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The Human Touch

THE JOURNAL OF POETRY,
PROSE AND VISUAL ART



THE JOURNAL OF

Poetry, Prose, & Visual Art

University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

FRONT COVER ARTWORK

The Tree of Love

ARTURO GARCIA

BACK COVER ARTWORK

Lighthouse Staircase

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Volume 12

2019

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PREFACE

Welcome to *The Human Touch* 2019—the annual anthology of prose, poetry, graphic art and photography created and contributed by the students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

This volume is a celebration and showcase of the amazing talents and unique perspectives of our contributors, and we appreciate their support of and involvement in another stunning compilation of work. But behind the evocative words and compelling images is the commitment and creativity of our editors and board members. From inviting submissions to devising time lines to reviewing materials to working with graphic artists to endless proofreading, they devote many hours to producing the volume that you now hold in your hands. And they do all of this in addition to schedules packed with class meetings, study sessions, high-stakes exams, residency interviews and resident duties! We are deeply grateful for their dedication and energy.

One of the biggest challenges of any literary and arts magazine is securing the necessary funding for the enterprise, no matter how big or small. We are extremely fortunate and especially thankful to an alumnus of the School of Medicine who, with his family, has committed to ongoing annual financial support for *The Human Touch*. Their “gift” enables us to create what we hope is and will continue to be our “gift” to the community of the Anschutz Medical Campus: a beautifully rendered and emotionally powerful representation of the artistry and the diversity of our colleagues and friends.

We are, as always, proud that this volume originates from the Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program at the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. The program’s mission is to realize the universal appeal of the arts and humanities and their power to connect student and teacher, patient and professional, citizen and artist, benefactor and institution. *The Human Touch* serves as a tangible means of making such connections.

Finally, on behalf of the editorial board, I want to thank and congratulate our 2019 Editors-in-Chief:

- Diana Ir, Colorado School of Public Health, Class of 2018
- Carolyn Ho, School of Medicine, Class of 2020
- Priya Krishnan, School of Medicine, Class of 2020

As noted, our editors have worked very hard over the past academic year and have produced a volume of which they (and we) can be very proud.

Therese (Tess) Jones, PhD
Director, Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program

I Finished Reading a Book Then Walked Down the Street

FREDRICK R. ABRAMS

Tears for the boy in the book that I read
For his innocent yearning for years
I grimaced to feel them and lifted my head
Looked in the mirror at eyes that were red
And heard my own words in my ears

I swear to remember what counts for a boy
Someday when I'm really a man
I won't put aside paper planes and toy trains
Or hide behind ledgers and pens and complain
About noise or small boys who must splash in the rain
I'll try to recall if I can

I had tears for a boy in a paper bound book
But none for a withered old lady I passed
Who swept with her broom as she muttered along
Defending her sidewalk from armies that cast
Paper cup missiles and tin can grenades
Against ramparts of zinnias
And fern barricades

And when she had swept all her battlefields clean
She picked up her broom with a look so serene
She would move down the street
Shuffling her arthritic feet
To choose a new fortress to conquer and claim
Endlessly sweeping her worlds as they came
Owning if briefly each fence and each door
Winning her battles but losing her war

There many ex-soldiers were slumped in the street
Their alcohol bottles of glass where they fell
Their day's journey over and night just begun
They can't face tomorrow again so they run
And here in a stupor their victory's won
Escaped from their own private hell

Now sirens are whining, I see red lights aglow
Steel beasts roar out from their cave
The rubber clad firemen leap onto the street
With hose made of canvas rolled out at their feet
Bright arrows of light split the night where they meet
And they're searching for someone to save

Now the neon invites you to visit the screen
As it titillates, terrifies, thrills
But don't look around you at blank staring men
And drably dressed women not trying again
There's horror aplenty and you're there in its den
As the street with the desperate fills
Isolation and loneliness kills



But for the Grace

ALICE ABRAMS

She was a stranger in the city and yet her stride belied her uncertainty of place. Walking with assurance, back straight, step strong, she had calculated without difficulty where the lounges were secreted, and instinctively knew where the powder rooms were in the marbled inner sanctum of the elegant hotel. She was alert to the white sound of the lobby waterfall, overshadowing luggage clatter, reservation desk activities and summer's fluttering high school graduates in their white dresses, with roses in hand and all a-giggle. Glancing at her watch as though checking the time, she hoped she would give the impression of awaiting an impending engagement and could remain in her newly appropriated home in the hotel lounge without disturbance. The appearance of belonging came with "the hat" she always wore. She had long since discovered the secret of "the hat," and used it judiciously. Any women who wore a hat seemed to be trusted without question. She rarely shared that secret.

Having obtained stationery from the concierge desk she sank into the soft down cushions of the couch and nestled deeply into the corner of the lounge. She was still shaken, having just encountered another self a few moments before. She took pen in hand and began to write. The notes quickly flowed.

There were two women physically dissimilar. Momentarily, there intimate gaze though quickly diverted was a cordial affirmation of one mind and perfect understanding.

An hour before, she had ordered for lunch a small salad and iced tea, having just walked in sneakers a great distance in the unfamiliar city, seeing with a stranger's eyes the minute details ordinarily made invisible by familiarity and one's normal preoccupation. The second level outdoor cafe was in a park-like harbor community. The architecture was striking. The anchored sailboats added color accents to the background and the breeze cooled the air, saturated with humidity and humanity. The salad and iced tea proved refreshing. Her eyes wandered between the insightful comments on the page of a newly published book she was reading, the crisp salad and the passing images below.

Enjoying the pleasure of the moment, a woman, perhaps fifty, was rummaging in the park's trash can below. Finding a pop can with a straw in it, surreptitiously she retrieved it and walked away sipping. She apparently was returning to a shade tree under which three white plastic garbage bags were stuffed with what might have remained of her life. Then she lay down on her stomach, with her legs playfully bent back, as though she were twenty and frolicking on the beach. Her clothes were in disarray, her hair askew. She was long past the dreams of a twenty year-old. Retrieving a pristine white book from a plastic bag she placed it on the grass, sipped from the dredged amphora, read, turned the page, read again and then with pencil in hand, began writing. What she wrote was privileged. An inquiry was not to be part of the moment.

On the second level, the silent observer requested the waiter to box the remaining roll and salad then asked that a plastic fork, knife and napkin be included. He noted, "What a lovely day for a picnic." "Yes," she acknowledged. Especially, she thought, under a shade tree, reading and writing in a pristine white book. With some apprehension, she negotiated the narrow rear spiral fire escape staircase down to the tree below. Then kneeling near her, made an offer.

"I just had lunch and couldn't quite finish it, perhaps you might enjoy it?"

The woman put down her pencil, closed her book and reached out with both hands. Accepting it graciously, she smiled, saying simply, "Thank you."

For an instant, the bearer of the remaining food thought the woman was partially blind, not quite able to focus on who had suddenly spoken to her out of the blur of passing humanity. Of course they both could see.

As she stretched upon the cool grass under her belly it felt good. She could smell the grass and the dirt. It was a sweet smell. Her drink was warm. The treasure of a rescued pop can, especially with a straw, was a real find. She hadn't found much in today's trash. It should have been a good day for that, a beautiful Sunday near the water with lots of people leaving over bits and pieces of lunch. Tomorrow it would rain. It would be more difficult. Retrieving her white journal from the plastic bag, she began reading yesterday's story.

Of course, today's was a different story. Tomorrow it would rain. That would be another story. Did it rain yesterday? She couldn't remember. She liked being in the crowded park. It was noisy and mixed up. She was unnoticed. She belonged. If it rains tomorrow the grass will be wet. Today was Sunday and the sun was shining and lots of people were around and the grass was cool and dry. Big people, little ones, pushy boys and giggly girls, crying babies, barking dogs, skate boarders, rollerbladers— this and the warm pop can with a straw made the day a good one.

continued on next page...

She tried to remember the good things that happened yesterday. She couldn't remember. What did the white book say about yesterday? She flipped through the pages, but couldn't find it. Where was yesterday? Where did it go? Maybe it's in tomorrow's page. She'd find it, maybe not just now, but soon. She'd wait a while and it would just show up. Yes, she'd just wait a while. The sun shone just above her. She saw the shadow of her head on the empty page. She must have just drawn the shadow on the page. It was a good shadow. It was a magic shadow because it moved when she did. If she turned to the right, it turned to the right. If she turned to the left it turned to the left. It was surely a magic shadow. She was a good artist. She remembered them telling her that. They would give her brown paper and a red crayon. She wanted a blue one, but she only got a red one. If she was nice to that girl over there maybe they could trade. Red and blue were better than just red or blue. She remembered that day. Was that yesterday? Was that the good day she remembered? The sun made patterns on the white page. She looked up at the tree umbrella overhead and saw sparkling diamonds shining through the leaves. It was so beautiful. It was a good day looking through the sparkling leaves. The sparkles danced. She thought about rolling over and looking at the sky through the sparkles, but it wouldn't be safe lying on her back. Her neck hurt from looking up while still on her belly, but she was afraid to lie on her back. Don't think about it. Don't be afraid and it will be a good day. Her eyes were still stinging from looking at the sun through the leaves. She saw only flickering spots. Her neck was hurting from looking up so long.

The lady spoke, "I just had lunch and couldn't quite finish it, perhaps you might enjoy it?"

She couldn't quite see who had said that. She put down her pencil, closed her book and reached out with both hands. Graciously accepting it, she smiled simply and said "Thank you." Yes, today is a good day. I'll try to remember this. The salad was cold and the roll had butter on it. There even was a fork, a knife and a paper napkin. She'd take care not to mess up the napkin too much and save it in the plastic bag for tomorrow, even though it was going to rain. She was having a magic picnic under a magic tree. She could see her magic shadow on the plate. Tomorrow it's going to rain, but today is a good day. I'll write that in my book so I'll remember because tomorrow it's going to rain.



Alzheimer's

JASMINE ARNEJA

I didn't know him, but
The curves of his nose seemed familiar
Like I have let my fingers roll down on them.
Somehow, I knew
Just how he wipes the beads of sweat across his forehead
Using the back of his hands.
He is holding flowers, and I am not sure why,
But a flutter tickles my heart.
I don't know his name,
He stands there saying hello, like he's known me forever!
I'm not sure if I recognize,
Yet I wave back.
As he sits across the couch, asking me how I was
I felt a funny little tingling in my stomach
He tells me stories, I don't know whose
I like his voice, so I let him go on.
His eyes become tiny when he laughs
sparkling like the silver lining
Strangely, I felt as if I had smiled at them before
He speaks of people and places I've never heard
And speaks of adventures we've been on
I am not sure if I know what he means
But I want him to keep talking for hours
Because he feels like.... Home



My People

MORGAN ALLRED

My people,
We have got to do better...
My people...
Those who look upon me with hope laced across their faces.
Those who leer in my peripheral as I ignore their disgraces.
The Americans bred in this melting pot of racist races.
I am them...
For they are who made this...

My People!!!
We have got to do better...
The problem is more
than the discrimination we are facin'
It is derived from fittin' the position
of the stereotype we are placed in.
My interactions with different races
is dependent upon their expectations.
I must switch faces...
To fit,
This is the worst of it,
stereotypical categorizations!
We are each an individual, uniquely amazing.
Yet we remain complacent
And don't expand past the boundary
That is holding whites and blacks back.
We just accept standardization,
Of checking the boxes next to the culture we relate with
Then acting as if we must uphold
The thoughts, speech and actions pulled
From the culture to which we've taken.

My People...
We have got to do better...

Neither culture which I reflect
Has viewed me as a whole individual
To which they can connect.
With one I am the whitest colored brother
My vocabulary broad
With proper sentences
and this reflects

The other part of my helix
Who see me to be a novelty
Who must be watched
Unless something goes missing after I have left.
Still I must admit I am uniquely blessed.
As an individual sowed
From two cultures I am bestowed
With a unique respect
Of people, all people,
And know freedom of speech
And belief are righteous concepts.
And freedom of expression
Does not mean you know
Who I am
In the words of one breath.

I am of a separate collective
that's been injected
Into an infectious society
Rejective
Of separate perspectives.
The people hemmed within
Cling to that which they are most receptive.
Falling into the deception
Of believing what's most widely accepted.
They are afraid to become a fray
Of the ideas portrayed
In the braid of the rope to which they are connected.
So of course my unique-ness is rejected.
And it's in the rejectors compunction
That I am reflected.

My people..
We have got to do better.



Poetic Diatribe

MORGAN ALLRED

I'm out to make everything,
shake everything,
the very foundations of this earth;
quake everything.

Your thoughts,
biased or not,
are upon what this poem is wrought.
Hopefully what this rhyme has caught.
A power to reconstrue views
what my intelligent charm has brought.
Now hear me out,
'bout what I've been taught,
What I've let in when my door was knocked.
What I've let through when my walls have dropped.
You need to lead your life with a fight
without it being said it's fought.
Using have as not, using give as got.
You can unravel your soul
and wrap your troubles in a knot.
You don't row with the flow
when you ro like a bot.
Using more as less and many as few
You will brighten the world you view.
As clouds part and mountains tumble before you
new ideas will be clear
and have no fear
for fear controls all that you do.
If you choose to pursue
the goals that drive you,
with no worry or rue,
regardless of the outcome
instead of saying "I want to"
You may proudly declare "I do"
Step with integrity and pride
and even if in your soul doubt resides
see it for what it is
and stare it in its eyes.
For doubt is fear
and we don't allow that round here.

Deep inside
Where you are defined
Where your hope, aspirations and liberation lie.
You may falter as you strive for your prize
but know that even if you fail
opportunity is at failures side
encouraging you not to give up
but to get up and try;
an infinite more times.
Dampen your determination.
Embolden your initiative.
Reinforce your resolve.
Spread your wings and fly.
In your uplifting winds of success
you will victoriously rise.



Someday, I Will Sign This

ANONYMOUS

Today, she compliments me
on my compassion with patients,
My smile,
My lighthearted, quick wit.
I've had so much practice.
It is all genuine,
But I am also hiding.
Even my well-attuned and present spouse
Hasn't noticed.

Inside I can't stop thinking about
Death.

Third Eye Blind's song "Jumper" plays
in loop,
in my brain,
day and night,
as it has for the past
9 months.

I feel like a failure.

I haven't been able to manage
These morose feelings that have fallen
to indescribable and seemingly unfamiliar depths.

I have waited
too long.

I finally go back to my psychiatrist
Report that I have all 9 criteria for depression.
Yet I am shocked from my years of denial by his diagnosis.

I'm having another recurrence of
major depressive disorder.

I pay close attention to my practice,
My patients, their responses to me,
And I more closely follow up
on their outcomes.

I don't ever want to practice if
I am unsafe to do so.
But, would I be able to tell?

If a colleague feels
I am unsafe or making mistakes,

I would desperately want someone
to tell me.

I know that I am not
Alone
Baffled by the stigma that still exists
I'm in treatment
Yet otherwise

I sit in silence.

I am your attending, your teacher,
Your colleague, your friend,
Your doctor,

You just don't know it... yet.



TACS

SARAH BARDWELL

At about 2:35am the Trauma pager went off
that particular pitch that = ACTIVATION
One officer shot
The shooter
also shot
no others injured
and a frantic urgency that was special for our boys in blue

To me,
two weeks wet footed into the third year
usually in the way and also inadequate,
the ED looked just as crazy as it always did
the old knife and gun club on a Friday after bar close
1:2 of handcuffed/drunk/homeless persons:hallway
and Trauma 1 bumping non stop
green, purple, red, black, maroon, both blues and navy all present (scrubs for MD,
radiology, lab, respiratory therapist, ED tech, RN/CNA and environmental services
respectively)
paramedics and badges
on deck.
No one has had a chance to get tired tonight.

My feet hurt
I'm as old as some of the attendings
I know less about what is going on than Jean with registration

The cop:

1. Was shot in the mid lateral thigh
2. Was pink
3. Gave a firm handshake
4. Was surrounded by nearly half of the 6th district
5. And was full of almost all of his blood

I didn't see the shooter until later

The shooter:

1. Didn't have any obvious bullet holes
2. Was an ashen black
3. Died split open from spine to sternum with his heart flopped at the back of his thorax like deflated basket ball thrown in the corner of the closet
4. Was surrounded by just me. . . and an intern who showed me how rough and ragged you could sew a man's chest back together when you were only trying to keep his organs inside as he is wheeled down the hall ways
5. And was surprisingly empty of blood

The thread was thick and blue across his chest

My gloves and shoes were sticky

My scrubs were somehow splattered even though I wasn't there as they pumped his heart with their fists

He was warm and naked and the first dead patient I ever touched



Mastectomy Meditations: Ruby Reality

ANNE RYAN BELL

Do not grace me with pink ribbons;
I am going deep – deep with ruby red,
the beauty of rubies, the life force of blood.
This red is real:
Pink re-saturated, infused with a tincture of black – dark, haunting;
Yet living, breathing –
Inhale...Exhale...
Dredging up beauty – the riches of healing.
In...Out...
Deep soul searching
Beneath the surface
Beneath the invasion...

In this, the month and the year of rubies, I mine depths of meaning:
Ruby, the birthstone of July
 July – the birth month of my husband – supporter, companion, lover –
 “in sickness and in health,” we are strong.
 July – the month of diagnosis, tests, prep, anticipation.
And this, a July with double sadness – loss upon loss,
 Tears for our middle son, born on his father’s birthday
 30 years ago, in this ruby-gemmed month,
 nourished at this breast I will now lose,
 even as we lost him after 18 soul-filling years.
Rubies, good rubies – the gemstone of 40th wedding anniversaries – yes, ours.
 Fresh celebratory memories – Alaska cruising, festive dining,
 joyous sharing with family and friends,
 And the grandest of toasts with ruby red wine.

AND NOW

We walk toward light of healing, of magical medical arts
And now I lay me down to sleep...

Cut through the skin, the tissue, the blood vessels
Excise the offending cells.
Suture the skin,
Let it rest – and heal.

Now I lay me down to sleep...

*Jesus, lover of my soul,
Who bled the rubiest of red blood in
love, grace and hope.
See me through the deep ruby journey ahead,
As I tread gingerly in faith
Where you have trod mightily in victory.*

BUT SOON

With hope we will celebrate healing of body and soul
and rejoice with ruby red wine...

And ruby red nail polish...

And maybe even ruby red lipstick

...if only long enough to leave

the kiss of thankfulness and

renewed depth of meaning

on the hands –

the many hands of healing and support –

boldly extended into life.

Ruby red, rich life

Full of celebration, gratitude,

and grace.



Purpose

JASMINE ARNEJA

Let your mind be the kite
Let it fly high and soar
Then pause and ask your self
Is that all? Or there is more?

Are we merely kites
meant to sway and fly
Or there is more to our existence
More than that meets the eye

Ask yourself a question
What does my presence mean?
And turn in for the answers
Let your quest for truth begin

The question intrigues your mind
Your journey has just begun
Curious in search for answers
You look at the glowing sun

He lights the world
He guides the lost
He warms the hearts
And charges no cost
He shares his warmth with everyone
Yet
Catch the light in your fist
And there is none

And then you smile
Because now you know
Something you wanted to know since long

Like the sunlight,
Spread love unconditionally
Yet
Be, but not belong



In The

JANET KIM



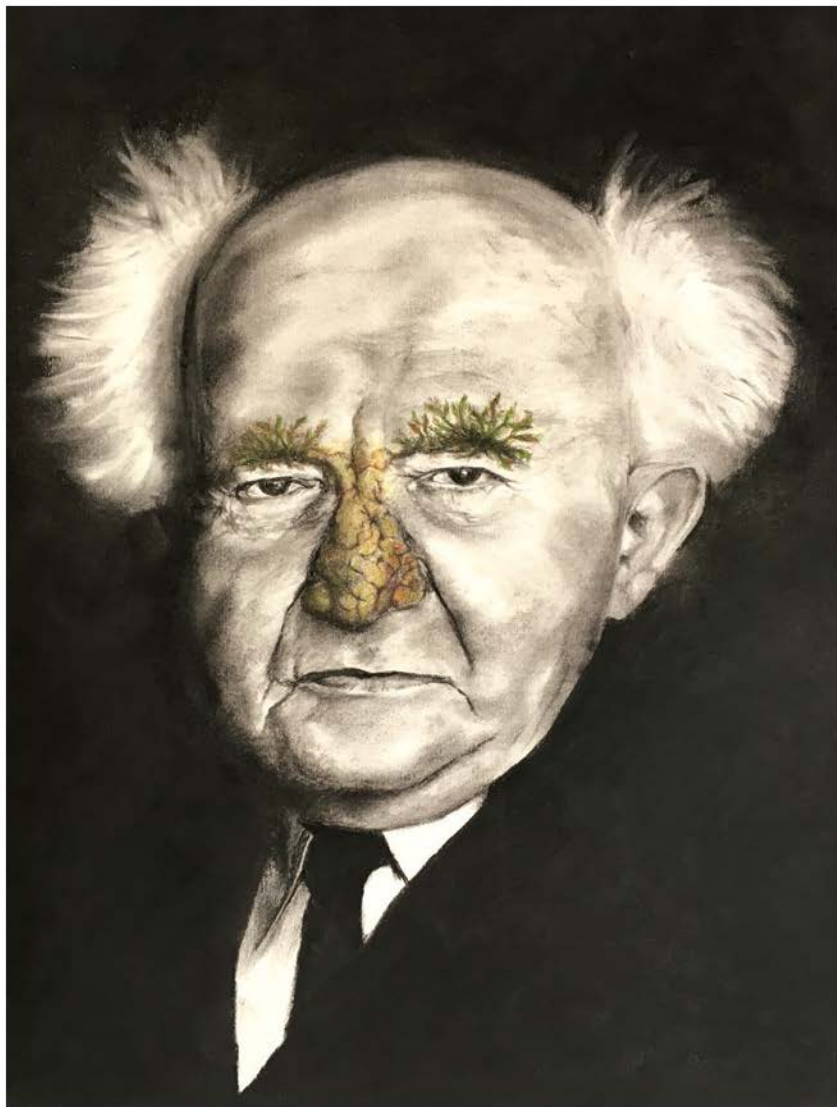
Inspiring Darwin

RAISA BAILON



Something Strange

DEBRA MILLER





Hope

OLIVER BAWMANN

As I leave the room, my eyes well up with tears. I consider ducking into the stairwell so that no one on the floor can see me. I pace. I try to breathe deeply. I feel rattled and helpless. After taking care of Mrs. P for the last 21 days, she is finally going to leave the hospital. But not home yet. Maybe not home ever again. Her husband has spent the morning assuring me that this won't be the case. After profuse thanks for all the time I've spent helping him and his family, he promised me that one day they would come back and walk the hospital halls where she received her care.

His optimistic smile through his tears is what hurt the most. His hope. Necessary hope. It's a mere shred of possibility, yet for him it's soul-sustaining. But it's unrealistic, foolish hope. High-dose IV steroids, plasmapheresis, and IVIG have only served to halt the deterioration from her so recently "normal" life. Acute hemorrhagic leukoencephalitis – a disease foreign to me and Mrs. P until only a month prior – has robbed her of the ability to walk, emote, "be herself" (to use her husband's words), or move the right side of her body at all.

As the naïve and eager third year medical student, I'd jumped into UpToDate the day I met Mrs. P and the diagnosis of AHLE was suggested by the neuroradiologist. I'd dazzled my team with my knowledge of this rare disorder, wowed them by knowing about the first and second line treatments. My pride soared initially and came crashing down as each sequential MRI showed no change. She wasn't getting worse, but she wasn't getting better either. I chirped like a parrot and an imposter. Each day I regurgitated UpToDate and the past day's neurology notes on rounds and to family members. More and more, it felt like my parroting had no actual utility. Nowhere had I read about what to do if someone didn't respond to the proposed treatments. There wasn't a section to read on "how to nurture a broken family who is losing their loved one and struggling to hold on to hope."

"I really hope so. It was a pleasure getting to know you and to help take care of your wife." This is all I can muster in response to Mr. P's confident assurances. I struggle to hold his eye contact and my computer screen beckons my attention, as if my practice note is the most pressing thing in the world right now. Any distraction feels welcome, any escape. I don't want him to see my sadness and guilt. I'm the provider; I'm not supposed to be broken too. I hate that I cannot share his optimism, foolishness and all aside.



Ballad of the Sleepless

RAE CARROLL

He has not slept in twenty years.
He lies down every night, goes through the motions,
lets consciousness evaporate into a slippery twilight,
dreams.
But he does not sleep.
Spinning through his veins, his blood cells are dark,
hemoglobin taut and domed, bridged delicately
with salt and frustration,
and dreams.

("Who's bunking with him?" someone asks,
"Let's draw straws."
Drinking straws from the 7-11, because of course,
and he sits away from them, feeling the short,
cut end
in his fingers, feeling his starving breath rattling up
the core of it to whoever is unlucky enough—

"Damn it," a friend says. He will be
too tired to drive, tomorrow.)

He has tried melatonin, chamomile, Bellsomra,
a tincture of starlight and lavender,
even danced with the Ambien walrus.
He has seventeen pillows. Every light
in his room is color balanced precisely.
They put him in a lab, strap wires to him,
watch him toss
and turn
and not sleep
and they give him a machine.

The machine does not work.

The machine makes matters worse,
breathing for him, breathing in spite of him.
His brain does not want the oxygen.
After twenty years, his body
is used to the delicate domes, the salt bridges,
the gasping and stuttering,
the noise that brings down ceilings.
It refuses to let him draw breath.

("Stop using it," his doctor says,
"Your heart might explode,
fall out of your chest, the chordae shredded,
and then what will there be
for all of us around you
to cling to?")

They put him back in the lab, take
more readings.
A different machine, they say,
and they promise to change his life.
A new life, a new day, a new hope;
assuming that hope is covered
under his insurance.

He inhales, holds his breath.
For just a moment, his blood sings.

(Doesn't he deserve breath?
Doesn't he deserve rest?
Doesn't he deserve hope?)

"No," says his health insurance.

He exhales,
a long descent.



Grip

JAMES CARTER

He remembers waking with disappointment that darkness blanketed the sky as his hands silently embraced his face. His eyelids fluttered open with a tease, little baby beats partial, partial, not completely opening, almost as if his eyes knew that his waking was premature. Delayed gratification be damned he wanted the day to begin, oh how he wanted the day to begin, oh how he could not go to sleep the previous night as his mind raced, overcome by anticipation, all he could imagine was the joy to follow, but it had to start with morning, and the sun was late.

He jumped up anyway and groped for his All-Stars and laced them tight. His glove was on the stand and his dreams were oiled into the laces, into the pocket, into the warm landing spot for his fingers and he smacked it hard, as if his fist was the hard line drive down the third base line, stopped in its tracks by intensity.

He greeted the slow to evolve sunrise with a smile, its brilliance paled against the glow in his heart and his father, after more unbearable delays, mercifully called him to go.

It was the little things he anticipated, the small things that only fresh minds enjoy. He had not lived long enough for reality to subvert hope.

Savoring the short ride to the railroad, the grimy escalator dancing with the sky, licking his lips to taste the future, he waited for the westbound to thunder to the game. To watch batting practice. An unparalleled joy of childhood. Major league batting practice. Many think it is the game, but no, its the buildup...the yearning, the excitement of unseen consequence enough to make them sprint for destiny though there seemed to be plenty of time.

All they wanted to bear was witness.

Laughing, Sweating, Churning, Giggling. Trying to keep up, he clasped his father's hand.

Warm.

Wet.

...Cold.

Reluctantly he accepts each dawn that rises from nightly reclamation of his soul, chiseled by blades of burdensome recollection...remnants to carry throughout the day.

There is no escape from bearing the unbearable. No replacement for abandoned expectation.

Childhood scars though deep, are palpable reminders of loss. He has dedicated his life to understanding loss, preventing loss, delaying loss. He now labors to preserve journeys for each patient that crosses his path. He understands that each time he helps a patient cheat death, he preserves opportunities for life, securing memories for those who love and cherish their touch.

Life is about accepting pleasures that land in our palms, while forgiving those that flutter beyond our dreams.

He seeks acceptance, just in case, just in case his father is watching.

Arms outstretched, he anchors in preparation, so that when their souls clasp hands again, they will tighten their grip, and hold on.



Lament of a Cardiologist at Poetry Slam

JAMES CARTER

They are so smart.

It makes no sense. Young men and women, the best of our future...creative, inclusive, open minded, sensitive, aware...take a break, from work, from leisure, from boredom, from poetry slam,

to go outside and kill themselves...

It's like watching people crossing the tracks, oblivious to the approaching train's warning blare...

It's like watching people saunter into the street en masse into traffic...and as in a nightmare you try to scream...LOOK OUT...but nothing comes out, just a faint whisper...*look...out...for...the...bus...*

In this living nightmare I will not witness the mangling...the seeds of their laborious effort at self-destruction will not sprout for another two decades or so....by that time they will have something to lose, there will be someone they love, someone they would prefer not share their desperation; their lives will be precious then, and they will want to live with intention and peace...pain and suffering won't be quite so abstract...

Today they are invincible. Living for the moment. Day to day. Impervious. Defiant. Fear is for later.

Fear....

will be nurtured by maturity...

In their future, they WILL fear...perhaps lung deterioration that feels like suffocation...or muscle wasting that feels like starvation...or metastatic cells that devour flesh, bone, and resolve...or drool frozen on lips that twenty years earlier kissed nicotine, but are now betrayed by a nervous system unable to control simple everyday tasks naively taken for granted.

They will fear loss because they will have procured hope.

Time will no longer be a distraction easily dismissed. Time will be a priceless commodity. In twenty years they will go from not considering time to valuing minutes so much they will insulate themselves from the misery of aging by tracking the seconds that sprint by.

They are so damned smart.

Beautiful. Rebellious. But as rebels they embrace the callousness of devices designed to addict more efficiently than heroin, feed companies that hid the risks until it captured our future and made it seem cool, so cool that young people would think they were expressing independence by defiantly accepting the opportunity to shiver in the cold for a few drags.

Just think...Scientists can't get research monkeys to smoke a cigarette.

They are so damned smart.

Damn....

Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn.



Our Revenant

ELLEN CLARK

Knowledge,
A continuous and intangible stream,
Washing into this space.
A new place.
Fascinating.
Demanding.
Reflective.

Embodying unknowns,
The dynamic that ebbs and flows.
You provide a gift,
An apology,
A question,
A tension of altruism.

Your beautiful lessons,
Speaking in utter silence,
Flowing within our team,
Spilling over and through ourselves.

Timeless understandings flooding our minds,
Beyond you,
Your authentic selflessness,
Woven into the thread of our lives,
To unravel once time takes our own.



Sensations

GARD

What if I lost the sense of touch
Would I wander like a ghost?
Unable to feel the earth
The magnet beneath my feet
A horse's dragon-like breath
Frothed soft upon my face
Food teasing on tense tongue
Hot, cold swallow in my throat
The silent touch of the hand
That lay by me in the night
The bed that soothes me.
Would I always feel naked
But how could I feel naked?
Would that imply feeling air
Brisk buff against my body
Or slimy, gritty-crunchy
Squirty things between my toes
Would I cry out, uncertain
Tears falling, eyes not knowing
Would I be afraid of life
More so than of death?
My fingers would be blinded
My hands unable to hear
My skin unable to speak
Leaving only taste or smell
To remind me of my fear
Senses-locked, yet not here.



Put me on the ropes

JAMIE COSTABILE

Inspiration hits quick and we must
take the jabs when they come. The
haymakers are easier to take notice of,
but the jabs matter most. Like many fights,
it's about gradually heaping on punishment
until - timber - the thing falls with
a lovely thud.

Jab, jab, jab, jab. You think, I can
take these all day. Let's hope it
stays this easy, this consistent.
But no, and in truth, it'd be simpler
to be knocked around with heavy blows.
I wish my muse would show me up close
the stitching on their gloves. Put one
right between my eyes, and then another
under my chin. Corner me and start
working the body.

But from my limited exposure,
inspiration, you only tend to
swing when I've lost focus
on the fight.



Ça, c'est pour toi

YASMINE DAKHAM

...

Those eyes

Those tie dye eyes

Did they know what would come?

How tied up your life would become

In the debilitating nature of your diagnosis

How such a thing would dye your existence,

Would color the way that you lived

Determine the way that you passed

How can your eyes

Your tie dye eyes

Swallow such a thing?

- my eyes miss yours,

yasmine dakhama



The Task

CAROL EHRLICH

Make a list. Again.
Capture those fragments of thought.
Watch them sift lightly
through the fog
settle for moments...
then blow away.

Work hard.
Woo them back.

Hang on to life.



RAINCLOUD

CAROL EHRLICH

A wall of raincloud
Mounts the sky in the north
Edging the horizon's peaks
In black and grey and smoky pink.
It slides noiselessly toward me
like a sheet of liquid
spilling from a gaping inkwell.
It eats the mountaintop as it comes.

I watch without words
and hold my breath
expecting the worst.
If losing the sunlight were audible
I would be hearing a dirge.

But even now
In the gloom that envelops me
I know in my bones
that blessed water will soon fall
on our parched earth,
restoring life to all growing things.
I'll breathe in humid air
to ease the dryness in my throat.
Our flowers, our trees, our farms
will wake and stand proud once more.

And tomorrow the sky will clear.
The sun will shine once more.



LOVE

CAROL EHRLICH

Love sometimes lives through quarrels,
fatigue, or too little time.

Though too often
they fray it at the corners,
then shatter its core.

With age, surviving love
glows with beauty and strength
like an ancient oak against the setting sun.

Moments of quarrel, fatigue, neglect,
become fading static

while the music grows.

The song swells,
resonates with our lives,
nourishing, sustaining us.

Love transcends the noise.



A Case for Compassion

BRYANT ELRICK

I was holding the door open when the police arrived. The female social worker was inside, seated on the sofa, adjacent to the veteran. He was lying face-up on the couch, disguised behind a mask of inebriation. Barely able to utter comprehensible phrases, he calmly engaged in conversation. The room was overwhelmed by the staggering smell of alcohol. His dirt stained New Balance sneakers lay untied on the floor, a deep state of intoxication preventing him from putting them on. He knew what he had done.

"Who wants to live!" the veteran screamed as he learned the police arrived, "Who cares about being safe!" His distress was visible – yet hurting himself, or any of us, seemed far from his intent. He was troubled, but not a threat.

Upon the arrival of the authorities, three police officers and a fireman greeted us in the hallway. My attending informed them that the veteran had suggested thoughts of suicide, but never made threats to anyone else. As they entered the room, I quietly followed. One police officer took the lead and politely prompted the veteran for his name. He comforted the veteran, assuring their only intent was to keep him safe.

As I watched this scene unfold, my eyes were directed to a second officer in the corner. His impatience visibly intensified with each moment. Finally, he had enough.

"Let me handle this," he gruffly asserted, as he dismissed his colleague. He approached the veteran, who was still lying face up on the couch. Without warning, the officer picked up the veteran's shoes and chucked them towards his face, yelling "Get up! Let's go!" He proceeded by violently kicking a pack of cigarettes and an ashtray out of the way. The police officer grabbed the veteran by his arm and forced him up.

"You're out of here, bud!" the officer berated, "You've lost this privilege!" My gut quivered.

"I can't," uttered the Veteran as he was ordered to stand. Without a chance to explain, all four of the first responders pounced on top of him. I watched as a fist flew through the air, only disengaging after striking the veteran across the forehead.

"Settle down, buddy," they called out, but I saw no signs of struggle. Confusion overwhelmed me. What did he do to deserve this type of restraint? He could barely keep his eyes open he was so drunk, let alone fight. My attending pulled at my arm, motioning for me to follow him into the hallway.

Without warning the veteran was shoved through the doorway, bleeding from a 4-inch gash on his forehead. Handcuffed and barely able to walk, he was escorted by all four men. As he was pulled past me, our eyes met for a split second. My eyes followed him as he bobbed to and fro down the hallway. The deep seated unease in my stomach was comforted by the fact he'd probably never remember how he got that 4-inch scar. My conscience comforted by the fact that I'd never forget.



Passing from Winter into Spring

With a nod to Mary Oliver

ART ELSER

The light comes earlier these mornings.
The crocuses and daffodils are blooming.
The lawn's a mix of winter death, spring hope.
Buds swell on the hawthorn and peach trees.

This is my eighty-second spring, and I wonder
how many more I'm likely to see. Next spring
I will be the age my father was when he died,
snow shovel in hand, his heart unwilling.
When *my* personal winter ends, what's next?

Will winter be the end of all except the dark nothingness
under the spring grass and the ferryman crossing the Styx?

Will I find a better world without pain, one full of angels
and see again those I have loved in the seasons of my life?

Will I return on some indeterminate day in a different form,
an insect, a tree, a cat, or even human, but much changed?

As I watch again the rebirth of nature in spring and watch
Orion drift farther west each night in the young spring sky,
I think of the wonders of this magnificent universe, this ever
fruitful world of nature, and think that maybe for me this
one wild and precious life is enough.



What If this Isn't Normal?

ART ELSER

This morning, as I started to sign a book
I was giving to a friend, I could not think
of her name. I could see her face clearly.
I work with her every Wednesday morning.
I had her husband's name ready in my pen.

That memory blank immediately triggered
the memory of a similar blank a week ago.
As I was talking to my wife, I had to stop,
grasp for a word, and search my memory.
I needed to use a word, one that I know,
a word that she finally had to suggest.

Of course, often I can't find my readers,
even though I have three pairs stashed
around the house, in several rooms.
And my car keys often wander off
on their own, hiding in jacket pockets.
Senior moments my friends also have.

But what if these aren't senior moments?
What if they're more serious? Like my mother,
then in her 90s, who smiled recognition when
I entered her room, but introduced me to a nurse
as a nephew, using his name, Richard. Not able
to identify people in a photo with her. Not able
to remember when her mother died, where she
once lived, that my father had long been dead.

What if this is dementia or Alzheimer's?



Finding Hope in the Obits

ART ELSER

I read my news online today, with trepidation,
checking the websites of local TV channels.
Today a headline about a teen shot and killed,
probably by a rival gang, the cops' best guess.
And another of a woman in her thirties stabbed,
killed by a homeless soul, probably off his meds.

So I turn to the front page of the New York Times.
The world and US news do nothing to cheer me.
So-called leaders trading boastful, macho threats.
Nature rampaging with wind and fire and flood.
Nor do topics on the opinion page offer cheer.
I scroll to the Obits, where perhaps there's hope.

Well, there's little cheer in a rock group drummer who
died at fifty-nine, or the former baseball player, dead
at sixty-eight, since I'm now eighty-one. I want more
ancient ones to read about. Ah, here we go, that writer,
I've never heard of until now, who was eighty-five
when he passed—some hope there, a few more years.

But wait, the other Obits, one for a journalist who
covered wars in Africa and died in his sleep. He was
ninety-five, but that's not all. There's a famous dancer
and also a research biologist who made important
discoveries. The dancer died at ninety-five, researcher
at ninety-eight. Now there are deaths to cheer about.

Then, satisfied I have a few more years, at least the hope
of some, I look up from the screen to find more hope.
A flyer, pinned there, above my desk, a celebration
of the life of my poetry mentor, who died this April
at one hundred and four. I do enjoy finding hope
in the Obits each morning.



Spiral by the Sea

CHELSEA TRIOLO





Golden Lava

JASMINE ARNEJA



Icarus

JANET KIM



Psychosis

EPHRAT FISSEHA

How very strange to watch someone's

brain

drift away

To see a dark heavy shadow where their

heart

once used to be

To mourn the loss of someone whose

lungs

still live + breath

This is the sickness of loving someone whose

ears

cannot stop listening

to the voices of the

faces

we cannot see

Whose demons are getting hungry with

mouths

I can no longer feed



Together

MACKENZIE GARCIA

I don't know your name, but
I held your heart.
I've held some before, but
yours was alive.
It was.

It moved so beautifully, but
it was tired.
Tired from this trauma, but
maybe also from much more.

I wish I could ask you:
What made your heart ache?
What made your heart full?
Who did you love, and who loves you?
What were you doing out so late?
Why has no one come for you?
Are they looking?
Why were you alone?

I tried to make sure you weren't alone when you died.
You were surrounded by people, but we all had masks.
Shielded from the blood.
Shielded from the pain?

You were not alone, but
when I placed my gloved hand on your knee,
you felt lonely.

I tried to comfort you
as I watched your
heart beat and lungs expand
into the open air.
As I listened to everyone say
there was nothing more we could do.

My eyes filled with tears.
I tried again to comfort you.
I was trying to comfort me.

Someone asked if I was okay.
I lied.

I swallowed my tears and summoned my bravery.

I heard them pronounce you.

I watched your heart beat for the last time.

They had me sew you up.

You weren't going to get an infection or see the scar, but
it still felt like my precision mattered.

I wanted you to know that someone cared about you in the end.

The blue threads made a simple design across your chest.

I tried to see your face before we left.

I saw it, but

I didn't know if it looked like you.

Your eyes were swollen and taped shut.

I wonder about the last thing you saw.

Maybe it was a light –

not one that would save you, but

one that would take you.

I wonder what you believed and if you wanted to go anywhere next.

I wonder who believed in you.

I wonder who is missing you,

other than me.

I'm sorry that I was the last one to touch your heart;
you will always have a place in mine.

I hope you lived a beautiful life.

That you had fulfillment and

joy and

that you overcame the worst challenges and

pains.

I hope people cared about you.

I wish I could have met you.

I will always wonder who you were.

I don't know your name, but

your blood is on my shoes.



Routines

CARRIE GILMAN

There are many routines in a house
where illness lives, many necessities.

Like the way my mother had to use mugs with handles
for tea and everything else, her fingers permanently bent.

The way pill bottles stood on a lazy susan
organized like spices in the kitchen cabinet

My mother called her assortment
the “pastel collection” as though the peach hexagons
and light blue ovals were this year’s fashion choices.

The ritual in which sunbursts on knuckles and heels
were bathed in betadine to make her more whole.

The way gauze was stacked in the linen closet.

Such routines were her life.

Every morning as my mother sipped her tea,
took her pills, I had an early awareness
one day I would miss such life preserving measures.

She’s been gone nearly two decades now.

Every morning, I find there is nothing better
than to drink my tea from a handled mug.

It keeps her from disappearing.



Feeling Old? Get Youth to It!

JUSTIN HAUXWELL

I don't want to be an infirm geriatric
With atonic bladder and colon all spastic
Old wrinkly skin that's as frail as tissue
And lips that are far too unstable to kiss you
I'd much rather be a young, dashing go-getter
Who buys you red roses and writes you love letters
I don't want to be stuck in old-person diapers
A grouchy curmudgeon who spits like a viper
Grey cataract eyeballs that can't hardly see
The wrinkly old woman who lay next to me
I'd much rather have a young tongue that can sing
Of your beauty (and do a few other nice things!)
I don't relish the thought of bein' wheelchair bound
With our ornery grandchildren running around
No viable teeth and a soft mushy diet
And if something is new then there's NO way I'll try it!
Oh, life would be grand if we never grew old
Never had to let go of the dear things we hold
So let's live forever as spry adolescents,
And never admit to old-age acquiescence!
A nice dream, to be sure, but I'm learning it's true,
Growing old ain't so bad when I grow old with you.



"It's Quiet"

JUSTIN HAUXWELL

The little old lady in Room Sixty-Eight
Just threw up all over herself
I got down a basin to wash off her face in
And saw something up on the shelf

A little, green creature with coarse, angled features
Long fingers on thin, wiry hands
Despite all my coaxing and sly subtle joking
It disobeyed all my commands

But, wait, have I seen it, before on this unit
This goblin, this demon, this sprite?
It tries not to show it, but I'm sure I know it:
It's why things go wrong in the night

Otherwise unexplained, my credulity strained
And the ICU seems to be haunted
When lights are all flashing and patients are crashing
It's clear that the goblin's undaunted

When beepers start beeping and patients aren't sleeping
And oxygen levels all drop
Potassium's rising, and I start surmising
I won't get this goblin to stop

This merciless pest keeps on trying its best
Just to ruin my overnight call
Without hesitation, it hacks my workstation
And gives all my patients Haldol!

While I treat NMS, there's a squeeze in my chest
And my heart rate and blood pressure rise
Then off in the distance, a nurse screams, "Dehiscence!"
"He's open from thorax to thighs!"

Didn't want to admit it, but, whoa, now I get it
What I'd thought was just old superstition
The things that go crazy and causes are hazy?
Precisely the goblin's main mission!

No use in complaining; it's part of my training,
This equal opportunity criminal
Each minute, each night, it wrongs all my rights
In ways both direct and subliminal

My thought all along: "Now what else can go wrong?"
A question I know not to ask
I cannot deny it, when I say, "It's quiet"
I've given the goblin its task!



Ode to Microbiology

ANDREW HAYNES

There once was a girl with an FUO
Who had visited family in Mexico
And what she brought back
Brought a two-month attack
Of fevers that just wouldn't slow

She had night sweats that drenched through her shirt
Her back and her joints always hurt
Her belly made sounds
And she lost twenty pounds
And she wouldn't even eat her dessert

She presented with pancytopenia
Along with fevers and hypovolemia
She had bumped LFTs
And a high CRP
And it seemed like it might be leukemia

No—it was just a teeny coccobacillus
That in your bloodstream can be quite malicious
It's difficult to grow
And when it does it's slow
Is queso fresco really that delicious?

Was it just a simple, old *Salmonella*?
Did she get *M. Bovis* or *Coxiella*?
Another zoonosis?
Or histoplasmosis?
No, her blood cultures grew out *Brucella*!

Though she was careful throughout her stay
Brucella somehow found a way
For she didn't like dairy
Or touch animals too hairy
But some tortas were made with bad leche

The case wasn't cracked by oncology
Or by those folks over there in pathology
The mystery was solved
And her fevers resolved
Because of our friends in microbiology!



Untouched by Dementia

STEVEN R. HEAPS

The tiny lady of the grey-haired
port-side listing head who
spends each day shuffling
along the halls of the
Memory Care Unit
approaches Bill and me,
on this day sobbing uncontrollably.

A kindly nurse ensconces her
in a one-armed hug, easing
both onto a sun-drenched bench
ringed by a half-dozen residents,
aides and visitors like me.

In his customary humble posture,
hands pressed together
with a slight bend at the waist
like a penitent priest,
Bill begins a soothing, high-pitched
song without the words that
he can no longer find as his
own slow shuffle brings him
ever closer until he leans
his face near hers, continuing
the strains of his tranquil melody.

After we move on I am again
grateful that the brutal dementia
that has bombed his memory and
shattered his ability to speak
cannot touch the gentle
kindness and love for others
that is a hallmark of his life.



Mimes to the Rescue

STEVEN R. HEAPS

"I didn't have anything with
Richard's voice on it, so
I put out a call to
his mime friends,"
says our dear friend, Elki,
who lost her husband
to ALS two years ago.

Drenched in her grief
as we sit today at the beach
near her home
on the Oregon Coast,
she misses the irony
of seeking these priceless
vocalizations from the
voluntarily voiceless
peers of her mate of 52 years.

Friends of ours for a half century,
this free-spirited atheist dyad,
one Jewish-raised,
the other Catholic-lapsed,
drank and partied and danced
to James Brown with us
through my grad school years
while Richard was my mentor.

He later wrote fiction,
took up juggling and mime
and taught workshops
about simulation and gaming
inspired by the seminal
"Prisoners' Dilemma" game he
had introduced us to in class.

Shortly before Richard ended his life
rather than burden Elki and
himself with the final throws
of the vile affliction named
for a famed baseball player,
we traveled to their home
perched on the cliff above
three surf-pounded arches
to say goodbye.

On this final visit he noted that
after retirement he had published
more papers on his
simulation and gaming work
than he had produced
on all other topics during
his academic career in
social psychology research.

In a clear, but waning, voice
he outlined his plan
to have a raucous party
for his "Leaving,"
the music, dancing, readings,
costumes and jokes to be
interrupted only briefly by
him drinking his final potion
in the privacy of a few loved ones.

When we last saw him,
a heavy blanket and gloves
battled to keep him warm as
he shrank away from the
robust 6' 3" tennis-playing
master of
the Frug
the Pony,
the Hully Gully,
the Mashed Potato.

As we walked away,
I choked back tears
(well, sort of) and
told him that though
he wanted everyone *only*
to celebrate his life
and not to be sad,
I would disappoint him because
he was important to me and
I would be very sad to lose him.
He smiled,
"I know; it's OK."

What remained of his health
soon crumbled so quickly
that he chose to exit
prior to his planned celebration
out of fear that he would become
physically incapable of raising
the terminal cup to his lips without
assistance, a requirement of the
Oregon Assisted Suicide Law.

To the end this tireless advocate
for peace and the environment
continued to develop
a new simulation game
to prod people to think about
the choices we make about our
use of the Earth's resources.

"Steve, I wish I had more time to
complete this game, but I am willing
it to a group of gaming friends
who have agreed to finish it."

As much as anything about him,
I will remember Richard's
cackling laughter, which,
along with a pair of
absurdly baggy socks,
ensnared the heart
of his bride in that
Los Angeles State College cafeteria.

If I could point out to him
that it was from
the mime community
that Elki solicited
recordings of his voice,
I know I'd hear that cackle
one more time; in fact,
I think I do.



Poor Soul

STEVEN R. HEAPS

In pre-vaccine days every kid I knew got chicken pox. We complied with "Don't Scratch!" as well as we could and a few days off from school and a single pockmark on my forehead and that was that.

Little did any of us know that *varicella zoster* was not vanquished by our immune system but left behind a guerrilla guard asleep within our ganglia for three or five or seven decades, only to erupt in the pustules of an oddly-named disease, SHINGLES.

Karen was diagnosed the day she brought me home from the hospital after my mitral valve repair. I still feel a guilt-laden compassion for her taking care of me while battling the agony of this stealthy malady. She recently revealed that she would wait to cry until she took the dog out.

Last summer she told me of a fellow walker on the Centennial Trail who had shingles on her face. My first thought was, "Oh, you poor soul." Now, despite being vaccinated, I'm the poor soul with five weeks of phosphorous tracer bullets of electric shooting pain up the side of my head to the exquisitely sensitive Sweet-Jesus-don't-even-glide-a-silken-scarf-across-my-hair scalp, an eyebrow-cheekbone-temple oval of fire around my eye socket and a left eye too inflamed to stay open.

So far, out of prednisone, valacyclovir, gabapentin, tramadol, cannabis ointment, lidocaine patches, acupuncture, ice massage, pupil dilation, and antibiotic and steroid eye-drops, good ol' frozen water has provided the most relief.

My three sources of respite have been running/walking, chocolate ice cream and making love, but fitness, nutritional and marital relationship factors set limits on these palliatives. I guess I'll surrender my 74 years of marijuana virginity and try one of my neighbor's cookies.



Fall

MATTHEW HICKEY

The autumnal hinge arrives,
and nature moves
through the seasonal arch.
Mornings cool, flowers fade,
and the days grow swiftly shorter.

The trees erupt
in a cacophony of color;
one last glorious chorus,
before the veil of winter
is drawn down on the landscape.

Leaves like multihued scarves
flutter in the breeze.
Some, stubborn,
cling to their branches,
seeking warmth from the sun above.

Others, adventurous,
loose their bonds and leap-
to ride the back of the wind,
as it stampedes toward the horizon.
The gentle ones linger;
they drop silently to the ground,
to join the blanket of color
that warms the lap of the tree.

The first frost tiptoes
in the predawn hours,
dappling each leaf
with crystal footprints.
They sparkle like gems
in the morning light,
bejeweled branches and carpet,
arrayed in frozen grandeur.

Cool breezes tease the treetops,
a gentle reminder
of duties that await.
All leaves must soon answer the call.
Branches, brushed clean,
stand as sentinels;
unrobed, they endure what comes
with dignified silence.

Patient, they wait,
bearing the secret.
each season has her moment,
sunlight and shadow,
warp and woof.
Life slumbers, but abides.



If Love Had a Name

CAROLYN HO

"27 year old female"

"Pregnant and here alone"

"Sudden bleeding this morning"

"Labs and imaging done"

"Spontaneous abortion suspected"

The words echo in my mind
Like the steady rhythm of our footsteps
As we rushed down the quiet hallway
Towards the inconspicuously marked room
Knowing what we would find
But hoping for otherwise

"What happened, ma'am?"

"I don't know, there was just pain."

"Were you injured?"

"No, I just started bleeding"

If horror had a scent
It would be a mix of blood and cleanser
Like that which permeated the air
Sharp, cloying, suffocating
As we spoke in hushed voices
Trying to get the story
From the tiny, terrified woman
Laying curled in the bed
Despite knowing the inevitable end
And dreading what had to be done

"Can you save my baby?"

"I'm sorry, it's already gone..."

"No, please..."

"We have to get it out so that you're safe."

If pain had a color
It would be a deep black
Like that which shone in her eyes
Dark, desperate, devastated
As she nodded for us to begin
While silently reaching for my hand
Asking, begging for human contact
With teardrops quietly cascading
Down already wet cheeks
And gaze flicking nervously
Across cold and unfamiliar tools
Being laid out by equally unfamiliar hands

"Will this hurt?"

"You'll feel sharp cramps—"

"No, will this hurt her?"

"Her?"

"Yes. Her. My baby. Will she feel it?"

If despair made a sound
It would be that of a whisper
Like the ones that left her dried lips
Speaking quickly, frantically
Words of denial, words of pleading
And it would be that of a gasp
Agonized gasps that almost blocked
Out the noise of the hand vacuum
Suctioning out clots of blood
Along with the torn pieces
Pieces of what had been
All her hopes and dreams

"Can I... Can I see her?"

"... There's not much to see, ma'am"

If nightmares had a single image
It would be that of a pale, tiny arm
Like the one that protruded
From the blood pooled in the small bin
Torn, mangled, unmoving
Before the lid is closed
And I quickly glance away
Schooling my face into a semblance of calm
To, once again, face her
Guilt, regret, nausea
All warring within me
As I attempted to meet her gaze
Knowing there was no other way
But feeling the weight of her loss
The weight of what was taken from her

"She had a name, you know"

"I'm sure it was beautiful."

"Just like she would have been."

"I'm so sorry for your loss."

"My baby, my little girl, she had a name."



The Young Ones

ANNETTE HOUSE

solar flare
sings in them
smoky and dense

bursting star debris
glitters in their
dance

gravitational lure
pulls the unsuspecting
into their dreams

eclipsing bodies
hide their cool essence

they are
luminosity and cataclysm
the nebula, the pulsar
the unknowable

flung into a universe
too far from our grasp



PEACE

MARY LASSITER



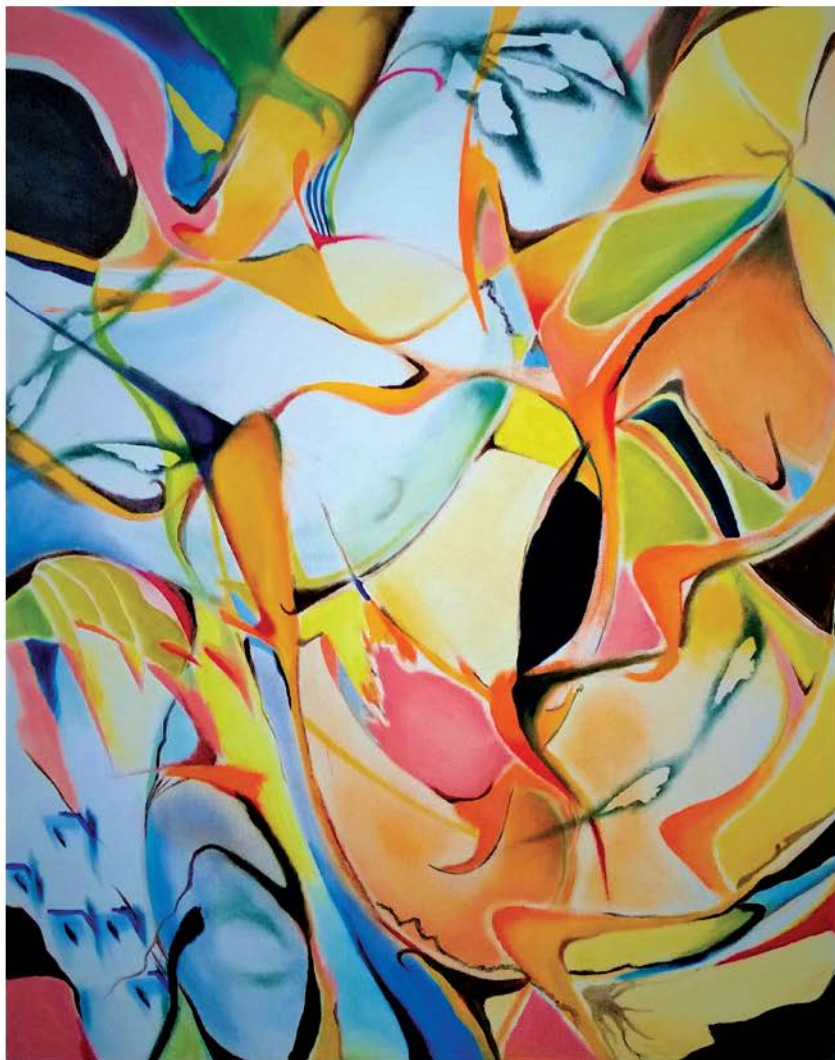
Emptiness

DEBRA MILLER



Intriguing Morocco

VLADKA KOVAR



Falling Away

MICHAEL AUBREY



Gravetalk

ANNETTE HOUSE

It used to be easier to find you
across the row of quiet names and years
near the three pine trees and the empty bench where no one sits

Hesitating, I approach you with
my whisk broom and grass clippers
and whatever greeting I've prepared for this first visit of the new year

Today, sitting squarely on top of you
I whisper softly I've become a poet
I wait for your words to rise through the silence of the soft grass and soil

I hear nothing, but I remember your wordless pauses
when, long in the past, I regularly announced
I've become a _____

In the emptiness of those moments
I heard your fear of my longings,
your protection unfolding around me, your slow tolerant smiles

From where I sit and you lie
I see the Mausoleum, in its whiteness is all the silence
that is held in this vast cemetery with its angelic sentinels and crumbling stones

The silence of remembrance,
of deep terrifying love
and forgiveness



Medicated

JOSEPH KARWIN

There's a doc bottle colored honey
beside my bathroom wall. The pills are white.
They're for my mind. Unopened. Lid's too tight.

"You'll sleep,
you'll not twitch so much," doc said.
Then,
"I can't see you every week. You can't afford me.
So how 'bout therapy?"

I spent the weekend counting clocks like change,
every minute a copper penny
spinning too fast. I didn't leave the couch—
movement is relativity. Speed is space / time.

There's astronauts for that
soaring where it's dawn over pink insulation clouds,
looking at amber street lights on Mars.
Let them be the ones who float
eating out of tubes.

Donned my madness cap and thought a poem,
told him,
"I don't want therapy 'cause I'd just out-think the shrink."

Really
I feared I'd find sanity.



Under-ripe

OLIVIA KINGERY

When cooking sweet potatoes for my dogs,
I make sure to keep the bone in, to not turn
them to mush. The bone, my grandmother said,
was what kept a potato a potato even after
you had made it into something else.
And I guess this can be true about people too.
I wish she were here, my grandmother that is,
to hold my hand and explain how to keep the bone
in a person when everything else has seemed to melt
to marrow, when the world has melted to marrow.
I watch closely, the sweet potatoes cooking
in chicken broth, the broth dancing a luminescent
shimmy on the surface of the water.
I think about bathing myself in this broth,
my under ripe skin peeling away as sweet potato
jackets do. I think about my grandmother reducing
down from brain cancer. I think of her bone,
holding her tall even when the boiling broth
took her over. Under ripe she was, just as I,
too young to understand the concepts: forever,
and I mean ever, chemotherapy, the disintegration
of flesh, goodbye. I boil the sweet potatoes
for three minutes and let them cool before adding
them to carrots and chicken, serving them to my dogs,
and boiling another pot of broth to sleep in.



Mendelssohn and Cannoli

PRIYA KRISHNAN

I met Mr. Addison in room 215 on a bleary-eyed morning. He had been admitted for a blood pressure of 220/150. I looked through the note from the overnight provider: "PROBLEMATIC PATIENT: non-compliant with several medications despite receiving counseling." This morning, I had been tasked with figuring out why he wasn't taking his medications. When I went in to see him, "I feel awful," was the longest sentence I could get out of him. He groaned noncommittally when I asked him to sit up so I could listen better to his lungs. He looked older than his age of sixty-five years, his face crumpled into wrinkles, his frame gaunt, the skin on his legs dry and cracked.

"Mr. Addison, can you tell me which medications you've been taking?"

"Hmm...nah," he said. "I think something for blood pressure. My wife manages all that stuff."

He grunted listlessly as I told him I'd be back later to check on him and to review medications when his wife returned.

Emmeline, right next door in room 214 and around my age, was the complete opposite of Mr. Addison, what you might call the perfect textbook patient. She had been admitted for pericarditis, a condition where fluid accumulates in the sac around the heart. "It felt like a whale was lying on my chest, I was breathing so hard and my heart was beating so fast," she described.

Her husband, Mark, it seemed, was trying to convert her hospital room into a home – framed photos and piles of stuffed animals abounded. She was always holding a plush horseshoe crab. "It's 'cause my middle name's Krabi," she explained, "because that's where my parents went in Thailand on their honeymoon, and my mom liked it for some reason. Whenever someone finds out, they think it's hilarious to say I'm crabby when I'm in a bad mood, like I've never heard that before."

She was sarcastically witty yet appreciative, and best of all, she was "engaged in her care," wrote provider after provider in their chart notes. She had requested pet therapy from every provider who saw her, but none of them had been able to figure out how to arrange that. That afternoon, after calling around to volunteer services, I found there was a gregarious, drooly black lab wandering the halls of the hospital. "I almost cried when he came to see me," Emmeline would tell me later, and it took me a second to realize she was talking about the dog and not about her husband Mark.

She was improving on her medications day by day, and one morning, I went to chat with her for the last time. She was so excited to leave the hospital. She told me there was an Italian restaurant I needed to go to in Denver. "I used to make my husband go there for date night all the time before I got sick," she said, "They have all these different types of cannolis. Your stomach will thank you. You can't find a better cannoli even in Italy." She said goodbye, all smiles and sparkles.

That same morning, when I went to check on Mr. Addison, whose blood pressures we were still trying to control, I asked about the guitar I'd seen propped up against the wall of his room for a few days, "Who plays?" I thought maybe one of his visitors had left it there.

His face lit up. "Oh, I do! Self-taught. But it's been so hard to keep it going since I've been sick. I feel too crummy to play and I just lay around the house all day."

"Well, I have my violin here for a rehearsal this evening. I can bring it up after a while and we can jam together if you'd like."

"That would be amazing," he said. That afternoon, I knocked on his door and he was sitting by the windowsill tuning his guitar. It was the first time I'd seen him out of bed during his hospital stay.

"You're a shining star," he crooned, "No matter who you are," strumming a few chords on his guitar. He looked so animated; far from the grey, hopeless figure he had been on my first morning meeting him.

"I like spiritual music, jazz, Rock'n'Roll," he told me. "Pretty much anything. I used to play weddings before my health got so bad."

I told him about the time I had gigged at an outdoor wedding in Western Maryland, where the couple had insisted on having our quartet sit outside and the bride's walk down the aisle was punctuated by sheet music flying off the stands despite the dozens of clothespins we had employed, but somehow we got through Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" anyway, and we still got paid. He laughed, saying, "Every musician has a story like that."

Mr. Addison and I played a few more songs, "Imagine" by The Beatles, "Amazing Grace," even some Mendelssohn melodies. His fingers were surprisingly dexterous over the strings, even with the IV constantly poking into his left arm.

"We're a good duo. I'm getting excited about this," he said. "I should get your phone number before I leave. We're going to make some money at some gigs!" I didn't say anything in response to this comment (what was the ethical answer? Wasn't this why they put all of those ethics questions on our standardized tests that were supposed to be "gimmes"?), but simply wished him a good evening.

"Thanks so much for coming to play music with me," he called after me as I left the room, "You made my day."

"You did good," said his nurse from her desk, "Good for you for taking the time."

I didn't go back and see Mr. Addison the next day. My resident told me, "Pick up a new patient. Nothing is going on with him, anyway." I went through his discharge paperwork methodically, making sure the medications were accurate, the summary of his hospital stay events written out crystal clear for the other providers who would be looking after him in their outpatient clinics. And when we walked past his room the next day, he was gone, and so was his guitar.

continued on next page...

Then it was the next and last day of my Medicine rotation, and Emmeline was back in the hospital four days after being sent home, this time catapulted from the ED to the ICU almost immediately to drain the fluid collapsing her heart.

"Pet therapy?" I said now, almost as soon as I walked into Emmeline's room, having taken the stairs two at a time and abandoning all hope of leaving my latte intact.

"Pet therapy," she said in tears, clutching her stuffed horseshoe crab. "I know there is a dog in this hospital, and I want to know why it's being kept from me."

"I overdid it," she said, her chest heaving with sobs. "I went home and Mark had had a really long week of work, and after he dropped me off at home I got really excited about being home, so then I went from just cleaning up the kitchen to doing the laundry and then to making the bed and then to organizing the bookshelves, because I wanted the house to be all nice for Mark, and then the next morning I tried to go to work and again I couldn't breathe..."

"They were trying to take me to another hospital in the ambulance but I told them I had to go here because they have dogs." Tears waterfalled down her cheeks.

I told Emmeline it was my last day on service but that I knew the rest of the hospital team would take great care of her. I promised her I would get a dog up there within the next two hours. I listened to her heart, *regular rate and rhythm, no friction rub*, made sure the skin around the pericardial drain was *clean dry and intact*. She told me to eat a cannoli for her. I said goodbye. It felt like my own heart was filling up with fluid.

No one had ever told me how much it would hurt, how *wrong* it seemed, to cut ties with the patients with whom you had connected particularly well. There were patients like Mr. Addison and like Emmeline about whom I fretted when I left the hospital, pulling my winter coat tight around me in the evening chill, as the dark tones of night inked their way across the sky. Whom I thought about the next time I played the incandescent notes of Amazing Grace on my violin at a concert or bit into a cannoli in the holiday light glow of the reception afterwards. Over time, I began to remember these patients with more equanimity, the crunchy shell of worry about how they were doing giving way to the rich filling of mellow fondness as I reminisced on our time together.



Black Canyon

PRIYA KRISHNAN

This morning, I told Norma
she was going to die,
and now evening light flickers across
the canyon walls, craggy maw at once
glossy and rugged, the sky scrubbed
raw blue, peeking between overhanging lantern-clouds,
and still the Gunnison River chisels,
persistent sculptor embodying time.

From the rocky pulpit where I stand
I frame the river, thumb and index finger pinching,
like the stapler coaxing a blackened, blubbery
piece of lung from Norma's smoke-ravaged chest,
her arms spread like angel wings –
here, winter is shedding its coat
like a molting phoenix,
exhaling snowflakes while lumbering along,
begging for reprieve,

I held Norma's cancer in my hand,
hardened and shriveled and brown,
the sickly-sweet of a rotten clementine,
I feel the weight of her lonely eyes
as I shift into low gear,
away from the looming canyon,
white-knuckling the steering wheel,
thick patches of ice-feathers
dotting the canvas of ground,
Norma's grip tight amidst her body's betrayal,
asphalt-stained potholing road
turning to unending sinew
in the light of the waning moon.



When the Storm Breaks

PRIYA KRISHNAN

The doctor pulls the sheets from the bed,
stained with rust and green,
calls me over.
For a moment,
I think her heart wonders
at my stethoscope,
but it's only the trickling of rain.

The body is light up shoes and
hair that smells like strawberry shampoo.

We find ourselves drowning
in the almost-quiet,
the drone of the flatlining monitor
so like a Buddhist monk's chant
that it scares us all into prayer.

I watch the fabric of rain,
wait for the clouds to empty themselves
of the weight of a life leaving.



Historic Structure Report: The Lungs

ISAAC LEIGH

"Historic Structure Reports provide a valuable foundation for the documentation of the status of a historic building, to educate the public of a structure's history, legacy, and potential hazards."

Introduction

My lungs are a pair of ten-story towers.
The white marble exterior is tangled with curling red lines,
like red bolts of frozen lightning.
The cornices bloom red sardonyx flourishes.

The turning shadow of these towers darken
sections of the low neighborhoods, organs, adjacent,
like a pair of hands, caressing.

One tower is a ten-story, high turnover, restaurant,
a favorite lunch spot for the droves
of overalled workers, wet
from shovelling every hour of the day,
across the street in the dark, steaming,
boiler rooms of The Heart.
The workers enter and leave on their staggered breaks to drink
and eat among hundreds of others like them,
to be full and feel the soreness of their backs
before returning to their endless shovelling
across the street.

The other tower of my lungs is an apartment building,
a tower that, unlike the restaurant, changes rarely,
where the tenants hold the memory of their place,
paint the walls, have their babies,
and remember the seasons by the temperature
of their apartment's drafts.

Brief History of the Property

The exteriors of the towers
of my lungs
are reviewed often, and it all looks sound.

continued on next page...

I hear good reviews from the tenants
and guests. I receive photos
from families in their apartments,
telling me they are so grateful
to carry portions
of the building's history.

But sometimes, when I worry, I go knocking
along the smooth lath and plaster.
The studs seem too far apart.

The fabric of this structure feels flimsy.

I wonder if the old pipes
are lined with lead, sick with some
old corruption, a poison,
that could render the towers empty
and suddenly dead.

I'm just the inheritor,
a landlord, and no builder.
I'm left to only guess
what's beneath the veneer.

Construction History

My grandfather, in his twenties
cared for his old father through emphysema
he obtained spray-painting ships for the war.

And before my great-grandfather left, he paid
a cheap architect to design my grandfather a pair
of lungs, perhaps towers as tall as mine,
with rooms I'd never seen
but whose fragments I hold
in the material memory of construction.
Those rooms, filled with furnishings and color
I'm left to only imagine,
would later drown
in spores, the furred black blooms
of cancer
as my father cared for him.

My father has a cough.

Architectural History

The curvy rooms of my lungs are each painted
by tenants, current and previous.

From the street, at night, I can see each glowing window
of my towers,
a frame for each interior color scheme
lit by bulb-light cooler and warmer.

I see swatches of thin cerulean blues,
full deep cold greens, desert ochres.
Each room is a cube of air,
and time.

Some tenants are still particularly concerned
with maintaining the honey-shades of tobacco
though the look is out.

Sometimes, I take my finger to the edges
of the lobby paint,
and peel it, further and further
what was the color of my first breath?

Existing Conditions

My older brother hopped out of bed
one summer morning,
and seven stories of his left lung collapsed.

The surgeon scraped the wall of his ribs
like a halloween pumpkin
for a scaffold of scar tissue,
a rescue.
The workers rebuilt his towers quickly,
without any issues since.

Ironically, his scars,
the marks of saving him,
look like a gunshot.

continued on next page...

Maintenance Requirements

A violent earthquake struck without notice,
when I fell from a cliff landing flat on my back.
All the tenants were evacuated,
without any casualties.
Though I hear otherwise,
I think a certain sense of trust has been broken.
Though they re-entered quickly, to resume
their lives,
it felt like an hour before I remembered
how to breathe.

When the news talks about dust outside,
I try to hold my breath because I know
how many coughs
it takes to get the dust
out of each apartment's carpeting.
Some apartment tenants are lazy,
and chose to live with the dust.
They have a way of collecting, with
or without my permission.

A main water line burst on the sixth floor,
when I caught bronchitis last spring.
Each of the stairwells
became manicured waterfalls,
for greenish water, spilling
down and running through the hallways.

The plushy red leather smoking sections
have been removed from each floor of the restaurant tower.
Every bar has pulled the ashtrays.
Each to my chagrin,
and the Heart workers too.

Adjacent Structures

The ten-story towers of my lungs,
feed the Heart building, built from red brick
that steams constantly.

Mainstreet runs north from the towers,
built at roughly the same time, with
marble lamp-posts to prove it.
Trucks,
some heading on the one-way south,
and others riding on the two-way ride back and forth
to the Nose and Mouth shipping depot nearby.

I haven't done much research
on the neighborhoods surrounding
the towers of my lungs,
but the city seems to run,
with or without my knowledge.

Other

Sometimes when the fall air is burning
the dying leaves, tenants
feel the urge to stand out on the fire escapes in the sun
and I'll hear their radios blaring from their apartments,
competing for space.

Who knows how many days like this
the fall brings, and how many falls
will come again

but, I feel the vibrations
and I shut my eyes against the warm sun.

I love this song.



Pete's Turn

DAMON MCLEESE

The first day of camp was always hard. You had to look around to see who was not there. Each year a few of the older campers did not return. I saw Pete being wheeled off his parents' wheelchair accessible van and I noticed immediately he did not look well. He had been sick and one of the notes on the turn list was to listen for new coughs or rattles. No shit. It was drilled into us from the first day of orientation that while so many people lived with Muscular Dystrophy, the thing that would end up killing them would be pneumonia or a respiratory infection.

Pete and most of the campers in Sunshine Cabin had a life expectancy of 18, maybe 20 if they were lucky. Pete did not strike me as the lucky type. I do not blame Pete's parents for their hesitation. If my eighteen year old son had just gotten over a chest infection that could have killed him, I am not so sure I would have entrusted him to a bunch of high school and college volunteers at a camp 7,500 feet elevation in the mountains. But, in all honesty I think not sending him might have been the harder choice for them.

Camp was life. Camp was where someone who might have been in a wheelchair since before their 10th birthday could come and be a "normal" kid. Families would build their summers around camp. While the daily drudgery of medicine, physical therapy, and clinics were also at camp, so were all of the hallmarks of the most perfect childhood summer: Cookouts, swimming pools, getting messy, and going on adventures big and small.

For these guys it was the only time they were away from their parents. They, and by association we (the volunteers), were part of a small slow moving family. Often, we would not see each other for the year in between camps, and a lot of things could change in a year. People would come and go, campers, counselors, and medical staff changed, but the institution of Camp, the essence of that grand adventure always stayed the same. Pete had changed that year. The disease had started taking away what little muscle tone he had left.

I was the 3 a.m. turn guy. There was a list of about 12 campers that were not strong enough to turn themselves in their beds, so every two hours one of the counselors would go check see if anyone needed a pillow adjusted or a leg to be moved. I realize how strange the term "turning," the campers must sound. How impersonal. But it was not impersonal at all. In fact, it was one of the most tender and personal things I have ever done for anyone. By this time, I knew who liked to sleep on their side, who liked their legs propped up, and was a master at getting the pillows just right. We did our nightly maneuvers by flashlight so as not to wake anyone else in the cabin and often had short conversations during our times together. I liked the 3:00 a.m. shift. Typically, there were fewer campers needing turns at that time and since I was strong enough to move most of them by myself, my peers could sleep.

Walking into Sunshine Cabin's entry was like walking into a Christmas tree with all the red and green lights blinking on the battery chargers for the electric wheelchairs. Soon after learning how not to drop someone in the shower, you learn to plug in the power chairs at night. Otherwise, you spend the next day pushing a 150 pound kid in a 200 pound power chair. You only needed to learn that lesson once.

Pete was awake. He was always awake. I adjusted his pillow and checked the oxygen tank. I thought to myself his muscles really are almost gone. His arms had folded up on themselves like a bird's wings. His legs would no longer straighten. He

was sleeping in the camp tee shirt from the 1976 summer, my first year. His hair was going a thousand directions at once, and I took the time to try and move it away from his face. I was about to head out when Pete asked if I would stay and sit with him for a moment. I sat back down on the edge of his bed thinking I had missed a wrinkle in the sheet or we needed to mount another offensive on the pillow under his knees. But he was breathing easy and his eyes were the clearest I had seen them. He thanked me for being nice, for taking care of him at night, and for always coming to camp. He had no idea how much I needed camp to get away from my own home. I took his thank you and thanked him for being such a great camper or something I did not think much of it at the time, and offered my own thanks to him for being such a great camper, or something equally vague. It struck me as a rather odd conversation, but it was 3:00 am and I was tired.

We sat there for a few more minutes and didn't say anything more. His sheets were blue. He had 4 pillows, one under his head, two under his knees and one between his feet. His bunk was in the back of the cabin near the bathroom. He liked to be close to his friend Billy, even though Billy snored. I remember the smell – actually the smell was consistent throughout most of the cabins and all the camps over the years. It would wash over you as you entered the warmth of the cabins. Stale sweat, bodily fluids, and exhaustion. The pads on the wheelchairs would absorb sweat all day and it became a unique smell, almost sweet but not quite. Anyone who has gone to camp or worked in a personal care setting knows the smell. I asked him if he was good and he assured me he was. I was glad he was resting comfortably.

I woke up the next morning to utter chaos. People were running back and forth and there were a lot of tears and general mayhem. Pete had died some time in between 5:00 am and 7:00 am. He had been asleep at the 5:00 a.m. turn. He was never asleep. I was the last person to be with him before he died, in his bed with his blue sheets, his legs propped up just so and I hope with a smile on his face. I know now that his clarity that night was actually acceptance, but at the time I questioned myself: Should I have done something different? Was I responsible? What should I have done differently? He knew, this 18 year old kid with more cow licks than sense, knew he had seen his last camp sunset, toasted his last marshmallow, and had his last grand adventure.

News of his death hit me like a ton of bricks. Pete was not afraid. I was with him shortly before he died, and he was not afraid. Pete gave me a gift that night. The gift of seeing someone close to death, who was not afraid. He lived a very short, challenging, yet beautiful life. I remember my friend Pete who showed me that the actual act of dying does not have to be feared. There is nothing heroic about Pete, his life, or his death. It is a horrible thing that young men do not have the ability to walk, to run. No heroics here. Frailty, yes. Unfairness? Check. But heroics, no.

Pete's gift to me did not take hold till much later in my life. He taught me the importance of being still, of being present and of being silent. I believe Pete knew he was close to death at that moment, and he was thanking me. He was at peace, there was no fear and no regret. To this day, I am honored to have been the last person to talk with him, to sit with him to be with him. I have since learned that people who know they are close to death will often wait until they are alone to die. I believe that Pete was not only at peace he was ready. Finally, it was Pete's turn.



The Death of the Rivers

SANDEEP KUMAR MISHRA

My mental wire renders
Images of worn out routes,
After a short circuit happened
In the pathways of daily burdens;
My diseased body quivers with its weight
The hard stitch rubbles skin-snatchers;
Leeched of life force
I have little energy to breathe;
The voice I hear is not my own,
They dictate notes in familiar tone
But full of foreign phrases,
Which they disguise as invitation;
I wish I could dissolve from memory
Or hide in my skull cave;
But it is not wise to stifle;
Then an unlearned laughter came
A spring emerges into sun rays
A Sea emerges from the death of the rivers
There are two ways to live a life
I can pursue the difficult one



My Gallery

SANDEEP KUMAR MISHRA

In upper part of my body
A cognitive bell rings
From a dial-up connection of live wires;
The modem is working JUST
To repeatedly provide the facsimile of
Barren and bald paths;
Inner lumbering of daily freight
Coiling, clutching upward;
There is no vivacity
The vital force has parasited
How I inhale life?
My days and nights are bolted
Inside a brain cell,
My voice has held back;
Now it lays a plan to brawl my soul;
Residing in my own skull
It dictates notes imitating my tone,
If I could disintegrate my recall;
As my shadow has left me
There remains Just I, me and myself,
None is willing to be with me
Why is my brain, a black hole?
How could it not be a universe?
I have a constellation of migraine, tablets
Syringe, backache and insomnia,
Dream has become a dead pattern,
As worn out as fossil led glow;
Everything has become identical
Except the weight of consequence
That has variations of endurance;
As I go through perdition
My imbalance will be rectified,
And after allotted time
My gallery will end,
Then you can hang my art
And me on the wall



Take a Deep Breath

MICHELLE LUNA

& when their spirit
becomes
too much for you,
step out—
& take a breath
elsewhere.
fill your lungs with air in
spaces meant just for you.
spaces that ease you,
spaces filled with sweetness,
spaces where you dream.
allow yourself to
inhale
love
&
exhale
anything that isn't.
do not ever let
anyone else's presence
suffocate your own.



Poet

MICHELLE LUNA

You once asked
me
the name of my favorite poet
I said
God,
Earth,
the Universe
You laughed and asked
which poem was
my favorite
I said
the one
where you
were written to
life



I Want to be Thin

MICHELLE LUNA

I strip down naked when I anxiously step on the scale. First, I take off my clothes: slip off my shorts that have become too big and peel off a shirt that hangs off my little frame, take off my underwear and a bralette because real bras are too big for me to wear. Then, I take off my jewelry—a thin gold chain that wraps around my neck and a gold bangle that continues to fall higher up my forearm as the pounds come off—I even remove my earrings and the hair tie on my wrist, as if this negligible weight would affect the glowing number staring back at me between my feet, backlit in blue as if disappointed by my lack of progress. I always suck in my stomach, as if this would affect my weight as all.

I wonder how many calories are in the toothpaste I use; I spit it all out and rinse my mouth out about 50 times. I only feel beautiful when my stomach is empty; I feel euphoric. The growl of hunger gets louder throughout the day; there is a zoo in my belly and everyone marvels at my self-control, missing the captivity.

I was never thin enough growing up. They told me I could stand to lose 5, 10, 15 pounds and then I would be so much more beautiful. Now they worry for my health—wasn't this what you always wanted me to be?

I drink Red Bull (sugar free of course) like it is a lifeline, chugging it like water so I don't pass out every time I try to walk across a room. I obsessively check calories of every single morsel of food that enters my body. I don't know how to cook, and I don't keep food in the house, eliminating all temptation.

You can start to see my bones, but you see, I have this under control. I'm not starving, it's "intermittent fasting." I'm just "on a diet"; I just "want my clothes to fit better"; I want to be "the thin friend"; I'm just "starting out."

I promise, if I just reach that my goal weight, just 5 more, then 5 more, then 5 more pounds, I'll stop. I'm not shrinking, not disappearing. I am remolding myself into a new sculpture made from countless creators—so blame them if you don't like the art.

Is this a crime? What's so wrong with wanting to be thin?



When Sonic Needs a Bandaid

SALLY PEACH

Sonic has a fever, you said.
We don't have a thermometer,
so we'll have to feel
with the backs of our hands
like our mothers taught us.

My mother,
 who is caring for my brother
 through eight rounds of chemo.

Your mother,
 who is crying
 in this room with us.

Sonic needs a flu shot, you said.
We're out of flu shots for hedgehogs,
but we have cotton balls and gauze,
so we can pretend.

I don't want to pretend, you said.

But we do.

Pretend
 that we can't hear
 what she says about you.

Pretend
 that they aren't starting medication
 without telling you.

(You'll wonder why you feel so
different
 next Saturday)

Sonic needs a bandaid, you said.

We treat it like arts and crafts:
the same plastic drawers that
 hold rainbow beads for bracelets
 hold bandaids for anything that hurts.

There.

Should I take it off before I leave, you said.

Keep it on as long as you want,
and here's another one in case
you get hurt again.

Your mother told me you're afraid of doctors,
but I guess she's just afraid of you.



Loneliness

MARY POOLE

I'm lonely when I'm not alone.
It's lonely in a crowd.
People pushing, crammed together,
Voices much too loud.

I much prefer to be alone
Away from noisy crowds.
I live with all my memories
And speak to them aloud.

I'm never really lonely now.
My friends are in my head
They talk to me and I to them
Though most of them are dead.

They come to me when I'm alone.
It makes me seem unkind
Ignoring others close to me
For phantoms in my mind.

I talk to them about my life.
They sigh and say it's true.
They saw it as it happened
And wondered what I'd do.

So now I'm here and all alone.
It's lonely in this crowd.
The voices in my head are dim,
My memories a shroud.



Getting Old

MARY POOLE

I'm always searching for my keys;
Without them I must stay at home.
Why did I come into this room?
Go back and enter once again.

A strange man's lying on my bed.
Your name escapes me. Who are you?
This hearing aid just will not hear.
I guess I have to read your lips.

I think I need some wrinkle cream.
My hair is fading brown to white
My children say I get confused.
I worry that I do forget.

My hearing's bad. I can't see far.
But still I need to find my keys
And then go searching for my car.



In the Name of the Father

NICOLE RESTAURI

I was high up
on the apex of the swing
when I heard something about blood
Whispers not words
hovered like premonitions
not ready to be born

The sweet summer air soured like milk
as I left the better part of my heart
unbroken on the fleeting
ascending arc of childhood

Grace can turn on her spiked heels
faster than it takes a
a child to go from high to low on
a summer swing

All I have to do now
is breathe
to remember
and to remember is to taste
pain
The bitter price of
grief's alchemy

Strong arms
reached from underneath
a stained white T- shirt
Unpacking saws and ladders
Always fixing, mending
making broken things whole

I would sit and watch
Lingering in the holy scent
of sawdust and sweat
hoping for a sweet forbidden sip
as we swept it all
into a neat pile in the garage

Only a few short hours would pass
and he would begin again
Up and at 'em
Shingling before the sun

Strong arms held me softly
Until they would break one day
Riddled by unwanted visitors
The blood it seems had gone bad

The rusty rhythm
of an empty swing
sang an eerie song
Most could not
bear to hear
this unexpected music

Words and tune
underscoring
the indifference of god
As if by listening, by seeing
lady Grace might leave them too

It was about a year later
August came and the fireflies
had gone for the season
We buried him high on a hill
above the little coal town
Not far from where he was born

The graveyard stands guard
Looking sorrowfully upon
the yellow sulfur creek
creeping its way through town

And then just beyond the creek
a view of St. Mary's
Adorned with the steeple he built
Barely visible
in late summer
beyond the trees

That bell still rings
out its cry
Promise of deliverance but
faint praise for the living
who refuse to see
IT refuses to forget
Calling out a lofty
Hallelujah!

An inanimate witness
to the justice of memory
Rhythmic tolls
in universal tongue
honoring the author of
its verse.



Colorado Summer

TRUDI SCHMIDT



Comfort in Dreams

SOPHIA HU



Know Thyself

DEBRA MILLER



Yellowstone

SUBADA SOTI



Her, Me, Us, This

KELSEY REPINE

"I don't know why you come in here every morning and ask me how I am doing when you know I am in a horrific situation."

Her: A 86-year-old mother, sister, and wife hospitalized for the past month with an extremely complicated medical history

Me: A 26-year-old daughter, sister, and student on her first clinical rotation of the third year of medical school

Us: A patient-provider duo who spent significant time discussing cooking, international travel, past careers, and favorite past times

This: The first time a patient yelled at me

"Can you please send in Kelsey? I need to talk with her."

Her: A patient navigating her future mortality

Me: A learner attempting to understand what it means to care for others

Us: A pair experiencing a difficult journey together

This: An olive branch

"I am so sorry I yelled at you, you have done nothing wrong and I know you are asking because you care."

Her: A tearful passenger on a ride for which she did not sign up

Me: A witness to a terrible disease

Us: A twosome trying to traverse a deteriorating situation

This: The human experience



Periodic Poetry

JOYCE NIELSEN

Beryllium, rutherfordium, rubidium

Those “r’s” and “um’s” roll rhythmically off my tongue.

Then there’s Yttrium, ununoctium, and molybdenum,

Causes for pauses in any vocal listing of the chemical elements.

The elements:

So fulsomely displayed

in The Periodic Table:

On walls, in Chem 101 lecture halls.

There when the universe began—

The elements, not the halls.

Hydrogen, helium, and a little lithium, anyway...

Other elements formed later, in subsequent reactions.

Now they’re found everywhere:

Iron in the earth’s core, aluminum & silicon in its crust, oxygen & nitrogen in its atmosphere,

And in everyday products,

Boron in Borax and chlorine in Clorox,

Fluorine in toothpaste and zinc in milk;

Copper and aluminum in pots and pans; titanium in reading glasses,

Sodium in soap, phosphorus in matches; neon signs; nickel in five cent coins.

Not to mention human bodies made of nitrogen, hydrogen, carbon, oxygen, and more.

“We are stardust.”

Science writers personify them:

Copper is a “reactive redhead”;

Zinc is “underappreciated and understated”;

Sodium a “degenerate” metal.

Science writers give them agency and describe their inter-reactions with other chemicals in social terms, like bonding and attraction-repulsion.

Some are unstable.

Some highly inter-reactive, others like being alone, and only found alone.

The noble gases, so named because they don’t interact with others, are rather aloof like the nobility of the middle ages and social snobs today.

Primo Levi likens Argon, one of the noble gases, to his reluctantly social relatives.

And zinc as boring—

After all, laundry tubs are made of it,

it is gray,

its salts colorless--no gaudy chromatic reactions here.

The elements have origin stories—

One scientist, after exhaustively analyzing his urine while looking for the mythical philosopher’s stone, discovered phosphorus.

They play starring roles in mystery stories, as in Arsenic and Old Lace and the poisonous thallium in Agatha Christie’s *The Pale Horse*.

They play starring roles in non-fiction mysteries and stories:

Like antimony, prescribed as an emetic in the 18th century, a possible cause of Mozart’s early death.

And polonium, the likely cause of the recent politically motivated death of Russian Alexander Litvinenko,

Mercury, used to treat felt & furs in hat making, poisoned many a milliner—hence our expression “mad as a hatter”.

continued on next page...

The elements have been categorized, classified, collided, indexed, graded, gradated, numbered, measured, weighed, boiled, frozen, smashed with neutrons, bombarded with alpha particles, slammed with ions, subjected to spectroscopy and electrolysis, processed in centrifuges, cyclotron particle accelerators, and semi-conductors.

And named.

Cobalt comes from the German *kobold*, meaning “goblin” or “evil sprite,” because it is difficult to extract from its ore and poisonous in the process.

Can you guess for which gods and goddesses these are named?

Promethium--after Prometheus in Greek mythology; he stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans.

Thorium--after the Scandinavian God for Thunder

And geographic locations:

Manganese--named after the Magnesia region of northern Greece, not to be confused with magnesium, which is used as a laxative, and altogether different.

Gallium (Gaul), francium (France), lutetia (Paris);

Americium, berkelium, californium;

Erbium, terbium, ytterbium, yttrium--all four named after the Swedish village of Ytterby.

And the heavenly bodies and famous scientists:

Selenium, Greek “selene” for the moon; Tellurium, Greek for earth;

Curium (Marie & Pierre Curie); Einsteinium, Fermium, Mendelevium.

The Periodic Table

The elements are predictably patterned from left to right in rows and from top to bottom in columns.

Still, like humans, they don’t always fit tidily into categories:

There are exceptions, oddities, incompleteness, controversies—

Where to place helium in the table and does hydrogen belong better to the alkali metals or the halogens?

And what’s with the K for Potassium? Shouldn’t that be P or Pt?

K19 is for Potassium because the potash in which it was found was used in the ancient world to make soap from the herb kali.

Pb82 is for lead because the Romans used lead extensively for domestic water pipes and named it *plumbum* (hence our words for plumbing, plumber).

Even though they knew about lead poisoning. But that's another story.

These distinctions and oddities aside,

There is deep beauty in their order

—their convergence

—their coherence;

There is elegance and parsimony in the law-like harmony and succinctness of The Table.

A grand synthesis:

Unity in diversity, unity in complexity, ideals in both science and art.

It's not just the poetry in their names—

The iums in sodium, chromium and cesium,

The ines in iodine, lanthanine, actinine,

The ens and ons in oxygen, nitrogen, boron, carbon and argon.

But too, the integrated and deftly arranged letter-number combinations that form a mosaic work of art.

There is order in the universe, in two pages of schematic design;

Systematic and scientific,

Graphic and artistic,

Poetic and Periodic.



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There is a Great White Shark in My Living Room

SPENCER POORE

Today, I woke up and found a great white shark in my living room. He claimed to have gotten in early last night, right as I had let the dog out. I asked him if he had seen my dog and he said that he had, but could not comment on his current whereabouts. Of this I was skeptical. He claimed to have been cruising about the Cape of Good Hope when a detour of trade winds and lower trench updrafts sent him to my front door. I did not ask too many questions, knowing my audience well after a few Netflix documentaries narrated by a British guy who I now think is dead. He enjoyed the fact that I had a fireplace and commented on my construction of the Ikea furniture throughout the house. Despite being in my living room, he claimed to have already investigated the remainder of my abode before I woke this morning. He felt that the living room was the best place for him given both size and access to water. I did not completely understand this, but believed him nonetheless.

He preferred that I did not know his birth name and claimed it was too hard to pronounce anyway. He felt it necessary to simply call him 'Carl' and not bother with sur names. He was born roughly 23 years ago and had been traveling most his life. More of a loner, he had spent most of his days in the vast solitude of the Pacific Ocean. He had seen them all, but the Pacific had a specific character of longing and rebirth that only a fish could understand. He felt it was both a beauty and a disaster, a desert of opportunity.

Carl was the deepest thinking fish I had ever met. He claimed to have studied most things but favored the culinary and abstract arts overall. He had a firm focus in foam technology and its application to the palate. I found this intriguing, especially since his palate was about 6 feet longer than mine.

A few days went on and Carl did not leave. He simply stayed in the living room. We discussed many things, perused the far ends of my AppleTV, and read my old college textbooks aloud, commenting on the inquisitions and plotted debates amongst them. I made most of the meals to his narration, fine tuning my chop technique and blending butter into each dish in ways I did not know were possible. At night, we would both read in silence or listen to academic jazz without saying a word. I would soon go to bed and leave Carl to drift off to the subtle aggression of Ornette Coleman and Chet Baker. I did not sleep much in those days, but once Carl arrived, I felt a security that I had never felt before.

This went on for roughly a month until one morning I awoke and Carl was gone. I looked under beds, in closets, and in the yard. He was nowhere. No trace or half eaten meals anywhere. He had simply vanished in the exact same way he appeared.

After years of inner turmoil, I asked myself over and over again if I'd ever see Carl again. I went to aquariums and took long boating trips as far out to sea as I could. Occasionally I'd catch a glimpse of his existence, an attack here or a sighting of some large gray beast here, but nothing of any truth. I soon developed a routine in which I would swim out as far as I could, well beyond the wave break and float for hours on end. I could never touch the bottom, yet would reach my limbs out in all directions as far as I could. I'd feel the ebb of the tide lift and swirl about me, trapped in something so much larger than me, feeling almost microscopic and indescribably quaint. However, in these moments, with the salt and water burning my nose, I felt Carl. It wasn't complete and it wasn't perfect, but it was the first time I'd felt safe in years.

With time and life, I found myself going to the water less and less each week. I became preoccupied in the regular moments of society and gained that security in artificial things that looked real, yet felt empty to the touch. Now when I wander to the shore, I simply put my feet in in hopes something will call my name and beg me further out. This never happens, and more often than not, something begs me back to where I came from.

I wish I could tell you that I finally swam out far enough. I wish that I could tell you that I found Carl and all is well. But those would be fish tales and my arms aren't nearly wide enough to fake this one.



Fishermen in Floating Village, Siem Riep, Cambodia

VICTORIA SELIGMAN



By the Time I Reached You

JAN RUDEEN

By the time i reached you,
you were already in your car
heading north down the blue, 6 AM highway
Singing with the radio and the
Goo Goo Dolls,

"I just want you to know who I am . . . "

watching the houses turn to
farms turn to tumbleweeds
as the land emptied out
around you.

You read my text, read it again and
put your phone back
on the passenger seat.

By the time you returned
my message,
you had already stopped at
that liquor store on reservation land,
heard Joseph's St. Patrick's Day joke
in his unconvincing brogue, laughing
like it was the first time you'd heard it.
Though you prefer Old Crow, you splurged for a
fifth of Jameson in honor of the occasion
and to throw a few more bucks Joseph's way.
When you got to your car, you opened the trunk,
found your dad's Thermos and
poured in half the whiskey, screwing the top on tight.
You waited till you'd driven another hundred miles
before taking your first sip,
But by the time you texted me back you had
emptied the Thermos.

By the time I called you, frantic
to hear your voice,
the bottle, too, was empty and
lying where you had tossed it
several miles down the road.
The sky in that town you found
had already turned dark
and was dropping cold, fat rain.

By the time I'd called again, and again.
But you were already on the tracks
and could see the distant train.
Turning up the radio,
you closed your eyes, leaned
back on the headrest
while the car spun sweetly around you,
and sang with Shawn Mullins
the chorus of "Lullaby"
until the fade-out.



Soleil

JAN RUDEEN

Today, I made a new friend
She smiles at me, asks me questions:
Can she come over to my house?
Do I like mangos?
Soleil likes mangos, but she *loves* strawberries.
I ask her favorite color
She thinks a minute
"Stripes."

Soleil is six-and-a-half
She is in the first grade
Not in my class
But I see her at recess
And she sees me
"I like your purple shirt," she says.

She walks across the cafeteria, looking for me.
She shows me her new red tennis shoes,
Looks down at my black flip-flops, says
"I would never wear those to school.
You can't run, *and you can't kick a ball.*"
Soleil is wise.

Today, the first-graders are taking their standardized math test.
"You may not use any books or
materials in the room," the instructor says.
Soleil raises her hand.
"Can we use our fingers?"



Clinic

ILONA SCHWARZ

You don't know me. I don't know you. You walk in, it smells like alcohol and that, somehow, is supposed to make me feel better.

You say I have disease X, diagnosed by Y, with prognosis Z, and I don't know what any of that means. Why did this happen? I don't ask. Treatment includes surgery. I guess I saw that coming, you are a surgeon after all. But what if I don't want to be cut open? I die unpleasantly. Okay, ditto.

My thoughts are racing, and I wonder if you can read them behind my eyes. I'm quiet. I sit still. I don't want to waste your time, you seem busy on the computer. I think you've noticed that I look concerned because you turn the screen to face me. I still don't know what any of this means. I don't want to sound stupid. Can you hear my heart beating, screaming, crying? My stomach hurts. My head hurts. If I tell you, will you just send me to your colleague down the hall?

You leave. I breathe. I need to sign a consent form. I guess this is really happening, and I speculate what you think of disease X. How often do you see this? What did I do so wrong?

You knock and walk in holding a cream-colored form. You have time to fit me in on a Tuesday in about six weeks. Is that too far away? Is it too soon? I guess I have no choice. Okay. I sign once, twice, three times, and initial to accept blood products with a sudden onset of stabbing fear. That seems scary, why are you asking me this? To you, it seems routine. I look at my pen, your pen. How many others have signed the same forms today? You say the risks are small, one in a hundred, maybe two. But what if I am number 101 today? You said you've done a thousand of these procedures. What happened to that one percent? Am I allowed to ask that?

You ask me if I have any other questions. A dozen come rushing and none form a sound. I swallow instead even though my throat is dry. I thank you for your time, but I wonder as the door closes behind the tail of your white coat — what if I were you?



A Matter of Life and Death

NORMAN SCOTT

My first visit with the baby, his mother and grandmother was the three day newborn exam. I had done a few thousand of these over my career. This one however would prove to be unique. His mother told me that the baby's father was fighting testicular cancer, and had just undergone a second stem cell transplant. In spite of this, they were still able to conceive their son. His mother almost bled to death after the delivery, but the baby was perfectly healthy, so we scheduled a routine two week check.

This time however, both grandmothers brought him to the clinic. In the space of ten days, his father's disease no longer held any hope of recovery or even an extra day's reprieve. As I held his infant son at the very beginning of his life, his mother was across the street at University Hospital holding her dying husband.

A father was able once to hold his newborn son, however briefly, and all the love and promise he represented.

A son who will only know his father's love through his mother's stories.

A physician, privileged and humbled, to bear witness to a husband and wife's extraordinary love and courage.



Hopefully my Sense

DAVID SHEPARD

Left to my hardened imagination,
I have heard that you've been nearby.
This way or that, softened again as though a dream.
Meeting my senses, I renew, bearing a life.
Soothing pause that renewed a beating heart.
Moods taking rest whatever angle their approach.
Demanding stillness, reflecting my joy.
Coming into my night's breath, respite of tomorrow.
Promising nothing, permissive your gift.
Taking little, promising its result, warming my chill.
Showing me the way, against my bones lifeless and pale.
Just stay, as loving cycles claim the sunrise.
Don't leave my door ajar, coldly leaking my warmth.
Please stay while life's air rescues a lost soul.
Remain as you were, always have been, my joyous imagination, awakening.
My dream, a softened hopeful sense.



Long Gone

DAVID SHEPARD

Where did they go?
A star too distant
Left with swiftiness.
A warm breath.
Nine months to arrive,
Gone in a minuscule frame,
A mouth agape.
A word whispered in secret.
Time was up,
As if rising,
to their destiny.
An echoed puppeteer's distant voice.
Carved as they were,
a piece of driftwood, near the shore.
They awaited, a part of the ages.
Fate now its part.
Their place, celestial's endlessness.
They are there,
Never more to catch, to touch, to be.



Portland's Autumn Light

DAVID SHEPARD

The smell of air in a November of rustling time.
Golden sounds as leaves swirl the season's quiet reflection.
Do not regard the brilliance of a tree's fleeting sunshine as anything but melodious change.
Crisp the momentary bite of light's bright memory.
Stop to feel yellow's temporary dawn,
Just to remind that limpness will define our defense of July's softening justification.
A soft breeze cools as afternoon beckons toward the darkening horizon.
The moon peers as it smiles over Summer's demand.



Here is the Truth

INDIRA SRIRAM

On Thursday, you started to sleep more, rousing a bit for food, for milk

On Friday, you told me you liked my dress before I left the house.

On Saturday, you barely woke up, until the night, when you cried out in terror, as our
ancestors gathered to collect you

You clutched my hand and asked me to come, and I choked as I told you that I
couldn't follow you

On Sunday, you slept stubbornly. I rested my head on your chest and whispered "I
love you." You sat bolt upright and said "why are you saying things like this?" It was
the first time you'd seemed like yourself in months.

On Monday, you stirred when you heard my voice. You held my hand, and some
guttural, garbled sound emerged. You met my eyes, and I felt a jolt of love, of
recognition.

On Tuesday, your breathing changed. Sputtering gasps interspersed with increasing
silence. I felt for your pulse when I held your hand.

On Wednesday, you didn't wake up.

On Thursday, I lost your pulse. Your feet grew cold. I watched the blood flutter in your
neck.

On Friday, you lay still, barely breathing.

On Saturday, your head jerked with each sharp breath, your neck straining with
effort. Finally, one last breath and no more. I held your feet and wept, and felt my
own pulse beating against your body in a steady rhythm that seemed to say: here is
the truth, here is the truth, here is the truth.



new mother

LINA STANCHEV

I hold you in one hand
as I stroke my empty belly with the other

one is now two

there is a new identity bestowed upon me
by the universe
while I'm hopelessly trying to forge
its meaning

I'm not ready to share you with the world yet
but then I remember
a butterfly doesn't become one overnight

everything takes time



A Cut to the Hand

KELLY STANEK

Your nails are painted, I nearly fainted
I saw your humanity, your life
I saw your children, your granddaughter smiling at your side, painting your nails,
watching a romance on your hospital tv
I saw her like she was me
Your skin, pale and cold, but open for my learning, open and exposed
Made me yearn to comfort you
And hesitate to do what I thought might hurt you
I saw your sacrifice
Your body
And I saw my body
Differently
My nails are painted, I nearly fainted
A connection, an interjection of one soul with another
One body to another
One human and another
A bit of color
A bit of paint
Showed me the spirit, the soul, the saint that you are
Showed me that life and death aren't far
But what an honor to hold your hand
What an honor to see inside
To wonder what you had planned
To reveal what we naturally hide
Your nails are red, my tears are shed
I cry for your loss, your life, your love
I cry for your family and friends and feet and hands
I cry because I get to see you more intimately than anyone has before
But I don't know your name
I get to learn more from you than from any one human
But I can't hear your voice
I learn, I copy, I connect
My nails are red, because for me, you led
You led my learning and so much more
You led me to be curious and explore
You helped me embark on the journey of medicine
And though your earthly life ended with the failing of your heart,
Your broken body gave me a beautiful start
and just like the paint on your nails,
Your lesson of humanity prevails.



The Eternal; the Untouchable.

KELLY STANEK

What an endeavor it is
To reach out and touch humanity
Where do you clench your hand to grasp a soul?
How to erect the spirit out of dust
And heal it so it glows, no one knows
But to smile, to love, to feel
Is infinite
Eternal
Beyond.
It reaches where the hands cannot
And revives something more magnificent



The Education of Medicine

KELLY STANEK

We begin with death.
When we aim for life
She lays before me
A myth of breath
Maybe someone's wife
Should I feel sorry?

We begin with violence
Yet we aim for gentleness
Power tools and saws
And then gaze in silence
To her I must confess
It is a worthy cause

We end in exhaustion
Aiming to achieve strength
Working, learning, building
To begin to defend;
Fight disease at length
Yet this fight is filling.

We end in triumph
A life well lived
A death well purposed
The giving tree's stump,
She lives on as a gift
A lesson never lost.



Radical Acceptance

MARGARET TEETS

Hopeless, ropeless, treeless. Medicaid taxied, preferably far away.

Radio wave hypnotism. Doing well, see you in 8 weeks.

My own home, in my own bed, with my own girlfriend. Not today, let's reassess in 2 days.

Mindfulness. Dimmed-light reading.

I feel useless. Try and stay busy, we'll see you on Friday.

Dialectical. Neological? Nope, just ignorant and unacquainted.

Bright and social out on the milieu. Observed on a smoke break, quantified food intake, effectively PRNed to sleep.

Coping mechanisms. Cannot remember any, cannot remember today actually.

Meditation. Dance, take a dance class, become the word "dance," dance to loud music, throw yourself into dancing.

Stabilize. Unable to treat.

No previous trauma? That can't be right.

Baseline. No progress, a few more days.

I just took 48 Tylenol. Impulsively? All 48 in one, impulsive swallow? Discharge, doing well.

Tearful. Push the Kleenex.

Consequences in BIOP. Positive and negative. Now and later. CAO too.

He was very charming. Red flags, lights going off, stay alert.

Which have you tried? Prozac, Abilify, Lithium, Seroquel, Zoloft, Remeron, Invega, Cymbalta, Latuda, Topamax, Celexa, and Lexapro = fluoxetine, 3rd gen, lithium, quetiapine, sertraline, mirtazapine, paliperidone, another SSRI, 2nd gen, topiramate, more SSRIs.

Can I go home today? Not today.

I can't go home today. Discharged.

"All roads lead to radical acceptance."



An Imperfect Kind of Perfect

MARGARET TEETS

Sometimes I care too much.
I want too much information.
Too much data.
Too many statistics.
Too many prognoses.

But my families don't want statistics.
They don't want their perfect babies put into cold numbers.
Perfect babies with imperfect diagnoses.

Sometimes there's a delicate balance between information and reality,
Between facts and hope.

And sometimes my families want to side with hope,
With irrational desires,
With slivers of lost stars,
Stars I would like too much to care about too.

And that's when I have to say I'm sorry.
I'm sorry my cold reality didn't align with my families outer-space worldly.
I'm sorry my words became other-worldly.
And I'm sorry your perfect world now has an imaginative diagnosis,
An unacceptable prognosis,
A different kind of imperfect kind of perfect.



Emotional Restraint

BENJAMIN TIANO

Dear Mr. S,

It was a pleasure meeting you – sort of. I’m afraid it wasn’t so much of a pleasure meeting me. You probably don’t remember me. My name is _____. I’m the medical student working with Dr. Y. We met only briefly. Maybe this will jog your memory:

“Hi! My name is _____, and I’m a third-year medical student. Is it okay if I ask a couple questions and then perform a physical exam? I promise I’ll come back with my mentor to answer any questions you might have.”

Does that sound familiar. That’s my spiel – the same three sentences I say almost every time I enter a patient’s room. I can’t imagine how many times you’ve heard it, or a variation of it. You’ve seen so many doctors, been to so many hospitals, talked to so many physicians, students, nurses, social workers lately that I would imagine it’s hard to keep them all straight. Like I said, I’d doubt if you remembered me. Though, I’ve thought a lot about you and your family. More than I’m comfortable with. I’ve thought about your wife and your son and daughter. I’ve thought about your grief. I’ve imagined your grief as my own... which is the part I can’t get out of my head. Mr. S, I want you to know that I cried after meeting you. Actually, I cried a little while meeting you. Did you notice? You don’t have to answer that.

I’m embarrassed because I was the only one in the room crying, and I cried after you left. And I wonder if anyone else did too. The tragedy you endured is senseless, in that I can’t make any sense of it at all. Senseless – devoid of sense or reason. Purposeless – serving no purpose to anyone or anything. Fair-less, fathom-less, recover-less, sparing-less.

Mr. S, I’m sorry I cried. I didn’t do a good job of presenting a face of strength when you needed it – or whatever it was I was supposed to present. I’m still not clear about that. You didn’t deserve it. I wonder how often you’ve had to navigate the outpouring of emotion from others when yours is the emotion that should most be looked after. On that day – when we met – YOU tended to MY emotion, whether you wanted that responsibility or not. The exam room in which we met was filled with my sadness, and I worry it didn’t leave enough room for anything else. When I began writing this letter, it was supposed to be an apology. Until two minutes ago, it was still an apology. It was an apology for subjugating you to my own emotional reaction to tragedy. It was an apology for the role I played in yet another miserable day you spent in a doctor’s office. Instinctively, I still want to apologize. Every fiber of my being wants to shout to you an apology.

“Sorry for your loss. I’m so sorry for your loss. Your family will be in my prayers.”

At all costs, I will avoid apologies and their use as a means for self-serving. If our paths ever cross again, I will strive only to listen. I regret that my sadness may have negatively impacted your healing, and I will use this regret as fuel to learn how better to support the next person I meet struggling with tragedy.

Sincerely,

You really want to know?

AMANDA TOMPKINS

People sometimes ask, “What was the craziest thing you ever saw as an EMT?” And at this question, I always feel the sinking pit in my stomach- a black hole that has just opened up inside of me. “What am I going to say this time?”

You do not want to know the truth. If you really wanted the truth, the question wouldn’t be asked in such a voyeuristic way. If you really understood, you wouldn’t be asking at all.

You want to know about the embarrassing injuries, the stories of stupidity, the eccentric patients or the ones who said outlandish things in a fit of psychosis... I’ve got plenty of those stories. Are you asking to hear those stories? Because I don’t think you want to know what I’ve really seen or what I know humans are capable of.

You don’t really want to know about the cold hands I’ve held. The sneakers I have packed away in plastic bags, never to be worn again. You don’t want to know about the children who weren’t injured accidentally or the women who were trying to get away. You don’t want to hear stories of an old women who I laughed with one moment and who, in the next, had a breathing tube withdrawn after a brain aneurysm. You don’t want to know about the burns, the pain, the blood, the feces, the tears, the chest compressions, or the trauma.

You really want to know?

“What was the craziest thing you ever saw?”

I saw myself grow cold and despondent.

I saw a person I did not recognize at the end of a shift.

I saw myself crying in the toothpaste aisle and not knowing why.

I saw myself discharging a homeless veteran to the bus stop and I saw myself helping him out of the hospital wheelchair to the bench, unsure of what he would do next or where he would go.

I saw the cold, lifeless limbs of a child. Bones of a man still breathing. Eyes of a woman dying.

The “craziest thing” I see now is that I still love medicine.

I see that I still believe there is an opportunity to fix this world.

The “craziest thing” I have seen is myself, still believing that people, and life, can be Good.



Do You Take Your Bad Day Personally?

KATIE VAN DEVENTER

Bright, the OR lights did not hide
your displeasure
as your tool smacked my hand.
I wondered what you thought of the ice
on your windshield this morning,
fractile patterns illuminated
As you drove east at sunrise,
Or the geese bedded in the grass
next to the parking lot.
And when your expletives
detonated in the room the first time,
I wondered if you had noticed the hands
clasped between brother and sister
who walked the sidewalk a block from school
Or the smell of your first sip of coffee
Or the gratitude in the nervous smile
of your patient as she greeted us this morning.
And when your tirades began again
How could I take it personally,
I do wonder, though, if you remember,
Your hands have such a gift to give.



MILES VISEUR

The daughter is POA.
She wants all life support removed
The forms are signed
Is this going to happen now?
The room gets quiet.
The chaplain seems young.
You want me to extubate?

I think about that amazing nurse a lot
She knew what to say
When we were overwhelmed
I now know what death is
We have the privilege
to undo a wrong
to make a death honorable
and to celebrate life.



Sundays

LISA VILTZ

The crunching of snow beneath our boots
Filled the pause in our conversation

Our thoughts had wandered a thousand miles away
To the same place and time
I was certain.

Brick buildings
Naked oaks
High piles of tainted snow
Were passed unnoticed

An unruly tangle of branches
Loomed over our path
And I returned to the present

"Look at this tree," I said, "the branches..."

"... it's as though they couldn't decide which way they wanted to grow," you said

I smiled
How strange and satisfying
To hear my thoughts
Spoken by your lips.

We walked on
Until the steam of our breath
Was traded for the steam of coffee
The sounds of the streets
Exchanged for the ambient chatter
Of a cafe we had visited
A hundred times before.

We talked of the Universe and its origins
Physics and philosophy
Intentions and regrets
Our past
My future
Your future.

We fought
Irritations waxed and waned
Until inevitably
Inexplicably
Our ideas came together
Strengthened each other
And had perhaps been the same all along

We talked with the vigor of new acquaintances
The familiarity of old lovers
And the hours melted away.

Once we laughed loud enough
To turn heads at a nearby table
The heads wondered what could be so amusing
But they would never understand our world.

An old man smiled at me
At us
With nostalgia in his eyes

I was struck with sadness
Knowing the scene before him
Was nothing more than an elegant delusion.

I sighed
A sigh deep enough
To spark the topic of love

"Love," you asked, mockingly, "What is that?"

I thought of the tangled oak tree
Reaching wildly in all directions
Only two of the branches
Had intertwined
Intermingled
Twisting and turning around one another
Through winter and spring
They grew together
Strengthened each other
The years melted away
And though they could not recall
How they had become one
They would never choose an alternate fate

"If you don't know it by now," I said, "you never will."



Lucky

ERIKA WALKER

"Check this thing, will you?" My father raises his voice to be heard above Fox News blaring from the TV. Even though I've cleaned his ears recently, he seems to be having trouble hearing again. He points to his right calf.

Here at assisted living, my father spends most of his time watching TV. The TV, smaller than the one he has at home, sits just a few feet away, next to his oxygen concentrator. The remote, within easy reach, perches precariously on a pile of junk mail next to his recliner. Curtains are closed tight over his one window. He stares straight ahead, eating roasted-not-salted almonds right out of the jar, one of the few snacks he is still allowed. Salt has become an enemy in his battle against congestive heart failure.

"Sure." I drop the t-shirt I've been folding back onto the laundry pile.

Bending down, I slip my hands under his pant leg and feel the catheter bag which stretches from his ankle to his knee. Tight and hard, it's full, almost bursting. *God damn these people*, I say to myself, stomach tightening, heart suddenly pounding. *Where are they? Why am I the one who always notices these things? What are we paying them for anyway?*

"I'll be right back."

In the bathroom, I grab the large plastic container and returning, lift his pant leg, find the valve on the cath bag, jam the container underneath it. As I pull off the green protective cap, I fumble, and a wide stream of dark urine shoots onto the carpet.

"Shit," I say loudly and am instantly ashamed. My father does not tolerate profanity.

"What?" my father says anxiously. Then louder, "What's wrong?"

God damn it. The circle of urine widens on the carpet.

"Nothing, nothing." I try to reassure him as I struggle to replace the cap.

"Just a little spill. I'll clean it up."

Finally the plastic cap, now wet and slippery, snaps in place. I run to the bathroom for paper towels, spread them over the dark yellow stain, stand on them, trying to absorb as much as possible. When I can't get any more urine out of the carpet, I carefully place the container under the cath bag and let it drain. In the bathroom, I record the amount—nearly a quart—on a paper I've taped above the toilet.

Helping my father feels more natural now, even though I still don't feel very good at it. I've been cutting his hair for months, trying to massage his shoulders when he'll let me. Once, when he was just back from the hospital, he asked me to look at a sore on his penis and I'd never even seen him wearing shorts before—let alone naked.

When I was young, among my favorite books were Nancy Drew, Girl Detective and Cherry Ames, Student Nurse. Even then, it was clear to me I wasn't cut out to be a nurse. I wanted Nancy's blue roadster and adventure, not hand holding. The sight of blood turned my stomach; I had to leave the room if anyone even felt nauseated. Plus, in my family we didn't touch each other and bodily functions didn't exist. Farting was not allowed, and my father yelled at us if we yawned without covering our mouths.

**

I take off my father's wet sock and find him a dry one. I put another layer of paper towel on the floor and stand on it again, trying to absorb more the urine.

Someone knocks at the door. It's one of my father's caregivers, a short woman wearing navy blue scrubs and bright white running shoes. She smiles and asks me if I want her to change his cath bag.

"No," I say, trying not to look annoyed. "I've already done it."

"I'll check things in here," she says, pulling on latex gloves and turning toward the bathroom.

I walk back to my father's bed, pull the t-shirt from the pile of laundry and begin folding it. Tears sting my eyes. I'm so tired, so angry. Angry I spilled the urine, angry my father's in assisted living, angry that he's dying. Every day he slips further away and I can't do a damn thing about it. The bathroom door opens. She stops, looks over at my father and smiles.

"You're lucky," she says, pulling off her gloves.

Lucky? I want to scream at her. Lucky? Don't you get it lady? Are you blind? My father's dying. He can't breathe anymore, he can't sleep. He can't lie down because when he does he can't stop coughing. He can't even pee anymore.

What the hell are you talking about?

But I don't say anything. I hold the t-shirt to my chest, tears run down my cheeks. I watch her watching my father.

"You are lucky," she says again, turning toward me, still smiling. "My father died when I was four years old. I never knew him."



Painting Cherry Blossoms

ERIKA WALKER

Feet bare in the dew wet grass, I find a forest of cherry blossoms blooming in my father's back yard. I'd never seem them before. As often as I visit my father, I'd missed this moment in spring.

Arms full, I spill their wild tangle into my grandmother's crystal vase and place them on the dining table. French doors open wide to the early April morning, alive under a cloudless Colorado sky. The air—thin, dry, effervescent—smells faintly of pine and already-greening grass. Sparrows and nut hatches converse loudly, crowding the feeder in the elm just outside.

I left home at 18, nearly 35 years ago, but have never forgotten these mornings I loved from my childhood. I grieve for them, even now. Up early, I sit, read the newspaper, and listen for the sound of my father's bedroom door, the scuff of his slippers down the hallway.

"Good morning Dad," I say. "How are you?"

"I'm here," he replies, leaning against the dishwasher, wheezing and resting his legs. "I'm here."

**

But for the first time, he's not here. Last Christmas, pneumonia came calling. I spent long days with him at the hospital and the nursing home before taking him to assisted living where he has been these past four months.

I picked the cherry blossoms for my father, knowing their exuberance would please him, remind him of home. But now, I remember his allergies. Most mornings are punctuated by his sneezes, three, four, five, in a row. Pollen would be especially aggravating in his small apartment and so I decide to paint them instead.

With layers of *The Denver Post* spread across the dining table, I set out my watercolor paper and open the small tin of paints. Mother, proud of the table's perfect maple finish, always covered it. Even though she has been dead for twenty years, I wouldn't dream of not protecting her table.

**

Studying the blossoms, I don't know where to start.

I try to focus,
to frame
a piece of the wildness
but my eye gets lost.

Finally,
I dip my brush
into red, dilute it, sketch
the pale pink center
of each cherry blossom.

One by one,
small shapes
meander
across my page,
tiny footprints.

Red swirled
into green, soft
grey puddles, my brush
begins to loop,

petals.

My mind quiets and I begin to feel the sad place inside me, the place I always run from and try to fill—with something, anything. I miss my father and still can't believe he's not here.

**

My parents bought this house in Aurora in 1957, when I was five, and raised four children here. Our neighborhood, a new suburb, had been carved out of an alfalfa field and our backyard opened wide to the prairie. We played pioneer, trapped tadpoles in the nearby irrigation ditch, and climbed the hundred-year-old cottonwoods that sheltered it. Before we had a table, we gathered in the dining room on Saturday nights to watch "Gunsmoke." My dad sat in our one comfortable chair and we sat on the floor.

Every fall, mother filled our kitchen with the smell of dill as she canned pickles and later, with the smell of warm tomatoes as she canned ketchup and sauce. Here, Grandmother prepared bountiful breakfasts of eggs and crisp bacon, cut piles of biscuits with an orange juice can, and dredged them through hot grease to produce their delicate golden crust. Countless times, my sister spread just-from-the-oven peanut-butter cookies on this kitchen counter. Each night, we ate dinner here together.

continued on next page...

Our beagle Kirby chased his birthday ice cream cup across this kitchen floor and my baby sister took her first toddling steps here. Scratches by the sink mark the many times we pulled out the old red step-stool to reach the faucet. My older sister and I spent hours sweeping and mopping the floor's tan tile and once a year, on our hands and knees, scoured the wax off with steel wool before applying a fresh coat.

I can't imagine losing this house. If my father doesn't get well, we'll have to sell it. I can't imagine cleaning everything out. All my life this house has been an anchor. If anything bad happened, I could always come home. All my dolls, all my school papers, all the family photos are still in the basement.

How do you dismantle your family home? I don't know—and I don't want to find out.

Petals
finished, I tuck
four tiny green leaves
beneath.

Knowing
the importance
of shadows, I paint
each leaf belly dark blue.

Suddenly, I turn and fall into the grief I've avoided for months. I can't—and don't want to—imagine life without my father. As much as I don't want to admit it, it's true. We're almost out of time.

I'm afraid—of leaving something unsaid, undone. As hard as I try, as often as I come to Denver, it isn't enough. Visits and vacations are too short, conversations inadequate. I close my eyes. Tears pour down my cheeks. This isn't what I planned. I thought I'd leave home and travel, but later, when it was time to raise my family, I'd return. And when I did, things would be different. My father be more like the dad I always wanted. We'd be closer. He'd turn off the TV and we'd talk. He'd be kind, less critical. Maybe he'd take my son fishing or golfing.

I thought I'd be nearby. I'd be the one to make him supper after my mother died. And, when he got sick, I'd be the one to nurse him back to health. I'd be the steadfast one, as he had been for his mother Maggie. But it hasn't turned out that way. First my job and later my marriage took root in another city and I didn't move back home.

Grief stalked me for months. All winter I'd been losing my father, losing my home by degrees. All I could see was what I was losing, what I never had and now, never would.

**

Then something shifted—and I saw a whole new picture, made up of the same pieces as before, but different. For a moment, I saw not what I was losing but what I had.

For forty years, my father went to work and came home for supper at 5:00. He took us camping every summer and he helped me catch my first rainbow trout. Many of the things I loved about my childhood—peaceful mornings on the prairie, roller skating in the driveway, Friday nights at the bookmobile—he had given to me.

I saw how steadfast he had been. My father was the one who took care of things. If something was broken, he fixed it. He cleaned the cat boxes and, when the time came, buried the cats and the dog. He taught us to save money and nagged us to turn off the lights when we left a room. If we burned toast, he'd eat it, so it wasn't thrown out. On Saturdays, he cut the grass and at night, walked through the house and locked the doors. He stayed up late to make sure I got home by my midnight curfew. On September 11, 2001 when I learned of the terrorist attacks, my dad was the first person I called.

Certainly our relationship hadn't been perfect, far from it. But in that moment, I understood he had done the best he could ... and so had I.

**

With my smallest brush,
I dot the centers
of a few flowers
with black.

I rinse my brush,
place it in the paint tin,
and close the lid.



Black Dog Found

ERIKA WALKER

"It's not practical," said my husband. "That dog is old. If you want a dog, why not get a puppy? Then we'd have him for a long time."

"You're right," I said. We sat on opposite ends of the sofa, in the evening after our son had gone to bed.

He's right, I said to myself. I thought of the garage, the small black dog shivering in a battered cardboard box, the blue blanket I'd tucked underneath him. I'd named him Sparky but didn't tell anyone. I knew it was too soon. Sparky eagerly ate the cat food I'd offered—we had no dog—and drunk the water before curling up in his bed. I wondered if I should take him another blanket or if I could rig up some sort of heater.

I'd been driving my son home from his cello lesson when I'd found the dog. Easing my mini-van through deep icy ruts on a Minnesota February night, I'd been thinking about dinner and homework, when he appeared in my headlights. Moving slowly, without any thought he was in the road or right in front of my car, he picked his way through the ruts, stepping as if each step hurt.

Without thinking, I stopped, jumped out, picked him up in my arms. I felt his shivering through my heavy coat. *I shouldn't be doing this. What if he's rabid? What if he bites me? What if he bites my son?* I opened the van door and set him on the floor. *A good mother would not pick up a stray dog and put in the back seat with her child.* Leaning down, I stroked his cold back, then shut the door.

"Don't touch him," I said to my son. "He might bite you." Driving fast, crashing against the ruts in the road, I hurried home. "I'm sure he belongs to a neighbor. We'll keep him safe tonight and then find his home tomorrow."

"Keeping the dog is not practical," my husband said again, looking directly at me this time. "Even if he's healthy now, he'll have medical problems later. It will cost a lot."

"Right," I said, and imagined the dog walking in our house, slowly, his nails clicking on the hardwood floors. I imagined him sleeping, maybe snoring a little, in the sun that pooled in the late afternoons by our small white stove. I wanted to bring him inside now but he might have mange. He might fight with our cats.

What I wanted to say to my husband but could not, was that if I couldn't help my father who was dying, maybe I could help this old dog. I wanted to scream at him, tell him how helpless I'd felt all these months, watching my father battle pneumonia, struggle to breathe, to even walk down the hall. I wanted to do something, to believe that something could be done. In a world which is broken, which is breaking, I can stop on a winter night and pick up an old dog. I wanted to believe that on a cold night someone would stop, that there would be help for an old dog. I wanted to believe in a world where help would come. I wanted to believe in happy endings.

★ ★

The next morning, I leashed Sparky and my husband and I walked him down the alley to a friend who had volunteered to take him to the humane society. We did not speak. I cried all the way home.

"Black dog found," I wrote in big bold letters on a stack of homemade posters. Walking through the neighborhood under a brittle sun, I stapled them on every telephone pole and on the bulletin board at Norm's Grocery.

Weeks later, a man called who had seen the sign I put up at Norm's. "My elderly neighbor lost a black dog," he said. "Do you still have him?"

"No." I replied. "I took the dog to the humane society. I'm sorry." I knew they only kept dogs for a week and that was a long time ago.

It was the practical thing to do.



hourglass

HOWE QIU

the sands of time fall grain by grain
catch them if you will or
watch them scatter
blow them
seize them
curse them
breathe them
but whomever you are
the sands of time fall equally upon you



For Those Who Need It

NICK WILLIAMS

It's not your fault, you know,

That your grandparents
No longer remember who you are.
That they don't recall how you look when
You tried to make them laugh,
Or why you have that chin scar.
It's not your fault
That you aren't there beside them,
But are, instead, a thousand miles away.

It's not your fault, you know,

That Nana
No longer wants to be here.
And that she daydreams of her mother and sisters
Till her cheeks swell and her eyes tear.
It's not your fault
That dementia has erased her children
Filling her with loneliness, emptiness, and despair.
And she kept falling at home over furniture.
So, now she no longer lives there.

.....

She would hit cars and forget.

.....

We had to take her keys and her right to drive.
Now, she is at The Home, stranded and secluded,
And we are the ones telling her to survive.
It's a hard and horrible thought
That I burden you to bear.
It costs months of fetal sitting,
Head down in the shower with a blank stare,
To make up for the minutes and seconds
That you wish you had spared.

So, it's not your fault
That they don't know your name.
And it's not your fault
That they want to end their game.
Call them and tell them you miss them
And I am sure they will tell you the same.
Just be a stranger with warmth in your voice
And you will feel that closeness again.
They may not remember,
But that doesn't mean you can forget,
Because one day will be their last day
And all is said and done when that day hits.



Kids

NICK WILLIAMS

I've decided against having my own kids.
I have my reasons.
One after another.
Why pass down a curse that they'll never recover?
It's in our genes
Uncontrolled and free to smother.
Jumping generation to generation
Pulling us apart,
Whenever we all get together.

My first cousin has a double DUI
Due to an insecurity he drank to confine.
Passed down father to son,
Not once, but two times.
It's running through our veins
And we all can point out the exact festering spot;
A man not deserving enough to call family,
Or my real Grandpops.

He's Bob, that's it. No more, no less.
Held a knife to my mom for making a mess.
Pushed my Nana down the stairs and
Put bruises on her chest.
While keeping a bottle close to his heart
And then forgetting about the rest.
The children witnessed it all
And now have problems of their own.
Who wouldda guessed?

My uncle received Bob's anger issues.
I can see it clenched in fist.
He watched beating after beating;
A spectacle he wished he would've missed.
Bob passed down his bi-polar disorder
Gift wrapped to my older brother,
And now he struggles to ingest a medication meal
Swallowing each breakdown with a glass of water.

My mom even got RA
Skipping generations from Bob's very own mother.
He may be gone,
But she continues to suffer.
Now she needs infusions to avoid contusions
And you wonder why I don't want
To poison another?

My family is the closest thing to me that keeps me sane;
The main thing that I strive to make proud
And what helps me when I'm deep in pain.
Through it all we remained a troop of soaked spider monkeys,
Held tight throughout the rain.
And yes, I still want a little chimp to myself;
Someone to continue the family name.
But not my seed: his line.
Something outside of this cursed reign.
So, there can be another one of me,
Without all this family bane.



A New Life

LYNNE YANCEY

I need to tell you a story. It is about a young boy. The boy lived in a small town in Mississippi, with his mother. He was an only child, she was a single mom. She worked two jobs to pay the bills. She took care of him as best she could.

The boy was sensitive. He felt deeply the lack of a father in his life. He was also smart. He got good grades. He wanted to learn all he could, so he could get out of his small town in Mississippi. He knew there was a life out there, something beyond the drudgery of his mother's life, beyond the meanness of the homes with fathers who drank whiskey every night and beat their sons with the cords from broken appliances.

There was one teacher who noticed him, noticed his aloneness. The teacher offered to help the boy with his homework. The boy didn't really need help. He had the highest grade in the class. But the teacher was always friendly, interested. He was nice to the boy. He made the boy think of what it would be like to have a dad.

One day, the boy went to the teacher after school, to get help with his homework. The teacher welcomed the boy in to the classroom. He shut the door. He sat down next to the boy.

The boy began to open his books, take out his pencil. You need a different notebook, the teacher said. Here, come over to the closet with me. I have a notebook that will be better.

The closet was dark, and the boy felt the teacher's hands. One over his mouth, and one around his throat. Be quiet, said the teacher. Be still. The boy was quiet and still.

As the boy picked up his books, the teacher stood over him. Remember what I said, he told the boy. If you tell anyone, I will kill you, and your family.

The boy walked home to an empty house. His mother was still at work. He unlocked the door and went inside. He locked the door behind him, went to the bathroom, and locked the bathroom door. Carefully, he removed his underwear and rinsed the smear of blood from them. Then he took them into his closet and hung them up to dry.

The man telling me this story is 32 years old. His mother brings him to the emergency department for worsening weakness and lack of appetite. He is emaciated, with skin sunken in over his temples, and hollow, haunting eyes. His lips and tongue are dry and sticky as he speaks. The department is full, and he lies on a gurney parked in a hallway. His bony index finger lifts momentarily from the bed as he swallows, signaling the need for a pause. His mother swabs his mouth with a pink oral swab. Her eyes have the same haunted look as his. After a breath, he continues his story.

The boy kept quiet. The teacher continued his regular abuse. During the boy's sophomore year, the teacher was promoted. He became the school principal. The principal made a new and more horrific threat. If you don't come to my office when I tell you to, I will fail you, so that you cannot graduate. I will keep you here with me at this school as long as I like.

The boy made perfect grades. He got a college scholarship. While he was away at college, the principal was elected mayor. The boy's mother still lived in this small town. He missed her desperately, but he was afraid to go home to visit her. Even driving past the city limit sign filled him with panic. He could feel a vise tightening around his chest as his roommate's car slowed toward the only stoplight at the center of town.

But when he was away from his hometown, on campus among the giant old oak trees and the red brick buildings, he felt unafraid, for the first time since the teacher had come into his life. He loved getting lost in the quiet of tall rows of books at the library. He loved listening to new ideas in class, ideas about social justice and community organizing. He made friends, people who didn't know anything about his hometown, or the teacher, or the closet in that classroom.

The young man got accepted to law school. He became passionate about representing victims of sexual abuse. The more he learned, the more he realized he probably wasn't the only boy who had been victimized by the mayor. He longed to ask his old classmates. But the shame and risk felt too great.

Then, at the start of his final year of law school, he called his mother as he always did on Sunday afternoon, to catch up on the week's events. She told him that the mayor had passed away unexpectedly that week. Heart attack. She was planning to go to the service on Wednesday.

It seemed as if the vise was removed from the young man's chest. For the first time in 13 years, he could breathe deeply. A few weeks later, he called one of the other boys he had grown up with, and met him for coffee. He barely hinted at what the teacher had done. And there, in the coffee shop, his childhood friend began to cry. No, he wasn't the only one.

At Christmastime, the young man developed a new kind of tightness in his chest. He was diagnosed with pneumonia. The infection was so severe that he was placed in isolation, on oxygen, in the intensive care unit at the nearby hospital. His immune system was crumbling under the weight of a different infection—AIDS. His mother came to the hospital, sat at his bedside, night and day. She wept when they learned the awful truth.

continued on next page...

Slowly his breathing improved. He began taking medication to suppress the HIV virus. The medication was only partially effective. But he continued his studies, and, despite having missed some time, managed to graduate at the top of his class. He landed a prestigious one-year clerking position with a congresswoman on capitol hill. She too was passionate about the cause of childhood sexual abuse. After his clerkship, he was hired by one of the biggest law firms in Atlanta. He set his sights on developing himself as an expert in areas of sexual abuse and harassment.

But the medications were not controlling his illness. He developed HIV wasting syndrome: weight loss, profound fatigue and weakness. He could not keep up with the demands for 80 hour work weeks and the expectation that he would produce volumes of well-researched legal opinion. After just a few months, the firm let him go.

The man had only a meager amount of savings. He tried working at a coffee shop, but so many days he was too weak to even get out of bed, get dressed, and get himself to work. Eventually, dreadfully, he acquiesced to his mother's entreaties. He moved home, back to the small town, and back in with her, so she could take care of him.

But once he came home, it seemed as if the toxic stench of the teacher's memory permeated his body, his mind, his very soul. He grew weaker. He lost more weight. He lost hope.

The man wants to keep telling me the story. It is somehow terribly important to him that he tell me, a doctor he has never met before, what happened. His head lapses back on the pillow in exhaustion. His mother takes his hand, takes over telling the story. She called a cousin in Denver. They could stay with him while they found a place to live, and she found a job. His mother packed what she could in their car. They moved here to Colorado, to start a new life.

Yes, she says, smiling resolutely, nodding. His eyes are closed, so he does not see her lip tremble or the tear she wipes away. She keeps her voice cheerful. A new life.

Thirty six hours later, when I come back to the emergency department for an evening shift, he is still there in the hallway, waiting for an inpatient bed. The IV fluids and medication have helped his nausea and diarrhea. His eyes look a little less hollow. Now I notice his dry sense of humor, and a faint, impish smile. His mother is still there at his side. She wears the same shirt she was wearing when I left yesterday. Guess what? She says to me. I got a call back from that Fedex office. They offered me the job. She raises her hand in a high five gesture toward her son. See? She says. A new life.

She turns to me. Remember today, Doctor. This is the start of our new life.

Yes ma'am, I say. I will remember.



History's Door

DANA ZACK

there is such a thing
as a human shield
I've seen it
in live action
when you clasped
the doorknob
before my hand
could reach its gleam
took the first steps
into a room full of sorrow
and willed shrapnel
into your soft being
to spare my own
from nothing that
could not be
unseen



Physicality

DANA ZACK

I believe in unfiltered kindness
if you poured me down a busy sidewalk
I would leave a trail of pulp smiles
chunky puddles of "good morning"
viscous with sincerity

I believe in unfiltered kindness
and so I am vulnerable

I am vulnerable to lengthy gazes
that drift below collarbone slants
I lie bare to unrefined compliments
of beauty and physicality and shape
that breed hunched shoulders
and an increasing sense of smallness
I am exposed to the brush of hands
simple "mistakes" that stain my skin
with their permanence

this kindness
this unfiltered, overflowing magic
in my bloodstream

is wasted on a world
where I am stamped by femininity
where kindness is unsafe
simply because I am contained by a body
that I did not choose

so PSA to all you strangers:

let me love you
let my existence stay unfiltered
let me shine light in your direction
remembering all the while
that you have not been invited

to bring my woman into this



In The Years Before Losing Her Mind

CONNIE ZUMPF

It was, some days, as if
she awakened from a ride on a train
she didn't remember boarding.
Opening the window blind of the Pullman car
she would find she had crossed over
into another country, unannounced,
where the body speaks strange languages
in down-sloping timbres.
Uncertain of all that was stolen as she slept,
but *yes, definitely*,
the substance of her belongings
was less.

*

How long had this been happening,
the stealth of petty burglary—
one month a coffee spoon, the next,
an antique vase, the brooch
she rarely wore—then
a knee joint, a hip, her grasp
on the latchkey, the recurring mystery
of where she might have left it?
Reaching for *tureen, evanesce*,
or *decrescendo* her palm would close
around the void, leaving her instead
with *bowl, bubble, and fade*.

*

Fading stars, black holes,
moth holes, worlds of absence
in the fabric, new universes
of limits appeared one at a time,
at a time.

*

At times the Rolodex
in her mind would spin, those girls
who came to see her, the giddy prattle
made her laugh, crack Ruby Apple
lipstick smiles that always overran
the edges of her lips, ever since
the lighted makeup mirror
disappeared.

*

Reflections in the window glass—
she, a bride in rose-gold suit,
the one for going away
after vows and photographs.
long before the final ashes,
mortgage papers on the grate.

*

Her hands, rice paper invitations
pale to light in half-hung shadows,
five-point stars against a violet blush of night.

*

And now the hat rack in the hall
is missing,
coats and scarves
in a tangle on the floor.

◆

My Mother Stops Time Every Night

CONNIE ZUMPF

She stops the pendulum
on the grandfather clock in the hall
so the half-hourly gong

won't awaken the sleeping
man, her love, beside her—

the rise and fall of his chest,
the narrowing
of his remaining breaths.

She collects the minutes, saves them
in a bottle by the window.

One day soon
she will pour them out,
drop by ivory drop.

*That-Time-We-Went-to-Montreal,
Toes-Touching-in-the-Night,
Sundays-on-the-Patio—*

She'll watch as they billow up
like cream in her coffee,

spread in circles out to the rim,
until everything she holds
turns golden.



Plastic Chair, Pink Gown Flapping Open in the Front

CONNIE ZUMPF

I tell myself not to stew about
the silent hullabaloo that brews
just under my skin. But there, I just
did it, again. Alien specks
that squat in uninvited residence,
tiny plots in my right breast now claim
the entire continent of my brain.

I'm careful not to stare at her chest, so
my gaze sidles around the private space
of the other mammogram roulette
loser in the room. Two islands of
doomed nonchalance, we read outdated
magazines. Haven't turned a single page.

Not to alarm my family
and friends, I sit here alone and stoic.
But the better angel of my nature
is in no mood for heroics.

Truth is, part of me *wants* them to worry.

And it could be a good opportunity
for them to review their shortcomings,
reflect on past slights. For example,
when was the last time that any of them
truly appreciated my poetry?

I'll give them a list.
I'm working on it now. But it's hard

to balance my reproofs
with what I most need for them
to forgive:

vows I did not keep, moments
I have not lived, tenderness
I failed to speak, visions
I slept through,
the life I've let slip
through my plans.



CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Alice Marilyn Abrams...87...lifetime student of the 38 string Concert Zither...6 string Guitar...88 string Piano. Student at Cornell University, Department of Architecture...Graduate of Pratt Institute, Department of Art Education...1954. Designer/Goldsmith since 1954. Well versed in the use of hammer...file...acetylene torch...gold/silver...precious stones and rewarded with wonderful patrons, gallery exhibitions and awards. Ten year former Member of the Board of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities when it was just a dream of an idea...sharing mutual interest with husband of 68 years, Fredrick R. Abrams...Ethicist Extraordinaire.

Fredrick R. Abrams MD Cornell Medical School, later became OB/GYN. From 1962 to 1996, he cared for thousands of patients in office and Operating Room. Taught Biomedical Ethics to healthcare professionals and Hospital Ethics Committees, DU and CU Policy Consortium, UCD, Iliff School of Theology and Governor's Commission on Life and Law. Ethics Committee Chair from College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, he wrote many guidelines for 25,000 members, then traveled across States teaching Medical Ethics. He was a founding Board Member for the Center for Bioethics and Humanities as it became a new building on the Colorado Medical School Campus. Abrams received Lifetime Achievement Award for Bioethics and Humanities of UC Health Sciences Center as well as the Isaac Bell and John Hayes Award for Leadership in Medical Ethics and Professionalism from the AMA. Board of Governors from the Health One System Health Sciences Center awarded the Trusted Care For Excellence In Clinical Ethics. Denver Public Library acquired his unique Biomedical Ethics Records that began in 1976. Abrams published in Saturday Review, New England Journal, Journal of the JAMA, Nurses Journals and two books, "Doctors On The Edge" and "Once I was A little Boy" as well as poetry.

Morgan Allred Mo Christo is a spoken word artist from the heartland, Kansas, currently residing in Nashville, TN. As the regional coordinator of Poetry for Personal Power and Host of Nashville's Po Boys and Poets he takes the stage and uses liberal arts to entertain, educate and inspire.

Jasmine Arneja I am a wandering soul who looks at the world with closed eyes and open heart.

Michael Aubrey is a histocompatibility specialist with ClinImmune Labs. My photographic drive is to find beauty in a conflicted and complicated world. My photographic philosophy is that there are more wondrous things in heaven and earth than have been dreamt in anyone's philosophy.

Raisa Bailon The author grew up in Ecuador and moved to the US for college at 17. She has been traveling through Central and South America during the summers and capturing their beauty through photos.

Sarah Bardwell is a third year medical student and lifetime advocate for social justice.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Oliver Bawmann is a third-year medical student at the University of Colorado. In addition to reading and writing, his interests include ceramic pottery, cooking and sports. While he has never submitted any of his writing for publication before, he is excited to be doing so now and aspires to have writing constitute some portion of his future career as a physician. He is still considering what sort of residency to pursue after medical school.

Anne Bell With a background in designing and delivering professional development for teachers, I've entered the life stage known by names such as the "second act" or "third chapter," (50+ or 60+ depending on the source – I qualify on both counts). In this stage, I'm enjoying exploring new opportunities where I can draw on interests, experiences, passions to make meaningful contributions. Such discoveries are playing out in three arenas of my life: seeking ways to help promote equity in K-12 educational environments; developing a more disciplined "writing life" to tackle those "someday I should write" projects; and a renewed interest in nutrition and health. The last of these areas has been prompted by my diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer last year. I'm educating myself on physiology, micro-nutrients, and ongoing research, trying somewhat successfully to apply what I'm learning. I'm grateful for support of my husband, two grown sons and their wives throughout my treatment, which thankfully has been successful. I enjoy the Colorado climate (I'm originally from Oregon, another amazing state!) and enjoy hiking, urban trail walking, and "gathering around the table" with friends and family.

Rae Carroll is a third year medical student, a future family physician, a writer and an artist, and a believer in every patient's story.

Dr. James E. Carter, Jr., MD graduated from Haverford College with a degree in sociology, and obtained his medical degree at State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center at Brooklyn. He completed his cardiology fellowship at the University of Chicago Hospitals and interventional cardiology fellowship at the University of Maryland Medical Center. Board certified in internal medicine, cardiology, and vascular medicine, Dr. Carter focuses on social determinants of health, systems biology, and nutritional modification to stimulate wound healing. Dr. Carter sees patients in vascular medicine clinic and the Advanced Wound Care clinic. While recovering from illness and the loss of his parents, Dr. Carter discovered poetry slam, while practicing cardiology in Flagstaff, Arizona, winning his first competition amongst college students. He now writes essays and poetry to foster resiliency.

Ellen Clark I grew up in Greenville, NC where, starting at a young age, I developed a love for creating two-and three-dimensional art. I then pursued a major in biology and minor in studio art while at Rollins College in Winter Park, FL. Prior to graduate school, I worked several years in neuroscience research, as a scribe in the Emergency Department, and volunteering in art therapy as with oncology patients, all at University of North Carolina. Currently, I am a first year medical student at CU School of Medicine. Here, I continue my love for the arts as a leader in the Clinical and Creative Minds interest group and hope to incorporate such practices into my future practice.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Jamie Costabile is trained to be technically minded. Jamie seeks to find his muse.

Yasmine Dakhama is a first year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Dakhama is deeply interested in questions and practices that aim to understand the human condition as well as the various (small or large) components of life that provide meaning for individuals/populations.

Carol Ehrlich, Ph.D., Chair Emerita, Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology, Children's Hospital Colorado, has drawn on her 91+years of life experience to write prose and poetry since her retirement in 1984. She loves her children, grands- and great-grandchildren, her cabin in the mountains, and classical music (in that order!), but she worries about the state of the world--politically, culturally and environmentally.

Bryant Elrick is a Colorado native and current third year medical student at CU School of Medicine. He grew up in a small farming and ranching community on the Eastern Plains. He completed his undergraduate education at Colorado School of Mines, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in biochemical engineering with a minor in bioengineering and life science. Bryant also completed a graduate degree in clinical anatomy from Creighton University before entering medical school. His current research involves the hand, specifically Seymour fractures. He plans to pursue a career in orthopedic surgery.

Art Elser is a poet and writer whose poetry has been published in numerous journals and anthologies. His books include a memoir, *What's It All About, Alfie?*, and four poetry books, *We Leave the Safety of the Sea*, *A Death at Tollgate Creek*, *As The Crow Flies*, and *To See a World in a Grain of Sand*.

Ephrat Fisseha is a 1st year medical student. She is a passionate advocate for HIV prevention and has an aspiration to eliminate the vertical transmission of HIV in resource-poor countries, like her birth country of Ethiopia. Ephrat Fisseha is a 1st year medical student.

Alexandra Frazier I am originally from Colorado and have always loved the outdoors and travel. Nature always has the most interesting and surreal experiences. It is unpredictable which makes it so exciting to capture and be a part of.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Mackenzie Garcia Mackenzie is a third year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She plans to become a primary care physician and is passionate about health equity, improving the healthcare system, and providing patient-centered care. She lives in Aurora with her wonderful husband CJ and dog Etta and enjoys spending time with family, painting/drawing, and being surrounded by plants.

Gard Likes to surf.

Arturo Garcia A surviving cancer patient at UCH, Arturo Garcia transitioned from a periodical “in the mood” artist to a professional artist five years ago when he decided to devote every minute of his life to making art fearing he might have his days counted. Effective medical treatment, a deep desire to live, and self-healing practices that included meditation, diet and exercise, Arturo was declared cancer free in 2017. Today he continues to paint both for fun and for a living while continuing to keep his desire to live by doing what he loves.

With years using a pallet knife as his preferred art tool, Garcia has developed a kind of mastery and it becomes evident as you get acquainted with his work. The strokes are fierce and fearless, but carefully chosen to reflect value and the natural shades of life giving a three dimensional effect by using a relief technique. The mixture of warm and cold colors is what makes Garcia’s work unique and distinctive. Garcia’s love for wildlife give him a natural drive to create beautiful and exquisite pieces where his contemporary style brings his subjects to life, thus bringing a feeling of fulfillment to the naked eye.

Carrie Gilman I have been a medical social worker for nearly two decades now and am currently pursuing a certification in poetry therapy. The opportunity to support individuals and families coping with chronic and end of life illnesses has inspired numerous pieces of writing over her career.

Justin Hauxwell is a double-boarded Physician practicing Psychiatry and Family Medicine in a college health center. It’s one of the most challenging and rewarding jobs he has held. Combining these specialties is an extension of aspects of his own personality: He loves considering things from multiple perspectives; adding creativity to things that might otherwise be routine; and trying to preserve the humanity in it all, sometimes at the most fundamental levels.

Andrew Haynes The author is a physician. He is currently a second year pediatric infectious diseases fellow at Children’s Hospital Colorado.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Steven R. Heaps, Ph.D., retired psychologist and author of *The Rancid Walnut: An Ultrarunning Psychologist's Journey with Prostate Cancer* (steveheaps@comcast.net), has used writing to deal with prostate cancer, heart surgery, shingles and LIFE. His poems have appeared in *Blood and Thunder: Musings on the Art of Medicine*, *SpokeWrite*, the *Electric Encyclopedia of Experimental Literature of the New York Press*, *Ars Medica*, *Uncensored*, *The Human Touch* and *Funny in 500*. In addition to private practice, he taught at Gonzaga University and the University of Manitoba. His granddaughter, Kaitlyn Oster, received her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from the Anschutz Medical Campus in December, 2018. He now runs, hikes, reads, writes, fishes, hunts pheasants with Oliver, the Chocolate Lab, and spends time with family and friends.

Todd Edward Herman's films and photographs deal with themes of the body and transience, representational taboos and spectatorship, difference and the historic consequences of othering. His work has generated collaborations with artists on books, films, performances and exhibitions around the world. Todd has received many awards for his work including the San Francisco International Film Festival's New Vision Award, the Art Council of Northern Ireland's Artist in Residence Award, the San Francisco Film Arts Foundation, Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowship, Taipei Artist Village Residency, and San Francisco Art Commission's Emerging Curator Award. Todd is also co-founder and project advisor for *Sins Invalid* -- a performance project that centralizes artists with disabilities, artists of color, queer and gender-variant artists. He has presented his work at such venues as the International Film Festival Rotterdam, San Francisco International Film Festival, Southbank Centre, Anthology Film Archives, San Francisco Cinematheque, and Pacific Film Archives.

"At their best artists can question habits of understanding, looking, and story telling, thereby investigating the ways personal and historical forms are constructed rather than fixed. For me, this means generating work that examines how images compose, enforce, or undermine -- rather than simply reflect -- history, dominant values, identity, and authorship."

Matthew Hickey is a Professor and University Distinguished Teaching Scholar at Colorado State University. He serves as the Director of the Human Performance Clinical Research Laboratory, and has faculty appointments in the Department of Health and Exercise Science and the Department of Biomedical Sciences.

Carolyn Ho is a current MS4 hoping to be an OB/GYN in the future. Although a California native at heart, she is relishing her time in the beautiful state of Colorado and loves the experiences she has had thus far. In her free time, she enjoys being able to share her appreciation of the world with others through her writing and art.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Annette House I was a nurse for 40 years. Now I'm a poet. Writing honors the exquisitely complex relationship between nurse and patient. Writing is a way through the inexplicable in our lives.

Sophia Hu I am a 1st year medical student interested in photography and painting. As I move up the career ladder and eventually deal with life and death situations, I like to keep in touch with my innocent and vulnerable side through art and photography. A kid at heart, my artwork reflects my need to resort back to a childhood-like state as a source of comfort.

Diana Ir, BS, MPH is an alumni at the Colorado School of Public Health Master's program at the Anschutz Medical Campus, concentrating on epidemiology and applied biostatistics. She is currently working full-time as an Infectious Disease Scientist at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, studying the effects of human microbiome and its role in human health and disease. Her aspiring career goals is to become a medical physician scientist. She has a variety of interests, ranging from running races (half marathon, marathon), rock climbing, hip hop and urban dancing, playing ultimate frisbee, martial arts, reading, anthology, writing stories or poems/blogging, being a dilettante, hanging out with friends/family, photography, and learning new things.

Joseph Karwin is currently a graduate student at the University of Texas, Tyler, where he is finishing his M.A. in English. Previously, Joseph earned his B.A. in English and Creative Writing from Colorado College, graduating in 2012. Joseph's connection to the Anschutz campus starts with his mother, Maria Portelli, who has worked on campus for eleven years. While earning his B.A., Joseph also worked on campus, spending a summer working the grounds. Joseph is currently teaching middle school communications and creative writing. He spends his time writing poetry and novels and playing with his two dogs, Navi and Link.

Janet Kim is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Colorado. She learned how to use oil paints in her senior year of undergrad and has continued the hobby since. She also enjoys hiking and spending time with friends and family.

Olivia Kingery is a writer in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She is an MFA candidate at Northern Michigan University, where she reads for Passages North. Her work is published and forthcoming with The Ore Ink Review, Dunes Review, From Whispers to Roars, and Cosmographia. When not writing, she is in the woods with her Chihuahua and Saint Bernard.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Vladka Kovar, MD, MPH is a board-certified preventive medicine physician/epidemiologist with a background in psychiatry and a “side” degree in Art History, Theory, and Criticism. She currently works for the Community Epidemiology and Program Evaluation Group (CEPEG). Previously she acted as a consultant for the Pediatric Injury Prevention, Education and Research Program conducting qualitative research related to mental health services and as an assistant program director in the Preventive Medicine Residency Program at the UCD. She also spent time volunteering in Africa, working mainly on health care system designs and quality improvement projects as well as disease prevention and health promotion campaigns. She is originally from the Czech Republic, loves to travel, hike in the mountains, draw, paint, and spend time with her family and friends.

Priya Krishnan is a third-year medical student at the University of Colorado; she is passionate about the intersections between the humanities and medicine. She obtained a B.A. in Music (Violin Performance) and a B.S. in Physiology and Neurobiology from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2015. As a member of the TOTUS Spoken Word Collective in college, she discovered her interest in using artistic efforts for social change. She currently plays as a violinist with the Boulder Symphony and the Anschutz Symphony Orchestra, participates in poetry initiatives around the country, and enjoys adventuring in the outdoors. In her future career, she hopes to continue to explore how the arts and medicine illuminate healthcare disparities and lend insight to the patient-physician relationship.

Mary Lassiter is employed at the University of Colorado Denver. A quilt artist for many years, she depicts in this quilt of indigo, her wish for a more peaceful world.

Isaac Leigh is an undergraduate student studying creative writing on the CU Denver campus. He writes primarily poetry, though also enjoys exploring nonfiction forms such as, personal and lyric essay.

Damon McLeese had worked with art disability and ability for more than 40 years. He began to write stories of the people he had met and learned from along the way.

Debra Miller I graduated with a BFA, Emphasis Drawing, at the Metropolitan State University of Denver in 2003. I currently work at the Health Sciences Library. I am the contact person for the Art from CU Exhibits in the library gallery, and additional exhibits throughout the year.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Sandeep Kumar Mishra is an outsider artist, poet and lecturer in English Literature. He has edited a collection of poems by various poets - Pearls (2002) and written a professional guide book -How to be (2016) and a collection of poems and art - Feel My Heart (2016). Recently his work has published in Asian Signature, Blue Mountain Review, Chiron Review, Convergence, Harbinger Asylum, Helix, High Plains Register, Literary Orphans, Marathon Literary Review, Phenomenal Literature, Quail Bell, Really System, Red Fez, Society of Classical Poets, The Brasilia Review, The Criterion, The Literary Yard, Third Wednesday, Ygdrasil, ZOUC Magazine & Miscellany etc.

Michelle Luna Michelle graduated from Johns Hopkins in 2015 with her BA in Public Health Studies; she earned her MHS in Mental Health in 2016 from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

Joyce Nielsen The author is Emeritus Professor of Sociology (CU at Boulder) who has become a full-time artist & part-time poet. She recently exhibited at Gallery 1857 in Arvada, CORE New Art Space in Denver; was in 17th annual Lone Tree Art Expo & 24th Annual Gateway to the Rockies Art Show; currently shows at Prism Workspaces, Denver and Side Door Salon, Boulder; upcoming exhibit at Bank of the West, Aurora.

Sally Peach, MD, PhD graduated from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in May 2018, and is currently a pediatrics resident at Seattle Children's Hospital. Originally from North Carolina, she went to undergrad at MIT, where she received the Joseph D. Everingham Award for her theatrical performances and playwriting. She's been writing poetry and taking photographs since she was but a tiny Peach, and this is her 6th year publishing in The Human Touch.

Mary D. Poole is a retired healthcare executive. Mary moved from Albuquerque, New Mexico 14 years ago and began writing poetry and essays in Denver.

Spencer Poore is a a pediatric pulmonary fellow currently training at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. His goal in life is to have a piano on every floor in his house. He currently has a keyboard that resides in his daughter's play room.

Howe Qiu is a medical student of the University of Colorado School of Medicine. His hobbies include photography, poetry, dance, and Taekwondo. His writing reflects on his personal experiences, structured as a raw, unfiltered stream of consciousness.

Kelsey Repine is a third year medical student at University of Colorado School of Medicine. Born and raised in Colorado, she enjoys spending as much time in the mountains as possible.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Nicole Restauri I believe stories have power.... to heal, to create a better world and and to shine as beacons of hope and inspiration when the landscape darkens. I am a radiologist and reading and writing poems is not all that different than interpreting images in that both ask us to look beyond what is on the surface of things.

Jan Rudeen “Having been a reporter and freelance writer for years, I began writing in verse as a way to express and unravel my own fact and fiction. At the heart of this piece is regret, a recurring theme in my writing that I continue to explore.” Jan Crain Rudeen lives in Denver with her writer/editor husband, Mike. They have three grown children.

Trudi Schmidt served as Administrative Assistant to the faculty of General Internal Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine at Anschutz. She paints the landscape of Colorado “en plein air.”

Ilona Schwarz Gone skiing!

Norman Scott Clinical Professor, Department of Pediatrics, UCSOM
Communications Coach, Foundations Program, UCSOM

Victoria Seligman Dr. Seligman is an assistant professor in the departments of internal medicine and rheumatology. She completed her residency at the University of Colorado and her fellowship at the University of California, San Francisco. She has had a longstanding interest in caring for underserved populations. This interest has led her to direct a global health program in Cambodia with Health Volunteers Overseas in Washington, DC to bolster specialty care in this country. Locally, she has developed an ECHO program for rheumatology that delivers virtual education to primary care providers in the VA nationally to extend access to rheumatic care in this system. She serves on the American College of Rheumatology Volunteerism Committee that promotes volunteer opportunities to fill gaps of care. During a sabbatical year from 2012-13, she completed her MPH at Harvard with a concentration in quality improvement to compliment her clinical interests. In parallel to her clinical pursuits, Dr. Seligman has developed a curriculum in humanities and medicine. In particular, she has enjoyed researching artists with rheumatic diseases and the impact on their lives and work. In her free time, she is an avid photographer, an advocate for special needs children, and a world traveler.

David Shepard Retired psychiatrist, teaching PBL course, published poet.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Subada Soti is a third-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She was born in Nepal and moved to Colorado at the age of 12. Her passion lies in urban underserved health including the health of immigrants and refugees. She considers herself to be an amateur artist who leans on the world of poetry and photography to process her experiences being a student doctor. In her free time, you can find her crocheting, reflecting with friends and family or watching Bollywood movies.

Indira Sriram is a fourth year medical student. She plans to pursue a career in Pediatrics, and will continue her training at the Children's Hospital of Colorado.

Lina Stanchev, MS is currently a nursing student at the College of Nursing at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Her prior focus was biotech clinical research in the San Francisco Bay Area before moving to Colorado. Originally from a small town in Bulgaria, Lina has always had passion for both sciences and humanities. She enjoys impromptu dance parties with her two children as well as pretending to be a food critic.

Kelly Stanek is a first year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine with a passion for the eternal and philosophical aspects of humanity. She is a Colorado native and lover of poetry. She previously worked at the Barbara Davis Center and continues to pursue an education in beauty, goodness, and truth, while preparing to become a physician.

Margaret Teets This author is a third year medical student from Colorado Springs who holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Religious Studies from Stanford University. She is an aspiring pediatrician who attempts to think very deeply about her patients and their families. She is very grateful for her opportunity to be involved in other families' lives, health, and well-being.

Benjamin Tiano I'm a medical student from Los Angeles currently working as a research assistant in a basic science lab at Anschutz. Last year, during my third year of medical school, I felt myself grow and develop in ways I couldn't have imagined, yet it also brought some of the most trying moments of my life. I still have a lot to learn about clinical medicine, but I have even more to learn about selfless, compassionate care.

Amanda F. Tompkins is a second year medical student at the University of Colorado-Anschutz Medical Campus. Prior to attending medical school, Amanda earned her BA in Psychology (with a double minor in Philosophy and Religion) from Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Following graduation, Amanda lived in South Africa for a year before starting her career in healthcare, first as a patient transporter and later as a CNA, eventually earning her EMT. She moved to Denver, traveled cross-country, and worked for a year as a Professional Research Assistant before starting at CUSOM as a medical student. In her spare time Amanda enjoys international travel, making meals with non-med school friends and spending time in the mountains of Colorado.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Chelsea Triolo I have been an artist all my life. I am extremely grateful that I still have time to pursue and enjoy my hobby, even as I am about to begin the accelerated Nursing program at CU. I have worked in Pathology on this campus for over 3 years, and I plan on staying here for more!

Katie Van Deventer Growing up on a Colorado ranch taught me the values of hard work and perseverance. I have approached each aspect of my life with this in mind. I grew up as the oldest of 5 siblings. Intensely committed to sports and academics, my high school and college career revolved around training and schoolwork. I studied Sculpture and Environmental Earth Science at Dartmouth College and went on to graduate school in the arts at UCLA. Returning to Colorado, however, changed my orientation. When my husband and I moved back to the Roaring Fork Valley we knew our life-long home resided in the Colorado Mountains. During my time in an operating room in Iquitos, Peru, I began to seriously consider the possibility of contributing my energy and drive to a small community as a physician. I have chosen a career in medicine precisely for this purpose, not only to support my family's love for the Rocky Mountains, but also to provide a needed service for those underserved.

Lisa Viltz I am a neuroscientist, rock climber, California transplant, skier, and an avid cheesecake baker. I'm passionate about books, classical music, photography, coffee, dessert, whiskey, and, of course, science and medicine.

Miles Viseur is a 3rd year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He currently lives in Colorado Springs because he is part of the Colorado Springs Branch. He is interested in Family Medicine. In his free time, he likes to go skiing in the winter and wakeboarding in the summer.

Erika Walker The author's writing has been published in Literary Mama, Pulse: Voices from the Heart of Medicine, and American Baby Magazine. She co-authored Denver Mountain Parks: 100 Years of the Magnificent Dream which won the 2014 Colorado Book Award in the history category and she recently completed her first memoir, Loyalty Was a Kind of Love, as part of the Poetry Book Project with Lighthouse Writer's Workshop. She lives in Denver, Colorado.

Arek Wiktor MD FACS is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at University of Colorado Hospital where he practices Burn Surgery and Surgical Critical Care. His research interests include PTSD in burn survivors, impact of marijuana legalization on burn injury, and care of the elderly burn patient. He enjoys spending time with wonderful family, archery, and smoking meats.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Nick Williams is a Doctor of Physical Therapy student at the University of Colorado, Anschutz campus. Nick earned a Bachelor of Science degree at John Carroll University in 2015 and spent a few years researching in the fields of immunology and stem cell biology after graduating. He is quite tall and can usually be found hitting his head on low-hanging lights and tripping on low-lying objects. He dreams of traveling to third-world countries to give back to those in need and eventually get a little fat in the process, but insists that he will “run it off later”. In sports and life, he is 90 percent reflexes, 15 percent luck, and really bad at math. As with most graduate students, he is very much looking forward to not being in debt!

Lynne Yancey, MD is an emergency physician in Denver, Colorado. She feels privileged to bear witness to the stories of the people she has cared for during her career. She does her best writing late at night, under pressure from a deadline, over a bar of dark chocolate and a glass of red wine.

Dana Zack is a first year student of the Child Health Associate Physician Assistant (CHA/PA) Program at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Her interests—outside of medicine—include youth leadership, outdoor adventuring, and dabbling in the arts. Growing up with an older sister who was an avid writer has largely served as inspiration for the exploration of her own poetic thoughts.

Connie Zumpf was educated as a developmental psychologist, and much of her poetry reflects themes of selfhood, aging, and change. She is a longtime member of Lighthouse Writer’s Workshop in Denver, Colorado, where she recently finished her first poetry manuscript. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming New Ohio Review, Pilgrimage, Christian Century, North American Review, Medical Literary Messenger, and Persimmon Tree.

MEDIA SUBMISSIONS

Media submissions are found on the website: <http://tinyurl.com/thehumantouch2019>

Galaxy of Floating Stars by Diana Ir (video)

When I Stop Looking by Todd Herman (video)

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The Editors-in-Chief:

- Diana Ir, Colorado School of Public Health, Class of 2018
- Carolyn Ho, School of Medicine, Class of 2020
- Priya Krishnan, School of Medicine, Class of 2020

All other members of the Editorial Board

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