

Or was it the 60s, late into it. Indeed  
It was a time of violent trends, distraught dreams  
Of men without names or means. Headlines screamed  
Another a slasher was on the loose  
Five vagrant's throats slit in just as many days  
And you? Did you feel any responsibility,  
For these crimes of others? This public poverty,  
They asked. The attribution confused me  
Culpable by mere presence? Something to ponder  
However, they expected no answer, I don't know,  
I said anyway, the towns were full of mystery then  
And juxtaposition was the currency then  
And I was merely a man dropping in  
Where he didn't belong, which was everywhere then.  
There was nothing to learn, little to hear  
And I paid for my apathy dearly,  
I replied, I thought wisely.  
You have one phone call, they said,  
Pretend it is now.

### **(Day Two)**

The only number that came to mind  
Was not my banjo-skin scalp merchant or juju dealer  
Not the beat horn player up the street, under the viaduct  
Of the Jack Kerouac memorial highway  
No A-list celebrity, no financial planner  
But only that of an old stonecutter,  
A man I'd courted in many a dark hour.  
I thought to plead with him for a favor—  
Not to praise nor comfort nor condescend,  
Neither to epithet my death's head  
With ignoble epithets (always the best). I mean  
Ornament was fine if truthfully rendered  
I spoke. It was indeed a sarcastic comment  
On earnest aestheticism  
And I ran with it as we vagabonds do.  
Let winged clowns hover inches from these temples  
Angels playing slide trombones,  
Ventriloquists to wheeze and goad me on.