

*Drive Time*

She switches the ignition on,  
pushes the button for the radio.  
A satellite in space transmits  
a signal, and music recorded over  
thirty years ago,  
a thousand miles away  
floats out of the speakers.

*I look into the sky  
(The love you need ain't gonna see you through)  
And I wonder why  
(The little things you planned ain't coming true)*

And, for a moment, though she is already late, she sings along.  
Maybe he's listening, too, in his own car,  
a thousand miles away.

*Blue days, black nights  
Do-wah, do-lang*

"Well, shit," she says to herself,  
laughs at the ridiculousness of it.  
She takes a deep, cleansing breath,  
and puts the car into reverse.

*Oh, oh, telephone line  
Give me some time  
I'm living in twilight.*

Her foot presses down on the accelerator,  
and as she backs out of the driveway,  
she changes the station.

*Sunday Morning, 2:00 a.m.*

As a moth  
to a porch-light  
left burning—  
against  
her better judgment  
she goes to him.

She has drained  
the bourbon  
from her glass,  
paid her tab,  
and wordlessly  
nodded to the bartender  
on her way out.

She has walked  
the four blocks,  
listening to her heels click  
on otherwise  
sleeping streets.

Now she stands  
on the street  
below his window.  
He lives alone,  
she knows—  
she's been inside.

The lights are out,  
save for the occasional  
flash from a Zippo lighter.  
She can almost  
smell the smoke  
from his cigarettes.

On the street below,  
she does her best  
Nina Simone, sings  
*Ne Me Quitte Pas*,  
from beginning to end  
knowing he won't  
hear her.  
And never could.

*Good News/Bad News*

Why was she surprised?      She knew how babies were made.  
But she was surprised,  
and she balked – a little.

Well, we often shy away from the unexpected.

But, she came around quickly—  
embraced      the news.  
Happily made adjustments. Sacrifices? *Adjustments*.  
Settled in.      Made *new* plans.

Went to work.  
Didn't complain  
about the conditions    the long hours    the fumes from the machine  
in front of her.

Then: The red flag.    A pain in the belly  
added insult to injury.  
More visits to the doctor  
than seemed plausible.  
Or necessary.  
How much blood can one person give?  
    (How much wouldn't she give?)

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.    Not so easy as it sounds.

How will she feel when she hears the news again?  
Will she      hear the news again?

*Afterwards*

You toss and turn.  
Nothing helps.  
Not reading or warm milk  
or lying on your stomach.

Because you can't sleep at night,  
in the afternoons  
you make espresso in that little  
metal pot you bought  
on Arthur Avenue.