

Jo Angela Edwins – Two Poems

Showing Photos to a Stranger in a Waiting Room

Last February's snow.

Last June's volunteer petunia.
See? It overflowed the wide rim
of its cracked clay pot.

One of my cats. And another. And another.
You get the picture.

I don't want to bore you.

My work friends and I
at last year's office party.
Notice the goofy grins.
Notice the tense poses.

A close friend, one of several I love.
She can sometimes be distant.
I can sometimes be sad.
I like this picture. Our laughs are genuine.
We seem happy to be together.

My cousin, two weeks before
he died in a car crash.
He isn't smiling, which is rare.
It's as if he knew.

This one is old. A man I loved
years ago. I don't have any
of us together. One
of our last conversations
was a late-night phone call
months after I moved away.
He said, "I wish I could have fallen
completely in love with you."
That was years ago.
I've seen pictures of him since
on the internet, you know.
He doesn't look the same.
That could be said, I guess,
of any of us.

Mortal

So many proverbs tell us
not to fear death.

Scholars tells us we fear
most what we don't know.

Still, what if in fact we fear
most what we know,

the slap of the father's hand,
the sting of the wasp,

the beloved's back turned quickly
away, always away.

Perhaps it is that we know death
too well, watching the final quiver

of muscle, the deflation of lungs,
once—more than enough.

But even if you haven't seen
a body go limp, you know

in your spirit the blank millennia
you were nothing, so many absent sparks,

so much soundlessness, until
earth's miraculous biology

called you down to take this form
you'd never seen the likes of—

arm and leg and heart and liver
as foreign as the rings of Jupiter,
but they were yours, these strange bundles
of dusty nerves, so you kept them,

learned to love them, to beg your god each day
with those wide, blank hands

never to let them go.

Jo Angela Edwins has published poems in various venues, including recently in *Breakwater Review*, *Willows Wept Review*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, and *Feral*. Her chapbook *Play* was published in 2016. She has received awards from Winning Writers, Poetry Super Highway, and the SC Academy of Authors and is a Pushcart Prize, Forward Prize, and Bettering American Poetry nominee. She lives in Florence, SC, where she serves as poet laureate of the Pee Dee region of the state.