

*IF NOT NOW... AND OTHER POEMS*

By Scott Thomas Outlar

I seek to shine in spite of my darkness.  
In fact, it was a kiss of death  
that forced me to fully embrace the light.

At the end of a rope  
there is but one question  
that truly matters:  
how strong is your grip?

I burn because my blood and bones are kerosene.  
After the fire, it was a barren field of ash  
that showed me where to plant new seeds of life.

When surfacing for air  
there is a certain thought  
that takes precedence over all others:  
are you still breathing?

I always try to fight my wars from a firm footing of peace.  
Within the schism, it was a mirror of nature  
that birthed the bite of our dualistic tongue.

As the sun sets below  
that horizon in the distance  
there remains only this to ask:  
will we rise again tomorrow?

*A BIT OF BOTH*

If I'm hanging on every word  
that might drip  
from your tongue,

does that mean  
I love you endlessly/madly

or that I'm soon to slip  
off the ledge of false promises?

*CARRIED AWAY BY THE WIND*

And then the air  
left both my lungs  
as I gasped  
for the breath  
that no longer cared  
to be held  
so close,  
but wanted release  
toward a freedom  
I couldn't fathom  
beyond broken spaces  
in my chest  
where the organ  
played its final song

called collapse.

**Bio**

**Scott Thomas Outlar** hosts the site [17Numa.wordpress.com](http://17Numa.wordpress.com) where links to his published poetry, fiction, essays, interviews, reviews, and books can be found. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Scott serves as an editor for The Peregrine Muse, Novelmasters, and Happy Hour Hallelujah. His most recent book, *Poison in Paradise*, is available through Alien Buddha Press.

EPISTEME