Illiterate

Carlton R. Harris*

*Iowa State University

Copyright ©1981 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress). http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
ILLITERATE
by
Carlton R. Harris
S & H Sophomore

Not being one
To blow my chance,
Or miss my turn,
Or hide my light
Under a laundry basket.
I wore my heart upon my sleeve
Embroidered my feelings onto my forehead.

You see,
I wanted to make it perfectly clear
Who I was,
How I felt,
Why I thought the way I did
(No mysteries here)
To anyone concerned enough to glance.

But People can't seem to read . . .
That line that says “I'm sensitive and warm”
Somehow gets read as “He's vulnerable and easy”
A line that goes “I've a good sense of humor”
Gets translated as “He don't take nothing seriously”
Hey—wait—
That line don't read “Patsy and chump”
It's SUPPOSED to say “I'm helpful”
Maybe these folks skipped over “Dick and Jane”
Or something.

Illiterates.

But you—
Yes, you—
Have no excuse
Cannot be pardoned
Are unforgiveable.
You of all people
Should know
Should be able to recognize
Should discern the difference
Between my heart
And a piece of linoleum.
Or are you blind?
I would never have dreamed
That you could ever misinterpret
My saying “I love you”
As “Pass the salt.”
Or are you deaf?
And not even my elastic imagination
Could ever stretch so far

As to imagine you spreading and smearing
All of my secrets
And plans
And hopes and fears and dreams
On the street like
A chocolate cream pie.
Or don’t you give a damn anymore?

Did you ever?

I guess I’ll just put my stuff
Back in my pocket out of sight.
They never read it
And neither do you.

Illiterates

Oh . . .
I’m sorry . . .
I didn’t know . . .
I was simply unaware . . .
That a fine, educated person
(Such as yourself)
Only understands Sanskrit and Latin
In lieu of English . . .