

Night Nurse

Start of Shift:

No one made fresh coffee. It is stale and cold, a film crawling from the edge of the pot.

Admission:

Brought by the police.

Blood seeps through the bandage on his neck.

His eyes, glazed, gone missing.

The search:

No knives, blades, ropes, scissors, belts,
glass, pills, pens, matches.

Check. Check.

The Quiet Room:

No pillows, sheets, vents, drapes, doors,
springs in toilet paper roll or mattress.

Check.

Coffee break:

She watches her heart slide down the sink
with the cold coffee, the last of it clinging
to the metal drain rim, not wanting to
take the plunge.

Fifteen Minute Checks:

Breathing/sleeping/alive.

Breathing/sleeping/alive.

7am- End of shift.

She vows to leave the stories there;
each one, a jagged shard in a fractured life.

Tylenol, Drano, Ativan with Vodka, Clorox,

"I love you. Your life will be lived better without me,"
can't get Mom's blood out of the car.

Into the morning:

She remembers to retrieve her heart.

Where to put it for safekeeping?

The glove compartment? The trunk?

The passenger's seat, safety belt on.

She knows she can no longer buy red roses,
cross bridges without wondering how many,
feel lucky.

She drinks in the morning air: sharp and tart, her
thirst, a hard rock in a parched throat.