

Nick Rossi

Litany for What's Lost and What's Left

this poem in the waiting room at the clinic.
this poem on all six of my W2 forms this year.
this poem on my dad's inheritance, a thirteen-inch Toshiba television.
this poem into a note on a Blackberry commuting between jobs.
this poem on my friend's headstone, the most expensive thing to his name.
this poem fucked up off a thirteen dollar fifth of Seagram's gin.
this poem my first day of work, blistered feet in an old pair of Chucks.
this poem on the third Hamburger Helper box this week.
this poem for a class paid for with a government loan.
this poem after a thirteen-hour shift.
this poem to "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman.
this poem in the cavity I can't afford to get filled.
this poem today, for minimum wage.
this poem with the freight line rattling my windows.
this poem trying to dig out a septic tank after lunch break.
this poem shopping for back to school clothes at Nu2u Resale Shop.
this poem on the clock and in full sight of the security camera.
this poem on the cover of every book my mom took from a library free bin.
this poem in puke cleaned up off the bathroom floor, midshift.
this poem on a carton of cigarettes in the freezer on payday.

Dear David

It rained the night of the day we heard you died, big dumb drops on the front steps. The next morning I drove up Lake Shore through thick fog seeping in from the shoreline, grey overlaying the blue of the water in a way that reminded me of a Monet painting, overwhelming me, making me short of breath, almost wanting to puke.

I don't want to be sitting home alone in Chicago, writing this into my laptop. I want to be in that Nashville garage, just us, sweaty and stupid with sound ricocheted off of cement blocks. The heart stops and veins collapse. I hope it didn't hurt. I've got a can of Busch heavy at the desk with me. I wish it was a tall boy dewing in the grass as we get beet red basking in the kiddie pool in the backyard, speakers aimed out the kitchen windows pumping Kyuss or Tupac, full volume. I'd give anything to watch you chain smoke a pack fresh from the carton, purchased on pay day from the corner store on Dickerson. I know I'll spend the better part of tomorrow reading about Fentanyl and fuck you for that. I wish we had a Colt 45 forty, that we were taking turns pouring each other's mouths full on the roof and somebody had just flipped the record without us asking. Fuck you, work. Fuck you, Murfreesboro. Fuck you, heroin.

I still have the massive vinyl \$5 Footlong sign you stole from Subway. You did a lot of dumb shit, but you never wanted to hurt nobody but yourself. Everyone's posting on social media about John Prine dying, but you were always more of a Townes guy. I've watched a video of me singing Croce to you at least fifty times today, our laughs interwoven like the fog and lake after some stupid joke whispered in the din of a dim triple-wide trailer karaoke bar. There's a difference between a poet and a songwriter, and you had no interest in being either. You'd rather have been an extra in a John Waters movie or a roadie for Sabbath or a carny playing banjo in a dirt lot somewhere in Oklahoma, making you more of a poet than most to me. You are forever my barbarous and metal little man. Come sit your bony ass on my knee and let me feel your heart pump through your tombstone tattoo into my palm, let me smell your grease and wet denim. Lend me a comic and get way too jazzed telling me the intricacies of an alien mythology. Get on my shoulders and let me lift you up to the rafters of this basement. The band is playing your favorite song. The music is in minors and the drums are loud. Grab onto that crossbeam. Hang there. Here comes the riff. You're fucked up, you're floating, you're free.



Nick Rossi is a co-founder / editor / designer at *Sobotka Literary Magazine* / Ursus Americanus Press / No Rest Press. His work has recently appeared in or is forthcoming from *Dryland*, *giallo lit*, and *Funny Looking Dog Quarterly*. He lives and works in Chicago, IL.