

Matthew Siegel

Blood Work

Beditions

You my rich blood!

– Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself'

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'fox goes to the fox hospital'

And look there he is back in the hospital
in the easy blue dressing gown, at this facility
with a delicate floral print on the walls.
He'd always had an affinity for flowers.
And healthy yet being repaired, he is back
in this gown and it is like an old costume
pulled out of a locked trunk in the attic
of bad dreams. In the gown he feels naked,
notices his softness, how his sex has never seemed less willing
to rise. As if there could be such a cause in this place.
He is healthy but writing a poem.
It is called 'going back to the hospital' and written
in lowercase, most notably the first person 'I'
which so often had stood properly capitalized
but for some reason today feels diminished.
He's writing a poem called 'going back to the hospital'
but really he wishes he could draw a comic
featuring a small mammal version of himself.
His animal would be a fox, he decides, and promptly
changes the title to 'fox goes to the fox hospital'.

Blood Work

The white sky presses a gauze pad
over my vein as the needle slips out.

The woman who draws from me smiles, always
remembers me, no matter how skinny I get.

No matter how dark the circles under my eyes,
she remembers me and how easy my veins are,

so visible, so thick, she doesn't even have to tie my arm,
but she does, and takes the smaller vein

the bigger one too easy. I don't tell her
the best to take my blood was a different woman

who used to draw blood from animals,
part the fur, find their blue tap and drain.

She lets me play with my filled tubes. *Can you feel
how warm they are? That's how warm you are inside*

and I nod, think about condoms, tissues
all the things that contain us but cannot.

At the community acupuncture clinic

the forms are long ropes for climbing
into the heaven of good health.

They are held together with a clip,
a little mouth clamped down.

There is no space to write how the cold hands
of each doctor felt against my belly.

A volunteer takes me by the wrist
to meet the acupuncturist.

She flips through my pages of blue scribbles
as I describe my complicated dream.

She wipes my forehead with an alcohol pad,
taps a needle into my third eye –

and I am almost silent now, just breathing,
as she hovers above each wrist and ankle,

a hummingbird pressing its thin beak
into flowers. My eyelids flutter each time

she taps a needle into me and when she's done,
spreads a blanket across my body.