

Ones

*Lightning struck so close to us  
& to think we were spared the flood.*

1.

One tulip makes it Holland.  
Buried under glass; lightning burned  
in the corner of the room.  
While the silver river's  
thinned to canal:  
plate on the wall: nailed & hung.

2.

One child has his legs blown off  
in Ireland  
tonight outside a tavern.  
Wheeled to hospital  
his torso withers an hour later. One boy gone.

3.

One  
more evening poring over maps  
searching a square  
to fit in:  
mismatched, odd-fellow passion.

“Chiddingstone Street. Southwark. Trafalgar.”  
Streetnames bear a queer ring.  
Pressed one-to-one:  
charting courses  
weathervaned.

*(Continued on page 2)*

4.

Your face like weathered churchyard-wood.  
Quaker-plain.  
Thee & Thou.  
You stir, settle in wine-brown.  
But my mother wed in brown satin.  
And look how, like tallow-candle, that burnt down.

5.

One more cease-fire violation.  
Men cluster, in the round at smooth tables.  
But spell it plain:  
war from peace, breach of truce.  
If your home is burnt of thatch  
your child blown, spouse. Your grief's without match  
the mind will unhinge, heart unlatch, the sole one.

6.

"I hold life holy as this milkglass cup  
clear water in it."  
You never spinster  
nor without child.  
You mother, as the light mothers.  
You note—like hermit thrush—what breaks clear &  
wild, till dark smothers.

7.

One rabbit.  
Cat. Dog. Can substitute for love.  
But you wake the gazelle  
in the harpstrings tonight.  
Bony fingers pluck the gold  
strings, fire-bright.

*(Continued on page 3)*

8.

Amish  
Quaker woman.  
You are none.  
Texan.  
Tidewater. But one note  
so repeated has the force of requiem.

9.

Sun-bonnet-pale eyes.  
But  
not blue.  
The walls of your porch are whitewashed.  
Amsterdam-tidy  
your one passion-house. One. Kept true.

from *Countrywoman/ Surgeon*. © Lynn Strongin 1979, 2002.  
All rights reserved.