

“Visiting Hours”

She took the elevator to the second floor
Followed by the first hallway on the left
Past the chatty front desk clerk with jade earrings
And always felt the need to comment on her blouse

Next she passed the respiratory therapist
Who always brought donuts on Thursdays
The food staff making their mealtime rounds
And the nursing assistant texting by the supply closet

She finally entered the cold, sterile room
Filled with beeping machines taking measurements
Flickering fluorescent lights on the monitors
Lines of fluid strung about like plastic vines

His eyes remained closed, two shuttered windows
Concealing deep-set reservoirs of hazel
The gentle hum of the ventilator
Rhythmically causing his chest to rise and fall

She set down a small bowl filled to the brim
Wafting scents of baked cinnamon, apples, and nutmeg
Placing it next to a pinecone
from the old tree in the front yard

She placed both on the bedside tray
Looking down at his calm face
And gently kissed his forehead, whispering,
“I just wanted you to know it’s fall again.”