

ANN QUINN

ON LEARNING OF YOUR DIAGNOSIS

All morning I wiped the high ornate spaces
that have lain untouched, remote enough
to appear pristine, even with their fine fur of dust.

The wick lamp carried by my great-grandmother,
its soft hovering glow dark these hundred years.
The vases, empty now of her innumerable flowers.

In the frame of my great-aunt's oil painting,
delphiniums still fresh. My damp cloth
soiled so but easily rinsed and laundered,

made new — the work tying me to all that
will never be done
sweet labor.

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ODE TO WEEDS

Here is the chickweed, with its starry mien,
and here the buttercup, bright oracle
of who likes butter best. Here are the
goldenrods, strong tassels waving,
beacons of pollen along the asphalt.

Here, Queen Anne's lace, with
a drop of blood in each galaxy of flower,
and shepherd's purse, with
green valentines proffered to elves.

Here is the morning glory, a furled
trumpet of color. Here the buttonweed's
shy flowers found only by the hungry.

Here are the cockleburs, pitchfork and
pokeberry, lambsquarters, sheepsorrel
and milkweed, a meadow of bright rags
bordered by concrete. And here
the butterflies, winged messengers
of a nonpartisan god of mercy, and their
consorts, buzzing balls of pollen-laden
fuzz. But look there, on higher ground,

where stanchions of nursery bred trees
guard the combed grass of medians
the color of money.