

Ode to the Hotel Near the Children's Hospital

By Kevin Young

Praise the restless beds
Praise the beds that do not adjust
that won't lift the head to feed
or lower for shots
or blood
or raise to watch the tinny TV
Praise the hotel TV that won't quit
its murmur & holler
Praise the room service
that doesn't exist
just the slow delivery to the front desk
of cooling pizzas
& brown bags leaky
greasy & clear
Praise the vending machines
Praise the change
Praise the hot water
& the heat
or the loud cool
that helps the helpless sleep.

Praise the front desk
who knows to wake
Rm 120 when the hospital rings
Praise the silent phone
Praise the dark drawn
by thick daytime curtains
after long nights of waiting,
awake.

Praise the waiting & then praise the nothing
that's better than bad news
Praise the wakeup call
at 6 am
Praise the sleeping in
Praise the card hung on the door
like a whisper
lips pressed silent
Praise the stranger's hands
that change the sweat of sheets
Praise the checking out

Praise the going home
to beds unmade
for days
Beds that won't resurrect
or rise
that lie there like a child should

sleeping, tubeless

Praise this mess
that can be left

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Kevin Young was born in Lincoln, Nebraska. He studied under Seamus Heaney and Lucie Brock-Broido at Harvard University and, while a student there, became a member of the Dark Room Collective, a community of African American writers. "I feel like a poem is made up of poetic and unpoetic language, or unexpected language," Young said in a 2006 interview with *Ploughshares*. "I think there are many other vernaculars, whether it's the vernacular of the blues, or the vernacular of visual art, the sort of living language of the everyday." For roughly a decade, Young was the Atticus Haygood Professor of Creative Writing and English and curator of Literary Collections and the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at Emory University. Young is the poetry editor of the *New Yorker* and the director of New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.