

Two Poems by Charles Rammelkamp

Warm Wet

“If it’s warm, wet and not yours,
don’t touch it,”
the emergency response instructor advises us.
Blood, of course, and vomit.
Warnings in case we come across
injury victims in a disaster situation.

But the words “warm” and “wet”
trigger a memory of Stacy,
the girl I’d met at the party
what seems like a hundred years ago,
winter having given way to spring,
everybody dressed light,
dancing, flirting, carefree.

What was warm and wet
belonged to her,
and yes, I longed to touch it.

“Always wear your non-latex gloves
in case the victim’s allergic. Remember:
Blood-borne pathogens can be lethal.”

As if beauty were a thing
you could feel, possess;
maybe you could, for a while.
Stacy spent one night with me.

The Dummy

I noticed the woman right away,
rising up the escalator
at the department store
like an assembly line product
moving along the conveyor belt.
A gorgeous blonde in her thirties,
she stood behind a lady
with an enormous bag,
serene as Venus
emerging from foam.

I stood in the men's clothing department,
looking around for a bathroom.
Distracted by momentary
lustful thoughts
rioting in my imagination –
bending the blonde
over the escalator rail,
her legs around me,
crotches fused –
I approached a clerk
by a rack of sports coats
who appeared to be modeling
a herringbone jacket.
I asked him
directions to the restrooms.

When I realized
I'd spoken to a mannequin,
I looked around to see
if anybody'd noticed my mistake.
The blonde and I locked eyes
just before the escalator
carried her away

to the sporting goods floor above.
She'd seen my mistake.
Flustered, I felt
I'd blown a chance
I never actually had.

In June, 2012, Time Being Books published Charles Rammelkamp's collection of poems about missionaries in a leper colony in Vietnam during the war, entitled *Fusen Bakudan* ("Balloon Bombs" in Japanese). He edita an online literary journal called *The Potomac* - <http://thepotomacjournal.com/> and is also a fiction editor for *The Pedestal*, <http://www.thepedestalmagazine.com>.