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THREE POEMS

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The Disguise of Flowers

The deep, red cut on my father's toe
needs daily bandaging.
This is the slow, impatient healing
of diabetes. Filled with saline
a square of gauze initiates
repair. His foot swells—hard and puffed to touch
like a pinecone and each toenail,
yellowed, brittle, and crooked
shows decay. As I wrap the gauze,
one piece holding the first, a looser,
thicker piece webs around one toe,
the heel and then the ankle, he tells me
of the possibility of amputation.

My father's brother Stanley died the year
I entered kindergarten and began
to add things together, take them apart.
At his funeral, arrangements
of white carnations and yellow lilies
covered the lower part of the cedar casket
as if part of his body were missing, or disjointed.
Amazed at the stark balance of the halves,
half-body, half-flower bed,
I wondered if this covering were more
a disguise than display.

I learn the true story of Stanley's leg tonight,
bandaging dad's unfortunate foot
twenty years afterwards:
there was no illusion of separateness
at the funeral, nothing but truly vacant places
where the legs would have been.

Reparations

This winter, the house erupts with a series of leaks
originating in the upstairs bathroom. Buckets in the foyer
harvest the rainstorm that descends from the ceiling.
This has been the pattern lately: the argument
is the same with only the slight rearrangement of things,
such that spaces have not changed.

Sheet rock
loosened from the wall reveals a spot of exposed pipe.
My brothers and father work with such deliberation
their work has a scrutiny to it. There is no talking
between them, only goggles and fire to mask
the men they really are.
So precise is the mending,
this safeguarding of parts, welding copper
to copper. There is such harmony in the repair of it—
how selfless and burden-free some things are.

Threads

Opening the walk-in closet filled
with the stuff of living—I think
one day we will have to sell the house.
In the meantime, closing the door
as a hatbox falls, there are no poems
about choosing the appropriate dress
for your mother to be cremated in.

As a schoolchild, I learned
when there is anything left over
you must carry it. I'm taught to love
what lingers—the timpani in a slow concerto,
the echo of a lost voice,
the sound, three rooms away
of a breath stopping on its last chord.
Paying its debt, nighttime
closes its eyes and gives itself up
to morning. I think she is sleeping,
so best let her sleep. Keep the cat
from waking her.

I recognize my mother's hands
on the walls of our house. These are her threads;
the threads I hold onto as I make my way,
always there is a path back.

My first act as an orphan: I choose
the sapphire dress, the best color I know
depicting the moon's shadow
as it spirals away from the earth.

Amy Nawrocki received an M.F.A from the University of Arkansas and currently teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of Bridgeport, Housatonic Community College, and Sacred Heart University. Her poems have appeared in *Loch Raven Review*, *poetrymagazine.com*, *Ribbons*, *The Pegasus Review*, *The Lucid Stone*, *The Midday Moon*, *Exposure*, and *Simply Haiku*.

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