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Black Snake

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“Here we go. Calm thoughts now.”
You might reply,
if it weren’t for that
plastic, circular tube jamming your jaw open
so nothing but saliva can exit.

The blacksnake slides over your tongue
to the mouth’s back before writhing through
the barrier of epiglottis,
pressing soft swallowing tissues
and tautening to a hard rod against which
your throat struggles
until you’re gagging uncontrollably.

The trainee endoscopist invites you to take an interest in
the walls of your stomach, up on the screen
but your eyes are squeezed shut as
belches erupt from your gullet like wild rabbits from a cage and
those images of stomach lining awash with curdled debris
might be the last straw.

Calm resists conjuring,
panic surges, threatening to spew everywhere
while they tear snippets from the edges of an indurated

blight whose ache stole your appetite
months ago.

“Pulling out now.”

The slithering voyeur returns to its sterile case and
they hand you a towel for mopping up slobber.

You sit up, fumble for dignity and
glimpse sky out the window where

clouds scud, wild and ragged, at the rate of knots-

like life.

“Goodbye,” you murmur politely. “Thank you.”

But they have turned their backs and are
absorbed in reviewing copies of your insides.

You, a container-ship for today’s gut-cargo,
are no longer relevant.

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