

## **Three Poems**

by Len Krisak

## The Story of the Other Woman

We sat that night, there at her kitchen table, Listening. I watched my spell-bound wife, Who looked down, fiddling with her butter knife; Not showing, in so far as she was able,

Any sign that might expose the way The woman's calm recital made her feel. I had no doubt the tale told there was real: That not so many years ago, she lay

Wide open for a shy young man she let Play with her body "like some sand-box toy." She'd pitied him as if he were a boy; A pupil she felt sorry for; a pet.

That's when the silence came—the awkward pause Of third-rate-fiction fame . . . until she swept Her arm in sharing gesture, and a goblet leapt To trace an arc. By physics' iron laws,

It smashed to flindered shards—to little bits Of what had lent warm claret lees the shape A cratered pond might take. Her mouth agape, My wife stood up, and by brief starts and fits

We exited the story I am telling You. We failed to show much grace in going, But what would you expect? We left her knowing Only vaguely what she had been selling,

The other woman. If you read ahead
Though, right between the lines, you will have guessed
Which one of us soon bought . . . and all the rest,
Including that it had been no cheap red

## **Shits Passing in the Night**

Who wouldn't want . . . I mean, who wouldn't *love* Some way to keep alive the memory of A seedy, soul-demeaning irony Like this (which needs some sordid imagery To drive it home): a country highway just As dusk comes on; a core of shabby lust; A husband driving from her house (and his) One day a month, as regular as is The other man (besotted) driving *toward* The self-same house whose master is not lord.

Home

Summer 2014

Fall-Winter 2013-14

Summer-Fall 2013

Spring-Summer 2013

Winter-Spring 2013

Fall-Winter 2012-2013

Summer-Fall 2012

Spring-Summer 2012

Winter-Spring 2012

Autumn/Winter 2011-12

Summer 2011

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Autumn 2009

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Autumn 2008

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Spring/Summer 2008

Winter/Spring 2008

Editor's Note

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And down this rut-filled road, their Volvos pass.
One races toward her for a piece of ass
That makes him think of Plato, Petrarch, Dante;
The other, though, is hardly Patrick Bronte.
For in this wuthering town like Haworth, York,
Where hubby has—once more—pulled out his cork,
He is already always un-protective
Of a wife whose troth has proved defective.

Which means it's safe to pass him on the road,
Not one mile from that couple's quaint abode.
And every month, they cut it ever-closer
As the cuckoo's work grows ever-grosser—
Ever more flagrant—till . . . Her appetite
Grows cloyed—eight years, to get their numbers right—
And all stove-in, like Usher's house of cards,
The rank affair lies middened in its shards.

Who wouldn't savor irony like this, Though it's been thirty years since their last kiss? Yes, why not wallow in the memory, though The dupe and cunt—and prick—died long ago?

## "The More You Cross It Out, the More It's Here"

-- "X," from Richard Wilbur's The Disappearing Alphabet

Dream-shaken still; At 3 A.M., awakened Far too often.

Do what I will, Ice-blue irises will soften To grey, the ache in

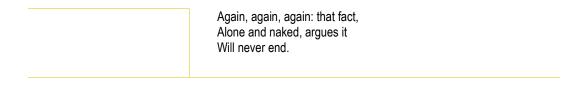
How they melt. And then the thin lips part As if to speak.

What has she felt?
Why do my knees go weak?
Where is her carved-out heart?

Why, when I claw from sleep, Does every nerve feel stricken And the pulse die feebly as

The day begins—a prison-keep Where nothing dead can quicken Because it never has?

Again, again, again: the act Goes on. She will not quit; He can't defend.



Len Krisak's most recent books are *The* Carmina of Catullus (Carcanet Press), Ovid's Erotic Poems (University of Pennsylvania Press), and Afterimage (Measure Press). His work has appeared in such publications as Antioch, Hudson, PN, Sewanee, and Southwest Reviews. He is the recipient of the Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wilbur, and Robert Frost Prizes, and to top it off, he's a four-time champion on Jeopardy!

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