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Desertion

So much invasion, and so little to see—
 in a moment you might put on your hat,
 toss your newspaper into the fireplace,
 empty your waterbottle into the sink.
 You might abandon even the remote
 control. Take your shirt
 from the back of the chair
 at the head of the table. Pack
 your dictionary. So little to take
 with you. Nothing of use to leave
 behind. The empty room full
 of your need
 to be heard.

Dessert

two	what one said to the other
knives	in the dish drainer
crossed	yesterday's ashes
on	his empty hands
a	flame that echoed
white	her face
lace	a brittle dance
table	torn and carved
cloth	on the edge of the stairs

Nineteen

lives in a typical
 guy house

refrigerator
 with nothing but

condiments
and a Chinese food carton
age and origin unknown

conversation revolves around beer
and the deeper
philosophical questions

he keeps a double mattress on the floor
with a single pokemon sheets
stretched to a diagonal near fit
and a very old
pacman pillow

the entertainment center
is state of the art

Oversight

Mother presents
with request for utility form completion

Physician aware

Records clerk brings chart to physician for review
Chart documents poorly controlled asthma
MD requests that parent wait while MD completes exam of scheduled patient
Mother expresses anger at medical records clerk
Attempts to follow clerk into medical record room

Physician aware

MD repeats request that parent wait while MD completes exam of sick child
Mother threatens clerk with bodily harm
Staff request clinic manager dial 911

Physician aware

MD requests mother wait until care of current patient is completed
Clinic manager escorts parent to an exam room
Mother co-operative with physician as form is completed
Staff requests improved security protocol

Mother fails to bring asthmatic child to office for care as requested by physician

Union grievance filed against manager by clinical staff for failure to dial 911

Zen

I was the medical student on orthopedic surgery.
It was a big case: neurosurgery, orthopedics
and pediatric surgery all involved; a child
with myelomeningocele, respiratory compromise
secondary to worsening scoliosis. He lay on his
left side. One group was to enter the chest,

one the back, one the abdomen. The first incisions
were made by general surgery (the abdomen)
and ortho (the back) then anesthesia spoke: dropping
pressures, irregular rhythm, flat line flat line transfuse
shock shock. Bill Jo, left-handed, four foot ten, stood
across from me, quiet, good-humored; for four hours
he held the heart in his hands, a bag of worms. Pump.
Pump. Pump. I carried warm saline to lavage
the intestines. Neurosurgery never scrubbed.
We stood under the hot OR lamps as fall light
grayed to black. Bill told quiet jokes in unaccented
English. The first board certified Korean American
pediatric surgeon. Ortho left. Bill squeezed the heart.
Again. Again. Competent. Steady. Gave me a turn.
The faintest stirring movement. That bag of worms.
Defibrillate. Jolt. And it did. On the eleventh try.
Sinus rhythm. On rounds the next day the child
sat up, CNS fully intact, told us all about kindergarten.

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A New Hampshire native, **Kelley Jean White** studied at Dartmouth College and
Harvard Medical School and has been a pediatrician in inner-city Philadelphia for
more than twenty-five years. Mother of three, White is an active Quaker. Her
poems have been widely published over the past decade, in journals including
Exquisite Corpse, *Nimrod*, *Poet Lore*, *Rattle* and the *Journal of the American
Medical Association* and in several chapbook and full-length collections. She is
the recipient of a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts grant in poetry.