

Demerol Trips

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The ceiling hangs so close
I could touch it with my hand
The bed drifts toward the northwest
the ceiling floats along, an unsteady
canopy Dulled pain
gathers all my awareness
and lays it on the pit of my stomach
like a rock I open my eyes

to see the curtain separating me
from the man in the next bed
a goose-necked urinal standing
indecently somewhere above my feet
a pink-bowed plant that reminds me
of death Eventually

it is night I think I am
not sleeping because there are voices
and footsteps but my bed seems
deep within its guard rails
like a baby's crib A nurse wonders
whether I want another hypo
I cannot tell . . .
The bed surrounds me like a little room
I stretch suspended between its ends
like a lampstand in a lathe
Something hums like a motor near my head
It picks up speed and I whirl
and turn and spin and
whirl The stiff medicinal mattress rises
against my back, and from the hallway
a light shines through an open door
very far away