

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Peggy Dobreer: Three Poems

Peggy Dobreer · Wednesday, March 28th, 2018

### Is There a Doctor in the House?

A voice rang out in the restaurant. A man fell. People pushed their plates away. Was it the food?

No one made a move. Sirens grew loud and stopped outside. My mother always said, “Marry a doctor.” She did the second time. It worked well for the lot of us. She had a murmur from a teenage fever that turned her hair gray at fourteen. *Salt and pepper*, he insisted. She was told, *no children*. Had four. That was mother, always sleeping late.

A doctor gets up, makes rounds, wears a suit coat, a lab coat, a surgery gown, a silky hounds-tooth smoking jacket, a wool cap in winter sent from Baltimore. A doctor might grow a beard in autumn, have a whirl in politics, drink Wild Turkey. A doctor won't garden, not even water the lawn. He calls Sam. Gives him good work after his internment. A doctor may even overpay, long after a man can do the hard work. Bend and shuffle, after all those years, one of the family, of the yard. Sam came till he could not. The patio stairs still have no railing.

The EMT's could not revive him. Defib paddles failed. After the body bag was zipped, after they gathered to choose a box, after all those years he carried his black bag to bedsides in the dark, there was no doctor on the premises as his life slumped away proving, that whether you marry him or not, there is never a doctor available when you need one.

\*

### Southbound

The day the devil's advocate came

through, my father was out to lunch.

My stepbrother was born before anyone  
could get to the hospital.

Mother lay in the cab, spent and silenced.  
She never made it to the ABC Room,

for which she paid double to have  
her second born enter the world

under water in a state of bliss.  
It's what the brochure promised.

Her *peignoir* designed for nursing  
mothers remained, predictably in the hall

in her valise, left behind in the rush.  
No single specialist had ever reported

the effects of birth by taxi driver in any  
of her previous nine months of research.

Mother threw up her hands and accepted  
the shirt swaddled child, chord unsevered.

The sirens got louder and the baby wailed.

\*

## Set Up

She had it coming. For picking up the call, pouring a cup  
of tea, trusting the weather. For removing items from the tray,  
forgetting to bring flowers, signing unmentionables over.

It's what we do when things get thick. We capitulate.  
Add water. Let the mixture cool. Do it nicely. There's a good girl.  
There's a strong boy. There's not one bad thing to say

about an indigo child. How could you? Have you seen  
into one's eyes? That cosmic color, Elizabeth Taylor  
violet. He, smartly sported dark glasses, while she squinted

into the distance? It made her look awfully mad, though  
everyone knew she had exactly what she wanted most.

*(Featured photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)*

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