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Losing a Breast: Prayer before Surgery

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Losing a Breast: Prayer Before Surgery

Linda Parsons Burggraf

for Libba

In another time and place
I would show your hand the way
under this bloom shimmering like a hunter's
moon just below the skyline. Under, because
it's heavier than you think, fibrous bulb,
paper-white fountain in your mouth, roots
now severed at body and soul. Though deep
in the last moment there's time to remember
the lilacs I broke off to sell down on Russell Street.
They always ripened in rain.
Am I anything like that purple time,
those buds down on Russell?
Am I lovely today as you take up the knife?

Valium, howl through me.
Surgeon, bless and keep me.
Lights, burn above me.
Birches, dance round me.

Here is the pulse of my children.
Will you cut it? Will you throw it away
like a bag of beans? not knowing a mother's nights,
old as the pounding of a baby's heart
in the soft cleft of bone. Its head a globe,
my breast a globe, the milk divine ocean,
darkness against the rocker in unchanging song.
We are all so young to empty out our time like this.
Warm and sticky, we have grown up together
in the long, the beautiful hunger.