

Elena Lelia Radulescu

FALLING

There were ominous signs,
Greek choir's voices,
revealing the hero's fate:
 a pencil-thin crack
 in the hallway mirror,
one amber earring lost,
 the dead sparrow down
 on the path to the mailbox,
its legs curled up,
warrior ants crawling over
 the beady eyes.

When the call came
 she was watching
her neighbor raking leaves,
 pushing them
into wobbly piles.
 Sisyphean work,
she thought,
 for the wind swept
them back under the trees.

*“Your son... Overdose...
Sorry for your loss...”*

She dropped the phone
 as if it were a glowing ember
in her hand,
 ears full of scratching,
screeching sound of the rake
 scraping the leaves
from the sidewalk.

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EXPOSED

The eye is the only brain tissue exposed to the outside world,
the professor paused, checked our faces for ripples of wonder.

I thought of Muriel
who lost the sight at three,
her memories of colors, shapes
vague as summer clouds,

her mind coding, decoding
mapping signs, landmarks:
nine steps from her door
to the landing, street smells,

the swishing of cars
in parallel traffic—
safe crossing ahead,
voices tagged to new names,

like bows on boxes under
the Christmas tree. Once she
asked to touch my face,
to learn *a nicer way to smile*.

Under her fingertips,
my lips felt naked, exposed,
as if she could have read
my mind in braille.

Even now,
I wonder if she walks
out there in the world
wearing my smile.

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MATINAL POEM

On the terrace,
by the blue glow
of hydrangea shrubs,
two old friends sip
sweet jasmine tea,
and trade stories of grief
as they would trade
remedies for arthritis.

They share
names lost to the world,
stray facts of people
who took the clarity vow
of love for the words.

A robin glides close
to the eaves of the house.
They watch its flight,
the gathering clouds,
like puffs of white hair
in the sky
and wonder
who will be the last
to remember the other.