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Sievers, 5 Poems

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None

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Praise

memory, a full moon
alive behind my eyes.

The girl I was— night-watching
from the dorm's screened porch
waiting my turn for the stealth reach
of romance. By day

a girl in white hurrying
hospital halls, courier
of care, of certain fear.

Life. The sudden rush
of its arriving,
leaving. Heart's
cyclical miracle.

Praise hospital wards
where I first witnessed love:
Mrs. Henry leading her
brain injured husband
to the tub room. His
left eyelid drooping,
swollen blue-black.
I, the student shadow.
Mrs. Henry, an anchor
on an edge, following
the curve of his spine
with a washcloth.

Praise for each winter night
of my girlhood where I lifted
the window beside my bed,
slid open three round slots
in the storm window, hungry
for the cold vastness of the world.

December

*"Calla Crows," William Park
for Marlene*

Hours after I learn you died I watch a young man in a coffee house
fix on purple clusters flashing on his laptop. Tumor cells. I have to leave.

In September, you and I and Rosemary chose colossal calla lilies unfurling
their white joy on canvas. How we loved the lilies set against dense

black-green trees. I return to the painting, "Calla Crows." How did I miss
the nagging abstractions in the branches? Crows. Perhaps you saw it all,

your unnamed tumor a growing reality. December now, the same
month my husband struggles every year with loss. His sister. Her quick,

black ending. O, the lilies. Layers of white brushstrokes, whirling. Each
inflorescence opening and closing. An order in blooming, a short grasp.

Witness

*Dusk fell every night. Things
fall. Why should I
have been surprised.
Joanna Klink*

Working nights. Intensive Care. Blood
spilling. Beneath fluorescent lights
respirators hiss forced rhythms.
I stand elbow to elbow beside
women supple with strength.
They slide their hands
into the guts of grief.

My first resuscitation. In holy white
habit one wimpled nun swings her veil
behind her shoulders, places her mouth-
to-mouth against extinction. I find her
retching in the bathroom.

I join the struggle against an abundance
of mutations. Cancerous lungs. Bloom
in a brain artery. Hazards
of a family curse.

Without speaking I merge into night's
circle of worry as ungoverned hearts
skid rapid, quiver. Ribbons
of cardiogram paper
trail the floor.

Kneeling, I measure
golden wastes in milliliters
per minute. No time
for tenderness. No time for
stethoscope's quiet hold
over a brachial artery.
Only a quick look—the mercury
bounces. I record.
I record.

Kathy Kelly 1945-2009

Connection

My brother asks me, "Do you remember
our phone number?" *Humboldt-3-5533.*
His mind, now a scheme of slowed circuits,

retrieves his first love's: "Sheridan-4-7086."
He is a funambulist traveling time's wire
to her. She waits in her mother's kitchen

balanced on a round stool beneath
the turquoise phone. Then her voice,
a wave of sound so embedded over

fifty years he hears it as a ringing, a bell
to follow, "Hello, love." Stillness now. In
the house of the Humboldt number my

brother and I once huddled hopeful in the
clatter of our lives. What now to tell him?
"I held her hand," he tells me,
"She was unconscious."

Together

*Tanner Springs Park, Portland
Eye of Water: a spring's genesis*

A slant of autumn sun warms the top of my head,
my face, and the curve of a young woman adrift

in sleep on a bench. The spring's gentle eye bubbles
between us. Its slim stream ambles down the slope,

feeds a stilled pond, silent water lilies. At pond's edge—
a boy, dry reed in hand, stirs the water. I have seen

the glints of gold he summons, ancient auguries.
From my bench I listen—water murmurs.

Near me another boy appears. He splashes
a dance, sings, *I found the beginning! I found*

the beginning! The young woman stirs, does not
open her eyes. She is busy growing beauty. The boy

at the pond looks up, waves, but does not give up
his magic. I winnow my gaze. A bold pigeon

spies us for plummets of food. In these
runnels of sun even he is iridescent.

How is it that I, in my autumn, am here—
riding time beside a woman wafting in

drowsy youth, a boy peering into an eye
of genesis, another stirring for luck beneath

a benevolent sun. Keep me.

