

Shana Manion

Hollow Dolls

Dusty pink walls, doors to sterile white halls
That echo with the efficient clapping of footfalls
Cold fluorescent lights with their predictable flicker
The room is furnished in recliners of white wicker
Where we sit, heating pads, blankets of pastel
Eyes averted, navigating our own personal Hell
This room has the essence of a home for convalescents
But the presence of adolescents just doesn't make sense.

Shy in the shadow of our shared secret shame
Heaping coals of fire, laying claim to the blame
A self-imposed solitude – I didn't tell a soul
Not my mother or my father or THE father and this whole
Situation seems to hit me with a loud solid crack
To the back of my skull as I lie there on the table on my back
Staring at ceiling tiles, a recognition so cruel
These are the same tiles I used to stare at back in school
So bored, counting holes, couldn't wait to get out
Less than two years ago – is this what life is all about
About loss and compromise and a guilt that runs so deep
A life that would have claimed mine now instead claims my sleep

Just a local anesthetic, a syringe between my legs
Keep saying that I'm ready, but deep inside me something begs
To cry out in anguish, but not in upheaval
Every part of me resigned to this necessary evil
The medication is working – I can't feel my tongue
But it hasn't reached the only part I want to feel numb
As a side effect, every sound in the room is amplified
An unbearable humming from those damned fluorescent lights
And then they turn on the machine, and the cacophony starts
The angry voice of God booming straight to my heart
An accusation in thunder from the strident machine
A sin beyond redemption at the age of nineteen

Hysterically sobbing, my breath is coming in gasps
My right hand tries to plug my ear, my left hand grasps
The only hand that was there – the only one near
The hand belonging to an anonymous volunteer
She doesn't know me from Eve, but in that moment she is all
She is my mother and my father, she is me before my fall
She is an angel of mercy, she too is starting to cry
Her hand is my child, and with my grip I say goodbye

Then it's over, and the noise stops, and my breathing's controlled
I'm feeling no pain, just unendurably old
And they lead me slowly down those sterile white halls
To sit in white wicker chairs with the other hollow dolls.