

MAYBE THIS WILL DO THE TRICK

a couple of months ago, i let
a salesgirl sell me a blue
ink refill for my ballpoint
pen instead of the black ink
refill that i really wanted.

today, being near the stationery
shop, i went in and replaced the
blue ink cartridge with a black
ink cartridge, even though there
was still a little blue ink left.

this raised my spirits.

i believe that,
for the time being,
i will resist any impulses
to make further changes
in my life.

THE INGREDIENT

my uncle virgil
was an uncle by marriage,
the husband of my father's sister,
a great beauty who died young
of tuberculosis.

every year virgil renewed my subscription
to the *national geographic*.
the issues accumulated, many
unopened, as in, i suspect, most families.

he lived in pennsylvania,
an engineer at sylvania electronics,
and he married the housekeeper, roseanne,
not long after his wife was buried.

roseanne was not beautiful,
just helpful and warm and good-natured.
their marriage was a success.

my parents were never critical
of virgil and roseanne.
i thought it strange to marry
a plain woman after having had the glory
of a beautiful one, but my parents seemed
to understand.

i'm beginning to also.

MUMMY MASK, PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

such large gentle eyes
and modest mundane features.
you think: this woman would have
made a good wife.
you also think: certainly this is but
another aspect of the immortality
art can bestow: that your image, at
least, can remain lovable, more than
two thousand years after your death:
no wonder the wiser potentates not
only honored their artists but made sure
that they were well liked by them.

finally, though (and it's the stuff of
science fiction), you think that it
is an awful long trip back in
time to have to make just to find
a woman that you might be able to
live in harmony with.

—Gerald Locklin
Long Beach, CA