

Trigger Warning

by **Len Krisak** (March 2016)

How was I to know?

There was no way to tell

That when we came to Philomel

Her tears would well up so.

The thought of Itys as so many shish kebobs,

And served up to his father in a stew,

Racked her with convulsive sobs

That sent her bolting for the door

And down the hall. *Tereu, Tereu,*

I thought, with nine books more

To get through.

I called a break, of course,

As twenty pairs of eyes besides my own

Followed the weeping mother in

Her dash to find a place where Ovid's sin

Might lose some smidgen of its force.

She blamed me, too (I should have *known*

That myths like that were pure abominations

That no loving mom should be subjected to).

Ten minutes later, we were at our stations,

Ready for the rape and incest coming next.

"All right," I said. "Remember—this is *just* a text."

Len Krisak has published in *The London Magazine*, *The Oxonian Review*, *PN Review*, *Standpoint*, *Agni*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Dark Horse*, *Agenda*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Commonweal*, *Literary Imagination*, *The Oxford Book of Poems on Classical Mythology*, and others. His latest book is *Virgil's Eclogues*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. Forthcoming: *The Carmina of Catullus*, Carcanet Press, 2015, *Afterimage*, Measure Press, 2014, *Rilke: New Poems*, Boydell & Brewer, 2015 and *Ovid: The Amores and The Ars Amatoria*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

To comment on this poem, please click