

**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.