

...january 31, 1985...

hospital hours set for visitors
two to eight p.m.
strictly enforced –
but visitors don't come
to read the signs
they wander in at any hour
from after noon
to nine p.m. –
never really certain
of how long they have been in
or how long it will be
before they come again –

healthy faces rock the halls
and agitate the rooms
like shadows of the outside
where the outside doesn't belong –
conversations concentrate
on the fractured imagery
of operations – temperatures
and endless vomiting –
or how many cups of water
can enlarge the gut before
the kidneys enter overload
and arteries explode –

nurses doctors hover
over test results and charts
like jigsaw puzzles with leftover
pieces that won't fit –
and still the visitors
merge in and out and in
scuffing polished corridors
like other-world beings –
haunting chairs and bedsides
and maintaining outside lifelines
to the haunted inmates
that the hospital has claimed.

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