

Matthew Siegel

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**Blood Work**

**B**editions

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.