

Onset

By Susan Palwick

The year the terrors came,
she hid her face in mirrors
as her skin dissolved to sand.

She fled through the canyons of her kitchen,
its knives sharp against her skull,
prodding treacherous bone.

The town ticked on, a broken toy,
spinning banks and cars and swimming pools.
There was nothing to report, and no one to believe her.

Every night she swallowed darkness,
a suffocating jelly, and stumbled
through labyrinths of shadow.

Every morning
the sky broke into flowers
to which she dared not climb.

Author Bio: Susan Palwick is Associate Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she specializes in teaching fiction writing, and Associate Clinical Professor of Medical Education at the UNV School of Medicine, where she specializes in Narrative Medicine. She volunteers as a lay chaplain in a local ER. Ms. Palwick has published three novels (from Tor Books) and a story collection (from Tachyon Publications), all science fiction or fantasy, and is currently writing a fourth, non-fantastical novel. Her medical poetry is published or forthcoming in *The Yale Journal of the Humanities in Medicine and Hospital Drive*. She and her husband live with three cats in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. You may contact her at: SusanPalATAol.com