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3 POEMS BY RACHEL SAHAIDACHNY**

I brush my hair to shed the dead

By Rachel Sahaidachny

strands and think how old hair isn't lovely
not like leaves falling

in these winter nights of freezing fog
only half the trees have lost their leaves

discarded strands wrap around the brush handle
find their way under the covers of the bed

impossible to untangle
every feeling in a day

I keep brushing but never shampoo
I think tomorrow

I will dunk my head in the stream
where the ice melts and leaves clump

I will let my knees sink deep into the umber
then barefoot in the ripples wade

trying to hear you coming
in the rattling leaves.

It Cannot Be Called Ambition

By Rachel Sahaidachny

Your need for blood
has brought you back into my life—
no good veins to slip
the needle in—a tube bleeds into the PICC line
in your chest.

You text to say *blood levels are critical.*
I come to the hall outside your room
and I don't open the door and I don't
unpack the card I brought.
I used to erase
all of your messages.
Nothing in my house was once yours.

Each morning I scent the air with incense
before I open my eyes I have a memory
of prayer—
your dry fingers hold mine
in church I always wondered
if I should keep my eyes closed
in meditation I don't mind questions.

I dream I watch you on a ridge.
I stand below
unseen shards of ice scatter the trail
shaken free from evergreens
you look ahead—and step off.
I watch you fall.

I don't think I wanted easy
as it would have been—I assume—
to disappear but not
this blistering
inside the body: not a blossom
or rotting, only a body and yours
a sick one—though
mine could be, too the instruments
have not yet proclaimed what this life has done
to my interior.

Iron Shoes

By Rachel Sahaidachny

I sit silently beside you in your hospital room
my pulse half shadow—I slip
slip like a smear of rain left to dry on glass—

at a reservoir's cracked edge end of summer
algae blooms cloud its mirror surface, putrid green
I peer into the slime: something I can't look into

I can only see
all of your symptoms
scream death. I am sunk—

I walk into pond
wearing iron shoes schools of minnows
swarm me cool silver tongues— slip
slip I am princess of the brine before you

unlaced my casing I was your little fish
diving in the foam & bliss listening to the knocks below
the surface

no seagull to pluck me out my hair black as weeds

I am full of water I am close to my beginning
liquid in your womb

once you were warm to me