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### “Triple Bypass”

*Non è posso che mai piu ci vedremo faccia a faccia.*  
It's not possible that we will never see each other again, face to face.

You have to understand the basics to survive a whole life.  
“*L’arancia di mattina--oro puro; nel pomeriggio--argento; di sera--piombo.*”  
Mamma never had an ice cold drink ‘til she was nineteen and in America.  
Water, wine and a squeeze of the goat whenever she had a cold.  
Hank didn’t listen. “If you call the Bronx America,” was all he said to me,  
Licking the last malt off his lip.

If she sang to herself while her fingers pulled my shoelaces tight  
I knew I had a good chance of getting an ice-cream cone  
outside the slaughterhouse.  
I held my mouth full of cream  
‘til it dissolved as her arm dove into cages  
where feathers became her hand.  
Her face reddened and her mouth gathered spit to knock  
the price down. Feathers everywhere  
as she pointed at the chicken whose breast  
passed her inspection. Feathers in my mouth as its blood fell  
into a pail. “*A spezzia!*” she sang triumphantly.  
Onward we marched up and down the market aisles,  
hunting and gathering, feeling the heads of lettuces  
like the skulls of babies, feeling  
for the soft spot, smelling each peach at a microphone’s distance,  
remembering something there, then moving on,  
pocketing garlic, pocketing parsley.  
Some things in life you shouldn’t pay for.  
“*L’aglio e essenziale. L’aglio e l’essenza della vita.*”  
I tried to tell Hank.  
Garlic will straighten you out, if you know how to eat it.  
Garlic will push an ocean through your aorta.  
Sammy he ate fried foods.  
Vinny was a *sopressata* man.  
And Hank loved milkshakes.  
We all had the same operation, the American  
senior citizen bar mitzvah.  
They were all dead in six months.  
Me?  
I’m not really here.  
I’m on borrowed time.  
I boil everything.