

# APL Vacation

Survival is...

Bright red needle basins  
chunky, clunky, enclosed in  
biohazard symbols.

A bed with railings and buttons in abundance  
in a cold room with white ceilings, ivory counters  
chalky cabinets and pale floors.

The green luminosity of the intravenous infusion pump  
beeping its agitations repeatedly  
throughout the long night.

Pressurized air hissing, pushing, parching  
making the door whoosh constantly  
with each entrance and exodus.

The acerbic scent of alcohol swabs  
nauseatingly acidic and biting  
turning an empty stomach.

Long, skinny tubes dangling from the pectoralis major  
implanted, straight, catheterized,  
through a vein to the heart.

Countless saline-filled plungers,  
with ominous air bubbles that could kill  
if not held up just right.

Crisp, bleached sheets tangled over limbs  
sterile-smelling, thin, never concealing  
fallen crimson hemoglobin.

Bone marrow sucked through a syringe  
purplish, brownish, red  
filched from the ilium.

The hiss through teeth of agony  
gasping, rasping, hyperventilating  
overused pulmonary lobes.

Survival is...

Enduring it all  
and considerably more  
to hear the term “cured”  
to get to go home.

*Ash Cook*