

Dandelions at the loading dock

I kneel in the grass
behind the foreboding structure of sterility,
the place where the mowers stall
and the scent of cut clover
meets the sharp sting of hospital disinfectant.

The hum of HVAC vents drifts down,
steady as a heart monitor.
Somewhere, a code is called,
its echo swallowed by sharp, piercing lights,
Solid brick,
And the thundering footsteps of those who run to answer it.

A patch of dandelions and wildflowers to my right
Rise up in resistance against the mossy grass.
The soil pulses steady beneath the stem,
Its own heartbeat to the ecosystem of the earth.

Through the open loading dock, the hospital exhales:
the beep of infusion pumps,
the hiss of oxygen,
a metal gurney rolling somewhere unseen.

The dandelion's anatomy is arranged with surgical precision,
a system for gathering sun,
each floret an open mouth.
Yet the softest exhalation and
the globe trembles, fractures.
Seeds rise like held breaths
finally let go.

Inside, I go back to charts.
And follow up the imaging.
I watch electrolytes and tele's.
And run when I see the torsades or asystole
I record recoveries and losses in ink.
Some return to rhythm,
some drift past saving.

After rounds,
Evening light leans against the windows.
The grass holds the shape of my knees,
a faint impression of presence.
The stem is already closing,
its wound dressed in air.
My hands hover over it.
A memory of the pulse that was once there.

—Shreya Katwala

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