

LIGHTS IN THE ICU

Lights

Are everywhere
In the ICU
Some small,
Unobtrusive
Those of sensors
Tracing the beating of a heart
The ebb and flow
Of breathing lungs
The precision
Of the ventilators
Others blare rudely
Fluorescent ones awaken patients
From fitful sleep
Or illuminate for the examiner
That patient who cannot
And may never
Awake

In this small room
As the pool of light
From the central station
Spills thoughtlessly in
Through the doorless opening
Two sets burn
Of a different type
Mine burn steadily
They are lit at both ends,
But steady
Yours burn softly
And occasionally
Flicker
And try to go out

Alarms sound
As once again
Your lights grow dim
Their pools murky
As they threaten to sputter
Once more
Into gloomy oblivion

Suddenly more lights appear
They are all around me
As mine ignite
A bloodshot inferno
Frantically trying
To rekindle the dim glow
Of yours
But burn fiercely as they might
My lights impart
Not even a fraction
Of their intensity
To yours

Finally
Jolts of electricity
A last attempt
To return lights
To your lightless body
But none return
No effort can drive away
The relentless dark curtain
In its final descent

Somehow I know
That everything is as it should be
And your lights now burn elsewhere
As my lights
Drained by their effort
Return to their steady
Bloodshot glow
Lit at both ends
Two light burn
In this small room
Lost among the many lights
In the ICU.

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