

**YOU KNOW WHO
YOU ARE**

IAN WILLIAMS



**WOLSAK
& WYNN**

TRIOLET FOR YOU

There is no synonym for *you*.
A billion names for men like me
and none for you. *None*. Not a few.
There is no synonym for *you*.
The thesaurus says, *No match*. *Do*
you mean yogi? May I use *thee*?
No, there is no synonym for you.
A billion names for men like me.

YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE

You're looking worse.

Overbitten, underkissed, bottom teeth a shambles
like an old beach house fence. Why you never smile.
You of the slack tricep. Slack elastic. Jockey drawer's
been white cotton for decades. Toilet bowl's stained,
seat's spattered with dried piss.

About as sexy

as herringbone or a preposition. Honorable
mention. Prufrock, Polonius, Millhouse. Just a friend.
A best friend. Just a friend.

Love handled. Juliet-sleeved mustard bridesmaid.
Alto in the church choir, can't remember the words
to *The Lord in Zion Reigneth*. Piano quitter. Median child. Fourth
or fifth pick for street hockey. In tag, it. Nursed on juice boxes
by Super Mario brothers, a key round your neck.

Today alone

missed the eight-glass water quota, missed five to ten
servings of whatever, did not floss, missed the ex, couldn't resist
sitcom after syndicated sitcom, *Law & Order*, then *Late*
and *Late Late Shows*, their cynical hosts looking at the audience
behind the cameras but not you, God too turning his head
in disgust – how long have you had
to work things out?

You're looking real bad these days.

I don't have anything else to say.
I don't have to say anything else.

CODE WHITE: MEDICAL EMERGENCY (PEDIATRIC)

When Dre was about nine he and a friend
tried to pierce their ears with a thumbtack
and a stapler. Quick. Where Dr. Huxtable at?
Boys. I tell you.

Remember the time
Theo pierced his ear (*I'm a man*) and it got infected
and Dr. Huxtable found out and got his little black bag
to clean it up? It was like that

minus the black bag,
Dr. Huxtable, Theo, the live studio audience
laughter and applause.

It's time to blame someone.
Not Dre or his friend or the school system,
the government, sitcoms, hip hop videos,
the streets, whatever. I don't blame myself either.

That leaves you. Maybe I blame you a little.
Because. You. Should have.

BUFFERING, A SONNET

The video quality is poor. So's the sound.
The girl's mouth moves two seconds too late
to keep up with her voice. A cityscape
of cosmetics, perfume, and hairspray surrounds
her. For a moment, a gold doorknob in the background.
For three minutes seventeen seconds straight
she will rant on and on on how much she hates
excess bodyglitter. But somewhere around
minute two the stream freezes *buffering*,
buffering freezes her eyes as they sink,
her shocked mouth about to close on a word,
and when it seems that she will be fenced in
the webcam's silent field forever mouth open toward
the devourer, her voice finds her and she blinks.

ÉTUDE IN E, OP. 10, NO. 3



–Frédéric Chopin, bar 46

The phone interrupts a dark scale, a late
night glissando down the black keys
because I happen to be passing

by. The call is quick and quiet.
I barely knew her, this woman
no one really knew after 5:00.

Then, although it's late, I go outside and water
the new mulberry and the grass seeds
trying to sprout. Lord she wasn't even 30.

No one knew how long she was dead
walking around the terminal
of some disease waiting for her plane.

Had I been around instead of – Had I
been around, I'd like to think, I would have known
from her chipped French manicure,

from her mismatched purse and shoes,
that death was strapped to her chest.
Had I been around, were my hands not full



of tristesse, not practising the same wrecked bar
of Chopin, the bar where the whole étude crashes
into accidentals, the reckless intervals,

the hell-with-it bar where Tristesse jangles,
I would have what? known what?
enough to what? to what? to watch?

