

The Singing Bowl

Anne Simpson

“What keeps this light from pouring out as light?”
Agha Shahid Ali

I

She recalls two high, arched windows in a farmhouse attic,
light slipping from side to side. The house was tilted;
it could have been a ship, going down. People might have needed rescue.

II

Perhaps she’s been made to promise something because of what she’s seen.

III

During chemo, she studies lymph nodes in the ceiling tiles.
Once she saw a farmhouse lanced with light.
It was evening.
She carried it with her. Radiant house.

IV

There’s nothing in the bowl, not even desire. Only nausea.

V

The chaplain’s hands make shapes in air, as if she’s building a house of cards.
There, she’s done it. The delicacy of the world,
one thing resting on another.

VI

She’s a child in the house of her body. The doors
open and close,
open and close,
open and close,
from daylight to evening. Eyes, mouth, lungs, heart.

VII

Light poured through the windows from west to east.
Sky, speaking in tongues.

VIII

She has a brass bowl, a singing bowl, on the windowsill of the hospital room.

IX

It catches the light and sometimes holds it, depending on the time of day.

X

Her body. A bowl, singing.

The Cannibal Doctors

Dylan Blacquiere

(for Meredith)

She gives directions with a hungry smile.
Her words are silken, reassuring,
but her teeth still drip the hours, minutes, seconds,
the remnants of the meal just past. And they don't hide
the days still caught between
her sharpened canines, her worn-down molar teeth.

She eats time with all the rest of them. And when
we see her talk, she wears her eyes
ringed black with the mark of three nights
spent awake, on call, and in the trenches, feeding.
We thank her for her guidance, then walk faster
to outrun the feeding-frenzy there beneath
the unfilled seconds we spend standing by her side.

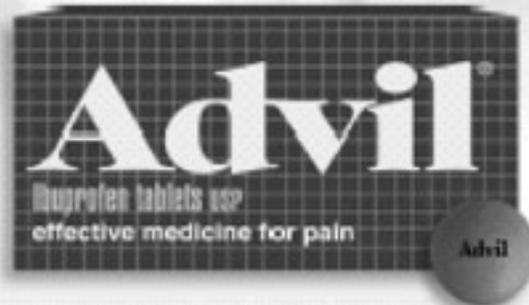
It's just her eyes -
her tired, restless eyes that moan for sleep
that hint at who she was before she started eating hours.
They give the true directions, better than
the well-meant counsel that she gives to passers-by.

Behind us
are the suburbs of an ignorant, idiot time
where she once lived,
where all our empty moments were our own.

But forward – there the cannibal doctors wait
like her, to steal our seasons, snatch the finite years
and feed on every passing day and night.

Poet and artist Anne Simpson was the Medical Humanities Artist-in-Residence for the Fall of 2004. Among her goals and accomplishments Anne organized a weekly session on poetry and short stories. Dylan Blacquiere participated in these workshops, writing the poem *Cannibal Doctors* as well as many others.

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