

## **Blueberry Pie**

The woodstove seemed to devour hardwood  
this winter. We could not keep warm  
when it was three degrees outside for a week.

My wife was concerned  
because Abigail's lips were blue.  
No matter how many logs I jammed  
into the stove, the poor girl's lips were blue.

She seemed just fine  
with her merry brown eyes  
and red cheeks. She skipped  
about the house and did not complain  
of the cold. But we bundled her up  
just the same.

It was a mystery, her blue lips  
until late one afternoon  
when the refrigerator door slammed.  
"Alright," my wife said,  
"who ate the blueberry pie?"

Tom Donlon

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## **Ballet Lesson**

Lily writhes, her face contorted  
from catching her finger in the car door.  
She is six—too young to know such hurt.

She grips her hand. In her twisted face,  
I see the pain of Dido, of Trojan women  
holding their fallen men, their dying sons.

I kiss her hand. No cut, no blood.  
She wipes her eyes, forgets her grief.  
As we drive to class, she points out daffodils,

dogwood, redbud, forsythia that bloom  
along this mountain road. Her pink-clad body  
and blonde hair bounce on the car seat.

We follow the winding road to town  
not looking too far ahead, nor behind,  
but welcoming this warm, clear day. I pray

she will transform the pain of practice,  
learn the pli  , glissade, arabesque,  
to greet her life en pointe, to pirouette,

to read and embrace in people's faces  
the centuries of grief, the yearnings,  
and yes, my little flower, to bloom.

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## Texting with a Teen

for Dylan

“fu—to erase, to take back, to make into nothing”  
—Judy Halebsky  
from “How to Find a Man up to the Task”

I told the poet, after her reading,  
“Now I know what my son means  
when he texts ‘FU’ to me.” It’s tough  
to follow the shortcut language of teens.  
I am glad to have discovered,  
in Japanese symbols, how to relate to my son.

Take last week when I texted him  
to mow the lawn. His response—WTF—  
made me think he was suggesting a day:  
Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.  
I responded: “Today.” He said “OMG.”  
He texted that he was playing X-Box.

Years ago, I lost my first son  
to real-time, online war games.  
We’d had a few years of chess,  
but my level of commitment waned  
when we moved to hand-held controllers.

I asked son number two when he would be done  
on X-Box. “IDK,” he said. “Mow before dark,”  
I said. He texted “whatever,” and probably did it  
without looking at the keys on his cell phone.

My sons play war games together across the world.  
The first one, a sailor, is in Tokyo on a ship.  
Son two is in our basement in West Virginia.  
They use headphones and converse  
while they massacre each other’s armies  
in an Internet war room on X-Box.

IDK, maybe I need to loosen up. As a kid,  
I’d stand up plastic soldiers and shoot them down  
with rubber bands. The thrill was there,  
but not the technology. No, I think it’s too late  
to join that fight. Chess, anyone?

Tom Donlon

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