

Finalist, Poetry

The Strongman's Lament

By Diya Banerjee

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I didn't used to be this weak,
Back in '78 I had a stomach bleed,
I needed 8 liters to revive me,
The doctors said "A weaker man would've died"
- but I didn't!
I've always taken care of my own house,
I mow my own grass, fix my own roof,
My son and I, we built a backyard shed,
With lumber, nails and sweat,
And though my eyesight is going,
It isn't gone,
And though my back is bent,
It isn't broke,
And I always carried my own groceries,
Even after I turned 80.
You wouldn't know it if you saw me now!
The left side of my body looks strange
and doesn't work,
I can see my left shin is just a bone
Covered in paper,
My left hand is a curled purple nautilus,
And my left eyelid droops, a curtain of fat,
Over my sluggish eye.
Do you think I'll be able to walk again?
Do you think I'll be able to write?
Two days ago, I could run!
I could take the dog for a walk
And the dog would get winded before me!
When do I get to go home?
Mona needs me- she's got bad lungs,
Without the man of the house
The whole place will crumble.
Did I tell you that once I had a bad stomach bleed?
I nearly died! But I survived it,
And I healed real well,
Because I've always been tough.
Could you pass me that towel?
I seem to be drooling all over the place.