The Tower

Into the reflective tower I came then
Although I had no mandate and my stethoscope at home
Holding the sharded road noise through its neck

I was given
A box of toys for doctors
    A gavel to dismiss a knee
    A light that brought out blood behind the human lens
    A funnel for ears, every size compatible with the hunt
    A list of every kind of fire, each paired to a telephone

Linens ruled the backstairs
Long coats, overshoe slippers
Sheets fashioned after whales
    A weepable top-eye
Like the extinct rorquals and those living

Each holed linen paired with burstable ampules
Bleach and spirits
To rub through the eye to
    The skin

Like church art not one thing had a meaningful back
This was not church my friends were not absent I was still
In sin possibly late and it was a tower after all

A wreath on the table chewing itself softly
Like a dog on its own tail
Bells were pulled for almost nothing, just counting
Unlike year or season, the week is not real in sky terms

In the tower the best medicines
In two bags like twins
Brought together, are strong on the spot

One does not believe in them
One rather steps abreast of their system
And observes outcomes from
The oily and marine ones, the powders, gases

One does not depart
The tower is too awake
And discloses new extensions off

Its telescope spine
The color of dried yogurt

One stays then and the world
Walks out as though at large
Intensive Care

I am tired of playing
death’s white clerk,

I will stand in the glove closet
eating an orange.

Ten fat bulbs acrostic
to the warren wards.

Segment: you are twin
to endless sisters

but this buttered vein
is yours, these strings

parting your head
officious as batons.

Chest puffed with documents.
This wet parade ground

mucking my hand,
it almost cheers me:

not to be the lone
creation formal unto sludge.

Why, to be imparted
with mouth like a clock
that points itself out:  
my word, my word?

The orange warms  
in my hand.

Runnel of pepper,  
palm-glow, squalid—

less than light.  
Stirs still some crepitant

waking to gold  
as to a molar filling

dislodged, aswim  
on a vacant pillow.

It is 3 am.  
The telemetry insists.

Around me they seed  
their small bitten flaws,

the pulses there are.
Intensive Care

One might right it, arm beneath a siderail,
channel-changer smothered under thigh.

Then think again
these parts might roll back.

Beds, pinned corners clasped against
another grim ectasia. A patient prong-ended

in the coverlet, a shirt breeze-stiffened
about a line.

There are trinkets on the flip-side
of forgetting: a new study on the last days

in the brain. Words take texture, leaf.
There’s no accounting-for.

Bent limbs, sancta,
stranded loess in beds, how receptive
to revision and the dark.
See how brain intercalated

loss before it even bared my hand.

*
Looms the face of next caregiver
spinning up the corridor

like a clock in love: all hands, all hands,
a chant of sinking or circle-singing—

that dire, that dialect,
its wrung syntax lemoning the morning,

lit and sour as a welt.
Patient turned like pillow blemish.

*

Doctor, I don my day-face

like a net of cathodes, drained
of all irruption, non-particular.

Whose mask and sign
is Sun. Enter this sickroom

bugged with surging pentecosts of light,
the green tracings

of the representative heart.
Permit now its miraculous whim.
It’s called an awakening trial when the pleasanter drugs stop. It’s called bucking when the lungs and vent jam wind against each other. It’s called clubbing when the fingernails thicken to spoons from lack of oxygen. It’s called drug fever when no one knows why. It’s called elevation when the eyes can see where the feet should be. It’s called fasting when radiology foretells like a speaking goat on the blood-blue mountain. It’s called gunk when they suction the trach. It’s called hipaa when no one tells. It’s called inspiration just before the triggered cough. It’s called jaw thrust when the head is prepared for the macintosh blade. It’s called kin when they don’t shy speechless from the gunk. And when they do. It’s called labored when breath outmoans machines. It’s called manual blood pressure when you hope the machine lied. It’s called nitroprusside when the body is flushed like a cinema. It’s called octreotide when the blood untucks the napkin of the diner. It’s called a pan scan when the body won’t tell. It’s called a query when insurer and the bank won’t tell. Called resuscitation but it isn’t. Called shock when it started as resuscitation. Called trendelenburg when the feet are in the air. Called underventilation when the gas is more like the future planet’s. Called the vagus nerve when touching the neck makes the rhythm stop. Called weaning when the fentanyl hangs salivary at the chin of the bed. Called xeroform when the gauze smells like gin and tonic. Called you when it’s a question of error. Called zeroing out when they reset the machines for the next body.
The Fall

You arrive, crystalloid
Drips lounging off arms.

Single port of peridot
Drilled high beside collarbone.

Bathed in quills, rattling
Like singed paper, importuned

By pain // its enameled antidote,
Fever // its chalky antidote,

Waking // its felted antidote,
Solitude // its monstrous antidote.

Bride-and-groom sugar figures
In candied opposition,
Claylike, moody.

Naked like a ficus cutting
Your one breathless idea—parlous.

Its clear bitter jar.
Eyebrows catgut stitches—

Right down
To the shallow saucer expounding
Your ribs. Right down
The rounded fallproof bed . . .

Canoe turned dry and drumming on its dock.
Oh let blow at your edges

Your last long thought drawn bare.
Respiratory rush of season’s wind

Season’s last grass.