

Janice Silverman Rebibo

My Beautiful Ballooning Heart

for Ruti

I

The impact of a bully on the left half of the heart
is like a thief in the night who breaks in
through the bathroom window by beating
the bars with a stone repeatedly –
that one last blow that bends the bars
lets the brutal bandit steal, not your sheaves
of wheat to shift them to his own pile
of golden grain, but the true objects of his desire –
the tools of your livelihood and the ring,
all that's left of one you love.

II

The largest and most muscular chamber of my heart
will sail us away to the land we dreamed of –
we only need to attach the strings
and stand underneath
and let it rise.

III

Volatile spirit, take a deep breath
and contain yourself. Do not allow his cruelty
to cause you to break your own heart.

IV

When he asked to be referred to
by ordination only, it was a sign;
when he lorded over the air-conditioning,
it was a sign; when he raised the cost
of your insurance to reduce the cost
of his, it was a sign; when he preached
withholding ice cream from his tiny daughter
proudly and demanded blind obedience and threatened
repercussions, evaluation, termination,
when he clarified to you that he was either in or he was
out.

V

Heed the signs of your spirit created

in your left ventricle. Do not be frightened
by the pain
s
in your chest
the lightning bolts before your eyes. Act
judiciously, spill your guts to those in
authority and walk away while your heart
still beats reasonably well in that chest
to the emergency room where they will
misdiagnose you almost kill you if you
haven't already died and then save you –
both from them and from yourself, but not from him.

VI

A shock to your system, post traumatic stress,
and maybe acid reflux just for muddying the waters
of recovery. You are fine but will you tolerate
a stress test just to be sure?

VII

The rest of the stressors do not go away.
Let's send them on a vacation to Bolivia.
Let's put them on a train.
Up up and away
high above my beautiful ballooning heart.

VIII

I am broken
and should be returning to the family farm
the old boys are still there and have become
doctors by now. They've missed me. We can
lie on a tarp on the grass surrounded by the
potted plants they brought me when they
looked at my face and knew that not only
am I older, I have not been well. A public
park will do if the family has no farm. I'll
strap on my pedometer and do a few laps,
weigh myself on my new digital scale
and take my own blood pressure now and
again between kisses.

IX

The impact of a bully upon the younger generation
is not limited to tabloids and TV. Tragedy easily descends
down our offender's bony fingers down down to
curse our children, forced to gather round

leaving
their unguarded households prey
to local predators who are essentially the same
as our white collar tough. A curse upon his head.

X

The impact of a bully
can be measured in words, lines, stanzas
that will not fly. Deflated left ventricles
hurrah

XI

Assessment oriented
continued impact
variables
and unknown
and his life goes on.

Janice Silverman Rebibo, who hails from Rehovot, Israel has been best known to date as a Hebrew poet. Her four poetry collections received considerable critical attention in Israel, as well as several awards. These poems were a frequent feature in the Israeli literary and daily press. Following a period as an English major in liberal arts studies in Massachusetts and in New Brunswick, Canada, Janice began studying Hebrew seriously at age twenty-one in a Jordan Valley kibbutz *Ulpán*. Later, she earned a BA and an MA in Jewish Studies with a concentration in Hebrew language and literature from Hebrew College, where she studied under Prof. Gila Ramras-Rauch. Janice took part in the *Beit Ariela* Tel Aviv two-year writing workshop led by Israel's foremost poets and conducted bilingual poetry workshops in Israel for many years. Since 2010, she has served as visiting poet at Brandeis University and at Middlebury College in Vermont. A number of her poems written in English were included in the *Voices Israel* and *ARC* anthologies.