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poem

The First Shift

Victoria Cole

Hoisted out, you remain Buddha-like,
betraying the fact
that I am the one supposed to convey inner calm.
Threaded puppet legs dangle.

I remove the piss-stained sheets
with a soliloquy about the state of the English weather
and last night's football match.
Your response is a rattle.

I feed you scrambled egg from a small plastic spoon.
I cluck and encourage like a mother hen.
You open your beak and gape.
I scrape the plate clean and pop it all in.

Before the crisp white sheet makes its full descent,
it is tamed and tucked,
I take pride in my hospital corners.
My hands work deftly
To smooth away the creases.

It is only then
I notice you watching me.

Victoria Cole originally trained as a mental health nurse. Currently, she is the clinical team leader for a psychological therapy service in North Devon, UK.

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Chosen by Femi Oyeboode.

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