

[Home](#)

[Current Issue](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Autumn 2007](#)

[Summer 2007](#)

[Spring 2007](#)

[Winter 2007](#)

[Autumn 2006](#)

[Summer 2006](#)

[Spring 2006](#)

[Winter 2006](#)

[Fall 2005](#)

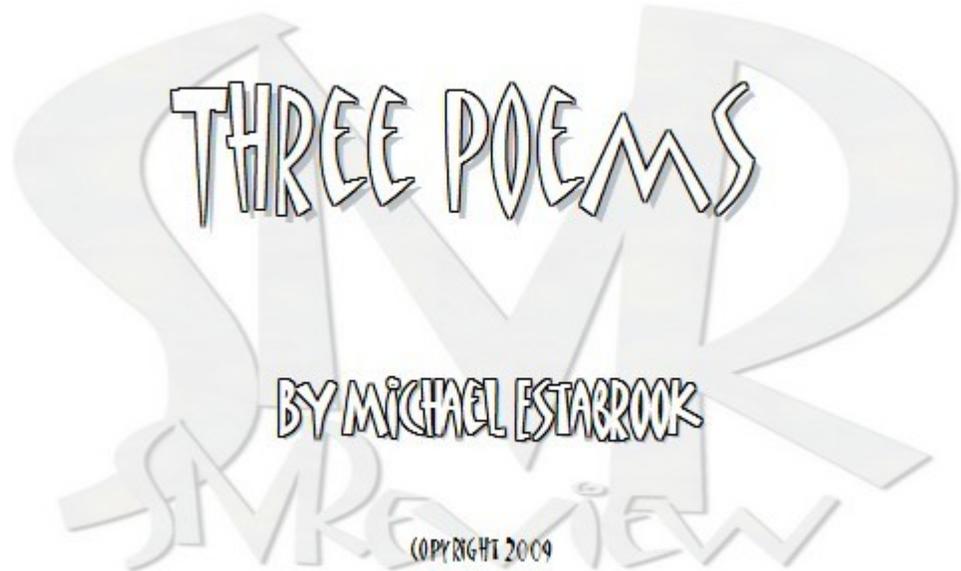
[Summer 2005](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[SNR's Writers](#)

[Contact](#)



Freedom

Asking you to go steady
with me on our very first date
in high school
was the best thing
I ever did in my whole life.
You said yes,
because you liked me enough
and felt it was the proper thing to do.
Then two weeks later
you changed your mind,
gave me my stupid ring back,
telling me I was going too fast for you,
telling me you needed your freedom.
But it turned out to be
the very best thing I ever did because –
over the next year and a half
you didn't date anyone else but me.
We became boyfriend and girlfriend,
dating each other exclusively
and that was that – until college
when your need for freedom
reared its ugly head yet again.

the worst day ever in my life

Winter, the end of
our first semester away at college,
I decide to surprise my girlfriend,
take the train like usual,
meet her in her dorm lobby.
But she's nervous, not looking at me,
one pretty leg folded under the other.
A beautiful girl, so collegiate, so confident,
fresh as the new winter snow outside.
“I'm so sorry, Mike” she says,
“But I can't see you today.”

I'm stunned, didn't see this one coming.
We had been together
since high school, two years now,
and were serious, at least I thought
we were serious. "I have a date
today with another guy."
My heart sinks to the bottom of the sea.
"I need my freedom
to date other guys to be certain
you are the right one for me."
I'm dumbfounded, shattered, I shrug.
What could I do? It is useless to protest.
But before leaving the campus
I slink over to the cafeteria,
spy from an upper window
as she and her new boyfriend
come in for lunch, she all giggling
and playful, throwing little snowballs
at her new beau, her lustrous
brown hair catching the sun.

She Never Succumbed

She gave me my ring back at the end
of our first semester of college
so she could have her freedom
to date other guys. But she made the mistake
of still dating me too. And while my strategy
to overwhelm her with attention
left her no time for these other guys,
for two anguished years she remained
open to dating them. Fortunately for me,
it never amounted to much.
She had only one official date (that I know of),
a blind date with a friend of a friend
who showed-up on campus for a good time.
So throughout college
she never made-out with another guy,
never went away for a weekend
with another guy, never got to know
another guy better in the back seat of his car.
In short, she never succumbed
to the attentions of any other guy,
not her hunky football player friends, not
her brilliant classmates, not the study-buddies
she'd meet-up with in the library, not
the popular, handsome dudes
who walked her to her classes
telling her what pretty eyes she had.
Nope, my beautiful girl, my sweet,
precious, wonderful girl, who one day
I would marry, never succumbed
to anyone else but me (that I know of).

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Over the years **Michael Estabrook** has published a few chapbooks and appeared in some terrific poetry magazines, but you are only as good as your next poem and like a surfer looking for that perfect wave, he's prowling for that perfect poem. Right now he's looking for that perfect poem in his wife, who just happens to be the most beautiful woman he has ever known. If he finds that poem anywhere, he says, "I'll find it in her."