

Winning Poems in 2022 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

3. Any Subject, Any Style, Second Place

**I Do Not Write Love Poems**

I wear the toga of my pain so well that  
I clothe my sorrow in rarefied dignity, you say.  
The gentle wrapping sequesters the rawness  
of all those missing pieces where loss  
consists of delicate incisions to each of my  
innards, precisely slicing away the ganglionic  
nature of intimate connectedness.  
It had to be removed because that is the  
way of flesh. The living and the dead  
can't share the same body anymore.  
The ephemeral of memory may sound like a  
balm to these gaping wounds, but that's for  
Hallmark to say. I'll take my toga, thank you,  
to hide what is mine only.

You can not know where the sutures are and  
you do not sleep with seeping sounds where the  
juice of my spirit leaks out at night. This  
elegant robe is the shroud I wear for now,  
night and day. Its threads will unravel some  
day, but I will always don it as a sort of mist,  
the exoskeleton of a woman whose contours  
can never totally hide the places where the other  
woman is missing.

Pat Egenberger  
Modesto, CA