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Hospital Corridor

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THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

I passed her in the hall today.
A body on a gurney in the hallway.

Flat, like a sleeve on a pressboard,
as though she were trying to melt into
the slice of a mattress beneath her.
A body on a gurney in the hallway.

I don't know who left her there;
there was no one else in sight.
Just the body on a gurney in the hallway.

She looked tiny, perhaps emaciated,
and a cloud of wild hair in various shades of grey,
puffed out like a wad of steel wool
from beneath the stiff white blanket
stamped HOSPITAL PROPERTY.
Just a body on a gurney in the hallway.

I imagined her jumping off the cart
wrapping that blanket around her, and
getting about her business -
if only she could.
Sorry body on a gurney in the hallway.

A transporter whistled in the hallway.
A security guard tipped his hat toward me as we passed.
A buzz came from a gaggle of medical students
in a conference room.
I passed the closed restroom door and heard the commode flush.
Two nurses carrying cups of coffee
blazing the words "Nurses Care"
in bright red letters on white cups
swished around
the body on a gurney in the hallway.

— *Mary Kathryn Murphy*