

## Steve Klepetar – Three Poems

### The Dead Mall

We drove out to the dead mall,  
road to the parking lot so badly  
rutted we kept swerving to avoid  
the holes. Winter now and gray  
sky threatening sleet or freezing  
rain, parked far away so we could  
struggle through cold air, watch  
our breath rise and braid in the wind.  
Your mother was there, sighing  
a little as we approached.

She held a package in her hands,  
beautifully wrapped with silver  
paper and a blue bow, but it faded  
into mist. "I'd love a coffee," she said  
and we sobbed as she trailed off  
and broke into fragments of light.  
All night we spoke of her,  
how she laughed even at the end  
in the hospital, with tubes and wires  
and a stillness that shattered your heart.

### Intersection

Once I came to a place where three roads meet.  
*Dangerous Intersection* the sign read,  
so I slowed down a little,  
but still I skidded into the trees.  
Somewhere the sun was turning to blood.  
The moon had faded into a little puddle of light.

She asked me a riddle, but my eyes went dark.  
I couldn't see her hair or the small smile  
flickering on her lips.  
I woke up on the floor, thirsty as a dog.  
Across the street, the pharmacy had closed for the night.  
People milled around outside, and someone was singing in the park.

Sirens howled along the avenue, but then I slept  
until she woke me with her foot.  
It was time to go.  
I offered her my hand, which she unscrewed  
and placed in a box with the other limbs.  
It's hard to say, but I think we're friends, though we swim in different pools.

### **Near Enough to Touch**

It's not surprising to find ourselves here.  
So dark already at four o'clock,  
especially when rain, or this wet mist  
soaks the pavement and grass.  
We are quiet together, like boulders  
half buried in the yard, almost near enough  
to touch. We have been reading about  
the end of the world.  
One of us will sigh, then the other.  
It might be flame or inundation,  
maybe a meteor smashing off a section  
of the globe, or AI gone wrong.  
There might be no warning,  
a super volcano spreading a toxic cloud,  
or it just a slow descent, with forests dying,  
deserts spreading, the poisoned sea rising up.  
We're listening to Hayden, for whom the world  
ended long ago. How bright the music, lively, yet calm,  
as if people danced, nearly touching, hands still innocent of blood.

**Steve Klepetar** lives in the Berkshires in Massachusetts. His work has appeared widely and has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Recent collections include *The Li Bo Poems*, *A Season in Hell*, and *The Coffee Drinker's Son*.