

HOLLY WELKER

Victory

We all got down behind the barricade.
We crossed that bridge when we came to it, and
50 million times after that. On a small
clean triangle of dirt someone had planted
hyacinths, which seemed to offer as much
promise as an engagement ring, though who
was betrothed to whom we could never figure out.

The enemy had a pulse and a vigorous
sense of outrage. Also an excellent
profile, handiwork of one of New York's
finest plastic surgeons. But no one likes
someone who *foists*, who forces something on
another by manipulation or schemes,
and once he lost his contact lenses and
everyone saw how awful he looked in
glasses, even the women with bobbed hair
who had formed the bulk of his volunteers
were no longer vulnerable to his charms.

Ours was a hollow victory. He was not,
after all, the acclaimed supremo of
robbery and slapstick, merely someone
with a sporty car and a long line of
credit. For all the legends of his
loathsomeness circulating among us,
for all the predictions of doom based on
scrupulous readings of venerable scrolls,
there should have been more of a fight. God knows,
once you haul out the heavy artillery,
you need something to shoot at. When the
vicissitudes of battle left us not just
skittish but downright cowardly we began
to see how chaos sets you up for a sudden

jumping of regimes. We took down the barricade,
armed ourselves with simple common
eccentricities and marched off, looking
for another target, a fragment of
an angel, the head of a king, a dragon passant.