



three
WINTERS

**Michael
Harren**

three
WINTERS

text by Michael Harren

listen to the music at:
michaelharren.com/threewinters

design by luke kurtis

published 2019 by bd-studios.com

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>



Winter I: 1968

He is open.
She is, too.

Their second boy is coming
And though they are both on guard
(Still grieving from the pair they lost)
They are filled with love.

For each other.
For their first, who is well into walking now
And so precocious he flung himself out the
 window
After his toys
And barely broke a bone.
That will be his claim to fame as the three get
 older

These three:
One is here, one on the way,
And one yet to be known.

Father is awake
Mother is, too.
It won't always be like this
But this winter it is.

Their third Christmas with a child
And the loss that brought them closer
It feels real
But different, too.

Winter II: 1978

They are in this moment now,
The season seen with wonder-fresh eyes
So clearly they forgot the view that
Obscured their light and joy
These childlike eyes,
(transitory still)
Reflect wonder
and light
and joy
For a time.
But newness fades
And life's cracks, scuttles, and scratches
Leave more indelible marks that only darken
in silence.
They are choosing this
For now:
Love.

He is here now
9 years old and the middle child of three.
Staring intently curious as Linus Van Pelt
Unlocks the mystery of Christmas
On a portable black and white TV—
Foreign sounding ethereal words of
Hopeful ghosts he's yet to know.

This Winter is especially strange.
Everyone has changed.
Grandma is here and the pipes are frozen—
It's Houston, and no one really knows how to
 handle the cold
And somehow there's a pine needle in his
 instant oats.
Allegedly found it's way in from the garden
 hose.
It's a strange way to seek attention
In this calamitous December.

He's trying to decode the wisdom of this
Charlie Brown climax,
Jumbled and far away like his consciousness
 was
This afternoon.
"Why is your mom in the hospital?"
Asked a concerned Mrs. White,
The fourth-grade teacher.
All eyes on him, waiting as his thoughts
 churn
Through the danger of lies, and the
 frightening truth
The months of increasing detachment
Watching her eyes get further and further
 away.
It wasn't just the drinking though, there was
 something else:

A sad absence of hope.

She gave up
One day at a time
As they say, only she was going the other
way.

Letting her light drain
Away.

Hope becomes pain
As love slowly dies.

Feelings drown

With this once lively elixir
Now dark, and thick,
With tremors and sweats evolving into
Visions and convulsions on the back yard
Picnic table.

"Call an ambulance!"
The next-door neighbor woke them up
It didn't dawn on any of them that this was
not okay.
The truth was too much.

"Michael? Why is your mom in the hospital?"

"Um... I don't know."

Winter III: 2019



Things accumulate here
And by "things" I mean
These sad wonderful moments of loss
That really mean
"I loved."

So,
Hmmm.
I love.

This will be my 50th Christmas
And though I was never religious
It has always meant something
Like the way holding on to an old way
Makes the new way mean something more.

But that's not really how this works.
These passing days and years and decades
And, fuck,
Half-centuries.
It can't stay the same, can it?

People die
Hearts break
Memories fade and evolve
But what I've got
What we've got
Is this:

Starting here, in this room
In this church
Where we have gathered
In some new way that we have never
Done before
But even if this isn't like last year
Or even like 1980
When I got the soundtrack to Xanadu
And proceeded to disco rollerskate my way
Through the next year—
with a friend who would
See me through so much more
Even after he passed.

He's not here,
But you are
And I am
And somehow we're here because of him
We're here because of her
My mother, who by the way,
Never touched another drink
After that calamitous December

And we are here
Because of you
Because of all that you loved
And lost
And love
Today
The romance, the family
The art, the shit, the blood
The light and the dark
And those grey moments that are
somewhere
In between.

The animals we've loved, and even those
we've eaten and worn
They are teachers that show us
The way
Even when it's the way not to go
Because that's part of the path too,
Isn't it?

So as we approach the solstice
This is my wish for you:

Go!
Do the thing.
Fuck up,
Fuck around,
FUCK—with consent of course.

Promise me you will do the fucking thing.
And I will too.
Do you promise?

Good.

I do too.

Goodnight.

bd
nyc



MICHAEL HARREN

