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## The Snowflake Heart / Hershey Children's Hospital / Night Stand

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### The Snowflake Heart

From the hospital window  
looking down at rooftops  
the outside world opens up  
beyond the white walls  
of intensive care.  
Today's light snow  
floats timeless toward earth  
bringing motion and meaning  
absent in static wires and tubes  
hanging blankly down from the ceiling.  
The flakes prescribe a shifting diagnosis  
randomly gliding toward my eyes  
teasing me with full intention  
before blowing away in absence.  
Life-measuring beeps and buzzes  
rubber shoes on linoleum floors  
impose a disciplined white noise  
in this wide-open wilderness.  
I turn again to the snow.  
An expert on snowflakes  
wrote that solid precipitation

falls into thirty-five shapes.  
The heart is a snowflake.  
It has different shapes.  
Nature adapts to diagnoses  
a procedural, organic evolution  
to serve our need for flawed form.  
Snowflakes teach us to search  
for a unique form even when  
we know the research is right.  
Today I search for one other shape  
the thirty-sixth shape of the heart  
a snowflake falling and landing  
next to the reconfigured muscle  
resting in the bed beside the window.

# Hershey Children's Hospital

On the road to Hershey  
and its specialized cardiologists,  
I find time to doubt our directions.  
This is the first trip and it's taken death  
this long to arrive closer to life than ever before.

Our pediatrician is a serious little round man.  
His directions, drawn on sterilized tissue,  
followed his diagnosis that something was wrong.  
He outlines the patent ductus, the four chambers  
of the correctly functioning heart. He diagnoses  
my sore throat and reminds me to drive easy  
on this foggy mid-March night. He shares confidence  
only as far as inexact detail can advance  
a necessary process without knowing.

It is no surprise that at the end of the road  
the hospital is locked down in dense fog.  
The manicured arborvitaes look fake.  
Pale light fights through fog to illuminate  
a dark glow above the hospital doors.  
It is an entrance to story without script or plot.  
This is my welcome to "Chocolate City."

## Night Stand

Inside our room the Vaseline jar  
holds tight to the edge  
of a Sanctuary nightstand.  
Diapers, formula, and flowers  
present an exposition. I do not  
unpack my bag, fearing I may stay.  
The door has three locks. I cannot  
see out beyond the closed hallway,  
and hear only light rain falling  
on waste cans outside the window.  
It is six a.m.—all pretense of time  
evaporates in the darkness of night's  
long closure. Joy of birth long gone,  
I stare ahead and make a dream:  
a pink balloon falling toward land  
as I dive headfirst to cradle it.  
Opening my eyes, I see the nightstand  
its curled legs stable, carved to control  
the tight space it has found itself in tonight.  
I will break free from this gaze only  
when sunlight reaches through the blinds.

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