

Editorial note:

The following poem was recently written by an SGH medical officer, contemplating his impending night call. Interestingly however, that particular call, turned out to be one of his better calls.

NIGHT CALLS

After midnight
When all the world, has gone home
and stillness sweeps the wards.
The metal beds creak
An asthmatic coughs
And the whole hospital
is like an old man –
groaning.

Along the sterile corridor
A syringe wrapper tumbles along
driven by air currents,
unseen
As the negative pressure fans whirl.

A quick patter of feet
only the vanishing back
of the houseman on call, is caught...
the darkness is enveloping.
The A&E has fifty patients waiting,
all for isolation ward beds
After the dam bursts – comes,
the Deluge
I have grown accustomed to treading water
some others around me, drown.

On call, even non-believers pray
For when courage
and stamina give way,
Science bends its head to superstition...
The HOs don't eat PAO
My partner changes yet another set of lucky underwear,
I, personally, try not to curse.

The daytime is governed by the Rules.
They stand, in black, in bold, so proud
But at night –
The Fury
Chaos bellows its head in defiance
It is giddy, soaking in, the multitude
the sick, the dying
Adrenaline is its drug
It makes the doctors superhuman.

After each nightcall
I feel as if I have died
With the morning sun –
I rise again
With each call, I struggle,
with the most primitive of instincts
Hunger, and fear
When night comes, I realise
I am not a doctor
I am my mortal elements –
I am a man, alone.