

# The Hospital Window

By James L. Dickey

I have just come down from my father.  
Higher and higher he lies  
Above me in a blue light  
Shed by a tinted window.  
I drop through six white floors  
And then step out onto pavement.

Still feeling my father ascend,  
I start to cross the firm street,  
My shoulder blades shining with all  
The glass the huge building can raise.  
Now I must turn round and face it,  
And know his one pane from the others.

Each window possesses the sun  
As though it burned there on a wick.  
I wave, like a man catching fire.  
All the deep-dyed windowpanes flash,  
And, behind them, all the white rooms  
They turn to the color of Heaven.

Ceremoniously, gravely, and weakly,  
Dozens of pale hands are waving  
Back, from inside their flames.  
Yet one pure pane among these  
Is the bright, erased blankness of nothing.  
I know that my father is there,

In the shape of his death still living.  
The traffic increases around me  
Like a madness called down on my head.  
The horns blast at me like shotguns,  
And drivers lean out, driven crazy—  
But now my propped-up father

Lifts his arm out of stillness at last.  
The light from the window strikes me  
And I turn as blue as a soul,  
As the moment when I was born.  
I am not afraid for my father—  
Look! He is grinning; he is not

Afraid for my life, either,  
As the wild engines stand at my knees  
Shredding their gears and roaring,  
And I hold each car in its place  
For miles, inciting its horn  
To blow down the walls of the world

That the dying may float without fear  
In the bold blue gaze of my father.  
Slowly I move to the sidewalk  
With my pin-tingling hand half dead  
At the end of my bloodless arm.  
I carry it off in amazement,

High, still higher, still waving,  
My recognized face fully mortal,  
Yet not; not at all, in the pale,  
Drained, otherworldly, stricken,  
Created hue of stained glass.  
I have just come down from my father.

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