
POETRY | FALL 2024

The OR

By Sumit Parikh

The man, as if his nature is to chart
a river, investigates the space,
takes in the view of the still water
he must wade through every day
after everyone has left for this day,
the room still hermetic

and frosty through his dark oversized scrubs,
a distinct scent of iron in the air.

His teachers told him to start at one end
but he prefers inside-out
and floats himself in the middle of it all,

then a tiny drop of soap
and displacing the debris
in cleaning ripples.

He holds his slim wooden partner carelessly
as he has paddled through here
too many times over twenty-three years.

Nat King Cole mellow in his earbuds.
His baritone matches the melody.

His first sweep takes all the bits of blood spilt,
oblong contours blending
in streaks with a detergent laden wave,
a plum paint feathering
its color with a faint dust of the day.

He no longer cleans with a look of worry —
what does he care of what
happened earlier today.

That is not his job.

He rows his oar smoothly from wet floor
to wet bucket in-and-out, wet floor to
wet bucket, in-and-out —
an experienced ferryman

His vessel always accepts
what his mop deposits,
deposits without protest,

until the floor is clear and the bucket,
brimming with rusty foam,
is emptied down the gated drain

The song is almost over.
On to the next.

Sumit Parikh is an emerging poet from Cleveland, OH. His work melds his Indian heritage with his experiences as a physician. He has been featured by the I-70 Review, Flipped Mitten, Akewi, Orange Peel, Hot Pot and Intima amongst others; his work can also be seen at sumitspoetry.com. He is in a writing mentorship and workshop with Brian Evans-Jones, who is a Poet Laureate of Hampshire, UK, and winner of the Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award from Poets & Writers. Parikh is a pediatric neurologist at the Cleveland Clinic and graduated with honors in English from Case Western Reserve University.
