

ANGELIKA FREMD

ASYLUM

Day One

Last night you tried to take
the life I gave you.
Now we sit silently and watch
uniform curtains clutch and billow.
The nurses give you wool;
I start to knit a shapeless scarf.

Day Two

The staff are gentle, muted;
speak as if to children.
You've been to therapy.
Loyally, you didn't tell
whose shadows fell
on your emerging life.

Day Three

Someone has left flowers at my door.
I take them to you pronouncing the lie
that they were left for you.
Your flowers are the only ones
in the shabbiness of Ward B.

Day Four

Dr Scottie is a hero.
His omniscient presence cheers us both.
In the lock-up ward next door
a naked form thuds against the walls.

Day Five

You are a stranger now;
you speak the language of the ward.
I am the visitor who comes
and goes without trace.

Day Six

The nurses know you well,
you are their misgrown child.
Dr Scottie knows for sure,
my mother's love is poisoned.

Day Seven

I come each day
with flowers for my guilt,
but still you tell on me.
I start to see my name
scrawled on the bed next to you.

Day Eight

Tomorrow you come home.
I clean the house,
make new curtains for your room.
Soon we'll sit at the table again,
face to face and silent.

Day Nine

All day I watch your face,
a dial, measuring pain.
You must, you must smile for me
or I swear, I too must die.

Day Ten

You've bought a pocket knife
that you sharpen when I am gone.
Deep cuts appear on your arm.
And still I wait for the blade
to cut the cord that binds us.

SUMAN KAPOOR

HYPHEN

Years later, Satyaki wrote in his diary
an improved answer to the unsolved question:
Death is both a prefix and a suffix,
a cause as well as an effect,
added before and after this life
like empty spaces that separate
words in a long sentence. Occasionally,
a hyphen links two words
and they cross its narrow beam
to blend their echoes and share
a common identity which they lose later,
trapped together in distilled silence.

IBARAGI NORIKO (1926-)

IN CAMERA

This eye the lens, this blink the shutter,
Mine is a darkroom roofed with hair: