



PORTABLE
DEBIT MACHINE
LYNN STRONGIN
ENTER PIN#



ALPHA

1 QZ.	2 ABC	3 DEF
4 GHI	5 JKL	6 MNO
7 PRS	8 TUV	9 WXY

F1
F2
F3
F4



portable debit machine
poems

Lynn Strongin

a right hand pointing web chapbook

www.righthandpointing.com



The author and editor of *Portable Debit Machine* would like to thank the following publications for having previously published two of these poems, perhaps in slightly different form.

Literary Mama: "Airshow on evening news"

Underground Voices: "The Boy Who Eats Jackets"

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p o r t a b l e d e b i t m a c h i n e

Lynn Strongin

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The Machine



The man who brings a rental bed brings, too, a portable debit machine:

Debtors in rain.

Nobody wants to talk about shortfall: nobody at all:

summertime laundry bulking the hall

darks & whites sorted.

What do we know about the human heart, that liver-colored spaniel

size of a fist knuckled?

How it stands up in a white nightgown

& shouts *Fire!* in the still, green summer morning?

*

I think of the hundred things that could go wrong before sendoff:

paper trails, rotting banana-skin the crockpot &

the time I dropped you off at *Greyhound* depot. Albuquerque:

the buzz of a beer, or an *espresso*

The apartment has become its own *cosmos*:

the overnight girl (with the root-beer bottle gold eyes)

will sleep on the rental cot from the shop

with portable debit machine:

Meantime, I hold a round hand mirror a lake

which gives me back my face & name: I smile although

the years have not been particularly kind.

The Photograph (*Governor roses*)



Dark day like Clay The trio of sister mother & me:
with that peculiar immigrant loneliness
(even before we crossed state line:) stands in oval frame:
monument-gray & white stone pores our faces
the nostalgic eyes of the traveler
looking back at another world: Deep Southern Depression
Telling somebody you're cold can take forever like telling your name.
The photograph chips
dissolves around its edges like *Script* ink in water
During the lifetime of illness-- Roses govern.
Governor Roses the government of flowers.
Bulldog of tedium barking up a storm on horizon.
Bulldog toothed our hands,
went too near the Bunsen
burner.
His name was Button.

The phone call to Rent Town



A baker's dozen years after recovery

here I am phoning *Rent-Town*

The muddle where the rented bed will stand

Bin Boy Hallway all swim, a miasma.

The sort you are who could turn up with a boy called *Moon* or *Mom*

Yellow pages thumbed.

St John's Ambulance I thumb & smile thinking of eternal rest:

they always take the very best.

Kissing goodbye: we might be an illustration from London's

Children's Weekly.

I shove the jaundice-yellow Bible under the bed, the

Gideons.

history, *sensuous*: which is always with us stuns:

Picayune & Perimeter, Georgia: dictionary & atlas: remain.

The Past stands up like a girl in sheer dress

Beyond belief & desire, & cries "*I am on fire! Come, caress.*"

"My head is holding too many
things,"



my 90-year-old aunt told me over the phone from Hollywood.

One of those 1000 things flies out of her skull--a robin

All dance-books she will will to the local dance-marathon.

She's already emptied her brain like a pool of debris

come shining spring. *Erasmus Heights High in Brooklyn* collapsing

methodically brick-by-brick, it too, is fading

Bricks fly off like birds into gas-pale heaven.

In Tallinn



Way up north in Tallinn, Estonian—

it's not quite yet spring:

birds, nonetheless, have become visible in town landscape:

One can see wrens on rooves, bell towers gold gilding

like the lily's.

Breath was crystal-December right up until spring.

Ninniku, Ninniku, I whisper, how I belong in your pages: "Garlic"

was to have been the name of the on-line Estonian magazine

but it folded.

My driver's down south: rain-stained & storm clouds over Europe are
massing

like clouds of cancer in the bone.

Bourbon Town



Once, I *washed* grief down
whiskey washing towns the color "Bourbon."
Boston, Snowmass, Athens even:
Light grooving over & over, an old vinyl RPM:
Cameo-appearances & chapels went gathering
dust
grilles with moss rusting
the lungs tobacco
whiskey mist that crystal-walnut, the brain.

Hope is a toss: one way to lay
the burden down: when almost *fait accompli*

The moment before birds returned
Jack Daniel apparitions came
top-hatted, ebon-caned.

(April 22, 2002)

After the burning stops



"The caring goes on."

How deeply alone the lung-cancer patient must feel, an RN she starts

giving talks on the disease November after diagnosis;

her daughter, Crosby is 10:

Mum has the stepdaughter of cancers: lungs holy as swisscheese

she spends hours watching the reflection of the palmetto on the bedroom wall.

Fire truck pulls away. Warts & all.

Scars, gathered gauze the heavenly gall:

"Inkspots" on top barking, flagging tail.

"That top has real attitude"

a woman tells her as she enters a boutique.

No outfit atones for loss of lung or limb.

Apples in flower

red on tea come in.

The world is lit

Whiskey-gold

by some sort of sun. After the small magnolia-like cigarette burns

stop the crying goes on.

Airshow on evening news



In silence the scar-trail of flame: wax-broken clouds: And mother, her
children grown, watching:
in this sun-stone
granular late August.

Strangeness

strikes like forked lightning spelling some message
in sun.

Better the beggar brought to the barn
knight upon the peasant:

Small consolation in Sarah's smile
when the white light comes down & in women's secret inconsolable religions.

The Boy Who Eats Jackets



That dust can so shine get him from open flame.

Boy wolfing cotton.

(Hound dogs in Guatemala are starved during mudslides
going after what cadavers they can.)

Isaiah

a black boy, born with HIV took to jacket eating

One winter he ate a pillow

& 3 jackets: hunger that cannot be staved divisive love:

did he get warm? Time Out. Time Up:

 The crack in the world thru which the light shines
 is both salt & cup.

Crane Over--Bus shelter & songbird



Behind glass—I watch beat up on the walls
waves of autumn color a miniature sea rushing on the shelter
awaiting #7 to go into our Tudor Village
I am nine years old again
coin in pocket for piano lesson.
Dreaming a way for music to split the sky open.
What, Lord, is reflection?
What sheltering?
Blue heron flies over bouncing sun off slate wings
soon snow will dust him.
Two diminutive maple leaves
paw-print
the pavement.
I remember reading the lightbulb case back home
just before inserting a new bulb
in the small Tiffany
by the bed for reading.
“To avoid shock make sure blades are not exposed.”
After the first gust of passion--
Marriage becomes repetition & rosary.

Forgiveness & misery.

Crane over: lost lover, come.

During war we kids built mini grocery stores

in bookcases

pewter light shone

round the barrels emptied of Quaker oats

with the stern Quaker man admonishing us.

All was ration.

When true hunger came

we looked to sky:

no sugarcane, but lit fire in the storm.

Don't cry aloud, Stint Cloud.

Ten more patients have died in Saint Hyacinth asylum.

and me, how have I landed in the British biscuit & batter town?

Floodwaters of passion

in the teeth of Downeast wind rise.

I narrowly escaped hospital as a girl—Bede's sparrow shooting thru
hall.

Sky must split open

like the lark

to reveal sound

the wound

a burnt star-char in the hands of an
astronomer

If only you could shake the illness



Out the window in the autumnal wind

Schizophrenia

Flap flap flap like a rug

It would be like beating dust from carpets

In spring.

Mind you

The design would resettle:

Maybe drifting on the heads of passerby

Where medieval angels

Danced on the head of a pin.

Some of the dust

Would sparkle like diamonds:

Schizo phrenia

Cancer

The trumpet exchanged for conductor's wand.

Lynn Strongin was born in the last year of the Dirty Thirties in New York City and was raised by first generation East European Jews, so developed in a very rich environment devoted to education and the arts: music, theatre, books. Her father was a research psychologist who went on to a clinical practice in New York for over half a century. Her mother was a freelance artist, studied under Alexander Archipenko and attended the Art Students League. Polio at age 12 left



Lynn in a wheelchair--a child dramatically marked by the past century. Often inspired by the confines this imposes, her work reflects it: in musical composition then in poetry. Lynn Strongin has fourteen books out by late summer 2007, among them *The Sorrow Psalms: A Book of Twentieth Century Elegy* (University of Iowa Press.) It was nominated "Book of the month" in England's "Poetry Kit." a four time Pushcart Prize nominee in poetry, she has also received two grants from PEN, a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Grant, a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and an Association of University Women dissertation grant. Lynn lived in Berkeley during the sixties and worked for poet Denise Levertov. An entire issue of *Ygradsil* will be devoted to a forum on Lynn's work: essays, reviews of Strongin's books, and about thirty new poems elegies for her mother who died last month in Boston at the age of 92. She has two full-length books of poems coming out in late summer 2007. *Rembrandt's Smock* (Plain View Press, Austin) and *The Girl with Copper-Colored Hair* (Conflux Press, California).

Strongin's sharp, always surprising sense of image, her compassion for those who suffer attrition and isolation have made me a fan from the first. It's a privilege to read and then return to the place where her imagination takes in the world. **Jordan Smith**, poet

Reading Strongin I am transported into what I think of as the Classic Universe of World Poetry. Strongin exists in a mind-world which she transforms into her psychological landscape: True solitude is inward, where once can cultivate one's crop of secrets. Strongin's creativity takes the world inside herself, turning it into her own private art-world then bringing us inside with her. **Hugh Fox**, poet and critic