

**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 shoos Dave (Trust Fall)

Mike and Jean Catch Dave

Our First Poet is Mike Barrett

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**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.

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

When I've slipped and slid  
along wet tile floors  
past the homeless hawking StreetWise  
and the song 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.

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**John/Rob:** Prisoner

**John** Political prisoners U.S.A.?

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

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:**AAAAmerica... 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 Guily! 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 Saturday 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.

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**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 Peugeot  
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?  
Oooooo

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 underwear

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 hack 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.

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**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 wakens 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 poem  
until he's held 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 weeping 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 fraphics--pixels  
pixies, pick-up sticks.

**Mike:** Sometimes wewordwaiting 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, sennsetize ...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