

Sue Ring deRosset
Notes from the Field Finalist

Witch Doctor

Such a small thing, an accident:
I spear my doublegloved hand with a bone pin
during surgery lab on a cadaver.

Kisch Schick

Just metal through flesh, and some microbes.
But of course nothing is ever that simple.

Two weeks on antibiotics, but the fever is why
I burn with a need for a deep medicine,
the old-as-bones doctor who dances trancelike
with Madame Chaos
in her green and purple feather-boas,
who writes prescriptions in fractals,
spoons out bitters that taste awful,
tincture of Gentian root.

What if something else slipped through the puncture?
Something verminous and vengeful, not of this world,
rippling rocking frothing outward in waves
as if from a stone thrown into a still lake,
something monstrous, Loch Ness, or worse --
iatrogenic?

Where is the black, white, and red mask
at midnight, the suspect tufts of hair and horn,
the clonking necklace of rodent skulls
from rats who died of old age,
and the flashing eyes of the old doctor
in the glamour of firelight?

Kisch Schick

Kisch Schick

of the gourds over the sweat of my chest
the rise and fall of the witch doctor's chant
the Evil Thing pulled from the back of my hand
like a Guinea worm on a toothpick
Dracunculus! Just like that: my sins
an accident
pulled from my skin like a parasite,

such a small thing
on a ball-point caduceus.