

Poem

Night Visiting

A wallowy wet night
they called me in.
'They want a doctor, only a doctor will do.'
I take the back steps into the hospice,
tiptoe past the dark.
'The family are waiting.'
I follow the nurse's translucent finger
pointing the way.
'I must see the patient first.'
My voice tired, harsher than I'd hoped.

Supine, slither of moon caught in the net curtain
illuminates the beauty of skin.
A morbid game,
we count to ten between breaths.

Slipping from the room,
through treacle I walk
to the designated family room.
Séance like under the sickly glow
of an energy saving light bulb,
a chair awaits my all-knowing bottom.
*'As a family we have decided - antibiotics, a blood transfusion,
there must be something you can do Doctor?'*

But what can I do?
Explain the biology of death,
the magician's hat run out of rabbits?
*'Where we are from, our country, we never give up,
we pray always for a miracle.'*
Hope hangs in the air,
fragile golden thread.
I cannot compete with miracles.
'I'm sorry.'

I watch them leave, heads bowed,
pad back to her room.
Standing, I examine the filament of the light bulb,
imagine the deep sulci of the brain.
I make to leave,
but on the last step,
something stops me -
singing,
from her room,
sweet gospel, all the way home.

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