

BART
Valentine's Day Commute

Maybe it was something
About the crowd
And being Underground,
Our bodies pressed close together,
My hands trapped at my side so that
I couldn't
wipe
away the tears when they came.

I heard the news yesterday in the afternoon
at work
As I worried
About my corporate survival.
(My bunker is not hardened.
My probability of survival is low.)

I was making plans.
I sent electronic mail.
I talked to New York about Important Projects.
The radio was on
at work so that
I heard the news yesterday in the afternoon
at work.

Last week
I heard Ramsey Clark cry
As he described an operation on a child
Performed without anesthetic
without the bright electric light of the operating room.

The surgeon
Had no water
To wash her hands.

I know Mothers know
How quickly children
Sicken and die
With no water to drink.

I know Mothers know
It takes a long time for an adult
To die of starvation.

And that
It is quicker With Children

I know
That disease is spread
When the surgeon Has no water
To wash her hands.

The generals wash their hands
Of the children
Who die Because
The surgeon has no water
To wash her hands.

My hands are not clean.

Maybe it was something
About the crowd
And being Underground,
Our bodies pressed close together,
My hands trapped at my side so that
I couldn't
wipe
away the tears when they came.

I felt my own self there In the dark
Under ground
Beneath concrete
Hardened bunker Shelter

I heard the news yesterday in the afternoon
at work.
I didn't wonder then As I do now
What it was like.

He said, One of the generals,
That one of the bombs went right down
the air shaft
He was Proud
Of that.

I wonder I want to know

Did their bodies burn?
Or was the air slowly squeezed from their lungs?
Did it take a long time?
Were bodies torn apart?
Were there screams?

I wonder
What it was like.

I want to know
Do children, being smaller, die
More quickly than mothers?

Did a mother have time to hold her dead child
And grieve?

Or did the little one,
Being more full Of life,
Stay to watch her mother Die First?

Was she alone then?
Did it take a long time?
Did she cry?

Maybe it was something
About the crowd
And being Underground,
Our bodies pressed close together,
My hands trapped at my side so that
I couldn't
wipe
away the tears when they came

That makes me wonder
What it was like.

I want to know
What are these other passengers thinking about?
Here Underground Pressed close

I wonder
I want to know
How can the Generals wash
Their hands?

My hands are not clean.

I wonder
I want to know

How do they keep from crying? The Passengers
The Generals

*Jackie Thomas on
Feb 14, 1991*