

KADDISH

For Robert Krenitski, 1956-2007

I

Pensively glancing back at you in my mind, brown hair and eyes given up to the eternal skies,
while I walk down the frozen sidewalks of 21st avenue.

music city, obscure winter moonlight, and I've been up for two days, talking to myself, talking
to the walls, reading the Kaddish aloud, listening to Sufjan Stevens americana
whispering through the creaking speakers in the corner

the strings resounding and bugles blowing – and recapturing you in my mind three years after -
And read the words of the psalmist aloud – confused, burdened about my
image of the divine and the discomfort in my skin – shaking nervously towards
the infinite

And how It never resolves unless the songs repeat again, making sense of time and
remembrance of grace

Thinking of what is to come, Your life – and if I follow the plan you had for me
your dying thoughts – the final moments as that car came tumbling down 287 accelerating
towards the ancient obsolete beauty and wonder of Haifa beaches and arches
overlooking soldiers fighting to bring the Apocalypse

And how it all starts turning away, the dreams of grandchildren reunions, freedom with lover and
children safe from fear-

the great American cities burning ashes behind – black President changing minds but not enough
to make the pain disappear from bloated stomachs on Harlem's streets

Difficult to discern what to weep for anymore, what minor place to reach for or whether to let
it disappear into the distance and uncertainty of the next decision – step – breath

You traveled to the Orient in your mind and through my screams in India, lifting the bloodied
man wet with piss

What is there left to say when the affirmation is gone and the stability of my mind to write words
on the page without constantly erasing – having it all start over again

And start over it does – constant regeneration that never produces the same effect
flashes come now and again in sighs, and your worship of God
eyes flowing with tears as your voice is raised towards the Most High

Will it ever last for more than these deceptive hints that your life is still here? Can it become
more than a dream I wake up disappointed to find reality?

I keep walking – turn on to Murphy Road, passing the shattered windows of southern tenement
houses – antebellum mansions of a world you never knew, the sky refusing to
change its disposition

But now back towards the Clifton streets you walked 40 years ago, shooting hoops to escape the
trap of your home and bipolar mother screaming for you to stay inside

Kept walking to Paterson buying treats for your sister making your stern father proud faith
wavering in fear of the afterlife

Beef brisket on the table and four-minute prayers for holy digestion and healing – Europe was
out of reach – only Passaic County within grasp and modest expectations of
happiness

You lay your head on the pillow thinking of athletic scholarships and ways to hold on to the love
of your life – competing with the world for her ambitions of global travel -
competing with the adornments of your local church – guilt ridden confessions
when your intentions were always pure
you knew, and I know the sorrow of your sister husband dying hair falling bit by bit and scared
for your kids – supposed danger of supposed crystal meth infested Pennsylvania
woods
Giving money to any plea of your family to leave no room for regrets – midnight phone calls and
obituary preparations for others until it was time for your own
- where can I find what is left of you?-
Still trying to understand how you cared so much and struggled without us knowing
sacrificing sacrificing sacrificing hearing your cries at 3am
Lying on my floor till I fell asleep between pacing and counting stairs
you waited patiently each night – radio on Rutgers basketball trying to console
me to just fall asleep and let eternity wait until tomorrow
No more of your mother, - she gone before you – but your visits kept her alive for years
dedication of week to week when your sibling wanted her to die for her
sins of neglect
Yelling at you for your goodness while I played the piano nearby drowning out the confusion
No more of your father, - gone away through a heart attack – you sat in your driveway until
the pain went away – but it never did
Clifton was too rough for you – the doctor your nickname for covering up the marijuana smells
of your basketball teammates
But you never partook, not judging but fearing the disappointment of your parents – their
unsure commitment to your future
The 70's never engulfed you because your burgeoning love for future mother filled the time of
would be protests
Munich was foreign and Vietnam escaped your luck of birth draw timing mother post-partum
depression
Mr. October Jackson hitting balls out of the park while the TV set shook and beer drank
in first years of college – pulling back mothers hair as she threw up
flushed down the toilet as you loved her and put her to bed
She now throws up from wine trying to forget the pain of loneliness without you
you both made it together for so long until the hideous heart let you down valves
disconnected with no warning
What did you feel? Your last thoughts? Mother's face bloodied while you died – you died trying
to wipe the blood off her face unable with the seatbelt obstruction
heart stopped with a look of horror trying to save her life's love obsession
Those last moments are still difficult for you to recapture – even in heaven you are lonely
for your wife to join – looking on her suffering with relative time seconds
are supposed to go by fast in the afterlife but always goes too slow when you look
down
What is the radiance like? Is your smile the same standing next to Peter, Abraham, and Moses?
Do you ask questions? – are they answered? Do you ever wish to come back
down, can your contentment satisfy the longing for your family?
Is it a triumph or confusion of figuring out your new surroundings? No changes in weather there

or icicles hanging down – or satisfaction of pleasure with your eternal lover
Mother grieves alive with your memory pressed to the front of her mind – glasses of wine can't
change feelings – sometimes would be easier if there was hostility but none to
find

Unknown blessedness I pour out to Thee – thy will – thy death will of confinement, no
way for the wanderer to seek it all without consequences – no more last chances here – only
God's darkness and choice of spot for light – Death, an apparition, an illusion, shadow yourself
no more!

II

Images of the hospital have not left your mind – like the reappearing chorus of
Cannonball Adderly shouting for Mercy – Mercy – Mercy

Nervous ticks waking up in the morning – shaking tears work again no more
steady hands of the woodsmen coming home with flowers in his hand

You went with him that night – dating again like it was in the beginning, the
cosmos coming together and finally being found

The Doctor came in bringing you the news you already knew, ripping you from
the arms of the corpse in the bed three floors below – it's OK he's just going to rest for a while
she screamed as you wept uncontrollably sorrow beyond curses merely reckless utterances

locked yourself away until you had to tell your family through sister-in-law's
naïve kindness

daughter covered her own face with pillows until the tears dripped through the
other side of the soft rectangular temporary comfort

Something happened to mother something happened in those weeks that I only
witnessed in spurts

'I'm your mother, come home now Scott where I can see you' but it never was
soon enough

Spends her nights watching more television envisioning global travel adventures
without responsibility of mind thought memory

After coming home I took the next bus to New York – not knowing what to do or
say but seeking escape, depressed head tilted back on the dark green couch of Dan's West
Village apartment

Room spinning round loud beats party punctures got home late that night woke up
to the sound of my own screaming

Hour train to face NEW HOME NEW with limited testosterone left in the place
and too much room for menopausal angst without check

Exhaustion wears emotions thin and mom is still hiding in her chair upstairs
wondering why these things all seem inevitable sometimes

Left on the next flight for Nashville – envisioned past movies with similar returns
– wondering what was next to come – finances working out upper middle class lifestyle lost and
mother fading away – I was only 18.

Thoughts of body lowered into the ground on a weather perfect for that day –
damp grass and water christening the new tombstone

Pastor repeating lines from impersonal texts – patiently waiting in line shaking germs passed along perpetuating life’s cycles and chance catastrophe

Stay! Here! In the moment! Forget not my teachings and admiration for what you have done - do not linger on the instability of your mind and the remnants of fearful sermons – ten-foot pews

Crying three times in five days emasculating emotions figuring out when the tear ducts will stop and when I can finally wake up in the morning with energy and repassion for life

Abraham, Moses, speak up and remind that we must keep singing to God each day Blessed be his name

He wrote – ‘don’t rush through life, and keep things balanced – in perspective – remember others and your mother – the key is in what is above – love – it will always shine through

Love,

Your father’

which is Robert

HYMMNN

Blessed be his name in the mental wilderness of the aftermath – may His name be Praised

Magnify Laud Honor Exaltation in the Holy Blessed will of His Zeal
In the house of Morristown Blessed is He! In the after school shouting and adolescent after school care admonishing Blessed is He!

Blessed be He in sorrow! Blessed by He in Victory and Death! Blessed be He!
Blessed be He in the smoke from my mouth! Outpourings of love in community! Blessed be He!

Blessed be Robert in Death! Blessed be the car of memories! The music of the driveway conversations!

Blessed are those who Mourn! Blessed are the uncomforted! The street children and smack addicts running loose!

Blest be your depression! Blest be your fading mind! Blest be your sagging face and weary eyes!

Blessed is He who trusts in the midst of the Darkness! Who serves in the midst of uncertainty!

Blessed Blessed be the Lord of the Most High! Blessed be His name!

III

Only to have not lost that night on the back porch in late July, with the water cooler leaking and dad’s surprise

only to have seen him pacing in the hallway about who to give the surplus to making sure
everyone would be OK
only to have the idea of an insane man through his mind for a few years and wipe them away
with such grace and love
only to have seen his first college year – the learning process he went through
only to have asked more questions – and known there was not more time
‘The key is in balance – sustain the love you have been given – increase in my love’
- just one last glimpse, seeing him wave out the car on my flight to Nashville
What if I knew?
Is there anything left behind to recapture? Any remnants I can gather?

IV

O father
what is lost from my mind
O father
where can I find our conversations
O father
long drives in the car
goodbye
with your smile to genuine for authentic pictures
goodbye
compassionate conservatism with pure intentions
goodbye
receding hairline
goodbye
white lines
with your increasing waist
with your fear of Hell
with your mouth of encouragement
with your fingers of tenderness
with your controlled anger and meekness
with your voice singing loudly and off-key
with your ruddy complexion
with your naïve optimism
with your Vietnam timing
with your Fernando Ortega tears
with your hopes for your children
with your eyes of mother
with your eyes of giving
with your eyes staring at the wall while you sit on the toilet
with your eyes out in the distance in your own world
with your eyes of Czechoslovakia from generations past
with your saggy white underwear checking locks at night
with your eyes
with your eyes of marriage

with your eyes
with your eyes
with your Death of abundance

V

All all all all all all all goes over the shadows into the steps of the back porch
God God God Robert you have saved in his entire life and your servant always calls
all all my stomach falls again each time I recall that car
God God it moves too quickly and the ground shakes when we look at it
all all hear my cry when I forget your name and the power of your voice
God God of the most high change our Time to make more sense in humanity's eyes
All all goes back to dust returns to You the most high
God God God all all all God God God all all all God

Nashville, February 2010