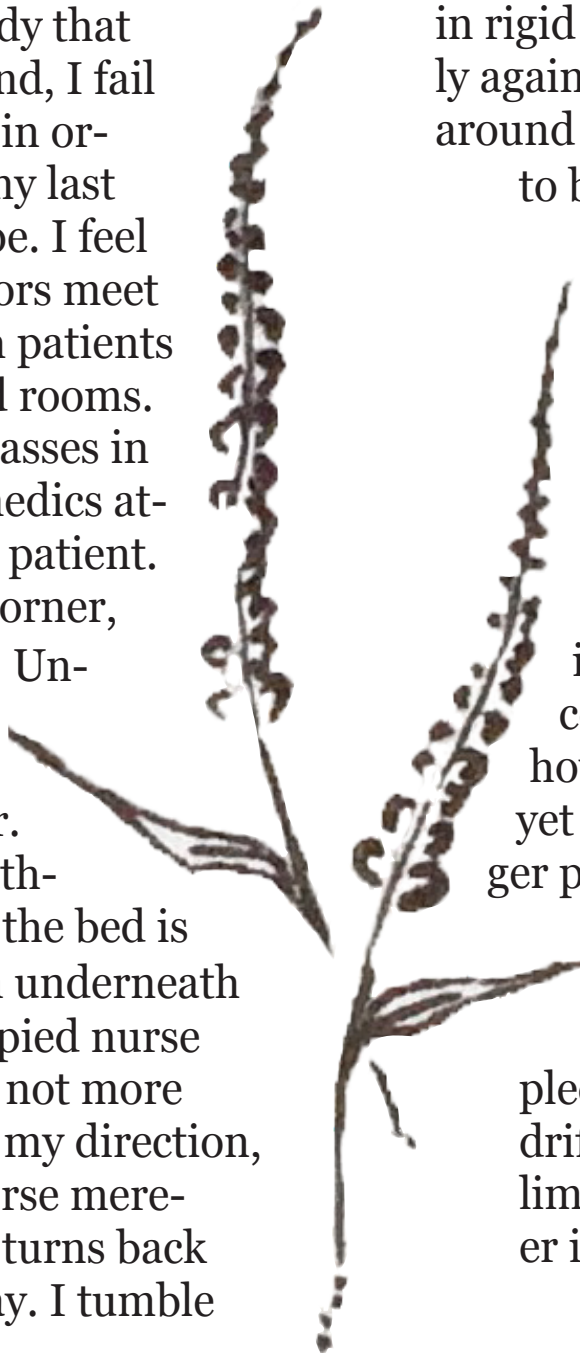


PARALYSIS

Alden Hinden-Stevenson

Slithering over my weakened body, twisting down my legs and finally disappearing beyond my mangled feet, neglected bed sheets collapse onto the bleached floor. Constrained by a body that refuses to respond, I fail to lift myself up in order to recover any last remnants of hope. I feel exposed as doctors meet nurses who rush patients to their assigned rooms. A flash of blue passes in front of me as medics attend to a coding patient. In a shadowed corner, I wait in silence. Unsure. My only company is wilted wallpaper. While I try to gather my thoughts, the bed is shoved out from underneath me as a preoccupied nurse races by. Giving not more than a glance in my direction, the apathetic nurse merely winces as she turns back down the hallway. I tumble

to the floor like a block of ice, landing on my shoulder. In my mind, I writhe and surge in a delirious effort to regain a steady form, all the while slowly melting into the floor in rigid agony. Head resting acutely against the wall, I dart my eyes around the packed hallway, hoping to be noticed. The hustle and bustle of big blue robes and black shoes cross my vision to taunt me endlessly. To wait is to suffer; to hope is too much. Nightfall, and my attention is drawn to a disfigured stuffed bear lying crooked under a nearby bed; it searches for breath as dust collects around it. Who knows how long it's been down there, yet I am comforted by its meager presence. It too is neglected, and it speaks to me as I wait. Before finally shutting my eyes, I see the crumpled sheets beside me. They drift over me as I am swept into limbo, sliding deeper and deeper into the reassuring darkness.



LAVENDER DOODLE | Lauren Jenks