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POETRY | SPRING 2017

## WERNICKE-KORSAKOFF

By Sarah Shirley

sitting with slippers the disappointing pink  
of a mediocre sunset, angry at everything -  
the nurses, the too soft too hard bed,  
the lunch that came with only one spoon  
though clearly two spoons were required,  
but especially angry at me, the student  
trying to get something, anything,  
any word about this person in the chair  
raging against the world

everything is thrown back  
she doesn't enjoy reading,  
cooking, walking,  
friends or family,  
relaxing, talking,  
movies or radio,  
but then in desperation  
I ask about pets  
and she tells me about a cat  
who beheaded mice  
and offered them up  
as gifts.  
What was his name?  
Podge.  
And she smiles down at her feet  
in her manky pink slippers,  
and she is a person again.

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Sarah Shirley lives in Hamilton, New Zealand with her husband and two young children. She previously worked as a molecular biologist, and is now in her final year of medical school. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *star\*line*, *takahe Magazine*, *Poetry New Zealand Yearbook 2017*, *Atlas*, *Ars Medica*, and *Pedestal*.

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