

# First Cadaver

Category: Poems

written by Shanna Germain | September 25, 2009

He presses the Sawzall to  
her chest, slices skin to bone.  
This unzipping of skin does  
not stop our breaths—we're used to  
invasion of the body,  
the way his fingers pinch  
into her pockets as though  
for a cloth or a quarter.

Grasping bone ends, he spreads  
her pinkish ribs, not breaking  
a sweat, to find what he's come  
for: such a small thing, really,

he plucks it easily.  
Fingers bloodied, he holds out  
the heart to us: take it, see,  
it is no bigger than your fist.

## **About the poet:**

Shanna Germain is a poet by nature, a short-story writer by the skin of her teeth and a novelist-in-training. Her poems and short stories have appeared in publications such as the [Absinthe Literary Review](#), [American Journal of Nursing](#), [Best American Erotica](#), [McSweeney's](#) and [Salon](#). You can see more of her work on her website, [yearofthebooks.wordpress.com](http://yearofthebooks.wordpress.com).

## **About the poem:**

*First Cadaver* is actually one of two poems that bookend my years of working on the ambulance. In this poem, I was trying to explore the discovery of the body, in triplicate: as it relates to our own living experiences inside our own bodies; to the dead bodies that we were seeing as part of our paramedic training; and to the living bodies of our patients.

## **Poetry editors:**

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro