
POETRY | FALL 2020

Essential

By Alexis Rehrmann

We were peons to skyscrapers and super
structures. Subject to blood pumping profit-
making we stretched, strained, strived. No matter.

Half a plastic purple Easter egg traces semi-circles
on the dusty floor. You pick it up, cradle it
in your palm, provenance unknown. Weightless

matters, tender care for small goods, are your life's
littlest labors. Did you touch that doorknob? Then
go wash your hands. Kitchen table budgets

+ 2nd grade subtraction. Feed the cat and
the people pith, kernel and core, heart and
soul—and for dinner, all again.

You are essential to me, small person.
Face pressed to my neck, knees bent
to breast, elbows insistent. Love,

what happened? Hush, we are
waiting for answers. It's women's
work will deliver us now.

Alexis Rehrmann is a writer and editor whose journalism and digital work has appeared in publications including *The New York Times* and *Portland Monthly* magazine. A member of the Northwest Narrative Medicine Collaborative, and a staff member at the Lewis & Clark College Center for Community and Global Health, Rehrmann has pursued the connection between story and healing throughout her creative life. She lives in Portland, Oregon with her family and began playing with poetic forms in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In “Essential,” she tries to put words around the sudden loss of public and professional persona that non-essential workers are experiencing in quarantine. The short stanzas are essential now that she’s home with her six-year-old son... all of the time. Her poem “Essential” appears in the Fall 2020 *Intima*.

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