
POETRY | FALL 2023

Makeshift First Aid Stations at the World Trade Center

By Joan Roger

September 12th, 2001

In this world, Liberty One Plaza is an aide station.
Brooks Brothers, a makeshift morgue.
We whir about trying to make order:
saline next to IV tubing, ace wraps
next to bandages, chairs near
make-do eyewashes, vials of albuterol
next to nasal cannulas,
and bodies wrapped in black bags,
we lay carefully in a corner.

A man wearing ruins enters.
There's torn flesh around his ankle,
trailing red over the shards of cement.
He's been belly-crawling through the inferno
with a pocketknife and a flashlight.
He needs sutures,
but he says: "Just wrap it up.
We're running out of time."

So I orbit a bandage around his wounds
and rinse the blue planets of his eyes.
In this world, there's a different kind of gravity,
one that pulls a person into a mound
of mutilated city where they writhe their bodies
through cracks and crevices
searching for life.

Joan Roger is an emergency medicine physician who resides in the Pacific Northwest. When not practicing medicine or spending time in nature with her family, Roger is earning her MFA in poetry at Pacific University. Through the writing of poetry she has begun to find a voice for her experience of working at Ground Zero on 9/11/01. During that time, she was a third-year medical resident at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. Roger has published poems in *The Healing Muse*, *Thimble*, *The Human Touch* and *Canary* magazine.

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