

DEAR HOSPITAL,

CARRIE SHIPERS

I hate your smell of potatoes
and alcohol wipes. The forced cheer of your lobby,
with its dried flowers and holiday displays.
Your elderly volunteers, their kindly greetings
and inability to answer any question except
where the restrooms are. I hate your coffee shop,
its weak brew and insufficient hours,
live piano music that sets my teeth on edge.
I hate your winding hallways, signs pointing
places I don't want to go. Your waiting rooms,
awkwardly arranged and stocked with pamphlets—
*What to Expect in the ICU, When Caregivers
Give Too Much*—I shove in my purse
when no one's looking. I even hate your chapel,
which is too close to the elevators although at least
it's dimly lit. The plastic shoes your nurses wear.
Your parking garage, the NO SMOKING policy
that covers your entire campus. I hate
that you call it a *campus*. Dear Hospital,
I hate how many of your windows
I've looked through, how many hours I've spent
observing your routines. I hate how safe
you make me feel, how every time
my husband leaves you I worry it's too soon.