

Ode to My Instruments
Lily Kate A.

I hung my mother's rosary
from the arm of the medical pole posted at my bedside
in a moment of ill-induced fear for my insignificant life,
after the pulmonologist cast me a sideways glance
in his office some several months ago
and pronounced unsympathetically
that I would not live another few years
without extreme intervention. He spoke lung transplant,
the immediate placement of the dreaded feeding tube.
The pastel beads dangle there still,
the phantom debris of some seraphic Mardi Gras,
catching the yellow lamplight and glinting hypnotically.
"It was a souvenir," my mother told me, "from Rome."
In the evenings, dinner finished, hair washed, dressings changed,
the Crucifix swings melancholically, like a pendulum,
undulating to the rhythmic tune
of the motorized pump's mechanical whir,
the pole sandbagged like an air balloon
with swollen udders of a sweetly-sterile medical grade
and a tangle of plastic lines erected to nurse me nocturnally,
aimed at padding my ailing skeleton with an insulation of excess weight,
to bulk me up like a winter-bound squirrel.
The tubes are prone to spontaneous disconnection
from my doctored umbilical cord, springing leaks,
discharging impishly like calcitic drizzle in a cave
while I sleep through the quiet deluge and wake later
to a milk-spotted floor and vanilla-soaked bedsheets.
No one informed me of what a mess it could be
until the button had already been surgically placed
in my abdomen, driving through me like a stake.
I guess that's healthcare.
I was baptized Christian and raised somewhat agnostically,
the prayer beads a nod to my grandparents' past,
the pole a cross-like symbol of the broken genetics I claimed,
but I find that omnism resonates with me most—
the belief that truth and divinity are found almost everywhere—
and though I can't speak to what it is that we're doing on Earth,
a dominant part of me suspects that it might be as simple
as writing poems, drawing connections,
and draping rosaries from our medical poles.