

Fluorescent Lightning

by Gabriel Sage

All of the sudden the night changed shape-
the silent purple of the sky hanging cool overhead
became an emergency, an electric monsoon
peeling back Oakland just North of the 580,
where I lay, tangled in the plastic sheets
of a hospital bed, listening to the cracking and whistling.
The walls are long gone, high winds wearing
a face-mask and scrubs removed them before
placing the IV in my arm while thunder rolled down
the hall in a gurney just outside my room.
I heard birds beeping in the distance
with the bleating of heartbeats heralding
the song of still being alive.
The storm slapped on rubber gloves
and stole my vitals every four hours,
but took too long to deliver my pain meds,
fluorescent lightning flickered in the ceiling
and the permeating smell of flirting
with death dictated danger and the deep
sense that the stakes are high.
Nature always plays for keeps
and out here anything can happen.
I learned that the hard way,
with titanium holding my bones together
and just a hand-me-down umbrella
to turn toward the tempest.