

Cultural Daily

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Michael Mark: Three Poems

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Michael Mark is a hospice volunteer and author of two books of stories, *Toba* and *At the Hands of a Thief* (Atheneum). His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Alaska Quarterly Review, Bellevue Literary Review, Cimarron Review, Cutthroat Journal, Harpur Palate, Paterson Literary Review, Pleiades, Poet Lore, Potomac Review, Prelude Magazine, Rattle, Spillway, The Sun, Tahoma Literary Review, Sugar House Review. His poetry has been nominated for three Pushcart Prizes and the Best of the Net. michaeljmark.com

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The Importance Of A Good Shtup

He comes home and his wife asks,
 “How was work?” and he says, “Good”
 and washes up. It’s out of his control,
 whether or not he works hard. His boss
 is sleeping with the company’s biggest
 customer. Which means his whole paycheck
 depends on the quality of their sex.
 He can’t stop himself from wondering
 if the 72 year old boss is doing the job.
 He becomes a victim to his own fantasies—
 half opening her bedroom door to check
 on their progress. “She greets me in pink
 pajamas,” his boss tells him, putting a picture
 in his head, like the one on his desk he looks
 at some days all day.

You Got To Look Good For The Dying

Tuesdays and Thursdays I shave

For Will and Herman and now Bill

Before I knock
I tuck in my buttoned shirt
Pinks, baby blues and yellows

We need the lightness

It was my father who dressed me
In my Bar Mitzvah suit
I was scared for what was about to happen

Alone at the Torah
I made the sounds I was taught
Never knowing what I am saying
Or to whom

Q-tips to the ears
Brush to the teeth
Tweezers to the hairs from my nose
And now ears – *What has become*
Of me

In the mirror are Will and Herman and Bill,
My father and me
Dementia and Pancreatic Cancer, and Colon Cancer
All of us fading
Closer

Those Stop Lights Will Get You Worse Than The Slots And The Slots Will Kill You Worse Than The Sun

The All Nude Revue stripper calls the street corner
whore *a skank*. The whore shouts back *Tell me that*
when you're out here

next December bitch. Isn't that right?
How we step on the other just to get home and there's
never anything on TV or in the fridge worth the bother.

The stoplights are so long here they make drivers crazy –
run reds even when cops are waiting in plain sight.
But they're good for hookers.

Like that \$1.99 candy bar gets harder to resist
every second you're stuck on that slow checker's line
at the Wawa. He's nice but he talks,

and when he talks— the weather, his paper cuts, too few breaks—
his fingers don't go. It's the way of the whole world right
on this block – a mile off

the boardwalk where you can smell the ocean,
see the casinos flashing their come-on
but the year you moved you got melanoma twice

and the tables emptied you so bad you can't remember
how you could think this was your escape.

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