Verse: Eulogy for Brad

February 1, 1999 By Paul Schliesing

I dreamed you hadn't died.
I saw you freckled and pale
(I guess it was the Irish in
    your blood),
Flitting among vendors,
Ghostlike in a marketplace

Which changed to a chic
    party scene.
Angry, insistent,
You were searching
For a shot, a bump,
Anything to inject

In an angry race to beat
    the virus,
To stamp out the mitochondria
And the faulty DNA.

Reagan killed you—
"Indifference,"
You'd say—
The enemy in your cells,
Now turning them to rot.

Also the medicine,
Ugly colored pills
with Dr. Seuss–demonized names
Making you queasy
And forcing Welfare,
Being too expensive for
    minimum wage
Or jobs a failing, variable body
    could do.

The port city of New Orleans
Has bars which never close.
“I’ll drink myself across the river.”
And your liver swelled
    basketball big,
You lay in confusion on the floor.

Clothed with memories,
You pulled off your shirt
Before Mardi Gras even came.
Family and friends paraded by
In wild combinations.
You closed your eyes.

My last sight of you alive,
And you were almost blind,
The lights going out.
Only Stuart’s snowy amaryllis
    was unbroken
As you passed away.

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