

Shannon J. Curtin – Two Poems

At the end, we're alone

*And I'll stay in my body and you'll stay in your own
'Cause we know that we're born and we're dying alone
-Dar Williams*

At the end, we are alone.
Just like the beginning.
If we're fortunate, we are
ushered out of life
in the hands of another, just as
we were welcomed into it.

If we are timely or unlucky in death,
or an embedded figure head of community,
the line outside the funeral home
will coil like a garden snake.
Most of us will gather only a roomful,
a sprinkling of those who really loved
us, and the obligated.

But, in time there is no difference.
No matter how loved our memory,
in two generations we're forgotten.
We are names looked up in family bibles,
we are tidbits in holiday stories, we are
plaques and statues that last until the
next remodel or renovation or until
the trust runs dry.

We exit life the way we enter
and the way we really live-
alone. We might connect,
build friendships, commit
to walking alongside another,
but our lives are inexplicably lived
alone; in the decisions we make,
the words we give meaning to,
the way we view every second
of our existence.

We are alone.
We are only assisted through life
by the hands of others.

And after one hundred years
they build parking lots
above our bones.

Growing Away

First, you are the sun. You are
made of fire. You are the light and the center.
Without you, there is nothing.

Then you are bread. You are a north star,
the home keys, the magic elixir. You still burn
but you feel the fade.

The first time he kicks away in bed,
falls asleep not nestled next to your ribcage,
you cry. You are elated and destroyed.

You know that soon you will be made of marbles,
of matchsticks. You will be a treasure he keeps precious,
but relegated to his pocket.

Now every time he settles in someone else's arms
you hear a hollow rattle, you feel yourself splinter
when he smiles for someone else's eyes.

Shannon J. Curtin is a 2014 Pushcart Prize nominee and the author of two collections of poetry, *Motherland* (forthcoming from Anchor & Plume Press), and *File Cabinet Heart* (ELJ Publications, 2014). Her poetry has been featured in a variety of literary magazines including *Short, Fast, and Deadly*, *y'all'd've*, *Vox Poetica*, and *The Camel Saloon*. She holds an MBA, competitive shooting records, and her liquor. She would probably like you.