

Steroids and EpiPens

were quickly injected by the Muslim doctor
Nissiem into the biggest
muscle in my body; my bare, white,
glute. “There had to have been a circular
sticker on the glass” said the guilty nutritionist.
He was innocent, and I, while sprawled
out on the hospital bed, red bumps taking over
my body, causing every hole and opening
that connected my inner organs to the real world
to swell shut, was a liar.

The purple onions, drizzled with warm oil
sat in the grey serving platter behind the
glass in the dining hall that Wednesday evening.
Mixed in, the thick parmesan balls and the green
beans in the dish looked surprisingly,
edible. The rare commodity was too good to turn
down for such an underprivileged stomach.

“Are there nuts in this?”
“I don’t think so!”
The server made a simple mistake.

After the first bite,
the body was engulfed with the pricks of allergens as
the walnuts squeezed every last bit of air out of the lungs.
The oiled, purple onions that stuck to
the green beans seemed safe as they
all traveled down
the esophagus smoothly,
but after a few seconds I knew.

The server had made a simple mistake.
She probably didn’t know that the platter
had tree nuts in it,
she probably just chose to tell a white
lie. But at that moment, when she thought she could
quickly get rid of me, instead, she watched me get pricked
and jabbed with needles helplessly,
as I desperately gasped for survival.

I listened to the nutritionist apologize
for the missing sticker.
This is *not* about the sticker, I said.
This is not about the sticker at all.

By Sarah Elardo