

## Three Poems by Bernice Rendrick

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### Waiting at the Veterans Clinic

This is where the men come  
with the aid of  
crutches and canes.  
They limp in  
or are pushed in wheelchairs.  
Legs are missing,  
parts of the brain changed forever  
like the nervous man pacing  
around coffee tables and chairs,  
his tense body draped  
in a dirty white blanket,  
a leg brace glinting under heavy folds.  
The spirits of some stayed  
on battlefields 60 years ago.

Names are called,  
one by one to see a doctor  
as they were once called  
away from their youth.

Across the street  
a chipmunk scurries,  
races through ice plant,  
runs along the twisted trunk  
of an oak tree.

Oh life of enthusiasm  
and expectation  
where have you gone  
and left us waiting to be called?

### **At Peace**

Its afternoon,  
a perfect June day.  
From the bedroom window  
fir trees nearly block the sky.  
The golden squirrel  
takes a frantic run  
on high branches.  
So much birdsong, a treble  
sweet as the day  
rises from swaying limbs.  
The white canvas curtain  
on the outdoor shower  
puffs and fills like a sail  
but goes nowhere.

I came here to go away  
into the soft greenery  
where the harmless ones live.

Three small cactus plants  
wait patiently on the deck  
for their cup of water.  
I do not long for much either,  
my thirst satisfied,  
the spines I sometimes raise  
smooth now as a silken leaf.

## **Rinsing Weeds and Flowers**

This evening I pick weeds for the salad:  
purslane, young dandelion greens,  
leaves of wild radish.

I'm not sure what to feed bodies  
that sleep rigid as sticks.

Maybe the weeds know how to untangle  
our roots that choke with grief,  
that entwine, want to yank loose,  
find our strength again.

We want to grow together,  
yet retain separate lives  
where private cravings are nourished,  
and tongues will not twist  
with self-need or urgencies at dinner time.

It's possible the common botanicals  
will impress their experience  
when chewed, imprint the random plan  
of seeds that scatter far  
to enable a season of blooms. I toss  
in nasturtium buds for spice.  
Violet chive flowers offer to listen,  
blue stars of the borage plant  
shine hopefully from the silver sieve.

**Bernice Rendrick** attends The Poetry Circle at the Scotts Valley library and is also a member of Poetry Santa Cruz and Front Street Poets. She has published recently in *RED Wheelbarrow* and *C.Q.* and is included in the forthcoming *Widow's Handbook*.