

A Perfectly Normal Broken Heart  
by Jenny Fox

I saw you on the silent screen,  
your heart flickering  
like the busy wings of the hummingbird.

Before I knew your heart was broken,  
we watched the mother hummingbird  
flit in and out of her nest to check tiny eggs.

She built on a dangling wind spinner,  
Dazzled by the glint of the metal,  
no awareness of its instability,  
like any of us who falls prey  
to what shimmers  
and regrets it later.

Mother's Day morning,  
a Hallmark excuse for sleep.  
Prisoners of war are tortured  
with sleep deprivation.  
Mothers are tortured  
this way, too.  
Still in bed,  
my chosen gift,  
but sleep not returning.  
Your father's voice  
barking at you and your brother.  
His anger meant for me.  
Then your shriek,  
as startling as your cry for milk.

Hummingbird's eggs below the nest.

Shells shattered amidst splattered yolk.

You gasping for breath  
between each word,  
your grief unleashed.

*The...babies...are...dead!*

Your heart again in black and white,  
larger now,  
cratered like the surface of the moon,  
heaving in mystifying slow pulses.

You as far from me,  
as the moon to the earth.

Your heart,  
a blurry satellite picture,  
sent back from space.

The doctor's voice,  
a muffled transmission,  
to me on earth.

*Valve. Cleft. Split.*

*Blood should flow this way,  
not that way.*

An enemy inside your chest,  
ripping your heart open,  
tearing at mine, too.

Each of us born raw and tender hearted.

Then gnawed upon and punctured,  
in some way,

that is both our own  
and the same as everyone else's.

Wounds close and are slashed open again.

First we flicker,

a tiny beating of bird wings,  
in the womb.  
Thrust into the world,  
howling to be held.

*His heart is normal,  
It is healthy,  
It just has this one part here,  
this one part that is...  
broken.  
It is a normal heart, really.  
A perfectly normal,  
broken heart.*

The nest I built for you  
and your brother,  
sturdy like a fortress.  
Unseen weakness succumbs to gusts.  
At another mother's beside,  
moaning with her,  
pressing her back against the pains,  
my purring voice at her ear.  
Her baby ready and twisting out,  
your sister still a tiny seed,  
drowning in the blood,  
my womb wrenching,  
the blood a twisted tornado inside me.  
Your sister blown out of the nest  
by one strong gust.  
She spilled out in a gush of blood.  
Her heart never glitching on the screen.  
The gentle thud of her heart  
never heard on the midwife's magic wand.

I am flitting around,  
like mama hummingbird,  
looking for my eggs.  
I am cowering in the corner of the house,  
heart beating too fast and fierce,  
like the hooves of a wild horse,  
still running after the threat is gone.  
Perfectly normal when one's heart is broken.  
Your father angry at my grief.  
Your father disgusted by my brokenness.  
*You will never be well again.*  
His words a seething attempt at prophesy.

Your heart was made broken,  
and that is better.  
No one can break what is already broken.  
*His heart is normal*  
*but still broken.*  
A perfectly normal  
broken heart.

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