

Keith Tornheim

A Gift

Death gave me a gift, and then left,
a whispered warning, not a reprieve.
And so I had a week, seven days to make full—
to tell those I loved most that I loved them;
to say good-bye and thanks to some of the rest;
to give apology for unintended slights and misunderstandings;
to savor a last sunset with full intensity and concentration,
and a last hug, and a last kiss—
all those things that we would do
if we had the time,
or if we knew we had no time.

Death gave me a gift, and then left.

Keith Tornheim is a biochemistry professor at Boston University School of Medicine. He was a co-winner of a Great Lakes College Association poetry contest in 1967 and is now a relapsed poet, with poems appearing in *Ibbetson Street*, *Poetica*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Spare Change News* and *Lyrical Somerville (The Somerville News)*. His poems have been a part of High Holiday services of his congregation (see www.shirhadash-ma.org/poetry.html). His poem cycle *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond* (Poetica Publishing) is appearing shortly.