

CIRCLES OF SUCCESS:

Reflections on Human Happiness

At life's first door, "success" is light as air,
a breath that trembles, bright and rare;
each passing smile, a small surprise,
a fleeting grace the world supplies.

Then, growing limbs and widening sight
recast success as forward flight—
untethered steps, a reckless art,
and then the wild wonder of wrestling meaning
from written words in stumbling reps.

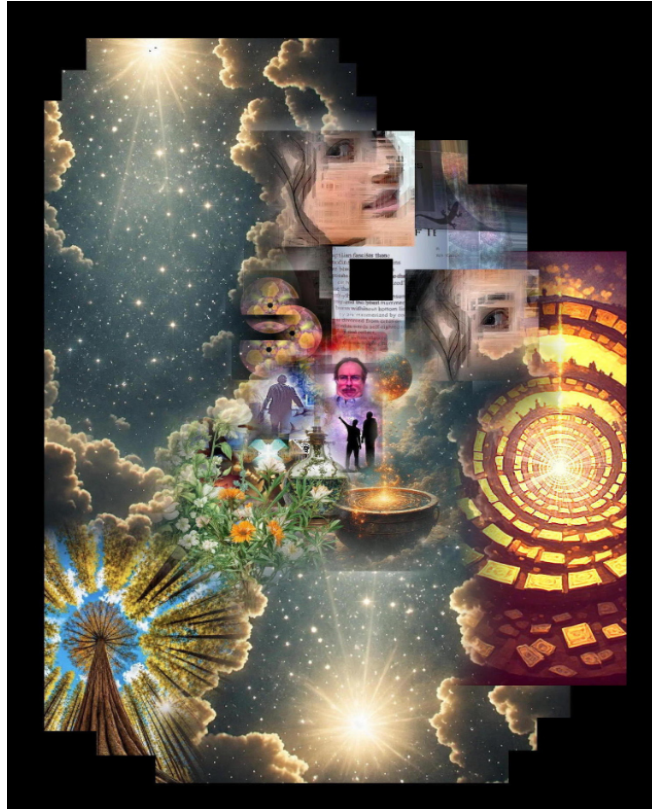
As seasons turn, the measures shift;
some count their friends as fortune's gift,
while others chase the gilded frame
of titles dressed in borrowed names.

Some seek their worth in passion's blaze,
in fevered nights and hurried days,
persuaded by desire's spark
as if heat alone can light the dark.

Others convince themselves that piling wealth
can answer the ancient ache within,
as if coins could cradle our trembling souls
against the cold collapse, the growing thin.

Indeed, when death draws near,
and breath clouds the glass of our days,
such notions splinter into dubious shards,
crumbling under a mindful gaze.

Then, in the hush beyond illusion,
perhaps a deeper question uncloaks:
"Does the notion of human happiness matter—
or are we chasing smoke?"



Ron pinched the bridge of his nose, slowly shaking his head as he stared at the manuscript on the table. "This poem doesn't work," he said, his voice flat and precise. He tapped the page with a blunt finger. "It's merely prose masquerading as poetry."

Linda leaned back, nodding as she studied the page. "Perhaps," she murmured, "but it raises some important questions. That has value."

Lex leaned forward, elbows resting on his knees, then added, "I agree." "For the young, 'success' often seems like the fulfillment of society's scripted dreams. It starts as something inherited, a set of handed down ideas. Young people are told what 'success' should look like long before they understand what it means."

Linda raised an eyebrow, but did not interrupt Lex. Lex sighed, then added, "Yet for many older people, 'success' is simply passing the baton to the next generation before the darkness closes in."

Lisa turned her gaze toward Lex, her expression entirely calm, tracking the subtle shift in his voice. "How about you?" she asked quietly. "How would you define 'success'?"

Lex gave a faint, humorless smile, his eyes dropping to the floor. "I think most versions of success are illusions," he said. "They are useful in some ways since they push us forward. But illusions all the same." He paused, the room growing quiet around them.

"As I've gotten older," he continued, "death feels less abstract. Less like an idea, more like a horizon you can actually see." He drew a slow breath. "And the closer that horizon gets, the less there seems to conquer."

Ron shifted slightly but said nothing. "Success," Lex went on, "isn't something you achieve. It's something you allow. The only moments that feel real—truly real—are the ones where I'm not resisting what is. No regret, no anxiety, no fear. Just... presence." His words lingered, heavy but not oppressive—like a truth no one had quite articulated before.

Lisa looked down, her composure softening. After a moment, she let out a quiet breath. "Then by that measure," she said, almost to herself, "I've been getting it all wrong."

Disclosure: This piece was partially generated using AI tools for styling and ideation; human editing was then applied.

- T Newfields

Beg.: 2014 Tokyo ☆ Fin.: 2026 Shizuoka