

Job Loss

Category: Poems

written by Risa Denenberg | January 13, 2012

Risa Denenberg

I'm no longer part of this operation.
I skulk back into hospital to hand over my name badge—
worn every workday for 12 years. Messy shame shines
on my face like spinach stuck between incisors.
It's noon, people jam every hall, every sluggish line,
there are no smiles for me. I don't want to meet the gaze
of anyone I know.

I reflect upon peaceable Christmas shifts,
ham and mashed potatoes in the cafeteria, 3 AM.
Passing comrades in corridors, news matters
only to the extent it might toss a tragedy
onto our shore. *Ours* is no longer
the operative concept.

Task done, on to another line to return my dog-eared
parking pass. Next stop, cashier, five dollar refund.
Finally in my car, I lean out the window,
and hand the voucher to a parking attendant.
I am holding back tears now. *Damn, I'll miss this place.*
Take care, he says. First kind words all day.

About the poet:

Risa Denenberg is an aging hippie currently living in Tacoma, Washington. She earns her keep as a nurse practitioner and freelance medical writer. Recent poems with health-related themes appear in [Touch: The Journal of Healing](#), [American Journal of Nursing](#), [The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine](#) and (forthcoming) in [Annals of Internal Medicine](#). Risa blogs about poetry, aging, death and other matters at risadenaday.wordpress.com.

About the poem:

"This poem is partly autobiographical and partly a composite of experiences, reflecting what it feels like to lose not just a job but a very meaningful job, one drenched with memories of the camaraderie that often exists among hospital employees, particularly at holiday times. The poem also reflects the impersonal face of the institution, a face that sometimes forgets to smile at patients or staff."

Poetry editors:

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