Rewritten

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In early spring, I watched a woman reach into her throat
and pull out a book. The spine came within her

beneath vellum ribs laid endless pages.
Illness and personas mutate over time,

words take on new meanings.
Her husband said he could not guess what lay beneath

her flesh, which thoughts she tucked
into the margins behind his ear

and pressed into his palm like
letters sent from a past season. In winter,

her house was leveled by an avalanche. Her children
ambered in layers of dust. When everything thawed

she looked for their bodies but found only blank pages,
empty diaries ready for someone else to fill.

They told her that being afraid of loss
was like screaming into a canyon and fearing the echo.

An abandoned woman is just a woman.
So she aimed to have it all, like the fledgling bird

taking ecstatic flight outstripping any terror. She
took my hands and offered herself, covers open.

By next spring, we were creating a new language:
breathing, lift, light.

Poet's Statement This poem is inspired by a patient I saw on the addiction psychiatry service. I wanted to capture her healing process, complex relationship with herself and loved ones, and inspiring force of will.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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