Poetry

ELIZABETH KOUHI

Heritage
Strong arms mid-wife
calves, breasts nurture
babies, hips sway to building
brush piles (burning new clearings)
shoulders heave with hoe
and rake, able hands
shape loaves, voices ring
sure and confident
in evening kitchens and
public meetings,

and in my head
sound and in my head.

HEATHER SPEARS

Sauna
So warm in here I lie low;
one arm at rest up the grainy wood
reaches into deliberate, real heat
where my fingers smoke like candles.
Tough, you’re grinning, up in the thick
of it,
legs swinging off the platform,
blurred demon. From your body
sweat leaks, runs down in big, loose
drops
that spread along my sides
warm as let wounds.

Infernal surgeon, you’re untouchable
in the cowl of sulphurous heat —
and I want to slide somehow out of
myself
romantically rise
to you through its intensifying,
into imagined cruelty,
your eyeballs burning and surely
burning

lungs and viscera, where we could be
fire swallowers, my mouth finally
blistered to your mouth,
where you might even begin
to peel off sections of your basted skin,
and lay them sizzling across me.

Arm, belly, breast, why
you’d be my armour then, your tactile
harm
closing around me, I can smell incis-
sions,

flesh going up in steam,
in sweetness, like god food,
prophecying —

no good. You’ll have to come down.
Closeup, your eyes lose focus, the lines
around your mouth define some
region I have not yet travelled on;

JUDITH STUART

Community Services

I. Intake
She sits a hotel towel in her hands
hands at her face blood-roses bloom
through rough cloth

Her name? Last name first
spell that again and slowly
Leave the OHIP wheel her down
3rd door to the left doctor’s waiting
(and aside) Did you see her?

II. Surgery
She’s fading out on the guerney
tries to speak a crimson tear slides
from the havoc in her eyes

What a mess let’s have that needle
yes you’ll be right in no time
no time now the sutures
She’s dropping off Christ!
What a mess.

III. Wardroom
She sleeps Invisible Woman
engauzed from hairline to chin thin
throat naked bandaged hands suppli-
cant

Her husband let her have it with a
bottle
fighting drunk shit! welfare cases,
sure
three kids with CAS now
better off, too stupid cow
some women ask for trouble

IV. Social Assistance
She sits across the desk
a map of scars scream furrows
on the plain of her face blunt hands
punctuate
the sentence of her life

It’s my fault too no job
he hates a cold dinner kids were
wild
he couldn’t help himself well
neighbours called the cops
Now he’s at The Don need work
get the kids back I need day care
to get work I asked the church for
help
they gave me clothes please
now I’m here please!
what d’you say?

JENNIFER JONES

I was cautious of him

I was cautious of him

always
although he was a regular churchgoer,
a fine father some would say
heartily
and heartily I would agree

and then remember
the fine flash of silver
well-oiled
on a cupboard
in the cellar

just in case.

(unloaded
of course)
they always are

until
some
lark happy
trigger hapsome
one
blunders.