

GLEN SORESTAD

## Three Poems

### 1. Hospital Vigil

I stand beside her bed,  
watch her shrunken body  
rise and fall in fitful sleep  
and it is hard. This body  
on the bed is not my mother;  
my mother has already gone.  
This is just a dying woman,  
a body to fill the hours  
of the doctors and nurses,  
a body to fill the charts  
with data to analyze  
and cost out in dollars,  
statistics for the health  
of the health care system.  
My mother is already gone,  
though this covered shape  
in the bed rises and falls,  
rises and falls in sleep.

## 2. Television Afternoon

Of all the TV programs, the cooking shows  
appear to interest and amuse the ladies most.  
No Jerry Springer brawling lovers for these,  
but rather, chefs in white, tossing pizza dough,  
or stuffing pale fillets of sole with concoctions  
of mushrooms or tiny shrimp with cheese;  
they are impressed with fancy knife-work  
on the chopping block, like the colours  
of paellas and pilafs, and ragouts and jambalayas.

They loll back in their easy chairs or sofas,  
snooze during the commercials and beyond,  
but focus on the ingredients as if committing  
the recipes to memory that has deserted them.  
Even soundless the cooking shows still win  
over the afternoon soaps and talkfests,  
as soups are made and bread is baked, a leg  
of lamb festooned with cloves of garlic,  
red bell peppers stuffed with cooked rice,  
a decadence of chocolate drizzled over pears,  
the mute chefs smiling and gesturing, holding  
up each newly garnished plate to the camera—  
and to the ladies who hold their applause  
like Olympic judges, but whose faces  
sometimes betray their appreciation.

### 3. The Day Mother Doesn't Know Me

I am disturbed—even though I know  
this day must come and will come again.

Mother speaks to me in generalities  
and seems guarded in her answers  
when I ask her what she has been doing,  
until at last I realize that she is  
speaking to a stranger who wants  
her to confide in him about things  
he has no right to know.

I feel a sense of hurt that I am  
her son and now for the first time  
since she bore the pain of my arrival  
howling into this life, she has  
rejected me as a prying busybody;

until I regain control of my silly  
self-image enough to know that this  
is just the first time this will happen  
and there is nothing either of us  
can do about it, that we are players  
in a drama we haven't written  
and there's no way to change our lines.