

## Florence Nightingale Receives a Visitor · *Margot Kriel*

Don't ask me if I remember  
your father. I cut the blood-soaked  
cloth from his legs. After the Battle  
of Inkerman, men lay in their own filth.  
I ordered scrubbing brushes and beds.

The minarets of Mihrimah Cami mosque  
rise outside the second-floor window.  
I coil ropes of linen. At night  
a nurse falls in her own stupor,  
skirts stain a punctured chest.  
She is removed to England.

For thirty years I've lain here,  
letters and viceroys pass the straits.  
Your father lived with a lost leg.

Under the dome of Hagia Sophia  
a cat stalks, its eyes wide  
like the wake eyes of wounded  
in pain. Divine wisdom  
brought me here, out of whale-boned  
convention, to treat an army.  
Each crusted face and open wound,  
I bathe and wrap.  
Distant and sharp, a bell rings,  
pebble slaps the surface.  
I fall through clear water to rest,  
my head to the East.

Don't think I cannot see you.  
Like your father, you want me  
to fall in your eyes. Young man,  
I am already drowned. I snubbed  
Lord Herbert before he died.