

Poem For Steve Urkel¹
By Robert M. Downey
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Laura never could stand you and your
dog-whistle-pitched love's confession

Edie fumbled footballs, embarrassed on dates
by your appearance and flailing limbs

like a water-skater's on the glittering
surface of the nationally syndicated sitcom

pond's surface. We all knew that Waldo
just hung out with you because he was bored

and that you probably contributed to the triple
coronary suffered by Mr. Winslow in the final season

of the show.

Remember when you tried to grow her hydroponic
roses, and created a man-eating Venus fly trap

instead? Remember when you added some extra horse
power to Mr. Winslow's power vacuum and sucked

the whole of Harriet's kitchen up into it? Remember when
you tried to give yourself a fade in your hair like Edie's,
tried to get yourself correct and cut a ragged

lightning bolt instead? We rooted for you
Romeo. We rooted for your ambition and for your

love. Family mattered to you and this we, we
respected. Young Orphan. Young Ulysses. O!

That this too too sullied flesh would melt,"² you sighed
against the door to your basement laboratory.

Here: Dr. Jekly, Here Mr. Hyde--you heard Laura's heart beat

¹ Steve Urkel is the name of the character played by Jaleel White on the sitcom "Family Matters" for the entirety of the show's 215 episodes when it ran from 1989-1997 on the USA Network television station, ABC. Its cast included but was not limited to Reginald VelJohnson as Carl Winslow, Judyann Elder as Harriet Winslow, Kellie Shanygne Williams as Laura Winslow, Darius McCrary as Edie Winslow and Shawn Harrison as Waldo Geraldo Faldo.

² See Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 2, Line 12930

through the floor boards and tapped your finger

in unison against your beaker in which you grew
some potion--some culture to make her give you her

hand and be wed. The New Man of Reason and Enlightenment--
you sought refuge for your sins and alienation

in science and philosophy. Like a poet searches in the glade's
and cospes of sounds and etymologies--Formal Inquiry,

you thought, would give you loves pattern and the frenzied
nightingale's lament. In one equation, you find the pH

balance of social tact and aptitude, honor or grace
in another. When you finally came up with your machine,

the one that cloned you and made you suave as
margarine. You're alter ego, coming out to save

her when you couldn't, to save her from embarrassment
and teenage angst because she didn't want you but you

you loved her too much to *not* bring in Stefan to save
the day. Like Clark Kent, you disappeared into the booth

and came out a hero. We could all see that you had just
taken off your glasses and that the actor had apparently more
range

than we had previously accounted for. "Do not show me the steep
and rocky road to heaven, while you take yourself the

primrose path." From Hamlet, you told her--you said
at her senior prom. But we knew that it was Urkel

inside--we knew that it was you that had memorized
the lines and was thus now repeating them.

The climax came, the end of the tragedy,
the boy with no parents borrowing the Winslows, when he

finally gets the girl. When Laura realizes that
it was you all along. You with the flowers.

You who were friends with famous pop stars
to serenade, and every special guest star. You wrote

the sonnets. For her to realize this,
you had to have realized that the possibility

to do anything that any human being
has ever done resides within you.

Heavenly Fury! We wept for you
and your success and we called out

out like monsters at the moon. and we stepped
into our phone booths and we are really

just like us and we are startled at our will
to strive, to seek, to find and not

to yield.³ and we ask the deep
night, we ask it earnestly,

"Did I do that?" And a voice answers back,
from somewhere behind the sitcom sets,

and it says, "Yes. Yes, You did."

³ See Alfred, Lord Tennyson "Ulysses"