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# THREE POEMS

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## Learning to skate

Silent words shuffle into cautious lines  
scoring ice with impermanent design.

You and the poem teeter alone  
on the pond, a balancing act -

arms outstretched, your red overcoat  
smells of mothballs and smoke,

underneath one thick glove  
a cigarette burn chafes.

Untried muscles tremble tied  
to second-hand skates, you

enter yourself, settling into something  
which cannot be named.

All roots and prayers left ashore,  
words in mind gracefully align

with a strange sense of lightness,  
nothing to hold.

Cold air from your nose  
swirls in your throat – then

you turn, and more or less  
*glide*, half Degas dancer

striking out toward the centre.  
The winter sunshine dazzles you.

## A sort of Valentine

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It is Valentine's Day.  
Bad news all round.

Today, we discover  
your transplanted bone marrow  
is rejecting your body,

the men in white coats  
call it *Graft versus Host*,  
(as if that's supposed  
to mean something.)

There is nothing I can do,  
but wait and watch you  
battle this out alone,  
you are only thirty-two.

Today, there will be  
no long-stemmed red roses,

no bottles of champagne.

### **the man upstairs**

the man upstairs  
is drunk again

day and night  
I hear him  
stumbling around  
crashing into furniture  
cursing his mother  
he was ever born  
his sixth stay in rehab  
was up  
last week

twitching carcass  
in urine-stained tracksuit  
he glares  
glassy-eyed  
defiant  
at death  
reaches for another  
cold one

I wish he'd do it  
quietly

