Not to Be

Written for Mr. K on Ward 2B, Royal Darwin Hospital

All this is, and yet is not to be:
This darkness that is still too bright,
Refusing to be night or day; these slack
Indignities and rages that do blister hot
And then are quickly gone. This foggy
Purgatory's secret filth that ever waits at
Hand, unseen. The days that drag along
With filtered air and noise at every hour
Keening; the heavy, slamming door, the
Electronic bleat, the sleeplessly supine
Who writhe and cry and dream of doors
Left all unlocked and rent unpaid, who
Wander to locate their lost responsibility.
Ward without end.

All true and yet for you, still not what is
To be. For you shall be true seasons that
Do run their courses true; the quietude of
Dawn, the bite of midnight chill, the heat
Of blazing morn. And for demented shouts
You'll trade cacophony of lorikeets all
Feasting in a dusky joy and black kites
Wheeling on the hunt, who in a rising
Gyre loft and tilt in columns warmed with
Sun. And in that bleating's stead a breeze
Shall sigh and shake the fruits that fall and
Lie beneath the tamarind tree. From sterile
Vials your salty droplets swap with waters
From the vast and Eastern sea.

This is what will come to be, not what you now
Endure. O, place your foot upon the welcome
Filth of living earth; not sterile, but most pure.

Liz Emrys, 2018