

# Resurrection

*Lisa M. de Rubilar*

## I

What if the Resurrection were not pent  
for the vast reendowment of all flesh  
but occurred as if by chance, like birth  
(that miraculous appointment), and just  
as unnoticed. What if these were the terms?:

You must die. You must taste the earth  
on your tongue and ride the wind among leaves  
until the last, very last, mortal soul who remembers  
your name returns to the soil. Then the entropy  
of your meat and bones, swishing cilia,

webbed filaments, coursing capillaries  
reverses itself and you appear, not  
near your grave, but in the spot where you suffered  
most on this green nonpartisan sphere. You  
appear in jeans and flannel shirt. Your beard

is shaved to the quick. The wind stings your face  
and you gasp to find yourself separate  
from the wind; to feel it part and circumvent  
your solid form instead of riding with you  
through empty limbs and dangling leaves of time;  
to displace molecules, take up space.

It is the same and different. Now you know  
some things not transmittable in words;  
you feel the motes of souls buffet your cheeks  
and hear their voices infiltrate every sound.  
Now this becomes your task: to speak for them all.

II

Jacob Tucker recomposes on the slopes  
of Kennesaw Mountain. A few tourists  
laugh on the trail ahead but have no reason  
to keep watch to rearward, and the ranger  
is sleeping it off in the movie room

where every quarter hour bugles pledge defeat  
to empty chairs or groups of Japanese  
businessmen. Tucker touches his shaven jaw  
and watches a hawk rise from a giant oak.  
He knows the place. Is luckier than most.  
Only the groan of combustion beyond

the shaven battlefield, only the jet  
intoning like an angel of revenge,  
tell him things have changed. And the silence forced  
through the cheesecloth of 130 years.  
Just he and the innermost core of the oak

remember the twang of death, the howls  
of dying men, the obscene blasts  
of cannons strategically installed (now)  
for kids to climb while parents aim the camera.  
His foxhole remains. A shallow leafy dent

rimmed by haphazard rotted logs labeled  
with explanatory plaque. Tucker  
kneels in the meal of leaves, breathes deep,  
weeps. He died here; but that was not the worst.  
The worst was watching, hearing, breathing death

and living on; discerning the maw of Hell  
in his own bloodthirsty core. Now he recalls,  
almost hears, the tenderest unseaming  
sound—cannon balls parting the leaves—  
and the boy at his side screaming, “Ma!”

## III

What if death were not the end of time?  
 What if, as you unloose your molecules  
 one by one in the ground or in the fire,  
 each ticks on in calmest synchrony  
 with the orbit of the moon; and you must wait

to be forgot. You must blow through scritchng weeds  
 on vacant lots, past panes where high school girls  
 stretch pallid toes into stockings for Prom,  
 through scarlet gills of fish and plankton guts  
 till you become a cloud approaching low

across the hills and the farmer looking up  
 swipes his chin and smiles to see you come;  
 you must pass through forests slated for the ax,  
 and pigeon-grimed squares, widows' marigolds,  
 school yards, fair grounds, prison yards, dust.

Time is slow as you sink in unison  
 with billions of trembling things into soil  
 and silt, as you spread, widen, and descend  
 like manna to the ground. Morning, night, spring,  
 summer, week, year—and you wait—impatiently

at first—then at last resigned until  
 the instant comes when you find yourself dressed  
 in a gabardine coat and coarse wool gloves,  
 a freshly coifed bun at the nape of your  
 neck, walking the teeth of a wintry wind.

## IV

Rosa Abramowitz has waited  
 a mere fifty years because all her folk  
 were chunked into a communal hole  
 brambled in human limbs from which they rose  
 within months—no one left to remember  
 another—and were mistook by dumbfounded

saviors at horror's end for citizens  
come to mourn the dead. But Rosa could not  
rise with the rest because she'd accepted bread  
through barbed wire from a passerby who suffered  
a moment's lapse of self-preservation.  
She told him her name, and was therefore sealed

to earth by insomniac dreams of one  
dim soul whose courage never rose again  
to such heights, but who found that name lodged fast  
in his skull till the day of his demise.  
So Rosa walks alone in an unchanged

place that was preserved to prevent forgetting  
(although the rending wind has kept us all  
in our beds). She died here. But the worst  
was not death; the worst was standing witness  
to ultimate possibilities—

no Hell left to imagine; Holiness  
no more than a hot cup of tea. She lost  
her faith—the most grievous loss of all—  
on this cindery spot where she was shot  
at roll call for briefly resting her head

on the shoulder of a friend she'd known  
from childhood. (Hadn't they racketed round  
her parlor together after Seder  
in search of the *Afikoman* to redeem  
for peppermints? Or was that, too, mere lie?)  
She died fast. No farewell. Only now, her cry.

## V

What if the secret to Resurrection is this?:  
You must use your new eyes to weep. You must  
use your lungs to breathe and your mouth to cry  
from the dust: *O earth, cover not thou my blood.*  
No one will hear you. The wind will divide

against your solid form and the atoms  
of all the dead will land on your tongue—  
and you will know who they are. They have names.  
Speak them. They have memories. Cry them.  
Feel the bark of the trees and the cinders

of the paths. Smell the pollen and the ice  
on the air. Take off your gloves; kneel among  
ashes and leaf meal; feel volition surge  
through your limbs, and blood drive life once more  
into embodiment. Feel. Breath. Hear

how the lark still sings in the bush afire  
as that old Pol Pot plots, Hutus hack,  
Ceausescu kills, Pinochet cherishes  
slaughter, and the self-satisfied, from afar,  
depress the lever of Devastation.

See. Bear witness. Open your mouth to hymn  
and to harrow. Eat the world whole. Breathe flame.  
Say, "I am" as the burning bush replies  
"And I AM."

At last, corporeal, ascend  
in Peace. The rest we can barely envision.

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