

## David Fraser

### Short Order

Before you start  
scribbling stuff on walls,  
grease-smear kitchen tiles,  
I tell you,  
you don't have the luxury  
of waiting, standing still  
showing up tired, hung-over  
on a belly full of cheap wine;  
the eggs gotta go over  
easy or hard, no matter what,  
bacon needs to sizzle,  
splatter your skin,  
wake you from shock, give you  
some spark of inspiration,  
while the whole time  
boss man lurks  
in a corner of your brain  
in that sweet rush  
of keeping up, as  
glaring customers hungry  
for your blocked and beaten hide  
make sly comments from behind  
menus in their booths.

Remember, you gotta  
throw it all down on the grill  
in a chain of orders, barking hot,  
no time for coffee, except  
in lukewarm sips, no straying  
too far from the action,  
griddle's hot, days are  
growing short, filling in  
a shift with fading light,  
where in corners of your mind  
elbow-grease accumulates,  
mixes with dust, and your old bones  
gone stiff from life's abuse;  
don't have the luxury of waiting,  
it's not a short order,  
it's not a long stare out the window  
sort of place to work,  
it's not for idle dreamers

in love with all the tools;  
it's tall, the order, I mean,  
long, stretched out,  
it's work, even in the good times  
when everything flows, when  
time stands still and you have it  
dressed, cooked, flipped  
for breakfast, lunch, dinner,  
no matter how the bacon's sliced,  
how the eggs are fried, beaten,  
scrambled, tossed, no matter how  
you butter toast and which side's up  
at the final closing of your shift;  
remember before you start,  
punch in.

**David Fraser** lives in Nanoose Bay, on Vancouver Island. He is the founder and editor of *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*, since 1997. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in over 50 journals and anthologies. He has published a collection of his poetry, *Going to the Well* (2004), a collection of short fiction, *The Dark Side of the Billboard* (2006) and edited and published the six print issues of *Ascent Aspirations Magazine*. A second collection of poetry, *Running Down the Wind* appeared in 2007. David is currently the Federation of BC Writers Regional Director for The Islands Region. His latest passion is developing Nanaimo's newest spoken-word series, WordStorm.