

## **My daughter smiles on a Saturday sunrise**

where streaks of light escape through windowsills  
like walls of this black room crumbling.

O my baby Sophia I will never forget,  
will never remember me

observing objects  
closer than they appear.  
Not at this juncture.

I should of read the speed limit,

my skeleton is starting to show--  
skin shrinking like a vacuum seal  
sucking fat down to my breath  
my throat to dust

Pills replace protein and  
now only bennies entice my appetite;

they help to fight the boredom  
acting belligerent and I can't stop  
scratching this beard like a tic--wait,  
a thousand ticks thick  
tearing the heart from Saint Agnes,  
leaving nothing but the old sinner.

And may I be beaten,  
buried alive in the streets of Rome  
these drugs piling more and more and  
I sink deeper than sorrow,

deeper

than the core  
of her mother's womb.

She is not a daddy's girl,  
I am not her gladiator  
I cannot fight,

and I will not die well.

## The Affair

Wives cheat; it's a proven fact.  
Right here in this very house,  
the blade still plunged in his heart  
tightening like Vise-Grips.

But bloodshed is sadder than tears,  
which now mixed with  
yesterday's mascara crawling  
down her cheeks like  
legs of a tarantula.

Three hours she lay dead  
in the parking lot  
of the old farmer's market  
with a hole through her skull and  
one in her hand  
(defense wound most likely)  
from a hollow-point at close range  
where the echo of the blast  
still stretched the sky.

And my father-in-law wept  
like a toddler when he went  
in the morgue, identified her body,  
said the stained blood smell  
made him think of  
a sweaty palm  
squeezing copper pennies.  
Reminded him of a bottle bank  
he once had, a Budweiser filled  
with over six-hundred coins  
he traded for a bag of weed, that  
he smoked with her that  
August night of '94,  
their own little summer of love but  
that was then.

For years his wife's been pissing  
on inhibitions, on herself when  
she's drunk,  
marking anything and everything  
she took for granted.

Less and less this looks of a home,

family pictures a fading reminder  
of how things used to be.  
Walls have become dividers that  
muffle the sound of secret lives  
and phone conversations.  
And she kept her phone by  
her side every night,  
under her pillow  
a veiled dagger destined for  
her husband's heart.  
And at this time tomorrow,  
things will never  
be the same.

## **Childhood**

Wish I was that little boy again,  
bare feet in a pair of pajamas  
caressing the carpet because  
at that age it's ok  
to let raw emotion sprawl  
on the living room floor.  
I was happy as home movies so  
it never took much to get me smiling,  
just silly pictures & action figures  
bear hugs & bear claws.  
This was way before I learned  
of a calorie or its consequence.  
Or of trans fat. Or clogged arteries.  
Or what it really means  
to have a lion's heart

roaring through the day  
then it's off to the second job  
eleven to eleven,  
miles from my wife and child  
where weekends are mandatory.  
And all the while I worry  
because zoologists claim that  
cubs are killed when  
lions invade a pride.  
It's on TV all the time:  
FATHER COMES HOME,

## FINDS FAMILY MURDERED HOUSE BURGLARIZED.

And if I could be that little boy again,  
turn around, face my dad  
from his living room floor  
carpet fibers stuck in my fingernails  
and ask: "what happens  
when you die?"

Don't believe him though,  
I'd believe what a child should.  
I'd believe we dance with angels  
top of dreamy clouds  
guiding us back home

just in time  
for supper.

## **The Drive**

I'd be a fool to say I really knew what it was like on the day my wife saw  
her mommy get hit by a tyrant (a shorter man with goofy glasses  
and a face so filthy an entire bottle of bleach  
couldn't do justice).  
And again I'd be a fool to say I know how she felt the day her mommy fought back,  
bashed his scalp on the kitchen counter, packed up whatever they could  
in ten minutes and split.  
Often my wife will talk about her late mother and growing up.  
She recalls being nine, her mom's countless boyfriends  
coming and going like it's 2 for 1 at the strip joint.  
She remembers being lonely, left at home for hours on end  
to fend for herself, and there's nothing for lunch  
because there's nothing to eat, maybe some soda crackers or some mustard,  
or if she's lucky some bread to mush it all together.  
But please don't be misled, my love is not without equal emotion,  
and neither was her mother who cried every time they played Chicago on the radio.  
And it's hard to say I'm sorry if she won't tell me what's wrong.  
Maybe I'm wrong to even ask. Should I already know? Perhaps  
she's already told me; maybe in waves not in words,  
like the way willow trees talk to willow trees:  
warning of insects and danger  
through zephyrs and pheromones.  
On occasion her mother reeked of smoke and alcohol;

that's when you knew something was wrong, the smell  
of black licorice and tobacco blend.

Those days she starts drinking quick as she starts her beat-up '91 Buick,  
that only started half the time and stalled the same.

And nineteen years before meeting my wife, a little girl sits in the backseat fragile  
as her loose tooth. Her mommy drives, headed for places  
they both don't want to go.

### **Beggars on the subway**

Through the prowl  
of piercing night,  
soured souls  
must hold their own.  
Blind mice  
to the blackest kite—  
such a life  
that some bemoan.

With fingernails  
overgrown  
filthy as a  
hidden crevice.  
And dotted arms,  
every vein blown,  
bloodshot eyed  
men turn a menace,

holding signs  
that set forth the premise:  
wounded vets  
with four children to feed,  
where heads hang  
like scraps of brown lettuce,  
and some do slave  
to one man's good deed.

Riding this train  
of notions preconceived,  
where the rich  
and the poor alike hold tight.  
As brakes grind steel  
on top precision speed,  
ALL are prey through the prowl

of piercing night.