

julie babcock

FIVE POEMS FROM *RULES FOR REARRANGEMENT*

The exercise: write a Valentine from the dead. What he would say to her if he was alive. No. What he would say dead like he is but able to send a message.

She sits at the grief support table and chooses a pair of scissors. She cuts and glues two hearts together—one from red paper, the other from white.

Words come small and true. Words they only spoke to each other when the whole world was nothing but them. Nothing but their scrap of paper nonsense and names.

The hearts begin beating. She hears his message and shivers from homesickness.

Snow continues after death. Blankets
will not warm her. She slips on
her sweater. She turns up
the heat and buries
her face in his scarf
Her spine is an icepole.
She locks the door to watch
La Femme Nikita. Anne Parillaud
in the shining restaurant hopes as he
hands her the present. She rips
the gold paper and finds
the gun. He gives
instructions and she forgets
the promise of jewelry. She slides
an extra clip into her dress
and fires.