

Joyce K. Luzzi

Even if I could forget the hours of watching them
Sitting, sipping, dipping into days passed by, and
If I could cast out the smell of time's old sin on skin,
Dust, done-in, pocked year's just souvenirs, dark,
Pitted as the railing that rings around this rosy

Brick laid into hard unyielding concrete; and if I could
Forget how long it takes to tie up hair frail as cloth too sheer
Even for rags, rare minutes mere movement on the clock,
No tick, no tock, just misplaced hearing; and if I could
Ignore the words that lie forgotten on the floor,

Simple syllables pooled thick as dried urine set out, let out
By reflex, by elemental habit, by what's recalled of autumn's
Grip on winter days that pull and fight like Monday's sheets
Against the line, tough pseudo-breathing; and if I could
Count as fast as I remember, forgetting that I can't

Remember anything but wronged defiance here where
All forgetting hits between the eyes and vision is opaqued,
Made gray as days and nights and babies gone to other
Tables' succulence; if I could take away the gift of counting,
Leave only these old women propped up like Sunday's

Upright righteousness against the backs of stiff-backed chairs
Till afternoon becomes defunct and shoulders slump into calm
Obsolescence, wrapped china, too delicate for use, fearful to lose
The last of the luster; if I could do these things,
There'd still be no forgetting Mama's name

Taped to the wall, the glaze of it, almost illegible now, gold band
Worn almost through, colour blistered down to the original clay.