**Behind the Curtain Wall**

Elisabeth Harrahy

My daughter’s heartbeat punctuates the air

of the emergency room, where she lies on a bed,

metal guardrail down. I watch the monitor

as it vacillates between 54 and 48, the alarm

beeping each time it dips below 50, though

no one comes running to her rescue.

I sit in a plastic chair beside her, while we wait

for test results. Comprehensive metabolic panel,

thyroid stimulating hormone, orthostatic

hypotension swim on the paper in my

shaky hands. I don’t understand

how we got here. How she got here—

89 lbs at 17 years. She is the one who loved gifts

of bricks of Vermont cheddar, trips to Dairy Queen

for Oreo Blizzards. The most powerful girl

on the soccer field. Later today, I will admit her

to an inpatient program for eating disorders.

The automatic blood pressure cuff for toddlers

tightens around her upper arm and the machine ticks

a countdown until 88 over 46 flashes red

on the screen. I want to scream. No. I want

to take her in my arms and nurse her, with vanilla

milk and chocolate ice cream.

She smiles a worried smile at me with lips that look

dry, and I smile back in a way that belies my terror,

reach up and squeeze her hand in a gentle fist

as if to say, “You’ve Got This.”