

# 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.

## Buried Abecedary for Intensive Care

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.