

## **A Smudge of Black**

Give me the hang-head glow from street lamps, tear-drop light that refuses to swallow darkness. Gift me with jaundiced halos from votive candles. Anything but this naked neon shout and shallow fluorescent hum. One flickers, keeps pace with the bleep of monitors and infusion pumps, the hiss and suck of life support. Each bed is an ecosystem of heartache and hope; archipelagos of grief, where too many cling to the flotsam of life on linen pontoons. And it's here you've lain for nights beyond number. Nights long and illegible when the hands on stygian clocks are forever hostages to false daylight. Not a single window to gaze out upon the constellations, or god's plan that placed you here. No monthly follow-spot to guide you on the stage. No lampblack hours to give substance to this pain. Permit me outside memory; meaning beyond a tethered soul. Show me life is calibrated in more than beats per minute. Does the flow of nocturnal rhythm matter not beside balanced tides of fluids in and fluids out? Lab reports that chase homeostasis? In this place of perpetual day, one craves the creeping darkness which drips from the x-ray's edge; a malevolence to outshadow each shining cluster fuck of whiteness on your lungs. I crave crumbs of light against a charcoal sky, long-lost scents of evergreen (without the tang of disinfectant). Is it too much to ask for one small smudge of black with a sifting of stars? Do you remember we found our bearings beneath the rim of a harvest moon? And you couldn't tell if it was wind romancing the pines, or my contented sigh. Now here you lie, cocooned in artificial light, covid and staph riding each ventilated breath. Your eyelids flutter but never open, and I wonder whether the smallest part of you is sparking in some distant galaxy?