

Baptist Hospital, 2020

POETRY

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I'm certain he's dying this time. I've already
complained in the group chat about the
time it takes to go to the hospital,
about his sunken eyes, gut, and kidneys.
I've told them I have too much work to do
and grief is like a dog that needs
to relieve himself far too often.

I'm certain he won't remember me.
He asks about school, calls me my name
like a teacher on the first day of class.
I am a word on the roster of his memory.
His skin looks like blue seashells under sand.
I see rocky bone and something dark,
a weed crawling beneath his wrinkled beach.

I cannot speak to a man who has
forgotten his first language
His tongue of stereotype and oblivion
seems cut to a nub of red muscle
that wrestles against dentures
to pray for me. He prays for me,
his left hand translucent and fragile.

Word becomes flesh and flesh becomes bread
that we break and we eat on Sundays.
This is the body broken for time;
this is no resurrection.
He's proud of me, he says
and points to the verse
on the hospital wall, says
I can do all things through Him
who gives me strength. ■