

Female CHF 89

By Casey Brown

we were not loving
we emptied the crevices
of your heart
held your hand
only to get it out of the way

we were not gentle
we unraveled your body
with scalpels and saws –
a trapezius hanging here
a glute falling off there

we were not heartfelt
we cried
only because the chemical
they used to preserve you
hurt like onions
in our eyes

we were fascinated
at the toughness
of your fascia lata
the tenderness
of each cutaneous nerve

inside your body we saw
the story each body writes
of vessels and plexuses
of tissue swaddling tissue

and from this story, we saw
all we could see, learned
all we could learn

your body will live on
in our minds as our map
your sculpted soleus
your thin deltoids
your tiny intestines
your giant spleen

we'll recall the traces of pain
that defined your last minutes on earth
the lungs filled with blood
the tumors and hematomas

but we'll remember more the evidence
that you were cared for while you lived
your expertly reconstructed tendons
your pacemakers
and deep-brain stimulators
your sandal tands
your painted nails

all the evidence that there was so much more to you
a hundred birthdays you celebrated, give or take
a soul that cannot be dissected or pinned
a collection of memories that cannot be seen under a lamp
a dreamer who believed there was hope for suffering in this world and
decided to trust us with knowledge
we could never give ourselves

About the Author



Casey Brown is a student physical therapist and writer. She writes to make sense of complicated experiences and to share it with her communities. Among other topics, she's written about getting injured teaching barre fitness and about performing as a statue in a museum. She has a BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. In her free time, she serves as a writing coach for high school students.