

## Operating Room Suite

Audrey Shafer, M.D.\*

I. A train of patients  
before and after  
but the one here now  
lies supine, quiet, eyelids taped shut.

II. Tubing, stopcocks  
draw sheet, up drape  
the Japanese moon bridge  
of chlorhexidine swabbed over the belly.

III. Bits of the patient  
squiggle on monitors  
shadow x-rays; inside is out  
magnified on videoscreens  
trimmed into specimen jars.

IV. The circulating nurse  
keeps her scrub pants rolled and tucked  
as if ready to ride a bicycle  
as she declogs the suction again.

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V. Too narrow, too wide  
too purple, too red  
too worn out;  
and then there is cancer  
calling to the wife in the waiting room  
pray, pray now.

VI. The medical student at 2:00 AM  
is told to sew: evert, big bites, don't dogear  
it is a small prize, a gift, a bone;  
the anesthesiologist sighs,  
keeps the sevoflurane on.

VII. Telephone, thermostat  
pillows, computer—  
the surgeon slides her hand behind omentum—  
and no matter what  
afterwards it is always the mop.

VIII. The anesthesiologist watches  
the patient breathe piped oxygen;  
hears the bellows force the chest to rise  
listen:  
each breath says  
yes  
yes to time  
yes to health  
yes to life.