

ALAN R. WILSON

Sculptor

The star maker works the small hours,
moulding spheres from dust and ionized gas—
and when the timing is right,
ignites his charges to stardom.
I stumble along a dark path that follows
the river, while stellar performers wind
in slow pirouettes around the pole.
Their taut beams spotlight the water.
Waves clapping against the rocks
erupt into glittering accolades.
Yet he himself maintains a low profile—

his secretary the awful distance that attenuates
each message, his appointment calendar
booked for a billion years.
Vainly I scour the huge directory
for his home number, losing my place,
time after time, in a galaxy of names—
bent finally over the telephone,
dialing out random digits into the night.

KEVIN IRIE

Dinner at Madonna's

Surely, the world over,
there is a table like this
in some city, village,
camp, canteen: travellers
seated together for dinner,
Let's Go, Lonely Planet,
Eyewitness, The Rough Guide,
placed on the table, pages tucked,
as sights are compared,
dismissed, recommended,
what bus to take, what times are best.

Tonight, it is Venice,
Madonna's restaurant,
rain pouring outside until
a sheet of water crashes down,
surges beneath the shut French windows
and waiters quickly drag mops across the floor
like anemones skewered
at the end of spears.

The menu in English passes from person to person,
opens, closes, a white winged creature
fluttering down the table,
as Adriatic fish is the topic for talk,
as is weather, the German couple worried,
their Lido hotel only reached by ferry.
The Californian who had to give up on Rome,
its roads too fast. And it was raining.