

**BRYCE HOSPITAL, 1932**

*for my grandfather, Oliver Adams*

Peering down the long ward,  
my grandfather's eyes dive  
for pearls in dark, underwater caves.  
He looks for anything he can believe.

Today I can hear him tell anyone  
who will listen  
this isn't what he planned.  
He says these hospital halls are burning  
railway stations. Nurses speak,  
and their voices turn to marble in the air.  
When the doctor looks into his eyes  
my grandfather sees the whole galaxy  
whirling in the bright light.  
With each headache he hears colors  
breaking underfoot, sees a mother  
and two children, eating alone while  
flowers on the wall speak the secret  
language of departure.

Now I walk the night with my hands  
cusped for hearing. I feel the pressure  
in my grandfather's head.  
The tumor, unknown and unnamed,  
squeezes its own voice  
across the tongue, its own  
sound of insistent persuasion.

Mushrooms rise up like pearls  
on the lawns of the living and the dead.  
My grandfather and I both thread  
our bare feet through the icy blades  
of grass, so far apart  
we don't see each other.  
A strange wind blows  
at our backs and his voice  
carries forward in waves.