

# Injury

## At the Berlin Rathaus Shoneberg Flea Market

Ingrid de Kok

All the dolls are bald.  
Some heads are porcelain  
some straw-stuffed cotton  
others rubbery, cold.

A few are blind,  
several stare across embroidered thread.  
Some marble eyes, cobalt blue,  
cannot close or cry.

If they had souls or skulls  
there might be something heraldic  
coiled inside, perhaps wings,  
the cauls of fallen seraphim.

Some arms are broken off,  
stacked in a pile  
for locking back if we can,  
into torso sockets.

Necks are limp, held by string,  
almost new-born floppy  
but more like rabbits  
hanging on a poacher's peg.

Most are naked, sexless,  
but one wears  
a grey nightdress  
and that makes it worse.

I watch them tipped  
from a hessian sack  
onto a long table  
in the corner of the market

next to a stack of lightbulbs,  
plugs, extension cords,  
screws and spanners,  
other small rusted tools.

The trader smiles, wants to make a sale.  
But I hesitate, wonder to myself  
why he buys and sells  
spanners, plugs and dolls.

Perhaps he's not a specialist.  
He may be what he seems:  
a poor guy in a threadbare belt,  
collecting this and that.

If I'm half delirious  
blame it on the weather.  
40 degrees, slowing my breath  
softening my brain.

I should stop stuttering  
say clearly that I'll buy a doll,  
the one with pockmarked cheeks,  
take her home on the train.

But I won't be able to mend her,  
make her well again.  
I know that. Not here.  
I would have to hide her away.