

## **Resurrecting Father** *(One Who Reappeared)*

I

You were brave and curiously calm  
before the operation, surrounded  
by a sea of white in the early winter air.

Propped up in your bed, you sported  
a name tag on your wrist  
and the beginnings of a beard,  
surprisingly becoming. You said  
you were resigned to the chances  
to the possibility of not  
living through it,  
the necessary surgery.

I, the first-born, was with you on my own then,  
deceived by the freshness  
of the linens, your aneurysm  
invisible, how vulnerable  
were we all. Other times with my brother  
our mother would hover  
a bird unsure of her future meals.

You were still the strength of us,  
before they put you under  
under for the chemical sleep  
thirteen hours they informed us later,  
a clamp on your vessel  
exacting its cost: your brain  
(with rigging severed, mast splintered)  
a gift none would claim.

## II

After – an afterwards which was to linger  
and linger – I saw you in the vastness  
of Intensive Care, strapped in your bed  
with stainless steel sidings  
your head bandaged as a turban  
pale as a beach after hard rain.

You sighed the sigh of a shipwreck  
our living crucifix  
limply holding my hand in a daze  
a dim smile as I clutched you.  
Amazingly, you whispered my name,  
surprised that you could whisper  
and glad that you could remember.  
I witnessed this remnant of your powers  
as a fog and waves of salt hurt  
invaded you: such thirst  
in the sterile air I had never seen.

Grey days later, dark December,  
in the difficult humdrum of recuperation  
I kept vigil in your room right the night through  
for you could not be left unattended.  
Your beard was full now  
and the surgeon's stitching evident:  
you were both laughing dervish  
and scrawny victim  
in the full throes of hallucination,  
with your head of clouded connections  
and memory a battered sieve  
revealing crazy pebbles and strange gold nuggets.

I had to restrain you  
as you imagined yourself  
on the deck of your navy destroyer  
swaying and listing, my poor dear father,  
time-travelling back to late world war two  
now sitting at your post at radar  
once again seasick and frightened  
the salt air and threat of *kamikazes*  
exciting your lungs and your eyes.

### III

Nearly thirty years onwards,  
nursing a low-grade winter virus,  
I attempt to chisel poetry  
from the suffering and endurance,  
the embarrassed bewilderment  
and the long drawn out coda,  
why, why, why:

That the son must look after his father  
as an infant who can do himself danger —  
engraves a mark on the psyche, and a scar  
I unveil as a trophy,  
a whelp I hide  
as a flaw.

Now a wizened, chastened child,  
he offers fruit from a cracked blue bowl:  
I do not know whether he knows  
how I have grown  
unspeakably old.