

## FOR CHET BAKER

~ by Frances Tompkins

1988 You sit on the window sill  
look down on the midnight street  
watch the black man strolling by,  
the white woman on his arm,  
they turn the corner.

The needle dangles from your arm,  
you pull it out,  
watch it drop to the pavement.  
You lean over as if to roll onto soft green grass  
like a sleepy child, fall gracefully  
to break out your life on cold stone.



1967 On that dark San Francisco night  
they jumped you, five young men  
knocked out your teeth.  
You fight You lose.

1969 You pulled up to The Cats  
taillight out  
    lid of grass on the dashboard  
        On parole  
            Just out of jail  
                Junkie  
                    Lovely  
                        Killer

We were more than lovers, Chet and I.  
He could make me cry with any song he sang  
or played on that dark horn.  
We never kissed nor touched  
except the time he waited at the bar  
and caught me unaware as I walked by  
to a seat near the piano.  
“I’ve been watching you.”

April 28, 1988

The last great concert  
the perfect horn  
the voice near gone  
you told me once  
“I play to keep from dying.”



*Obituary: Monday, May 16, 1988*

*American jazz trumpeter Chet Baker  
died Friday after falling from the second floor  
of his Amsterdam hotel.*