

POETRY | FALL 2017

Diving in the OR

By Geoffrey Rubin

White phosphorescence
Floods the sterile field
As yellow sunlight ripples
And shimmers off the frosty sea

The patient endures an ice-cold sleep
The diver stares into the deep
Blue booties slip onto Danskos
Black fins squawk over bare heels

The scalpel slices sternal
The body pencils vertical
Blood sprinkles the surgical mask
Fog obscures the peripheral glass

Ventilator inflations
Regulator inhalations
Produce a rhythmic breathy
Cooh-chh, Cooh-chh

Through the pale skin and bright bone
Organs glisten and glow
Beneath the white-capped surface
A shadow in the dark distance.

Lungs, aorta, diaphragm, pericardium
Encase the beating heart
Puffers, anemones, eels, mollusks
Surround a majestic whale

In bloody watery new worlds
Silent awe envelops everyone

The human heart stops.

The gentle giant glides.

Geoffrey Rubin went to medical school, internal medicine residency and cardiology fellowship at Columbia University. Previous narratives and poems have been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA Cardiology, Chest, Adelaide, The Healing Muse, and Blood and Thunder.

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