

## Dear Stranger II

By Andrew Scott

Dear Stranger, that is what you are to me now.  
You may remember me by another name,  
though, I am sure you do not remember  
On where we separated in life or how.  
It is most likely so vague to you that you cannot even think shame  
on why you have not seen me since that cold night in December.

It took a long time to adjust,  
to adjust to a new life  
but it was one without the emotional gun.  
One without pain and balancing the violent thrust.  
One without you sharing constant strife.  
Through me, your only son.

My hand shakes as I write this,  
my pen may just run away from me,  
I write with hurt and anger.  
I do not even know why I am writing this,  
I maybe just be doing this for me,  
writing to you, a stranger.

I am not sure what you remember of me  
but now I am thirty nine.  
I work every day,  
Barely surviving but I can see.  
I may never see money but that is not the successful sign.  
That is the way I feel today.

I have never taken the time to marry,  
I do not get attached that easily,  
Nervous when a lady wants to get to know me well.  
Such emotions, I cannot carry,  
so I chalk it up to being picky,  
better than the emotional hell.

I have been parentless for three years,  
stood there as I watched a loved one die.

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Since then I have been searching,  
trying to conquer life's madness and fears,  
makes you stare off and sigh.  
I just do not want to be afraid of living.

I do not know how many times I have sat here since,  
right across from your house,  
just sitting, looking,  
I am not sure if I have the words to mince  
without my anger making one of us a louse.  
So I just usually end up walking.

I am not even sure if you will get this letter anyway,  
I do not think it will fix in me what is wrong.  
Plus, I am not sure if you remember me.  
Yep, it will be thrown out later today.  
Time to stop dwelling and move on  
because, really, you are nothing but a stranger to me.

## The Empty Village

By Andrew Scott

Not sure how many days it has been  
since the singing of our daughters  
became silent to our now empty ears.

All of the teenage voices are gone.  
Seems like they disappeared in the night,  
taken by a phantom no one can find.

People searched, we all did.  
Tired days and nights.  
There were not footprints leading anywhere.  
The girls just disappeared,  
our daughters that no one seems to care about.

Hard to understand no one came.  
The folks that were sworn to protect  
did not move from their higher chairs.  
The only explanation is that  
the innocence taken was not theirs.

Maybe it is because we are poor in their eyes,  
people that barely make it through life.  
Two or three families to a shack,  
sharing waste that has no place to go.  
Such lack of care for us all.  
This can be the only explanation.

If everyone could feel what we do.  
Knowing deep down our daughters may be sold.  
Shared through dirty, soiled hands.  
Turned to slaves that are abused  
or beaten when our daughters  
do not understand what is expected.  
What if the girls were their children?

Each new day now is darker  
as we all wait, staring, hoping

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for the sweet choruses to be brought back  
to their homes where our daughters should be.  
Not away, out there.

No, they should be home singing and growing.  
Bringing back life to our empty village.

## Coal Cough Morning

By Andrew Scott

Every morning starts with a heavy cough,  
blackened phlegm follows more and more now.  
When this first started there was a little hackle  
that no one cared to notice but me.

When it started over a decade ago  
I knew what it was  
and that it would never go away.  
The little black dots that grew slowly  
taking my left lung and then my right lung.

I knew my future when the doctor found it.  
I have seen many before whither away  
in this coal mining town.  
Never thought it would happen to me.

The mines have gotten safer  
with up to date equipment and masks.  
I have racked my brain for when  
the time I breathed in too much.  
Thought that I was so careful  
until I found out I was not.

In these hills the mines  
were the only place  
to support yourself and a family.  
This is if a person stays  
and according to all the familiar faces  
we all stay here.

When I was told about the spots  
I knew I was going to die  
but kept it to myself  
to keep my job and benefits.  
The insurance will support  
my leftover family  
or I hope it will.

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Counting my days now  
but have been for a long time.  
It is closer, I can feel it  
with each harsh coal cough morning.

**Andrew Scott bio:** Andrew Scott is a native of Fredericton, NB. During his time as an active poet, Andrew Scott has taken the time to speak in front of a classrooms, judge poetry competitions as well as published worldwide in such publications as *The Art of Being Human*, *Battered Shadows* and *The Broken Ones*. His books, *Snake With A Flower*, *The Phoenix Has Risen* and *The Storm Is Coming* are available now. To contact Andrew: [twitter.com/JustMaritimeBoy](https://twitter.com/JustMaritimeBoy), [andrewmsscott.com](http://andrewmsscott.com), [facebook.com/andymsscott](https://facebook.com/andymsscott), [facebook.com/JustaMaritimeBoy](https://facebook.com/JustaMaritimeBoy)