

Westerly Articles in Electronic Form

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Mortality

I

Rushing like an ambulance
to the Casualty Ward at
Royal Perth Hospital our car

stalls and drops its clutch
on a hill at a Stop sign,
me not able to push

in my breathless panic,
the fear that drove us
this far, wife, daughter

and me. The tall cathedral
lurches between us
and the hospital, we walk slow-

ly around, derelicts dreaming
in greystone shadows, leaves
locked in chicken-wire cages,

mortality so much
a presence I suck air
like a desert wind,

then enter
air-conditioned Casualty.

II

We wait. My panic
leaps inside me in this
chapel of victims —
street girl cursing in
her blunt tongue; cops
like store mannequins,

their case losing
too much blood,
eyes spinning ...

A tow truck hooks up
our car, tows it away.
I lie back amongst

masks and gases.
This scene's a clip
from a madhouse movie —

yet who would think
to play these cops
just so, standing,

waiting, missing
their free burgers,
shaping their anger

amongst
the angst of others.

III

I am towed now,
scanned, and parked.
A toothless crone

lies beside me
mouthing soundless air,
thrashing at her belts,

one hand free
jerking like
a dying fish's fin.

I see my mother
new to her coffin,
thrashing, hands

ripping the lining,
her soundless mouth
opens and shuts.

'Taxi!' I scream,
laughing, 'Taxi!'