

Laura Stephens
Taking a Byte Out of the Apple

I'm in a file called life, and I'm the virus.
12 gigabytes – but it does not matter
Whether there are two or a thousand files,
– In Ethernet's eyes – it's the copyright that counts:
The more Jazz, the merrier! So I'm grounded
For downloading too many gigs
Without purchasing the rights to its flavor.

I took too big a byte from the internet –
And now I'm the main course, shared –
Just another item in the program of elimination.
But the irony is, if they scan their computers,
They'll find I'm only one of a smorgasbord of sinful sites,
All next in line to be banished from Paradise.

But why did they create an Eden
With apples so juicy, they drip from temptation
Onto windows that spawn the Hunger for Knowledge
As we worm through sacred fruit with increasing appetite?

Now, twelve million bites later, I'm the virus –
And they shut me down,
Defragment my life and make me an example
To try to convince themselves
That they can still scare the spider back into her cage.

But, there is no end to the weaving.
As the web spirals outward,
There are increasingly more apples for the taking.
So, I admit it: I did it.
I am the virus that needs to be purged!
God Knows, we shouldn't share files!
We must honor the Greed of those record companies
(Who sue little girls for listening to too much Britney).
Et tu Bruté; now punish us all with all you've got,
Before we commit another sin, like
Downloading another re-run of Comedy Hour
Thinking it's a joke that "that'll never happen to me,"
Like I even assumed before they caught me in the act
Of harmlessly browsing the internet,
Downloading *absolutely nothing*, taken advantage of
While others ragingly downloaded my Kazaa files by their day
As I slept peacefully by my night,
Completely oblivious to my crime, but punished just as hard
As Eve and Adam as they were thrown from their home
When they innocently ate some fruit they were told was juicy.

Now my anger pulses like the drum beat of every apple
That pounds its way into Earth's crust; and I fall
Without a net to catch me, because I took that bite,
Like all the rest of computer patrons in the world;
Except *I* was made another victim of their desperate attempt
To control the raging freedom of binary digits
While they know they truly have no control over our actions.

Now I wonder – am I a leader, or a martyr?
I will go with my country of the Internet – owned by no one
And ruled by everyone. And I will not bend.
I will spread my idea – worm it through holes,
Gaps in the system, because *I am the virus*.
And as I am purged, more viruses are in the making.

Until then, we take our bites and scatter back to the web –
To our files that we call our home, our life,
And sit in wait of the next virus,
Which happens to be *you*.