



Karen Braucher

Two Poems

Why Karen Can't Go Back to Her Old Cubicle

after Mirabai

Vermilion, ochre, pumpkin—the Painter, Her colors penetrate
my body.

Making love in Her sylvan boudoir, eating little, those are my
cell phone and portfolios.

Lit incense sticks at shrines for the disappearing animals,
those are my ruby and topaz diodes.

I'm done with make-up and high heels, left all my pinstripes behind.

Autumn teaches me to travel light, a barefoot pilgrim.
Approve me or curse me: I praise Her Neuron Forest 24/7!
I streak down the radical path ecstatic humans have taken
for millennia.
I don't steal. I hurt no one. Baby, why are you so threatened?
I've bodysurfed gargantuan waves and you want me to sit
in a wading pool? For once, try to be deep.

A Spine Moving

for Dr. Jocelyn Kirnak

In this poem there will not be
a looming, joking male
chiropractor
who leans down and cracks
my twisted back
as I scream. He will not tell me
crazy stories about getting
Cuban cigars for JFK as a young marine
as he checks
the length of my legs. Afterward,
I will not float out of
his office, completely without
pain for two hours, seventeen minutes.
There will not be hours. No three o'clock in the morning.
No knocking the Ibuprofen
to the floor in the dark bathroom.
No muscle spasms that make me
shriek, no hypodermics,
no Tylenol. No physical therapy.
In this poem, a tall blond Finnish expert,
my new Viking woman chiropractor,
will not show me how
one hip is higher than the other.
No hip bones will be tapped. No necks
whipped and cracked.
No suggestion of future X-rays.
No sitting down, lying down, or standing up.

There will be nothing
but my beautiful skeleton
floating in a pool,
all the discs and vertebrae
moving perfectly. Nothing but
a spine moving
in an undulating dance,
constant and graceful.
Nothing but a skeleton,
my skeleton:
a fluid X-ray of
an Alvin Ailey dancer whirls,
arches, jumps, tumbles—a spine
moving perfectly to shining choreography.

Karen Braucher has published work in *Rattle*, *Nimrod*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *The Worcester Review* and elsewhere. She has also published two poetry chapbooks, two full-length poetry collections (the most recent, *Aqua Curves*, was selected for publication by a judge of the Wallace Stevens Award) and a satirical mystery, “Poetic License to Kill.”