

Renée Rossi

Three Poems

After a Line of Rilke's

Are we here to collect *the unlived lines*
in our bodies, Linnaeus' named tragedies,
chordae tendinae heart strings
in their infinite rupturings...

My neighbor fell dead in Detroit snow
shoveling imagination's recesses. Large,
with his red-nosed rhinophyma and sorrow
draped across a loosely knitted scarf.

Gestures made to falling snow framed
by a window. Tonight, the mind's rheostat
is adjusted to memory. The blue heron
glides over us with that long painful cry...

As to the question of whether we are here
to make something or to abide,
the wood turner patiently turns wood
in his shed, cuts heartwood with his lathe.

I feel no irregularities in this
cherry and birch bowl rubbed down
with tongue oil and still holding.

#16

She is tagged number sixteen,
a small bullet hole in her right flank,
the day her dark hand grips mine,
white and fine and drained.
Blood pours into the thick vein
under the arch of her collar bone.

“Will I make it?” she whispers
squeezing my palm.
Outside, we scrub hands raw
to erase her words,
glove to insulate, mask to avoid
inhaling the fear

spreading in waves from a thin,
nameless frame on a metal bed.
And we plunge into her belly,
thick with ooze from her liver
irreparably torn away.
She sleeps peacefully.

The recorder in my head
plays a lullaby
over and over until it thrums
to the sweep of my hands
stitching a wound
that will never heal.

The snap of latex gloves
seals the lid of her coffin
as she's wheeled out
to a shelf in the morgue.
The hand I last held hangs
limply, over the gurney's edge.

Acha Man With Woman

Lying on the table of our bed
we are two
mummies in training.
Our eyeballs
strain to see
beyond the dust of their sockets.
Your breathing,
an accordion for lung,
brushes the Luna moth's
dive. This odd
assembly
of what we are. Proteins
dissolving
into one another.
They'll have to pry us
apart,
fetal embraced,
blood
still coursing
our live marrows.