
CEILING, FOUR WALLS AND A FLOOR

Peripheral Neuropathy—allodynia without the Greeks.
I met Jackson in the waiting room on the day before
the day they told me I had it. Casey had cut
his forehead running down the hill in front of their house.
He was going too fast, Jackson had said, and sometimes

you can't stop things like that. Seven stitches they gave him
and a popsicle stick with a sticker like a small picket sign
to bring home, adhesive souvenir. When they left,
the pale walls sucked me in and suctioned me
to the seat where I was sitting.

What does it feel like, the doctor asked. The tingling
in your hands, the numbness that came and then stayed
without warning. What is that like—its like my knuckles
and palms are tied up in a stocking, I said. Rubbing thumbs
and index fingers together, I could feel the soft nylon

CHRISTINE DEGENAARS

shielding textures from my fingertips. My cuts and callouses wrapped up, small lady's foot. They pricked me and pulled me and blood filled their tubes until I was certain I wouldn't have any left. One wince more, he said.

That afternoon they sent me home with the promise that

an appointment would be waiting for me tomorrow and a bill, like a sticker, my souvenir. It was Peripheral Neuropathy, they told me—allodynia without the Greeks. Casey's forehead healed in two weeks. But, at that point, I had trouble bending my fingers to feel

the fissures his fall had left behind. These days, I can think my hands to move, to grasp things that shouldn't be hard to hold. The oxycodone helps with the numbness, except for the nights when it nets me in my sleep, wrapping my body in dream-hemp and catalepsy.