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# The Artificial Heart

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## THE ARTIFICIAL HEART

### 1

Fistfuls of drinking straws,  
soup cans and balloons—  
I build a heart. I decorate its walls  
with bits of colored glass.

### 2

Shaped by their servitude the hearts of chickens and cows  
become my models.

I break into slaughter houses. I steal from local farms.

Oh! for the occasional heart of a dog or a horse,  
or the huge flabby heart  
of an elephant soaking in vinegar in a bucket.

### 3

I earmark a yellowed copy of *Gray's Anatomy*,  
take notes on a napkin at the scene  
of an accident: *The driver clearly caught  
a steering wheel in the chest, but where's his heart?  
Hidden in the ashtray? Or lying beneath a newspaper  
beside him on the seat?*

### 4

The neighbors, my family—who needs them watching?  
My mother hacking my chest open with a saw, my father tickling  
my ribs with the beam of a flashlight.

I paint the windows of my house black and board up the doors.  
I burn a soft watt bulb. I consult no one.

My left ventricle is a cracked headlight casing.  
My right atrium is a broken jug.

5

My heart has a slow leak, a faulty valve. Blood  
gathers in pools in the bottoms of my feet. I bruise so easily  
a nose bleed could kill me. I wear steel-toed shoes  
and welder's gloves. Avoid open flames, climb fences slowly.

6

Sawdust on my hands. A rusty knife from the kitchen. I flip  
a switch on a tank—my face is hidden by a mask.

My flesh comes apart, like warm butter, in my fingers.  
I cannot help marveling at this strange sensation:  
my new heart in my chest, my old heart in my hand—

7

My new heart will run on its own free will.  
My new heart will be filled with nothing but blood.