
Poetry | SPRING 2017

Osteosarcoma

By Sarah Shirley

Not sure what to do with all this extra material,
all these off cuts chopped from jeans and pants,
shorn off and the leg stitched closed to protect
the shy stump where your poor limb once attached.
Perhaps I could learn patchwork, my love,
and patch together a quilt of pant parts,
past and future. It'll keep you warm, and I
do see you shiver now and then - made cold
by chemo, but it's over soon, and you'll
be back to nearly normal in no time. We'll forget
the weeks after you fell from the tree, when your
leg hurt - just a little - but for so long we went
in, and the doctor shot radiation through you
to reveal a blossom of gnarly bone sitting
just below your knee. And then two weeks later
off it came, snip snip, just like that and here we are.

(Sometimes I sneak in to check you at night
and you blaze, my love, you are achingly bright,
incandescent, burning white silhouettes in my vision.
I marvel at your courage, how it fills the space around you.)

But we've got things to do and pants to sew,
the leg isn't coming back, but you are going far.
Just think - how much we'll save on socks.

*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.*
