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## Poems

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### **Abstract**

SMITTEN, THE STOA

# Rod Mengham

## SMITTEN

Before dawn all the first born  
died under the anaesthetic.

Paper, ink, pen and all  
the poisonous skin is heir to

started to feel utterly strange  
I still have the ticket

lights go out and this automatically  
puts hope into the hygienist.

They named a clinic in Chicago  
I have never walked into

in the dark of the stem  
although hidden now is the balance of power

the square root on which life depends  
but that's not the only answer.

The casual tourniquet has ceased to turn  
I explain to the children my nightmare

hating the mainland as it slips from view  
for the breaking surf has covered it over

with everlasting moisturiser.



- viii. It took three men to guide your feet  
your pocket money had gone missing.
- Thoughts of impeachment keep things straight  
like tiny grubs within the pale.
- The last request  
carries no weight.
- ix. The keys to your cell  
are pushed through the bars.
- x. Barefoot in the freezing labyrinth  
your friend is a late learner  
lower your antennae now.