

"not yet."

so i hang up as amicably as possible
and, on the way to the car,
i grind my teeth at the mother for having
urged me to give the son the money
for the contact lenses,
and the son for not knowing
the value of money.
don't they teach kids about cash-flow problems
in eighth grade?

then i find a street-sweeper ticket
on my windshield -- twelve dollars bail.
i must have been so drunk that i parked there,
right beneath the no-parking sign,
even though i vaguely remember
the thought making its way through the circuits,
like a camel turned loose in the kif closet,
that thursday was sweeper day.

so i forgive
(temporarily at least)
my former wife
and i permanently forgive my son.

and if someone will pay me twelve dollars
for this poem, you will be helping me
to square accounts with my conscience.
but if you can, brother, at least spare a dime for it,
maybe the i.r.s. will let me write off
the remaining \$11.90
as expenses incurred
in the pursuit of my profession.

IT TAKES, IT TAKES A BUSY MAN

he hadn't made a dent
in his list for weeks.
one of the items was "call z."
then one day z's wife called to say
that z had died.

he was ashamed to catch himself
indulging in a feeling of accomplishment
as he crossed "call z" off his list.