

BULBS

Lana Corrales

As she lay for months unaware in a hospital bed
She lost the roses she had so carefully grown
One at a time, petals falling, stems bending
Untended and unnourished, her garden began to wilt
The peonies bowed their heavy heads next
The delicate cornflower leaves dispersed with the wind

Another month, her arms turned black and gangrenous
Shriveled, rotting roots
As she continued to lie on a bed of winding wires
In a field of buzzing machines
Both sustaining and replacing life

Her legs followed, they did not carry her with them
Withered, flaccid, atrophied
Until they were as dried and dark as the winter earth
We watched her fade

What we didn't see were the dormant bulbs
Tiny sparks of light and hope
Embedded deep in the frozen ground
Just waiting for their time

"My kids", she said, when she awoke, "they need me"
And in a barren landscape of loss, taking root
Pushing undeterred by hardness or cold
Through the absence of hope
By millimeters, the bulbs began their journey

Metal legs, offered like stakes for spindly vines to climb
Baby steps, awkward and wobbly
Slowly gaining strength
Marching, not like soldiers but like inchworms
Marking time and growth imperceptibly towards light

Arms, titanium posts like tomato cages
That don't imprison but offer a path upward, ever upward
Hinged claws learning to grasp
Clearing tangles of dead brush
Making space for whatever might emerge

Her garden looks different now
She accepts the weeds; they have earned their place
They are not delicate like the roses
They are indestructible like her new limbs
That carry her, awkwardly but sturdily
To where she can watch her children
Making wishes on dandelions

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