

Quarantine

Raquel Cohen

To the man I saw dying behind a pane of glass

People are afraid of the big bold letters
like teeth chomping their health and feeding
on their fears as soon as they touch the door.
An orange construction paper taped
like a death sentence, an execution to watch
from a safe distance through a pane of glass.

QUARANTINE

I am afraid of something else.

We have never met but when I
look into your eyes I feel like I see
your lifetime, how you saw the world.
I see your eyes, once dark brown
lightened by your experiences,
flecks of blue and a translucent rim,
your iris, an imperfect circle, elliptical,
forms a small droplet of water
that slides—despite the friction of
beautiful peaks and valleys that come only
with wisdom and experience, battle scars and
triumphs—down your cheeks.

As I draw your blood I feel
like I am stealing
as the droplets are dragged
slowly to the bottom of the vial.
You tell me to lean forward.
You whisper,
“It hurts when I cry.”
The jagged shards of my heart
suddenly feel trivial.
We say goodbye and you are alone.
No visitors allowed except your thoughts,
fears, highs, loves, lows,
sunsets, emotions, memories, regrets.
One last blink, you see cloudy glass
through half-open eyes,
a world beyond,
not ready to say goodbye,
but also cannot go on.

I come back to see you again.
The sign is gone, the bed is made,
the scent of antiseptic and lidocaine.
Your heart stopped but your spirit stayed
in the room and in my thoughts.
Alone in your last moments,
the pain behind glass.

In a few minutes beyond the pane
of glass I am a changed human remembering
through some sort of emotional telekinesis to
never stop moving with my whole soul or putting
my whole heart into everything, knowing
that sometimes it gets broken in the process of
living and loving but it is still beating
ready to come out of its cage again.