

# Visiting Hours



Illustration by Claire Gilmore

She took the elevator to the second floor  
Followed by the first hallway on the left  
Past the chatty front desk clerk with jade earrings  
And always felt the need to comment on her blouse

Next she passed the respiratory therapist  
Who always brought donuts on Thursdays  
The food staff making their mealtime rounds  
And the nursing assistant texting by the supply closet

She finally entered the cold, sterile room  
Filled with beeping machines taking measurements  
Flickering fluorescent lights on the monitors  
Lines of fluid strung about like plastic vines

His eyes remained closed, two shuttered windows  
Concealing deep-set reservoirs of hazel  
The gentle hum of the ventilator  
Rhythmically causing his chest to rise and fall

She set down a small bowl filled to the brim  
Wafting scents of baked cinnamon, apples, and nutmeg  
Placing it next to a pinecone  
from the old tree in the front yard

She placed both on the bedside tray  
Looking down at his calm face  
And gently kissed his forehead, whispering,  
"I just wanted you to know it's Fall again."

—Christoffer Amdahl