

Working Script for *Trust Fall* performed at the Chicago Cultural Center, April 1997

ROB: Good Afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I'm Rob Van Tuyle and we are the Chicago Poetry Ensemble. Our group began performing in 1986, we helped establish the Uptown Poetry Slam and the Fitzgerald Slam in Berwyn, we haven't performed as a group for about five years and we are happy to be together here at the P2 C2 celebration. Our first poet....

Dave interrupts: " Anybody order a cab"

All: NO!!

Rob shoods Dave (Trust Fall)

Mike and Jean Catch Dave

Our First Poet is Mike Barrett

Mike: Short intro to poem

The Pie man.

The pie man comes, world weary and custard proud
he pushes his cart through the pieless city between the meal
and the after dinner coffee.

He pushes through the rind wrenched alleys
in the back streets of your mind
in places where you only have nightmares..
about this pieman.

Pies for sale

I've got some pies for sale
Grape pies, cherry pies, apple pies
ginger pies pumpkin pies
Whipped cream in your face pies
Finger in your lady friends pie pie
Pies for sale.

We have some pies for sale

Have a piece of pie

yeah you

You Mrs. "I don't eat deserts

Yeah you Mr. "I need a good body to pick up chicks with."

I'm talking to you Miss "I'm on a low sugar diet"

or you the thin man with an appetite so small it's like a snake
with a small mouth

Or you the fat man who has to throw up to move beyond this meal

or you yeah, your the poet who spends too much time with sweet words to enjoy desert
yeah you!

all of you

Have a piece of pie

OR are you afraid, afraid to put on calories that accumulate around your waist
growing larger , larger like a shadow across your lawn
Larger until you look down and you can't see your toes
Afraid, afraid of the dentist, afraid to cater to that sweet tooth
to risk cavity, afraid to wake up in the middle of the night
to look back on your life and say
"I need an alkaseltser"
come on
have a piece of pie.
I dare you.

Dave: Times like this
When I've been shot
when I've walked at a run for
13 blocks
against icey winds
with the hurried wave

When I've slipped and slid
along wet tile floors
past the homeless hawking StreetWise
and the soung of my own voice screaming
Shove it man! Just shove those silver bells
To the little old men
with the little red buckets

Don't they know
I've already given today
I would give more if I could
but I can't..stop..now

I'm late I need to catch...
I just missed my train.

It's times like this
when my feet are wet and my hands are cold
and my train rolls slowly
away: so slow, it seems
I could hop it if there was an open door

Sweaty, smelly
cold and clammy
knots of anger tightening
my sights

It's times like this
that I could kill.

John/Rob: Prisoner

John Political prisoners U.S.A.?

(Ain't no body here but us anti-semanticics.)

Polis- the city

Politics_ the running of the city

running for office

running around..for votes

running up .. the bill

running down ..the other side

running from ...the police.

Police- the city guards

who run down those who run into those

who run the city

Prison- where they run the wrong runners

of the other side.

Wrong runners of our side, of the right side
the winning side, hr ruling side, sometimes
go to prison, but not quite so often , so easily,
so quickly, for so long a stay, even if they're right
enough, not too badly ??

Political Prisoners- wrong runners, real or suspected
from the wrong side, whose numbers far exceed their real guilt.

,
ROB:AAAAAmerica... you got thousands of men and women in every state betting mad getting ready to get even.

They're taking nice to some parole offi"Sir" and laughing at his tie. Straights and squares you live in dangerous ignorance, thinking you can put a man on prison for half his life and he just disappears... or worse you expect a man to come out.

John: I used to visit the Houston Jail, every week, to see Joe Brown, 18, black. Joe could hardly stay out of jail. as soon as he was out he's get picked up again, usually on a Saturday night, He could;d hardly stay away from his crowd. The cops got somebody in his crowd once a month they'd pick up Joe too, as accomplice or suspect. Innocent or guilty, Joe couldn't stay out of jail.

Rob: Not Guilty! Self Defense.. I first went to jail for knifing a man over a dice game. Then I had to kill a man with sharpened spoon my first year in... you learn to be sly.. you learn how to lie.

John: The whiter middle-class college students I was teaching at the time seemed no better or

worse than Joe. On sSaturday night they got drunk, got in fights, or cheated on money. But they didn't need to use force or violence

Rob: First I was afraid of getting jumped, getting beat, punked out afraid of getting raped
Then I got jumped, I got beat, then I had to kill a man with a sharpened spoon, man they learn to FRY you for that!
Skills, trades I'm inside for 15 years, try some solitary for a while, you expect me to come out
keep job... when I have this RAGE inside me.

John: They had the keys, they knew the combination
they were not gathered on crowded corners
outside small stores and hot cafes
They were less densely ensconced in cool bars and clubs, spacious homes and
beach resorts, or country lodges.
There were more places for them to park n the dark
more protected than molested by cops

ROB: Your rules.

JOHN: Was John Brown a political prisoner?

ROB:say I gotta tell you everything..

JOHN:How many John Browns do you think there are

.ROB: You gonna hire me?

JOHN:in cities like Chicago,

ROB:My crime

JOHN:or Houston

ROB:was knifing a man with money.

.JOHN:or Louisville..

ROB:my lawyer...was a joke.....

JOHN:Political prisoners in the U.S.A.? O.K.

ROB:I didn't have a chance

JOHN:economic prisoners

ROB: you people made me.

JOHN:but is there a difference?

Rob: You put a man in a human garbage disposal and think he don't exist.
But you pay...you pay.. you pay.

JEAN:Quanto? Quanto? How Much?

Like deer caught in headlights
the young whores on
Via delle Cascine
turn. Their eyes flash
the white of small pressed
flowers. Their breasts push
upward into the mouth

of streetlights
as each new car slows
almost to a stop.

With fire still burning
three millimeters
hot above her hemline,
where the man in
the Peugeo
has just pulled out
she walks quickly,
panties in hand
to the next car.

Her bare ass
like the exposed face
of a young sleeping child
catches our headlights
before dropping down
into the darkness
of a bucket seat.

Across the bridge
the white Firenze moon
handstrokes
the genitals of
Chianti grapevines
Blessed Salvadonica
whose hills soak
in milk of spilled moonlight
whose luna lace drapes
each dirt mound
like the twice-washed
stockings of a
seventeen-year-old puttano.

Quanto? Quanto? sinks
it's nails into the place
where the Ponte Vecchio
stretches fingers deep
into the Arno;
where the moon always
sleeps with it's favorite
whore gartered
bu rivers
the color of bruised
sky

Quanto? "How much?"
Each girl like a statue
the Medici have commissioned
Glass-eyed virgins carved
with boots to their thighs,
turn and look
then bend down
All along Cascine Park
where Donatello knelt
each daybreak to
pray.

(Applause Applause Applause)

Rob: Jean Howard ladies and gentlemen....

Karen Nystrom was an integral part of the Ensemble since its inception. She is a talented and widely published writer, she couldn't with us here today but we would like to perform a piece Karen wrote for the Ensemble performance *Six Voices In Time*.
This is Bones by Karen Nystrom

Anna: A woman is sitting on top
of her father's bones on a hill
that vistas the whole town
Rob: This is the whole story
she smelled every smell in,
John: This is what we've told you.
averted her eyes from every man
Jean: What are you drinking?

and drank tea with women whose voices
sound like snakes or birds
depending on their mood.

The hill is not important

John Not Important?
she decides, trying to breathe
in something from this

dusty hill. A tomb is a tomb

Dave: Goat bells sound like goat bells
the hens she has chased around
the yard since childhood
turned out to be hens.

Grace and disgrace, cordoned off
in a ring, lie down together
in an awful mix. If she sells
her father's hill

John: When she sells

When she sells this hill she will be
invited to leave.

The women's voices will
be pythons curling around
her ankles at first. A tourist
in her father's town.
An anti-Antigone digging up
her blood's bones.

Rob: All I wanted to do was bury you
and everyone will spit and spit and spit.

Point is...they're only bones

Jean: Don't make me tell you again.
no the point is she needs the money

JOHN: That's what I want
no, she wants to get out, no,
a first class ride out of this
calcified town will keep
the snakes and vultures pecking
at each others old skeletons

Dave: We mixed your bones for tea
Hers will become a skeleton
they hold up to the light

Rob: Is she gone?

Jean: I can't see you?

Dave: Gimme the candle.

John: I think I see her
but it is getting cool now
in the early evening, the town's
lights blink out in reminder
that she's done nothing wrong.

ROB: How could we hate you dear?
No one hates her, yet.

Jean: Couldn't we do this another time?

She could
walk into town and speak
to the women oval rings
around which finches fly.

At some point women flash
gestures with their hands,
spitting as a car rides by.

She came here for her father's
answer and all she
can get out of him is Ooooooo
Ooooo

John: What is she saying?

Ooooooo

Dave: I don't know that sound

Ooooooo

Jean: Did you hear that?

What bones say when the earth cool down.

John: Ubi oh Ubi est mea Sub Ubi

Rob: Where oh where is my underware

Jean: where is under always

Mike: under where does under lie

Dave:: why is a lie always under

Anna :Why lie when you can lay under me?

MIKE: She believed, she said, in two worlds
speculating that the other lags
slightly behind ours, enough to prevent
mistakes after they're made. I had
my doubts. If two, I asked her, why
not scores, each elliptical, in revolution?
But force of habit keeps me heavy
despite the desire to ascend, where I'm
from a body at rest tends to remain
at rest, though, she could have been right.
It's possible, when lying next to somebody
to be caught in one world sleeping,
in the other, falling in love.

Anna; I love my body.

I love it's classic proportions, it's strength and flexibility. I love
the line of the arch of my pointed foot. I love the length of my arms and fingers.
I live the way my head turns on my neck, the way my chest rises and falls with my breath
the way my legs stretch when I walk fast. I love the feel of my body in motion
I hate my body. I can barely stand to breath sometimes, wishing I would not need to. Wishing
my body would go away. Wishing it weren't mine. I sit quietly. I don't need to speak. If I wait
long enough something will happen. I hold myself still (pause) waiting.
I hold back my thoughts. Inside my head, anything can exist as nothing. If I curl in a little, if I
just make some space in my body to keep things. I won't have to let anyone else see it. Then all I
have to do is wait.

I love my body. I love my body. I love the way it feels after a long swim a hard massage an
intimate strenuous fuck. I love all the things I can use it to do, especially hiking, kissing and
laughing. I love it's unlimited capabilities. I love the way it does what I say.

I love my body. I love my body.

I hate my sister.

John: This is dedicated to Margie Palm who passed away in January. These are her words

Jean: Nursing Home Journal.

At 7:30 Jodi, the night nurse wakes me to get me ready for the day - bath, shampoo, ect. When dressed I am rolled down the hall to breakfast. I try to move my, but can't. I whisper, "Stroke, be damned!"

Dave: We pass a young boy's room. His name is Charles. He sits on his bed screaming, having reached the point on no return from stroke to sanity. The noise shocks my body, and I jump.

Anna: This place, I think I more like a psych ward than a nursing home.

As we approach the dining room, an 80 year old shouts, Damn you!" and throws a stuffed animal at me.

MIKE: After breakfast, I go to activities, and work on a clay bust of Dr. Martin Luther King I glance out the window at the spacious lawn. Outside it's peaceful and quiet.

Rob: A lot of patients are incoherent, and live in the past. One night as I was watching T.V. an old lady came into my room crying.

ANNA: "Tell my mama to stop hitting me," she said.

Jean: (we laugh, we cry, we scream, we doze, we pray, we hope. We help and are helped. But sometimes we have to wait too long.)

Mike: Sometimes we wait too long for the words to end
like a drum-beaten music man
who passes around his hat for a powm
until he's hels in visions that bring storms

Rob: Drown stage in blue ethereal glow...laser shots, pinwheel, gyroscope

Mike: Sometimes we end waiting for the words,
like a woman whose man is drum beaten for music
and wears the poem wrapped around her hat.
She watches for storms on television.

Dave: Cue screen one, two, three--random images-- go one two three

Mike: Sometimes we wait too long for the words to end
the dead resolve in language no one can riddle
100 windows open when memory is sufficient
photographing rooms of abandon, or kansas dustbowl

Anna: Screen one grainy documentary of depression--cue wheeping music.

Mike: Sometimes we end waiting for the words:
a riddle from a dead language no one can solve

Sufficient memories swerve 100 widiws when they dance,
the ballroom of dust photographed, abandoned

Jean: Start claymation widows--stop--go computer enhanced graphics--pixels
pixies, pick-up sticks.

Mike: Sometimes we word waiting for the end
sitting in light, an idol lost in convesion
that shines on us, here, in the company of others
We are known by our escape when land expires

John: Spotlight--lone--bright white synthesizer, drop florescence--sweep to floor

Mike: Time is the sum of words and waiting
city lights lost in idle conversation
composing the shine voiced in others
We know each landscape our home requires

Anna: Camera on audience--pan left--pan right-- cue computer transformation,
de, de, de, sennsetze ...now!

Mike: The waiting erites too long for the words to end
Our longing voices the ending in words
Sometimes we word waiting for the end

Rob: Cue cacophany, pan on audience dim one two three and out

Mike: Time is the poem words can't understand.

Applause applause applause
All move to center stage
BOW