

In the Hospital **by Jocelyn Johnson**

Why do they wake you all night in the hospital,
Narrating as they check your vitals,
Unremarkable statistics for your chart—
As if you are less stable in the moonlight,
As if you've inconvenienced them with desperate sleep.

Then, in the day, they let you lay in silence,
Trusting the ticking monitors to see.
The TV watches as
You stumble to the bathroom,
Your gown open and floating like a ghost.

In the hospital
You are acquiescent as a child,
Eyes watery and half closed,
You take in half of what the shared room offers:
A narrow view,
A cup of ice melting
On a table out of reach.

You lose hours to morphine,
Urine siphoned through a catheter,
Then one-two-three- they pull it out like a bee sting.
A gaunt nurse passes,
Thick soles against linoleum,
Her swiftness makes the curtain billow.

Night comes again and
You dream of homecoming:
Flowers waiting in vases in your room.
Fat peony painted crimson,
Plump black ants lost in their stems,
And water-colored cards marked by family and friends.

4:00 a.m. in sneaks a pair of nurses,
Dizzy with exhaustion,
Eleven of a twelve hour shift on The Cancer Ward.
In the dark, they divine your translucent figure,
Turn you gently,
Whisper invitations,
Which, silently, you accept,
Extending your arm for them to do what they will.