

9/9/24 – 9/26/24

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Atelectasis: The process by which the alveoli of the lungs collapse and cannot fill with air, a pathology exacerbated by the weight of the earth's gravity.

There is comfort in physics—
the cut will bleed, blood will run
down. Acid dabbing the stain yields

its hydrogen. Each lonely breath
from a baby's lungs fights the pressure
of the atmosphere. A line of cars halts

for crossing ducklings, the brakes exert force,
opposing velocity. We can measure time
in sun spins or in the hair I found turning

black to gray— I taped it to the mirror as evidence.
There isn't time enough for these small
lungs, these ribs like clenched jaws. What might it

cost? To dress the tender of this tiny skeleton
in a silica spacesuit, close the desperate
helmet over his shuteyes, takeoff.

In another world, there is no bad gravity.
There, he is alive, still. There, oxygen feeds
the delicate miracle of his chest, ever expanding.