POETRY

The abandonment of pain

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Cautery-precise, the missing limb stroking
its missing twin, with a sound like a splat,
and love foregrounded, then backgrounded,
then the scenery chewed and spat out
and what of choice, what of picking these griefs
from hearts grown brutal from the fare?

Are we the summoned aches that sit upon our breast
and suggest, *If we cry for us, all will be well?*
Straightjacket, cell, syringe, leptic,
the gruesome shadow that looms in your craw,
rictus grins for all goodnights!

And when woebegone you succumb,
for there is no more strength to find,
when endurance is eschatological and ultraviolet,
and you ponder love as preposterous and palliative,
now monstrous, alive, and strewn, erasure now biological
and pain more than a signal of injury or need,
then pain will rebel, sell you on its merits.
You will be neither free, nor enslaved, nor normal,
but always EX-EX-EX.

Shane Neilson MD
Family physician
Guelph, Ont.

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