

The Poetry of Medicine

Her body is in ruin.

*A city nearly uninhabitable.
Newark comes to mind.
But, to be fair,
Perhaps ancient Athens or Constantinople.*

*She stares out of dark blue eyes
Looks out from under somehow
Her expression clenched like her hands
Her knees polished spheres on wires
Backbone a sickle.*

*Her abdomen another smooth roundness
Breasts folds of flesh over boney ripples.
She tries to speak but her mouth is full of
eggs served an hour ago.
A touch on her shoulder produces only wider eyes
An upper denture falls across a capital O.*

*A stuffed bear sits on her table
Surveying all of this.
Its eyes are bright, its smile stitched.
Its paws velcro a card.
“Dear Mom,” it reads, “Get well soon.”*

Dementia

*It's seen as a curse
A loss of self itself
A Catastrophe
Emptiness.*

*It also tiptoes on a slight slope
Downward to be sure, but easy.
Gentle fog settling slowly sliding
Into forgetting.*

*Seeing the same birds at the feeder
as an hour earlier
Brings joy of a new discovery
While death
Slowly wraps its arms around from behind.*

— Both poems submitted by S. Scott Paist, MD