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Three Poems

by Kenneth Markee

A Command Performance

My new neighbor a middle-aged woman
wrapped in a faded yellow flannel robe
spattered with snow, is clearing her steps
with a cast iron fireplace shovel.

Like a maestro bent slightly at the waist,
she conducts the aria of her life--
How beautiful her hardscrabble crescendo;
the chime of shovel on metal balustrades,
wind strumming the folds of her robe,
the rime of ice on its frayed strings ...

There in the doorway her symphony done
she bows to shake snowflakes from her hair
-- It's almost more than I can bear:
--this longing for the next encore.

Outside the ER

Wearing a pink striped gingham apron
an elderly women supported on each arm
by an entourage of family members,
scans the distance to her final destination.

Each step in the below thirty cold
ignites a pilot-light-blue breath,
like the cast iron kettle she received
as a wedding gift in nineteen-thirteen

There is no malice in her eyes,
no haste or delay in her stride,
she will arrive in her own good time.

An orderly following hospital policy
offers up encouragement and a wheelchair
which she makes disappear
with a curt wave of a waxy hand--
silencing the sirens and baby crying.

The Order

"Check the spirit level at the splays
Bevel, son, and tell me the angle,
And bring the calipers and my thermos
And a pencil with some life left in it."
Knowing the old man needed time to think
I went along with his little ruse --
Leaving him to scribe the mortise depth
And breadth with the business end of his awl.
Returning with the calipers and coffee --

I told him the plums had blossomed
But the cherries had not,
And we measured our laughter together.

Kenneth Markee is a poet and mentor whose work has been published in *Down East*, *Cider Press Review*, *From East to West*, *14 by 14*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Mirage Journal*, *Off The Coast*, *Oleander Review*, *Puckerbrush Review*, *Words and Images*, *Yankee on NPR* and in numerous e-zines and anthologies.

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