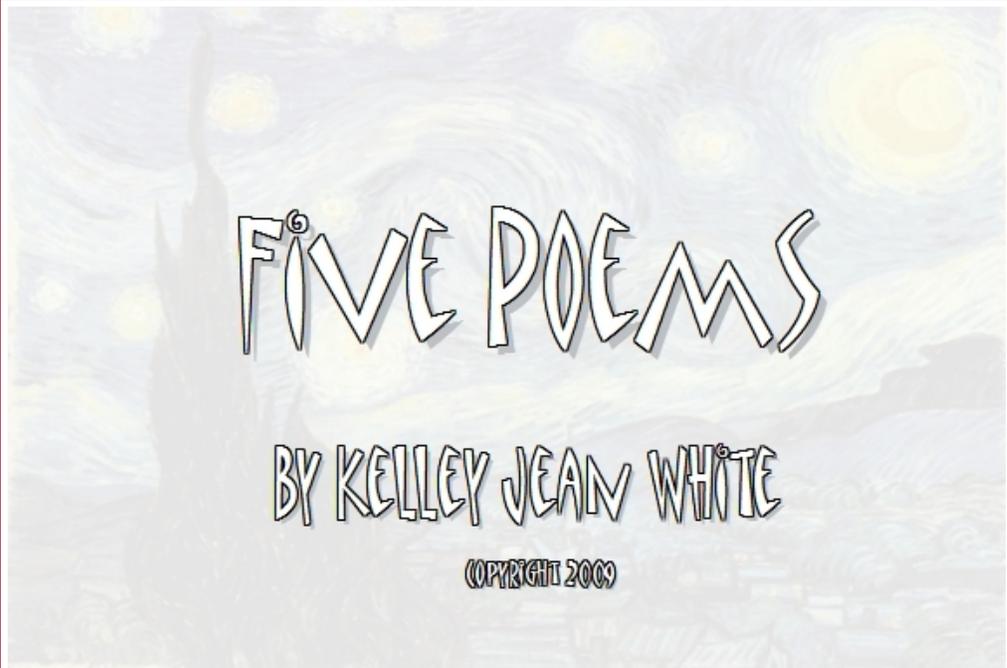


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### Desertion

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

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### **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

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### **Zen**

I was the medical student on orthopedic surgery.

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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. Defibrilate. 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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**Kelley White** worked as a pediatrician in inner-city Philadelphia for almost 30 years and now is in practice at a community health center in rural New Hampshire. Poetry has often saved her life. She is a recipient of a 2008 fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and her most recent book is *Toxic Environment* from BostonPoet Press.