

**One-sentence** poetry, by Dan Latner  
or "Two Weeks in August"  
8/12/2022 - 8/26/2022

The goal of one-sentence poetry, something I invented during the summer of 2022, is to tell a complete story in a single sentence that evokes a memory, thought or feeling in me and hopefully the reader, in a fun, playful and creative way.

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Walking down Fifth Avenue, I'm often irritated by fellow New Yorkers who use golf umbrellas in the rain, or choose to walk their dog on a 15-foot leash, as if somehow the concept of sharing the sidewalk with others has never even occurred to them.

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I'm usually opposed to run-on sentences because I feel that brevity is desirable, but for the sake of poetry, which I love, I choose to make an artistic exception to a rule I normally observe.

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When it snows, I like taking long walks because it feels like I have Manhattan all to myself, while the soft blankets of frozen flakes muffle all the typically sharp sounds and smells of my favorite city.

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Standing just outside in the stinging cold rain while it's warm and cozy inside demonstrates to me that even a person with full free-will is ultimately still a slave to the bidding of their master, the cigarette.

In December, the lobby of my apartment building is piled high with boxes, and reminds me of that scene at the end of 'Indiana Jones', in the warehouse, except that instead of the Ark of the Covenant, these boxes are filled with plastic Christmas tree ornaments and other nonsense from Walmart and Amazon.

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For me, life is a series of calculations, leading to an inevitable conclusion that's ultimately irrelevant, since the only thing that really matters, in the end, is the journey.

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The idea of living permanently in a hotel seems appealing to me, probably because it has all the benefits of my Manhattan apartment, with the added bonus that somebody makes the bed.

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I recently learned that several of my friends have a phobia of elevators, which initially surprised me as a New Yorker who rarely gives elevators a second thought, but on further reflection, I suppose I have to admit I can see why some people might dislike the idea of being inside of a metal box, hanging from a string.

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These short one-sentence poems are a fun diversion while I sit at the bar waiting for my drink, or stand outside waiting for a bus; and scribble in my small notebook, thinking to myself that a lot of life is spent, waiting.

Even now, in my middle-age, I find it amusing but also a little sad that people seem so absolutely astonished and enthralled when I simply do exactly what I said I was going to do, as if this, somehow, is the very last thing in the world they ever expected to happen.

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I smile seeing the toddler pass me on the street in his stroller, because it triggers a specific memory of my own bumpy rides across uneven sidewalks as my grandfather pushed me diligently to our favorite playground and all of its unending possibilities as seen through the wide eyes of a small child.

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I politely say 'hello' to the woman and her friend as I sit down at the bar, and she says 'hi' without ever looking up from her phone, then proceeds to complain to me, a total stranger, about how the air conditioning here is too cold, while the rest of us perspire on this warm August evening, and her friend doesn't even acknowledge my presence because she's been studying the simple drink menu for the past 5 minutes, and I quickly realize I don't want to have anything to do with either of them -- and fortunately, once my martini arrives, I don't need to.

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An early morning hike up a serene and scenic mountain elevates my soul in a way that nothing else can, and at the very top, I pause to look around and wonder to myself what that guy with the boom-box and electronic cigarette is getting from this experience.

Everyone knows I rarely raise my voice, but lately I find myself provoked into irritated name-calling and angry jabbing with my finger, and I'm hit with the realization that I am in a mutually abusive relationship with my phone.

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Sometimes I sit at the bar, gazing at my scotch with the single large ice cube floating at top, and lament the fact that my raw intellect rests at the ready, unchallenged by trivial problems of the day which somehow never present a real test for me, but are tedious, nonetheless.

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It's nice to sit outdoors on a breezy summer day, but I scowl suspiciously at the nearby pigeon as he edges closer and darts his gaze between me and my french fries, and we both wonder silently which of us is more hungry.

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In nearly every important aspect of life, the difference between success and failure is often less than an inch -- and this thought unexpectedly crosses my mind in mid-air while I'm jumping over that suspiciously deep puddle on my corner as I rush home in the rain.

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For better or worse, many of my one-sentence poems are written at the bar; so perhaps these should be called 'bar poetry', since they're somewhat reminiscent of a 'bar menu', typically self-contained bites meant to entertain the palate and provide a simple, but hopefully satisfying partner for your drink.

I have several friends that call me frequently, but only to ask for money, and now I have a new 'smart' phone that communicates with me often, and all it ever wants to tell me is that it's running low on battery.

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After a fun but exhausting weekend drinking with my out-of-town friend, I realize that for her, too much is never enough.

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Sometimes I feel like my life is spent preparing for something that never happens, or perhaps it already happened a long time ago and I failed to recognize it.

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In my experience, the loneliest places on earth are always the most crowded cities and streets, where you can drown in a sea of faces and never be noticed.

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"See you later", I said to my new friend at the bar after an evening connecting over dirty martinis and olives, knowing full well that we would never meet again.

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Someone said that the odds of winning the lottery are about the same as the odds of getting hit by a meteor, and I wonder to myself if that's really true as I watch my ticket print from the machine; although frankly, either one of those would certainly make this day more interesting.

I've worked with technology my entire life, but in the end, if we're being honest, nothing is more reliable than a piece of paper and pencil.

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I'm rarely alone, partly because of the running commentary in my own head, coupled with the fact that I live in a city with 8 million other people, each with their own inner monologues.

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I completely understand that inner demons are like underwear, and everybody has some -- but that doesn't mean I wanted a total stranger to show me his on the subway yesterday.

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As I get older, I've noticed that it's becoming increasingly harder for me to tell the difference between tragedy and comedy.

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My friend and I have been eating salads this summer in an attempt to lose some weight, but it's only working for me, and I wonder if it would be unkind to mention that it only works if you also give up the junk food.

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Sometimes I go out with purpose and accomplish nothing -- and other times I wander Manhattan aimlessly and accomplish everything.

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I've noticed that for me, ideas are like grapes; my best ones come in bunches.

Sitting in the park, I can't help wondering if there are the same number of pigeons as people in New York, and also if they take turns, or if there's a single specific pigeon that's assigned to follow me around and crap on me.

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As a perfectionist, I keep re-writing the same sentence and I'm disappointed in the version I submitted yesterday, but as a realist, I fully understand that we ultimately live and die by the arbitrary and unforgiving whim of the looming deadline.

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Every society needs its nonconformists, and I've always been one, which sometimes comes at the cost of feeling out-of-place, like today, when I noticed I was the only person on the subway without body piercings and tattoos.

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I believe collecting art is commendable and everyone should have some, but as I look at my neighbor's twenty thousand dollars worth of tattoos while overhearing how he can't make rent again this month, I think silently to myself about how you can always sell a lithograph or painting if you need some fast cash.

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I normally never notice the age difference of my casual conversation partners at the bar, but having to explain that an 'answering machine' is like voicemail, but in a plastic box that sits on your desk at home, made me realize just how young that guy sitting next to me really was.

When asked recently how others would sum me up in one sentence, I replied that my friends would say I always keep my word -- and my enemies would say exactly the same thing.

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Often, I forget to look at the expiration date on food when I'm shopping in the grocery; and then later, at home, I remember I'm a person who generally doesn't like surprises.

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My co-workers know I'm passionate about innovative gadgets to help get the job done better, but the unfortunate and familiar sound of my pants ripping is the reason I also have simple duct tape in my tool bag.

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I always avoid giving advice to people that are older than me -- partly because it feels disrespectful to assume I know more than my seniors, but also because no one ever takes advice anyway.

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I find that I'm never as artistic and creative as when I'm procrastinating from something I'm actually supposed to be doing today.

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I enjoy talking to people because they seem to pay attention and consider what I'm saying; but in truth, so does my neighbor's puppy when I talk to him, and I really have no idea what, if anything, is actually going on in his mind.

Some people achieve success -- and all of us in our own way strive for greatness in some area, and that construction worker at the job site today had the biggest and most impressive stomach I have ever seen.

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I often lie about my accomplishments, mostly because nobody wants to hear or believe the truth -- even though the truth is that I really accomplished more than I said.

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Just when I thought I was completely out of original ideas, I had 2 martinis for lunch, and 12 new poems sprang from my mind -- which makes it all the more difficult to stick to my New Year's resolution of drinking less.

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If I'm worried about saying something profoundly offensive, it's easy to avoid by just putting another appetizer in my mouth -- which is probably why I'm 15 pounds overweight.

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Miniature tennis shoes on infants are adorable and always induce a smile -- but if you really think about it logically, it's about as practical as a diploma for your dog.

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Most of the time, I have so many ideas I can't get them on paper fast enough -- except when I have a deadline, and that blank sheet suddenly becomes my worst enemy.

Sometimes in life, you need to run the entire maze before you realize the exit you were searching for was right behind you at the very start -- and then later you realize you're just a mouse, and running the maze was inevitable.

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On the one hand, I strongly dislike smartphones because it's the worst corruption of the word 'smart', but on the other hand, I fully understand the appeal of carrying your entire life around in one pocket -- which is great, until it ends up in the toilet.

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I think one of the keys to my success is that I try to make plans for the future when I can -- but I've made the troubling observation that some of my friends (who perpetually struggle) prefer not to think about the future, since it hasn't happened yet.

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I could write 100 more of these 'poems', but quickly realize if I don't set a hard deadline of August 31 to stop forever, this could easily become my new life -- and I'm not sure that would benefit anyone.

-DL