

Knit *Dedicated to our Elders, with Respect*

What is this hole? She wonders
Fretting her grey cardigan with knotted fingers

She will not ask aloud, she decides
In case he says, it is the same one
That you left for my baby toes to poke through
In the cold

She will not ask
In case he remembers
Red-faced, bawling feebleness
Crying, crying
Her young self too slow to respond

What is this break? She wears
Time's lines like a map for trains
The knitting needle years
Clack of passages

What tears did she dismiss?
Ignore, simply miss, caught up in her days
Or afraid to see what he might become.

when his fledgling fists hammered
Chubby rhythms on her skin, she simply said
He lacked the words at two
To make known his needs.
Is it because she should have
Stated firmly, No! given him certainty of boundaries
Or is it because he knew, when she did not, that
She was faking the serenity
With which she let him flail, while
she seethed inside
caught up in the act of Will that
Kept her from raising her hand to him
When she so easily thought of it
So vividly could see him roll and break
Shocked him silent once without thought

Is it that thought
Come to rest now upon her own cheek?

She rocks.
She plucks threads.

Shadows gather
Night will fall
Like accusations
Whispering its condemnations
Conjuring too many could-have-beens
She cradles
Her weary head
Shadows gather

What thread would it take to bind this?
We pray for the unraveling
Of the knots between generations

Come now, let our eyes see it
We come into this world sacred
And sacred let us leave

We come into this world sacred
If we know what it is to be seen, to be loved
Then let us reach that hand of love to our elders
Returning the gift in the fulness of season's turnings

If we do not know what it is to be seen
If the love we received was conditional, was scarring, was hard
imperfectly given let us not judge, scar, stint in our turn
Let us look With the true eyes of sacred love that all possess
Let us gain the love we need
By reaching our hands, now powerful
Toward our elders
With the sacred touch of that love gone missing
This is the act of Will, that will
Bring grace between us now.

What is this light? She wonders
Gazing at the face of her son
Streaming softly from his eyes
the lifelong dream

And he gathers her in
Rests her cheek upon his shoulder
Wraps her in new wool the colour of wild roses
The gift of comfort, after all, within reach
However uncertain the knit
However holey, wholely holy.

Anna Marie Sewell, Edmonton Poet Laureate 2011 -13