

# Emergence

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E  
EMERGENCE

is precious  
the way birth is holy  
breathing on your own  
you blink in the light  
you are here, you are you

a smooth emergence takes practice  
patience, often luck –  
if I can slip the tube out  
just as bandage touches skin  
and your breath mists the mask just so

it is a thing of beauty  
slick, smooth, sweet

I have been kissed within moments  
I've been hugged and asked  
*Is it over?* or even  
*When are they going to start?*

anesthesia time is a blackboard eraser  
sweeping through chalk dust

but emergence can be ugly  
you gag and buck

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anything to cough out  
that tube of life lodged in your throat

and I have seen emergence worse than ugly

hands in a pus filled belly  
the surgeon had said  
*Smell that? smells like a tortilla – that's pseudomonas*  
then irrigated, done

I pulled the tube from his throat  
and with the tube, a scream – an unearthly shriek  
his chest arched from the table  
as if a murderer twisted a dagger in his back

I asked *Are you in pain? Do you remember anything?*  
but like a shadow deepening to night he whispered *No*  
*No* he said hoarsely *I wanted to die*

emergence is hard  
I learned that day  
if you had embraced oblivion  
and I pulled you back.