



Illustration by Steve Derrick

# View from the ICU

She is suddenly restless,  
her core unreachable  
within the rabbit hole  
of fear  
where light is  
shattered  
and I am  
no more who I am.

*Nights morph to days as  
pain distorts  
the strangers...  
staring,  
gazing through fog,  
cold and clammy  
as I scream...I think...  
yet no sound.*

She gags and looks  
but does not see.  
No focus in those eyes  
to know...  
what is  
or what might be  
or what she thinks.  
Disconnected...

*I scan the room  
I need to see  
to know the threats  
but cannot know.  
My grip is slipping,  
room keeps changing,  
what is that shape  
that leers at me?*

I call her name,  
search for connection as  
the beeping cadence varies  
pulsing with her fear  
her agitation stilled with gradual push.  
Sedate or stimulate?  
Depends...

*Reality eludes me,  
awake yet not  
brain is powerless,  
my body's signals  
lost to meaning,  
no control as storm of shapes  
shifting as what is seen is unseen  
then seen again.*

How can we know?  
Is this an absence of the self?  
An emptiness...  
black hole of stars embracing  
or engulfing her?  
I tweak the knobs, adjust the dose,  
always one step behind.  
Unpredictable...

*I feel the hand  
...but do not know it?  
Calloused and safe,  
warm but moist,  
hurting with tightening grip,  
sometimes limp and flat,  
connected to a familiar shape.  
Always there.*

—Catherine Fuchs, MD, DFAACAP