NANCY GOBATO

Disintegrating Tissues

My pockets are full of crumpled Kleenex. DNA residue from tears and snot-mucus running then contained by soft, disintegrating tissue.

Now she wants my blood as well. For me to smell of iodine and ignore the needle’s prick so that she might avoid the blood bank by tightening her hold around my throat.

She wants to repossess me, to feel my blood charge her veins and soothe a heart ache that began twenty-eight years ago when I was born just nearly three months early.

Sick from a taste like sugar and salt, I put down the receiver and wonder how she knew I was talking about her today, crying through therapy.

I have pried free of her needy fingers, resisted the lure of her whimpered sighs, and refused the role of care-taker despite her gradual decline—her body’s slow surrender to yet unidentified ailments.

I have taken blades to my own flesh just to see the blood bead in careful rows, watched it scab and fall away, wasted. But to let them draw it in doses like some magic elixir destined for reunion with that original host body makes me cringe.

I cannot deny her but don’t think I can bear to see the flush in her cheeks knowing it is only my bright red breath that sustains her fading story.


RENEE NORMAN

Arthritic Dreams I

"you're really limping" this pronouncement coming so often from so many i've perfected the non-reply

I wonder why people feel they need to comment on your gait it's not as if they make remarks on snotty noses dandruff or hair loss

but your walk is open season and just when I'm feeling stronger more measured even able to cope with the pain someone I barely know blurts it out and then I wonder just how long i've been fooling myself

Renee Norman, Ph.D., is a poet, writer, and teacher living in Coquitlam, BC. Her poetry appears in her book House of Mirrors, in the anthology The Missing Line, published by Inanna Publications, and in many literary and academic journals across Canada and the U.S.