

The trees

Marcy Gross

The trees speak to me at night
I hear them screaming in pain
As they rub against one another
Now I am a tree
Sudden back pain
Shooting pain due to nerve root
Compression
What disease do they have that
Makes them scream out when
The cold wind moves
Their limbs

Untitled

Marcy Gross

My brain is swimming in my skull
I can hear it splashing
Like a fish trying to find oxygen
A light breeze flew over just right
To electrify me from head to toe

Reva

Marcy Gross

The other day
someone put plaster
on her lungs
now it's beginning to ache
it burns she cries
can't someone take it off
that girl I don't know
who she was
opened me up and
smeared that white brittle plaster
all over my lungs
the left one mostly
then she sewed me back up
Why? Why?

Alberta

Marcy Gross

People always tell me
You look so young
You can't possibly be that old
Well they say
At least when you're 40
You'll still look young
But will I really
Sometimes I wonder
When I take a quick look
At her picture on the wall
I always wonder
How old she was then
Black and white portrait
Hung off balance
But I'm always too busy
To pay much attention
It will always bother me
She has coffee with supper
But not breakfast
The only one of 165 residents
That belongs to an outcast religion
I think she must have been
My age in that portrait
Way before
Her hair turned grey
And was cut
Before her face
Got those lines under her eyes
And around her lips
Before she had whiskers
On her chin
She was oh so beautiful
And I wonder
If she ever
Thought about it
I wonder if she
Still sees that beautiful
Woman when she
Looks in the mirror

Alberta

Marcy Gross

Last Thursday
I told the nurse
you were sick
unresponsive
to my usual singing
every morning
I would sing to you
but that day
your eyes remained shut
not the usual
bright eyed
so happy to see me

Alberta

Marcy Gross

They took you away
in an ambulance today
the nurse in her panic
told me *hurry get her ready they're coming*
before I knew it
they were there
6 men in uniform
all asking me questions
what's this? what's that?
so confused overwhelmed
from the excitement
after my shift
I stood in the parking lot
letting my car warm
sucked down 2 cigarettes
in 5 minutes
and wondered
if I will ever
see you again

Alberta

Marcy Gross

The last time I saw you
you were gasping for your
last breath
the oxygen tube up your nose
doing no good
your eyes
were black
and sinking in
your mouth
open
you said nothing
to me as I told you
I love you, good bye
but I know
you really meant to
I know you heard me
yesterday she told you
hang on until Marcy gets
back to say good bye
and you did
20 minutes after
I left your side
you were
pronounced gone
8:02 am I found
out at 8:15 am
didn't see you again
until almost 9:00 am
uncovered your body
so frail, skin see-through
I could
see your bones
your hips turned
even more
than before
so crippled yet
so at peace
the way you lay
reminds me of
"ancient wing"
a famous fossil
of a bird
his wings spread

as if he were to
take off
just like you
always waiting
to fly

Marcy Gross was Shanan Ballam's sister. She died on July 8, 2023 of complications from Addison's Disease and Multiple Sclerosis. Marcy was a long-time resident of Cache Valley and she went to Utah State University. She worked as a CNA which is where many of these poems come from. Marcy was fond of tattoos, and the ones she chose to decorate her body told the world who she was. Family was crucial to her. The names of her beloved sons, Jeremiah and Jayden, had prominent places, as did the name of her younger brother Dylan who died in 2013.