

POETRY | SPRING 2022

Shoot Out

By Susan Thomas

I aim the thermometer at point blank range
thirty seven six - a bit too high to be let in.
He is frustrated and pushes his weight from foot to foot
going nowhere, except the lobby.
I block him with all the power my uniform affords,
but underneath I am just me dressed up -playing Cop

I have been standing in the sun he says, blaming the stars
trying to divert my suspicion that he may be concealing
a virus in his inside pocket ready to pull on the ward
the moment he steps through those doors.
You will have to sit there I say, and see if you cool down
trying to sound cool, embracing my double role of Cop and Nurse –
I only need a fire to break out now to cover all emergency services
I can do anything!

While I am away for five minutes someone kindly gives him a glass of ice cold water
and when I return I detect a smugness curling into his smile like a well fed cat
I point and shoot again -thirty four five
Oh no! you're hypothermic now I exclaim, trying to understand this violent change.
He gives himself up easily - I put the glass of cold water on my head
he confesses, the cartridge falling at his feet.
We exchange a brief crossfire of laughter
I pardon him and let him pass,
I am out of ammunition.

Susan Thomas is a Senior Nurse in Palliative Care working in a Hospice. She has had her work recognised by The Hippocrates Prize in 2021.

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