

RENNIE MCQUILKIN

Admission

Hidden, I'm watching dark Susannas bathe.
The whites of their teeth
glitter, their hair

glistens. Then the otherworldly wail
of something
calls me back to where

you curl beside me in bed,
your cries subsiding, the pain that stunning.
And now

at St. Francis, emergency, you bite your lip,
eyes wide. A young intern
pulls up your gown. Does this hurt, or this,

he asks, splaying your legs, pressing hard
where they meet.
A sharp cry seems to please him.

I know, it's his job. Mine
is strangling him, cracking his windpipe.
Until I focus again on you,

also on the rain lashing, wind keening,
and jumbo jets tossed about, unable to land
according to the anchor woman on Channel 2.

I'm trying, placing cold packs on your brow,
kneading your shoulders, your nape,
and while I wait for the anchor to return,

composing this. There is no health
in me. For which I hear the gurney coming to
cart me off to the underworld, but of course

it comes for you. They tape your ring,
explain the muscles relax under anesthesia,
rings fall off. More likely good pickings,

I think, and try to remember what ring
cynics are consigned to
and how much ring-loosening I'm guilty of.

Be true to her,
I want to tell the intern who delivers
preliminary oblivion. His name tag says

Angél. With that hush hush voice, he's too
other worldly. For one who doesn't believe
in signs, I'm surprisingly

terrified. How fast this bright new galaxy,
the marbled earth and all of us on board
spin into the dark, brave running lights

blinking. And you about to spin into the deep
of ether. Be true, hold the instruments
steady, I'd pray, if I prayed.

When they bring you back, *they*
are all you need, they
and the morphine trickler you fondle

between your breasts and squeeze.
It chimes in like the Fasten Seat Belt sign
in one of the jumbos,

reminding me
your long approach
is far from sure. Come in, my love, come in.