

Claire Scott – Three Poems

God Of Random and Roulette

To be crossing Webster on
Sunday at 11:27, swinging
a Wilson tennis racquet
thinking of the tournament
his new topspin serve

at the exact second a woman,
distracted, texting, worried about
her heroin daughter who didn't
come home last night,
runs the red light

The unluck of it all
the cold bleak lack of luck
like a calving iceberg severed
into before and after
or a blizzard obliterating
the first fragile crocus

Dystonia

says the young doctor, who has pimples
and looks too young to shave
painful, progressive, incurable
he turns away in the silence
not what he signed up for
not a success story
with smiling patients

Only the tiny waiting room
at John Muir, only my fingers
clenching and unclenching
nails digging into palms
I see a battle of bladed
days in his future
night-tossed spasms
of a hip, a shoulder, a wrist
and here I am four drinks past seven
at Gil's Bar and Grill
grabbing a handful of god
from a bowl of pretzels
whispering a prayer

for my son, who was simply
crossing the street that afternoon
simply wanting to win the LA
County annual tournament
may he stay alive
no that's not it
may he want to stay alive

Here's The Thing

Some to pancreatic cancer, coronary disease or
stroke. Others to multi-syllabic illnesses
we never heard of: *Leptomeningeal Disease*, sending us
scurrying to our computers like ground squirrels
searching for seeds, to see what it all means.
And if it's possible to cheat time. The way
we used to cheat at Monopoly.

We have funerals on our calendars right next
to periodontist appointments and Zoom calls
with our kids in Boulder, in Bethesda, in Bakersfield,
too busy to visit.

Actually not *funerals*, but *celebrations of life*
which seems to be the PC term these days.
A euphemism to abrade grief that doesn't help
at three am when we wake startled,
and remember.

Purple gladiolas and chicken casseroles
tossed two weeks later, covered in green fur.

We take our Scottie dog, our racecar, our wheelbarrow
around the board, collecting rent
on Melrose Place, paying for landing on Park Place,
taking a Chance or landing in Jail,
looping and looping like moths circling a flame.

We sip vodka with an uneasy twist. Scarf
pink pills of mercy at night.

Memories fly away like swallows to Capistrano.
Only they will not return. Stories unspool,
time-torn like deciduous leaves.
We slip-slide from Santa to Senility,
no longer collecting two hundred dollars.

Our faith atrophied, no visions of luminous angels
with shiny halos and hotels glinting gold.
We trudge on with heavy footed hope
and bone-brown hearts,
passing the B & O Railroad, Illinois Avenue.
Wanting to be next? To be last?

Wings

He soared ever higher on his homemade wings
easy gliding over the Mediterranean
giddy as only a teenager can be
elated to have escaped the dust of Crete
the airless prison of the labyrinth
and the spiteful wrath of old King Minos
I can be anything he shouts to the sun
startling the eagles and vultures
with his newly fractured voice
too close, too close
the wax melts, the feathers drift away
he is flailing wingless arms
help me Father he cries
as he plummets unseen into the sea

What of a boy whose limp wings lie
flat against his shoulders, a prisoner
of pain's wide wounds, but alive
though his dreams left long ago
no visions of flying in Apollo's chariot
fiery stallions prancing across the skies
or hauling three-headed Cerberus from hell
no taking a slow walk around the block, shy smiling
at Sharon Woods sunbathing in her back yard
his soul shriveling, curled like an arctic tern
or a three-banded armadillo, tensed against
the future, but alive, still alive
what of that boy whose feathered wings
failed to unfold

Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review, Enizagam and Healing Muse among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't*. She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry*.