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Halfway Down the Spine

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HALFWAY DOWN THE SPINE

1. Her wrists are weak
   from force of habit
   or lack of tradition
   or
   maybe from ironing shirts
   that only husbands wear

   But when she bleeds,
   she is proud of her wounds

   Asleep, she can only dream
   about broken wings
   or
   melted wings falling
   or sinking already fallen
   in currents down stream

   But she is embarrassed
   when she visits her own room

   Her fate amuses her more
   than old diaries
   or
   new daughters sucking
   or suddenly being in middle age
   with tired scars and dreaming more often

4

(Continued)

2. It is not the sea
   she hears
   it is the approval of
   like loud gulls
   screaming
   inside the same skies
   behind the locked door
   gripping cold steel keys
   as iron clad alibis
   she hears
   herself, her heart be' heavy in full circle
   screaming
   thru subways under wh
   But when she bleeds,
   she is proud of her w

   Yet, she can balance
   rising from death beds
   spreading for children
   born again and again
   carried on father's sh.
   away from youth

   Lost
   Did someone scream?

   It is the wind
   thru the Arch
   and the whine of the m
   returning
   again and again and
   the crowd is thirsty f
   but they are exotic
   and remain hidden.
HALFWAY DOWN THE SPINE

2. It is not the sea
she hears
it is the approval of the crowd
like loud gulls
screaming
inside the same skies
behind the locked doors
gripping cold steel keys
as iron clad alibis
she hears
herself, her heart beating indifferent
heavy in full circle flows
screaming
thru subways under white lights
But when she bleeds,
she is proud of her wounds
Yet, she can balance art
rising from death beds,
spreading for children
born again and again
carried on father's shoulders
away from youth
Lost
Did someone scream?
It is the wind
thru the Arch
and the whine of the milk truck
returning
again and again and
the crowd is thirsty for more
but they are exotic
and remain hidden.

(Continued)
HALFWAY DOWN THE SPINE (Continued)

3. The doors
dwarfed by disguise
can only reflect her leaving,
her wanting
to leave the aches,
the stolen riddles of suicide notes
and forced laughter all--
leave it with the love
the heavy skin
smelling of cigarettes and sweat and
ownership--that old tarnished leash
possessing link after link
as routine fate in repetition,
leave it with the rings
left behind the tool shed or
lost with the blue raincoat.

She watches herself leave
like traffic flashing before her,
leaving as the seasons
with summer always running after
spring after spring after spring...

(Continued)

4. Winter always finds her company
pierced ear rings and sawed
The nights would lose and still
standing in line, cutting into

Everybody thought she was back
in scuffed boots she shook the

sure of the answer, blurry that was more a run.

Her unpublished novel
and oily gun manuals grey or
glued to self appointed pos:

forgotten prospects, haunt the

Hands tight around the stock

across her cheeks to lips, her
the barrel end to her neck

spreading her wings, she new
4. Winter always finds her comparing pierced ear rings and sawed off shot guns.
The nights would lose and she would walk by her side, standing in line, cutting in front of herself, practicing.

Everybody thought she was building a dream, in scuffed boots she shook her head to unasked questions--sure of the answer, blurry in the future, a walk that was more a run.

Her unpublished novel and oily gun manuals grey on the glass table, glued to self appointed positions thru fear and forgotten prospects, haunt the air in palpable prayers. Hands tight around the stock, she slides the cold steel across her cheeks to lips, knuckles white she jams the barrel end to her neck leaving sucker stains, practicing, spreading her wings, she never gets above ground.

--Jeff Wills