

"Words' Worth" Poetry Readings

Poets at the Culture, Arts, and Parks Committee of the Seattle City Council.

Shampoo and Sponge Bath By J. W. Marshall

1.

It takes a small face
to see itself
in the handmirror offered

when staff says
it's time to wash that greasy hair.
Says it'll help.

Like a tuber on the pillow
or the shadow of a spade
is how

I remember looking. Water slopped
on my gown and skin and sheets.
when they laid my head back

into the metal basin
I died and happily that time.

2.

There was a terrifyingly large sky
that first day they rolled me
out for air.

Terrifyingly.
And clouds like balled-up cobwebs.
What if the chair got caught

in a crack or on a rock-I watched for that.
There's one the orderly said
meaning a cloud

that looks like you.
There was weakness in each of them.
There was a fraying wind. A mess

He said like you
before your bath.

The Nightshift Nurse Brought Her Shoes To Work In A Paper Bag by J. W. Marshall

And changed in a narrow room with a bench and sing and her own yellow locker in a row of yellow lockers for which the supplied her own lock. Lunch and the good shoes locked away until break and then just the shoes until her going home. That someone would steal from a nurse on duty that nurses stole from nurses on duty what the hell

was health care after all?

I loved her I guess because there was nothing else which is not to say I didn't really love her. Because there really was nothing else. The t.v. was nothing and the curtains that did the U around my bed were pointless really because light and noise and just anything at all got past them and because is she didn't come and talk to me didn't ask me something about me I really think I would not have existed just the furniture there. And I really did love how her professional shoes ached out loud like seagulls in the hall when she walked and that with the phone chimes sometimes and the elevators bell sometimes and sometimes my voice that that needed her more that called nurse out to her but I know really wasn't calling her but was calling nurse because of how calling nurse felt how righteous and pathetic it felt to call nurse from a dark room into a lit hall. What with all that I loved the sound of her shoes the shoes she put on for work that answered me.

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