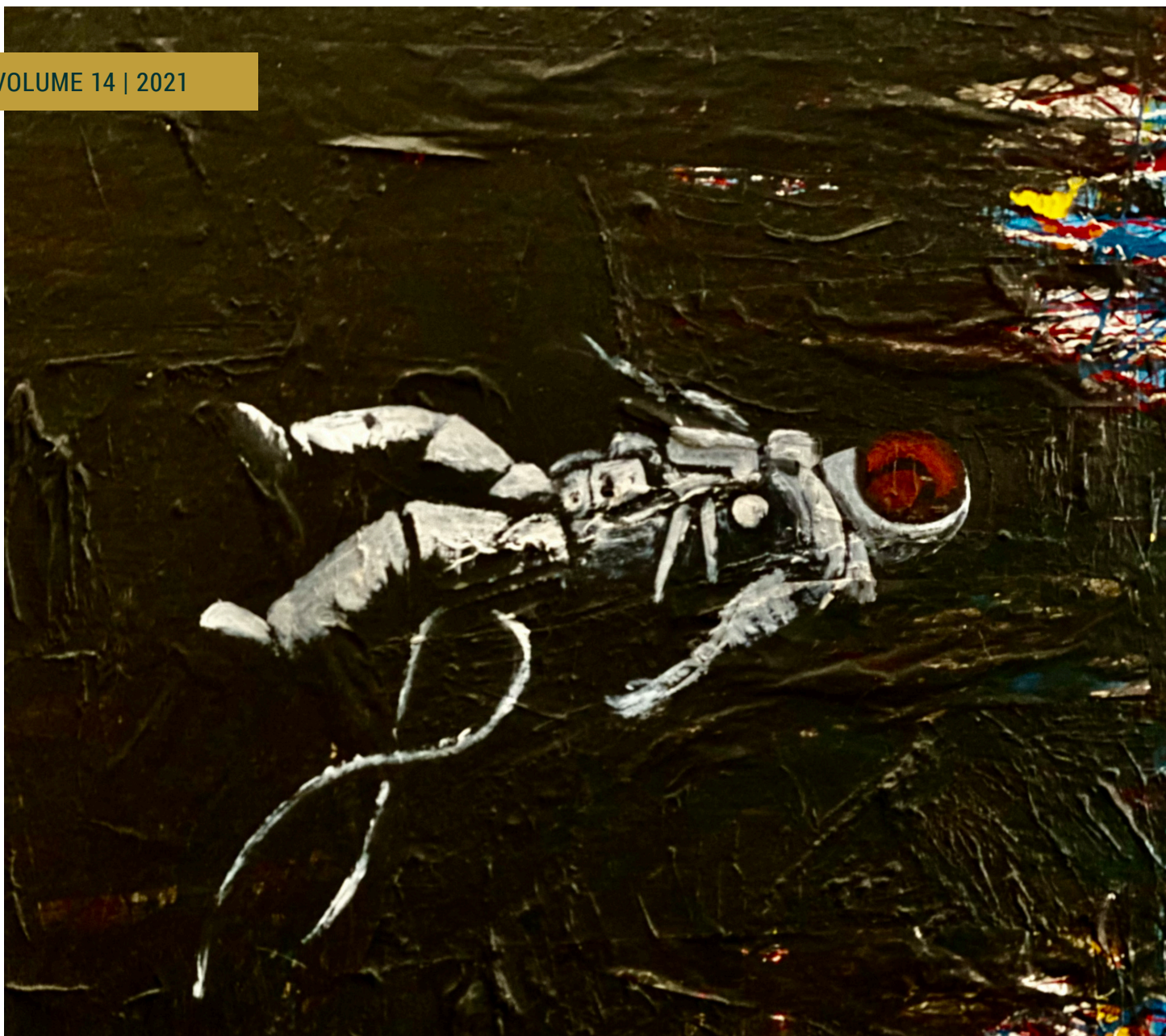


VOLUME 14 | 2021



the human touch

The Journal
of Poetry, Prose
& Visual Art

FRONT COVER ARTWORK



Quarantine
by Jacob Pellinen

Oil and foil on canvas, 18" x 24", 2020

The Journal of Poetry, Prose & Visual Art



ART DIRECTION / GRAPHIC DESIGN

Christina Martins
hello@christinamartins.me, christinamartins.me

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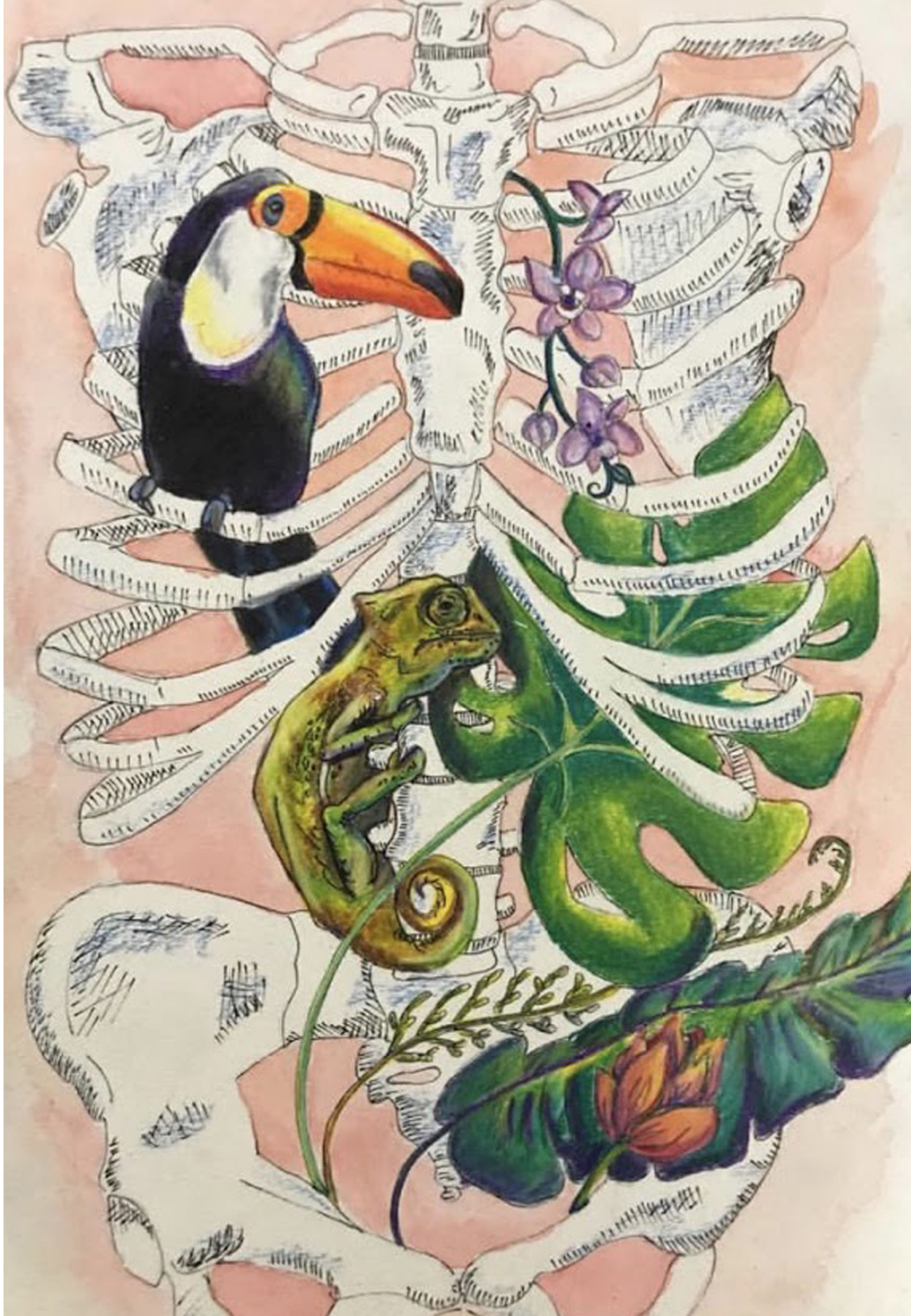
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Volume 14
2021

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PREFACE

Welcome to *The Human Touch* 2021—the annual anthology of prose, poetry, graphic art, photography, music, and video 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. This is our second digital publication in the “new normal” of the coronavirus pandemic, and while we have felt the loss of being unable to print and distribute a tangible object as in the past, we have taken full advantage of the freedom and accessibility of going virtual. Readers and viewers will find more images, more music, and more video.

Behind all the words and pictures is the commitment and creativity of our editors and board members. From inviting submissions to devising timelines to reviewing materials to working with graphic artists to endless proofreading, they devote many hours to producing the volume that you now behold. And they do all of this in addition to schedules packed with classwork, study sessions, high-stakes exams, residency interviews, lab research, and resident duties! We are deeply grateful for their dedication and energy.

One of the biggest challenges of any literary and arts publication is securing the necessary funding for the enterprise, no matter how big or small. We are extremely fortunate and especially thankful to Molly and Jeff Hill. Dr. Hill is an alumnus of the School of Medicine who, with wife, Molly, and their family have 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 the means of making such connections.

Finally, on behalf of the editorial board, I want to thank and congratulate our 2021 Editors:

- **Allison M. Dubner**, PhD Candidate, Integrated Physiology Program: Editor-in-Chief
- **Amelia J. Davis**, School of Medicine, Class of 2022: Assistant Editor
- **Brenna Cameron**, School of Medicine, Class of 2021: Assistant Editor

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



Sunset In Lesotho

Vladka Kovar

Mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24", 2019

Standing On Scars

Maureen Sweeney Ackerman

The history of the body is the history of the heart, scars of skin and spirit stitched into who we are.

~~~~~

Take your finger. Trace the scars, low below the belly. Ruptured ovary. Endometriosis. Retroverted uterus. I will never conceive.

May 1977. It is snowing on Long Island as we drive to pick up our son, nine months old and now ours. I will sing to him *Danny Boy*, and when he’s old enough to speak and young enough to speak truth, he will tell me that my singing hurts his ears. He’ll invite me into his igloo to watch stars.

July 2014. He is thirty-eight, he is here for his birthday with his pregnant wife and toddler son, and still he is Danny, he is Danny Boy, and I am his mother. In February he will be father to two children.

I could not produce you through my body, dear child of mine. But oh, Danny Boy, I have loved you through my whole self.

Touch the scars. Let them sing. Let them sing for life, for so much love.

~~~~~

July 2004. I’m in the corner of the room, I’m close to where my father is dying slow and hard. For almost two weeks he has been without food, without drink. He is all bone and eye, the cancer eye that stares but does not blink.

“Is he waiting for someone?” the hospice nurse asks, but I don’t know. I can’t say who it is. My mother is dead, my sister is dead, the others have come and gone, and it’s only me, sitting in the corner, reading poems to my father, who cannot move away from the words, who cannot move at all, frozen inside Parkinson’s and starvation.

I find the Irish Tenors. I play *Danny Boy* over and over, and I sit on the bed and whisper who we are. “I love you,” I say. “I love you.”

“Leave your body behind,” I beg. “It’s only a house. Open the window and let yourself loose. Do it for you. Do it for me.”

Dylan Thomas was wrong. Do not rage. Do go gentle.

“Go eat your lunch,” the hospice nurse says, and I sit outside the window with yogurt. Soon she’s yelling.

I run inside, but my father has already died. *Oh, Danny Boy, the Irish Tenors are singing. When I am dead, as dead I well may be...*

My father had been waiting for me, I’ll decide later. He did not die until I could live.

continued on next page...

Standing On Stars (continued)

Can we call love setting the spirit free?

~~~~~

Feel the scars. Find their source.

Mottled chest: Brown and white and red, bumpy like braille.

Summer 1989. I am slumped in a bed. I am here and not here. I am floating to the women who float in their oceany robes. I am trying to shine. I am trying to see through the light of so much love. I cannot unclosethe my eyes. I cannot open my mouth, or myself. The doctor is trying to touch me back to his side.

Atypical pneumonia, they call it, three weeks in the hospital, six months until I return to school. Drugs. Coughing, coughing I cannot stop. More drugs, and rest. If they tell me to stay out of the sun, I don't hear. I sit by the pool while my freckles turn inside out white, while my skin crusts into cancer.

I have visitors, students who come to see me. Billy writes about the old diesel from Huntington to Port Jefferson, about his teacher who is sick and who sits with him in her library and reads poems. He wins the contest, and the sponsors invite me, too.

Read it in the braille. I have borrowed Billy's glory. Call it love. Always and again and still, its name is love.

~~~~~

November 1977. I'm returning from class when I hear the siren. Long ago the Sisters taught me how to hear an emergency, so I pray between the cauliflower and turnips on my Thanksgiving list, *Have mercy, dear Lord*. In a few minutes I'll learn it was my mother the ambulance was carrying, my mother, who will be diagnosed with cancer and will be dead in nine months. I'll learn to be a mother as I learn to be without my own, and I'll know that my prayer had been perfunctory.

Spring 1978. I'm afraid, my mother tells me during chemo.

I'm afraid, too, but I don't know how to tell her. I don't know how to understand. I don't know how to watch her hair fall out and her skin peel off. I don't know how to smell this cancer in the house.

Late August. My sister comes from California with her toddler son. My mother is on a hospital bed in the kitchen. Gertrude, the nurse, makes chicken soup, and Danny and Colin wear birthday hats.

Nobody has asked if my mother is waiting for someone. But Gael has come, and my mother has seen, and maybe that is enough.

September 1. The hospital calls. "Come quick," someone tells me. My sister says we should keep vacuuming. My mother dies while my father watches, alone.

Who can hold the heart scar? I am Danny's mother and he is my child, and we will touch it and smooth it till it shines.

~~~~~

October 1999. "My mother, my mother, she's dead," Colleen cries into the phone, and I don't know how to hear that my sister has died without warning. I drive to tell my father, who staggers from sleep to his door and can't see from his cancer eye who I am.

In California, my father whispers about beauty and I say *So You Know*, the poem I wrote on the plane, and my father wants to bury his daughter, and her children say they don't know, they don't know, and it will be more than a year until we stand at the grave in Gate of Heaven and put Gael's ashes in the ground.

My father is eighty-three and he will not know how to live, and the pain will sharpen and slash, and neither he nor I will know how to hold.

What is the feel of a heart in half? How can it heal into whole?

"My sister died," I tell my friend, and he hears and he writes me a poem. Maybe he's holding the stone I gave him, the stone that says yes.

~~~~~

March 2017. It's malignant, the neurosurgeon says, after he removes the mass from my brain. I'll wear a mask for radiation, and beams from the robot will come as couplets. My heart will stretch and stretch until it holds my exhaustion. I'm told later that yes was the only word I could speak at the emergency room.

May. The oncologist recommends chemo. I say please, please let me try without it. I speak with my eyes when my words aren't here.

October. When I wake, I'm in the hospital again, my head all wired. "You had seizures," the doctor says.

I can't find the words. I can't find the poems. Can sadness sing? Can I polish it till it shines?

November. I'm talking with my doctor about curing and healing, how they're not the same. I tell him I know the man who wrote the book on his desk, *The Five Invitations*. "I met with that man," I say. "He said to welcome everything. He said to invite my whole self to the cancer."

I say yes when the doctor invites me to his writing group. "Poems can't cure the cancer," I say, "but they can heal me into who I am."

~~~~~

August 2019. I'm holding a book, my own book of my own poems. The words have come back, sometimes. ■



**Springtime Jubilance**  
Lisa Kurth

*Photograph, Estes Park, 2020*

**Where We Stand**  
Yaswanth Chintaluru

Where we stand  
We do not know  
We stand with one another  
But do not hold hands

We stand on the same street  
But two worlds apart  
We stand in silence but with  
roaring thoughts

We stand at home  
But hard at work  
We stand hopeful  
But with no end in sight

We stand victorious  
But lost every battle

We stand  
Because we have no choice ■

The Process Of Becoming

Amelia J. Davis

Aspen trees  
bend towards one another to whisper a secret,  
each leaf on the cusp of flying away forever  
to chase the wind.

Small stones crunch underneath  
on the trail  
snaking around a bend,  
disappearing into the dense forest.

Rising above,  
the gray peak  
stares somberly from a distance,  
daring me to even contemplate reaching its summit.

The sudden silence of the trees,  
accentuated by the absence of  
the chatter of birds and squeaks of marmots,  
made the slow pace that walking demanded  
unbearable.

Patches of gray splotch my vision,  
a fitting punishment for attempting to run and  
inhale the sparse gifts of oxygen from the thin air.

A deep, dark indigo arises—  
my reflection indiscernible  
in the smooth and silent surface of the lake.

Absent  
are the flashes of silver and green fish  
darting underneath the surface.  
The whole world  
still.

Abruptly aware of leaning over the waters of the lake,  
alone,  
the fear of disappearing under its dark, dim depths  
curls up in my throat.

No closer seems the summit  
even after two hours of trudging uphill.

A black stone of dismay flies into the  
infinite indigo.  
Offering no resistance to the flurry of stones that followed,  
the water simply envelops the stones  
and surrenders them to its depths.

Exhale.  
Sunken stones cannot be  
resurrected,  
but will and patience can be.

Softly waving crowds of purple and yellow  
gently urge me to  
begin again.  
Damp green mosses wink under the sun.

Each step of the trail,  
this journey,  
is indelibly ingrained in  
becoming  
who I am  
and where I want to be. ■



Flash Of Intuition

M.M. Ralph

Photograph, 2020

**Wilting**

Devin Boe

I.

Silver orchid,  
proud and bright;  
rot hiding in the root,  
her fate unraveled.

II.

Age had bloomed upon her;  
as the slow wound grew,  
quiet entropy prevailed.

III.

In the end,  
she was all tubes and lines;  
with plastic roots and withered limbs,  
she faded in the dark. ■

**Aging Alone**

Jeff Patton

Charcoal, oil paint, and India ink  
on canvas, 32" x 24", 2012



**Better Than The Flu**  
Ilona Schwarz

No, stop crying!  
I promise, I'm trying.  
*Uh*, look over there—  
See, a red square!  
Isn't it cool?  
All covered in drool.  
*As long as it works...*  
Does this make me a jerk?

Oh, good, you're distracted.  
Have I overreacted?  
"Hey, look at the light!"  
You glance with great spite.

I'm just a student!  
Please, follow the movement.  
This is part of my grade!  
Stop throwing such shade.

"What's your favorite cartoon?"  
"No, we don't have balloons."  
The visit is almost over—  
We have a fast turnover.  
Wait, one last thing...  
And sorry, it's going to sting.

I run past the door.  
Quick, this is war.  
Grab all of the stickers.  
*Am I allowed to bring liquor?*

No one likes this part—  
We know he knows. We roll in a cart.

DON'T UTTER THE 'S' WORD!  
Distractions preferred.

"Just a quick poke."  
No, it's not a hoax.

"OWWWWWWWW!"

It's game over.

I'm sorry, left shoulder.

I promise this is better  
Than a cough in cold weather.  
We're still the good guys!  
Someday you'll think we're wise.

"Look at you, so brave!"  
"Thanks for coming!" - I wave.

Phew, it's over. But wait, it's October.  
I look at the waiting room.  
I'm going to need a costume. ■



**Toy Fox**  
Mitra A. Razzaghi

*Oil paint on oil primed cotton canvas*  
16" x 20", 2020

**Blue Jay**  
Brenna Cameron

Toes press against shoe  
press against dirt.  
Legs: Pump pump pump  
Breath: Huh huh huh  
Blue.  
I halt.  
Blue jay.  
Quiet,  
perched on the carcass bloom  
of a cactus.

My breath thins out.  
Salt settles in my brow.  
My mind—  
shhhh—  
thick panes of glass  
wiped clean.

It lifts,  
floating  
blithe bead of blue.  
It lands,  
the width of a second.  
Then darts,  
drifting over  
green painted grass. ■



**Joy**  
Arek Wiktor  
*Photograph, 2019*



**Carduus Nutans  
(and butterfly)**  
Michael Aubrey

Photograph, 2020

**To A Poet Friend Dying Of ALS**  
Art Elser

I go about my morning chores, cleaning leaves  
from the fountain, filling it, watering flower pots,  
front and back, checking and filling bird feeders.  
I reach up to unhook the sunflower-seed feeder.

*You can no longer reach above your shoulders,  
crashed your car, arms frozen, couldn't turn.*

I empty the husks into the bushes, add new,  
and pour Niger seeds into the thistle feeder.

I head for the grocery store to pick up fettuccini  
for our dinner. The pasta shelves are almost all  
empty. COVID must make pasta meals a favorite.

*In your poem "Cooking with Crystal and Victoria,"  
you prepare lasagna noodles and meat sauce.  
You and your daughter often made your dinner  
pretending you were doing a TV cooking show.*

The paper towels and toilet paper aisles are about  
as empty as the pasta, but I grab a pack of towels,  
two salads, two prescriptions, and head home.

Chores and shopping done, I walk the pup,  
wash up, fix my lunch, eat, and take a short nap.  
Then I turn on the computer to work on this poem,  
stumble along, not sure how to write a final stanza.

*You have written your final stanza: hands and fingers  
difficult to move, unable to type, mind elsewhere.*

An email hits my inbox; you died today in hospice. ■



**Sandcreek  
Greenway  
Sunrise**  
Laura Strand

*Photograph 2020*

## Spirit Of Ubuntu

Aakriti Pandita

I have crushed many hopes. In fact, lately, I have found myself to be a pallbearer, one in blue gloves and crisply ironed white coat, one who carries no remorse. A little crack in soul, perhaps, as my shoulders crush from the many farewells I make.

I don't think I knew Julia when I first met her. I saw through her fear—pure, clear as glass, and her lips thin and chapped, not from cold but from endless bites, a symptom of deep restlessness in her. She was skinny and, needless to say, uneasy, and yet she had fooled me. Something she managed to do well: hiding her pain. In the morning, when I asked, she told me her pain was better. "It's not like it would ever go away," she said. Julia was admitted for kidney failure from a huge abdominal mass, an aggressive form of cancer her oncologist had hoped would respond to chemotherapy, and she did fairly well until she did not. It wasn't until that evening when I heard from someone else that she could barely hold a conversation without stopping to catch a breath.

Our paths crossed the following day again when she asked for my opinion. I told her hospice would be a good decision. To which she asked if she could go back to work. I then learned that Julia was a kindergarten teacher, and her students were having a hard time not having her around. I also learned that Julia had her own children, the oldest one in high school. "We are private people. We never speak about feelings..." she said. Her mother at the bedside, remained nicely composed and quiet, her hands cupped, still, very still.

I realized what distressed Julia was not her own death, but the abandonment of her children. How was she to announce to them and the kids she taught that soon she would not be around? Where would she be gone? When was she to return? Only this time, she would have no tricks up her sleeve and would feel forced to render a helpless smile to the barrage of peculiar questions coming her way.

I told Julia that's how mothers are, and the instinct is always to help, teach, and nurture. She had to try, difficult as it may seem, to think of herself and herself first. Her mother broke into muffled sobs. I told them about my mother and her eccentricities and her endless, obsessive worrying about me, which seemed to amuse them. And then Julia had a reflex that none of us had expected would happen. She felt like she could go to the bathroom. The obstruction from her cancer had made it difficult for Julia to care for herself, lately even the most basic and simplest things. I told her I'd leave because I wanted her to have privacy. Instead, she wanted me to stay. "Don't leave, please," she said.

*continued on next page...*

*Spirit Of Ubuntu (continued)*

We moved Julia from chair to the commode, and in a frenzy, I looked around for toilet paper. The one she was accustomed to using— soft, wet, scented—one for the sick. Her mother seemed equally committed, but we had no luck. Not until I rang the nurse, who came and pointed at the packet over the pink tub near the bathroom door. We looked stupid, but that hardly bothered Julia, who was grateful to not be alone. I offered her the wipes and dragged the trash can to her side as she directed me in our joint goal, however banal it might have been at that moment.

A relief spread on her sickly face, something the pain medications had not offered her. We resumed talking about the mundane, comical events of our lives and let something else take a grip on us. We were overpowered by that one collective spirit tethering our cores—the spirit of ubuntu. We are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. Humanity is what we reflected in each other, in the little mirrors of our souls. And it rose above all, the smallest of things or those we held most dear. Like the privacy that had been so important to Julia.

The day came, and I said goodbye. She was quiet and wrapped in thoughts. I told her the mountains that morning looked surreal, and she told me she still was afraid to walk out of the hospital. That’s the last thing I remember she said. I watched the mountains on my way out. A layer of smog, it appeared, cut through them. As if the peaks severed and floated above the clouds. If she were to make a new place home, I thought Julia would make home someplace like those peaks. But I know she would have a hard time letting go, as would I when my time comes. ■



**Reaching (Echinocystis lobata)**

Michael Aubrey

*Photograph*

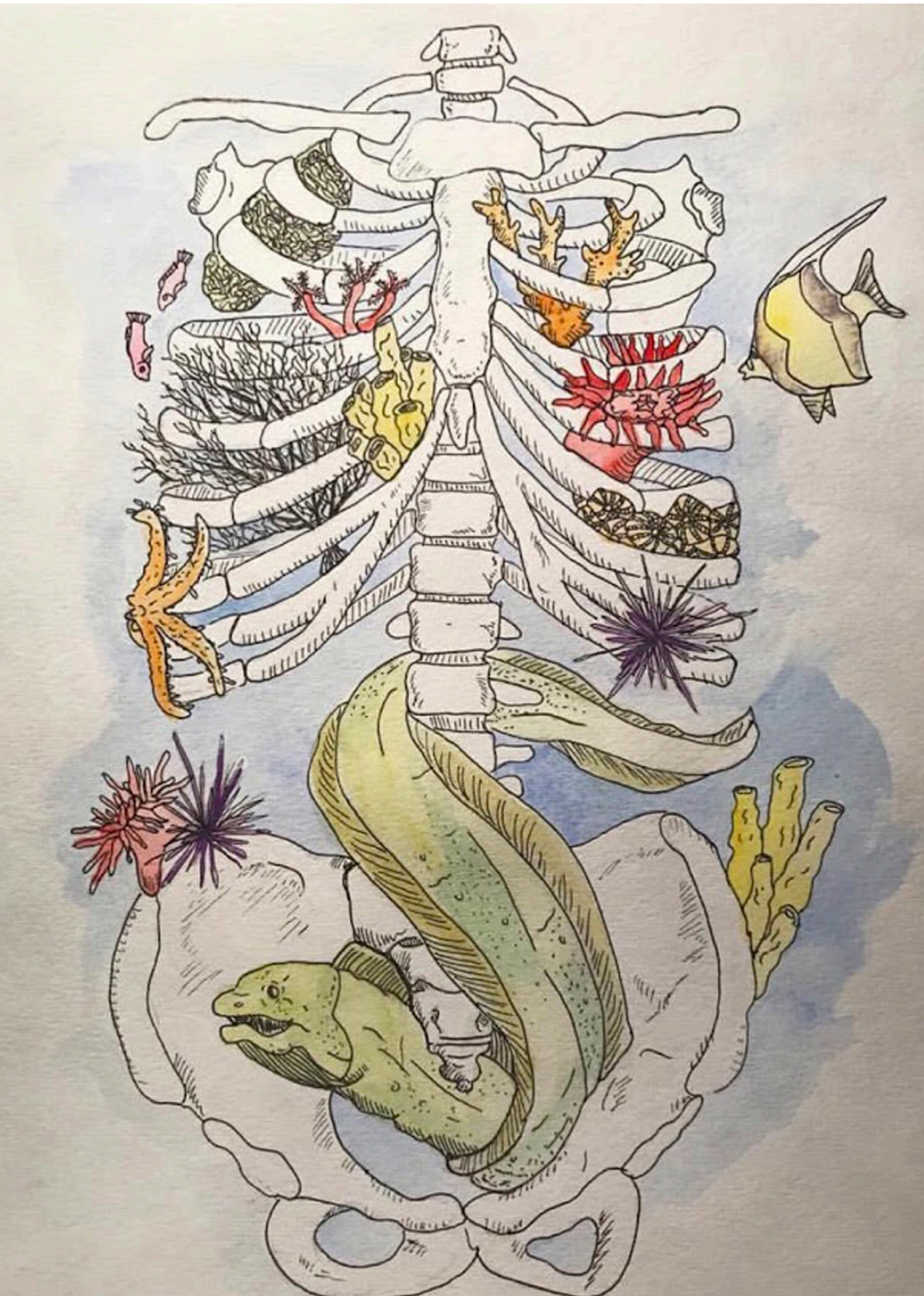


**Repose**  
Thea Carruth

*Quill, diluted ink and colored  
pencils on mylar, 13" x 9", 2020*

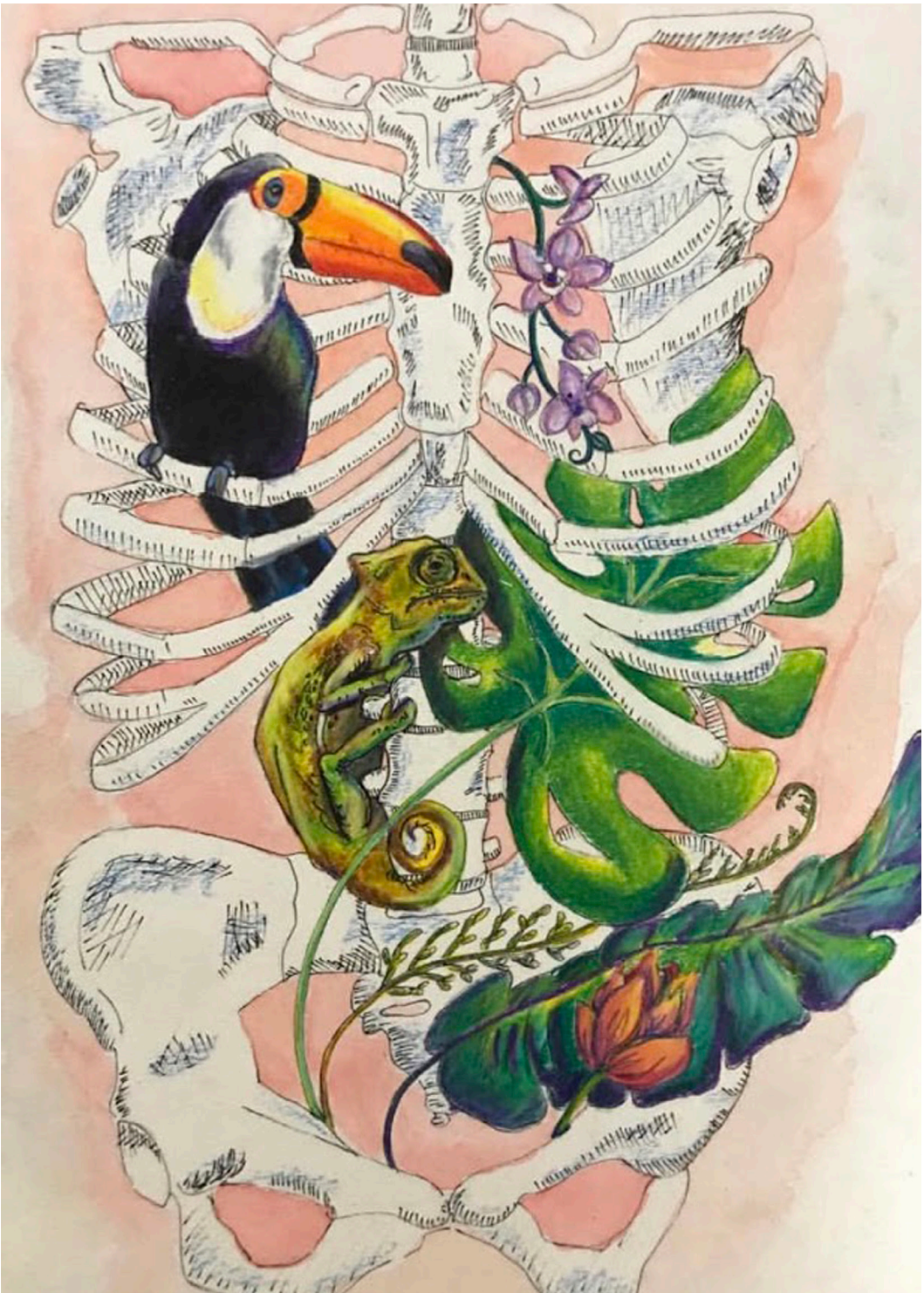
**Dusky Felicity**  
Andrew Glugla

Firefly,  
softly glowing—  
a fish jumps ■



**Human Nature;  
Ocean**  
Nicole Prete

*Watercolor and ink pen on paper,  
12" x 9", 2018*



**Human Nature;  
Rainforest**  
Nicole Prete

*Watercolor, colored pencil,  
and ink pen on paper,  
12" x 9", 2019*



**Human Nature;  
Desert**  
Nicole Prete

*Watercolor, colored pencil,  
and ink pen on paper,  
12" x 9", 2020*

Coping  
KC Moore

The first time I met him, I was watching nurses and doctors move with frenetic efficiency around Nana’s hospital room.

“They’ve stabilized her,” my dad told me, regurgitating what the doctor on the phone had told him just before we’d arrived.

But I knew the truth. I could feel that bony hand on my shoulder, could feel his cold presence behind me. I cried, grieving before they called the time of death, unsurprised when a doctor with a sympathetic expression finally approached us to tell us that they’d lost her.

The next time I saw him, he kept his distance, perhaps understanding my fear after our first encounter.

The man had been admitted to the floor in a grim state, death rattle sounding in every breath. His skin was clammy and yellow and swollen after a prolonged ICU course.

“His family is on their way,” the intern told me. “We’ll give him something to make sure he’s not breathing like that when they get here.”

He turned his head to watch us leave the room before focusing once more on the patient waiting to die.

We returned to the room a few hours later. The family had arrived, we had been told. It was the man’s sister. No one else could make it, it seemed, but the sister was there, in tears with the chaplain. He was there, too, squatting down beside the sister’s chair. He watched us enter, watched the intern perform his exam, watched as the time of death was called.

As we turned to leave, he reached out to touch my shoulder again. I waited until we were in the hallway to cry.

After that, he was a more familiar presence, if still not an entirely welcome one. He stood outside of hospital rooms during end-of-life discussions, waiting until the last possible moment to sweep in. He hovered uncertainly in the rooms of some patients and would occasionally leave without lingering too long. He spent time with some of my classmates, wrapping his arm around them as they recounted lost family members, lost friends, lost patients.

Brushes of bony fingers against my arm, a pat on the shoulder, a hug when it’s particularly difficult—he touches me every time. ■



2019, Before The Storm  
Kristina L. Terrell

Photography, Mt. Bierstadt off Guanella Pass, 2019

## Sleep Well Kathleen

Lisa Diamond

Outside of two emergency room visits during childhood, I hadn’t been inside a hospital, and never past the emergency department in my 20 years. The first one was at age 10 for a broken arm that the nuns yelled at my single-mother about. It was after hours; didn’t she know and there was no orthopedic doctor available? She should have planned better. And the second in my early teens for pleurisy, much less eventful in terms of nun-avoidance, however, more painful. However, at my hospital visit 22 days ago, I felt like entering another world: one in which I didn’t speak the language, nor know its customs. Approaching the parking lot, I quickly found a spot for my blue Datsun and pulled on the emergency brake. Impossible to drive a stick with Candies shoes, I quickly kicked off my flip flops and stuffed my feet into the latest shoe craze. Wobbling as I got my bearings, I made my way to the front entrance where whooshing doors opened to great me.

The lobby was awash in flowers and gleaming surfaces that could have been marble from Italy for all I know. All the important people were represented. Mary with her head draped in fabric carved of stone and Jesus in all his suffering. I think they were intended to comfort not unnerve, but unnerve they did. Death. That is what they represent to me, this was a place to die. Perusing signs miraculously suspended from the ceiling, I located the way to the elevator and clacked my plastic high heels down the corridor.

After getting over the death scene, I noticed a smell I’d never been exposed to. Clean and yet not cleaning products. Fresh but not like being outside. A combination of the two perhaps? Disinfectant? And yet it was no Pine Sol but whatever it was, it was everywhere even in the elevator, taking great care to avoid the sliver of nothingness lest I not get a Candie heel caught in as I entered. There were people in uniforms—nurses I imagined—and regularly dressed folks like me. None of them took notice of me, the nurses busy talking about some poor soul they were caring for. I looked to push the circular button with a "4" but it was already lit.

We stopped on every floor in between, leaving me the sole rider when the doors closed on 3. How was it 4 had been already illuminated? I didn’t have time to consider this as my arrival came much too quickly. The acrid smell flared my nostrils, stronger this time. In the 30 days I would spend in this new country, I would learn its customs and know enough of the language to get by.

Walking into the hospital awkwardly on another pair of new Candies high heels, tan leather band across my mid foot and what felt like plastic for the rest, I made the familiar journey to the elevator. The 4th floor button was an easy push, like I’d just been here and pushed it already but this was day 30. There was no check in desks once the doors opened, I just walked down the hall to her room like I owned the place. The beeps and squeaky rubber shoes welcomed me as did the antiseptic smell. Oh, how I loved the smell and after 30 days, it felt comforting. Arriving outside her room, the large window covered in a pale blue curtain, I took a deep breath and went in. Linda, her day nurse, was there controlling the machines. My frail 100-pound mother-in-law lay sleeping, enveloped in white. But she quickly faded away as I sat enraptured by Linda’s proficiency. She inherently knew how to wrangle all of the lifesaving tubing that snaked from each machine as it hid beneath the sheets keeping her alive, although out of sight. When she turned to leave a brief pat on the hand, “Sleep well Kathleen,” followed by a warm smile to me. Leaving the room, squeaks remain briefly in her wake. It would be the last day I would see either of them. ■



**The Singing Tree**  
Arturo Garcia

*Oil on canvas, 48" x 60", 2020*

**We Are Mud**  
Arturo Garcia

I am standing between the two docks on the south shore of the island with my eyes closed to see if I can make out something, a voice, or a whisper or something. Grandma says that by closing your eyes standing in the waterfront, one can hear the voices of our ancestors; that I have to pay attention to the wind and its whistles, also to the murmur of the waves that drag the clay pots and obsidian arrows to the shore. Those are offerings and another way our ancestors communicate with us, she says.

I half understand what Grandma says with so much emotion, and I go to the shore to see if I hear the things that she claims to hear, but the only thing that reaches my ears is the squawk of a seagull that floats as if playing with the wind. In the distance, a motorboat, and closer, the water burbling between the rocks.

I open my eyes braiding the sounds of the lake in an effort to weave a distant secret. We come from the Aztecs, my grandmother tells me when I go help while she grinds chili in a metate. I fix my gaze on the stone where, bent, she takes out a kind of red paste with which she works magic in the kitchen.

"Where do we come from, grandma?" I ask her. At school the teacher told us that we come from apes but in catechism school, they tell us that it is not true, that we come from Adam and Eve.

I can see Grandma frown from where I am standing and after a moment, she says with calmness, "We come from the elements."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"We are mud, rain, voice and fire."

Seeing the face I make, she laughs with a tenderness that takes me out of my confusion and sends me to the kitchen for the pot of nixtamal that she left soaking in water the previous night with which she makes tortillas.

"We are also corn," she tells me as she drowns her hands in the pot of nixtamal raising the grains in front of her face, and before she says anything else, I take off running to play with my cousins as I sometimes don't understand the things she tells me.

From the book *Innocence: A Memoir*, by J.A. Garcia Torres



**The Creation Of  
The Student Doctor**  
Avalon Swenson

*Digital artwork, Procreate pencil  
and pastel tools, 10"x10", 2020*

**Complication**  
Devin Boe

She brought the marker to the whiteboard, shaking as she wrote with her left hand, right hand wrapped in gauze and IV lines:

*"I just..."*

By then, I had already seen several patients who couldn't speak.

*"I just want..."*

But this was the first time I talked to a patient who lost their voice in the hospital.

*"I just want to tell..."*

She could talk before the surgery. Not well, but well enough.

*"I just want to tell my husband..."*

I knew what she was going to write next. My stomach twisted.

*"I just want to tell my husband I love him."*

At the end of the sentence, she dropped the marker and curled into the chair, weeping, silent.

*It's not our fault.*

It was the only thing I could tell myself, over and over.

*It's not our fault.* ■



## Can You Tell That I'm Pretending

Oliver Bawmann

Can you tell that I'm pretending?

That behind the calm demeanor I'm trying to project, my mind races. My fingers search for a pulse that isn't there. Nervous. Maybe I feel a faint one? More likely, it's just me feeling my own frantic heart rate. Pause. Breathe. Pretend I am calm. Listen to her heart and lungs. Nothing.

Can you tell that I don't know what to say? That I've never done this before.

We were always taught to use the "D word." No confusion that way. No lingering doubts. This advice seemed so obvious at the time. Why is it so hard to say now?

"She is dead."

My words hang in the air. Direct and to the point, but sharp and calculated. It feels like I'm pouring salt into a brand new wound.

"I'm so sorry, I can't imagine how difficult this must be." Silence and tears are the only response. Brief mutters. "Ella se murió." The room seeps in palpable grief.

My façade starts to crumble. I am an intruder; they can tell I don't know what I'm doing. I creep out of the room, offering my condolences and to come back if I can do anything else to help. What that would be, I cannot guess.

There is a sick comfort in the tangibility of the work that lays ahead. Returning pages, writing a death note, calling the coroner. Each with less risk of exposing myself. The busyness promising distraction. ■

## Only In Glacier

Lisa Kurth

*Photograph, Glacier National Park, 2020*

Learning To Listen

Madeline Huey

I arrived at the ICU at 5 AM sharp, my scrubs fresh, my coffee mug full.

The night resident came up to me as I took a seat at the nearest computer, “You’ll never guess what happened to your patient last night.” Oh no. I knew, these were not the words I wanted to hear as I prepared for my day.

My patient, a middle-aged gentleman who ran his car into a pole. He came to us unable to move his arms or legs and was intubated. A machine helping him breathe. Bullet fragments in his back prevented us from getting the MRI which would have given us the best pictures of his spinal cord. We got a CT scan which didn’t show anything definitive, but his symptoms were definitive. Something happened to damage his nerves.

Over the course of several days, we worked with the neurosurgeons, neurologists, and rehabilitation specialists to take care of my patient with little improvement in his quadriplegia. At the same time, he developed delirium which intruded on his sleep. We struggled to communicate with him.

In the meantime, his sister and ex-wife arrived from out-of-town with many questions for us and who we also struggled to communicate with. At first, I thought the problem was the health literacy of his family. They simply didn’t understand what was going on. But this was arrogant of me, because I didn’t understand what was going on and I am supposed to be a doctor soon. Next, I thought it was because of the discontinuity of care providers; residents constantly trading patients, attendings only covering the ICU one week at a time. This didn’t give the family a chance to get to know who exactly was taking care of their loved one. They couldn’t trust us because they didn’t know us.

So, when I asked what happened to him overnight, I learned he had coded in the elevator on the way to get a head CT. This means his heart stopped. He lost pulses. He died, but the night doctors and nurses were able to bring him back to life and he was back in his ICU room.

What happened?

While we had some ideas, we didn’t know exactly because it could have been a number of things. Over the next few days, it would happen at least one more time. We came to understand the problem more clearly, but it would not solve our problem of connecting with his family.

I was surprised one day when his sister questioned if we were lying to them about his care because he was black. I knew we weren’t lying to them, but I wondered if there was some truth in what she was suggesting. Did I treat him, or them, differently because of the color of their skin? I felt shame and sadness that she had to ask the question in the first place.

This is not the type of doctor that I want to be. I want to be the doctor who cares for all of my patients equally, but as a white female, I know it will be important to ask myself this question. This is a burden I must take on to combat my own bias and privilege, and it shouldn’t be the responsibility of my patients and their families.

Perhaps our flawed communication was due to all of the factors I’ve mentioned, including racial biases and inequities. It was messy and full of missteps and I’ve reflected on this experience many times since then. What would I have done differently then? What will I do differently in the future?

I think I will start from the beginning, always tell the truth, ask myself the difficult questions, and continue to return to the basics of listening to understand. I don’t have all the answers, but with these building blocks I hope to be guided down the right path. ■



**Crestone Panoramic**  
Wagner Schorr-Ratzlaff  
*Photograph, 2018*

**Save Me**  
Ignasis Gutierrez-Beasley

Metastatic cancer

But I took my medications,

Metastatic cancer

Friends ask if there’s anything  
they can do to help,

Friends never reach out

Recurrent Metastatic cancer

I’ll try to fight

Anything else?

No, just save me

Anything else?

Please, just save me

We will see what we can do

but later realized I couldn’t,

we couldn’t

and I hide my tears. ■



**Arch**  
Justin Kesler  
*Photograph 2018*

**At the Cardio Rehab Center**  
Art Elser

The physical therapist holds his right arm as she gently helps him onto the treadmill. She shows him how to set speed and stop, points to a woman who'll monitor his heart from a small black box strapped to his chest.

Today's the first day of rehab. It's been six weeks since his triple-bypass and he's only begun to regain his strength. He's walked some, slowly, on sidewalks near his house.

He starts the treadmill and walks slowly. Twinges of pain flicker through his chest. He looks at the woman monitoring his heart who looks back with a warm reassuring smile. Ignoring the twinges, he continues to walk ■



**Helianthus Annuus**  
Michael Aubrey

*Photograph, 2020*



**Grief**  
Chelsea L. Mason

I had bumped into you  
by coincidence and ignored the view  
as I thought I was out of time.  
I hurried past the trees  
until I could not hear  
your footsteps on the mountain.

I had been once to the mountain.  
I was surprised to see you  
since nobody was here—  
on the side with the spectacular view—  
intermingled away from the path in the trees  
where there seemed to be infinite time.

There was too much and too little time  
to spend in the serene mountains.  
Now, there is one small tree  
I had left in the corner for you  
to imagine, to remember the view  
since you could not leave here.

With the hospital red letters and blares here,  
there is a continuous marking of time.  
In my mind, I could view  
every inch of the mountain  
and the life I had with you  
before illness spread roots like a tree.

Knowledge it not like a tree;  
it doesn't spread its roots here.  
There was not enough knowledge to stop your  
pestilential cells. They gave us little time  
to fill out liter lungs with clean mountain  
air and to bask in the view.

There are many sights—views,  
but we always forgot to look at the trees  
on top of the stormy, lightning mountain.  
The chirping of the wires—can you hear?  
What do you forget with time?  
Perhaps the blue porcelain is not you.

In the end, you ran out of time  
and left me here to view  
the trees on top of the mountain. ■

**Blackbeard, MD**  
Hayley Specht

“I’m a scientist and a pirate,”  
my patient told me  
with a flat resignation  
often seen in psychosis.

Me too.

I think like a scientist.  
Using logic and mechanisms,  
research, data, ad nauseum  
to make informed decisions.

I look like a scientist.  
Short white coat starched and sparkling  
with newness  
and anxiety sweat.

I study like a scientist.  
Late nights turning into early mornings  
bent over books  
memorizing pathways and diagrams.  
Preparing for the day I’ll need them.

I sacrifice like a scientist.  
Willingly relenting my wellbeing  
in the pursuit of knowledge.  
So that someday  
I might  
be able to help someone.

But I’m also a pirate.

I certainly walk like a pirate.  
Muscles stiff  
after hours of standing still in the OR  
holding a laparoscopic camera,  
scolded for my shakiness  
and poor sense of direction.

I eat like a pirate.  
Scavenging break rooms for disappointing leftovers,  
too tired to cook.  
Sometimes too tired even to eat.  
Scurvy is a concern.

I talk like a pirate.

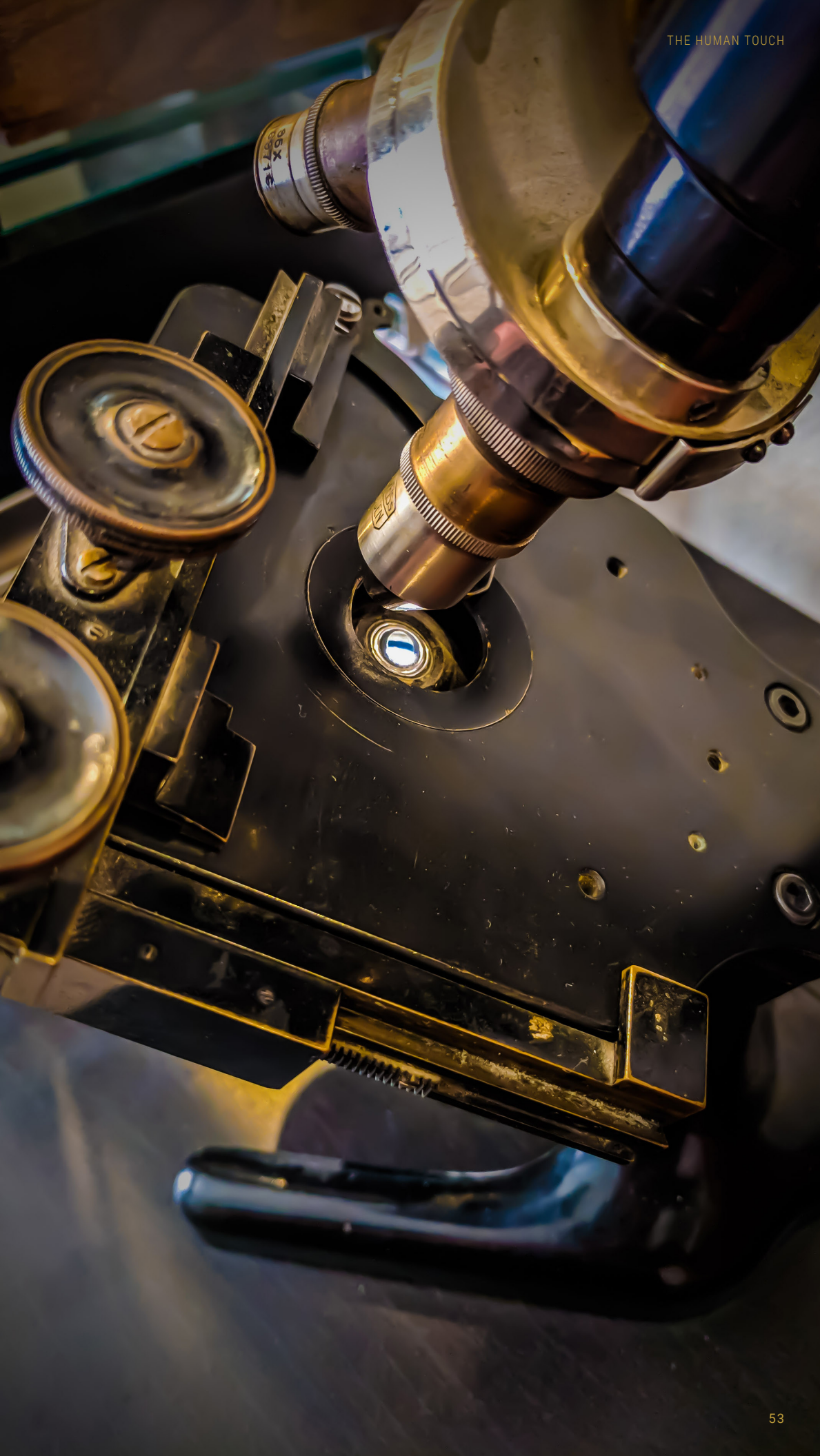
When only cursing and grunting  
can describe the day I’ve had.  
When a failure or a loss  
has taken the words out of my mouth.

I feel like a pirate.  
At the mercy of the hospital’s tides,  
the ebb and flow of joy and grief,  
following the patterns of the moon.  
According to the nightshift.

“So am I,”  
I told my patient  
with a flat resignation  
often seen in medical students. ■

**Curiosity**  
Justin Kesler

*Photograph 2018*





On The Road To '23

Evan Cornish

Where once the students sat in rows, now plastic holds their seat.  
Our lecture hall, second home—now over Zoom we meet.

Those voices that would fill the square, comrades one could depend on.  
Our campus now just shades of grey, once gay hallways abandoned.

Rolled eyes at histology (more drone than lecture-giving).  
But back then we'd wince as friends, well that at least was living.

I hope they're well, those that I'd see, getting to class each morning.  
Tied to our seats like haustra, epiploica adorning.

Each impressive, gifted too, some with test tubes, some with mice.  
And in helping me, a stranger, they showed some are gifted twice.

First was Lexi in the lab-room, holding forceps—not a twitch—  
Perfect knowledge of the vessels. Oh, the patients she will stitch!

Then was Boris with the X-Ray. I gave up, sophomorical.  
He reads out the fracture pattern—this PA film Delphic Oracle.

Rouna translates neuron cascade, so we mortals too can know,  
How serotonin's absence leaves us feeling low.

Then the few with gentle presence put the mind at ease.  
Helene & Ali will find, for a patient's psyche, keys.

Walking to corpse behind me, Nick passes in a haste.  
Even he offers something, "Don't slouch, bend at the waist."

It's these passing interactions that I long for most of all.  
Human moment at the fountain, a shared laugh in the hall.

Blunt dissected back in April, our class like fascias separate.  
After so long we haven't spoken, did social channels ablate?

I hope it isn't that way. This distance, some issue.  
It's given me the chance I would've missed to miss you.

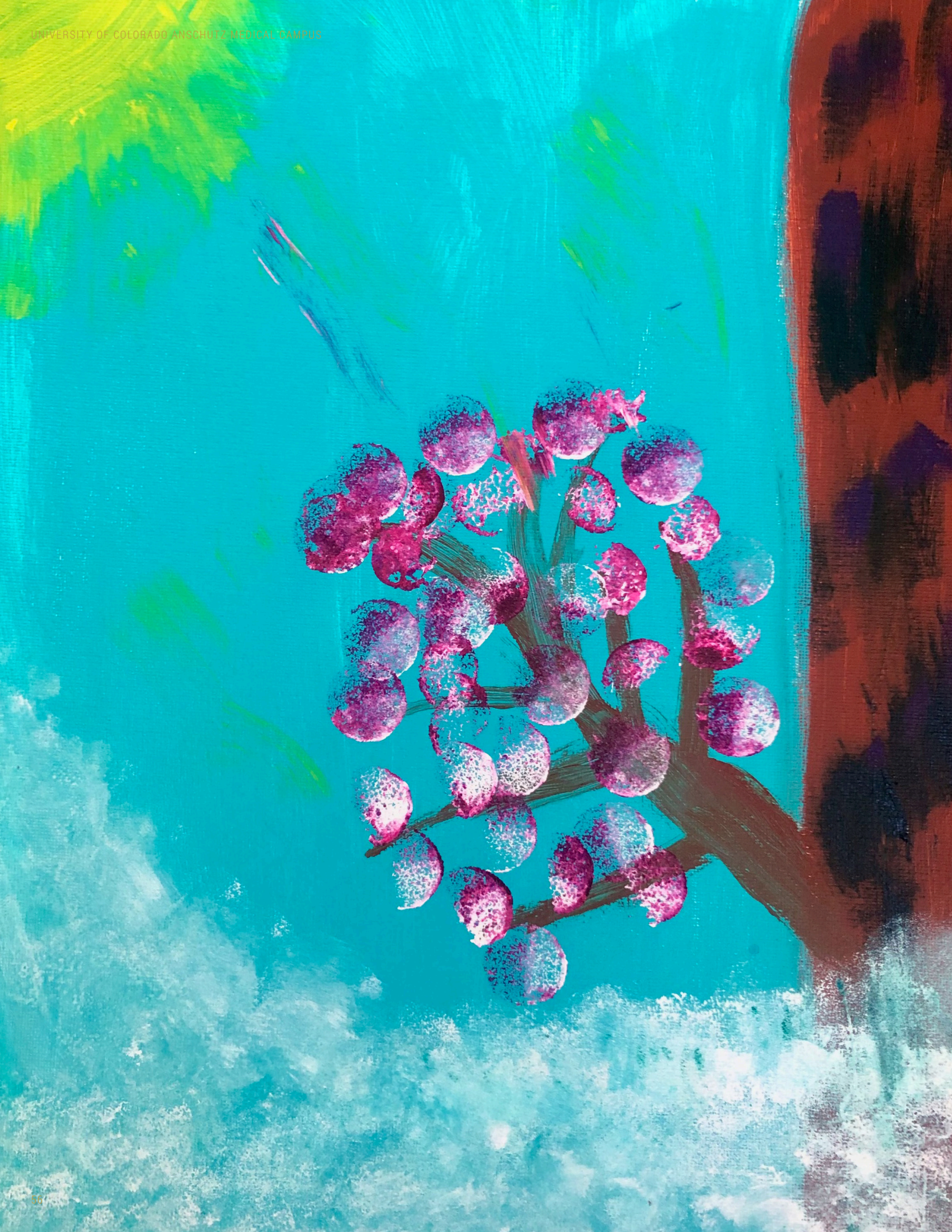
As we head into rotations, wading deep into the fog,  
There are no others I'd have beside me in the droplet-laden bog.

But for now we're on home-duty, until Hippocrates will let  
Us be of some use somewhere, though we are not doctors yet. ■

Dog World

Therese (Tess) Jones

Acrylic on canvas, 20" x 20", 2021



## Stories of the Heart: Illness Narratives Of Veterans Living With Heart Failure Themes

Rachel Johnson-Koenke

Acrylic on canvas, 2020

*As part of her dissertation work, Dr. Rachel Johnson-Koenke painted emergent themes of each illness narrative co-created with five Veterans living with heart failure. This painting depicts one narrative describing a participant's experience climbing a mountain in South Korea. Much like his experience rebuilding his life after his traumatic past, he found a tree growing above the darkness of the clouds and reaching out to the light. This was an overarching theme about the resiliency and strength of the Veterans who participated in the study and is informative to all the health care practitioners who work with them and all people living with chronic illness. ■*



I Am Not Throwin' Away My Shot

CT Lin

Video, 2020



Telehealth World

CT Lin

Video, 2020



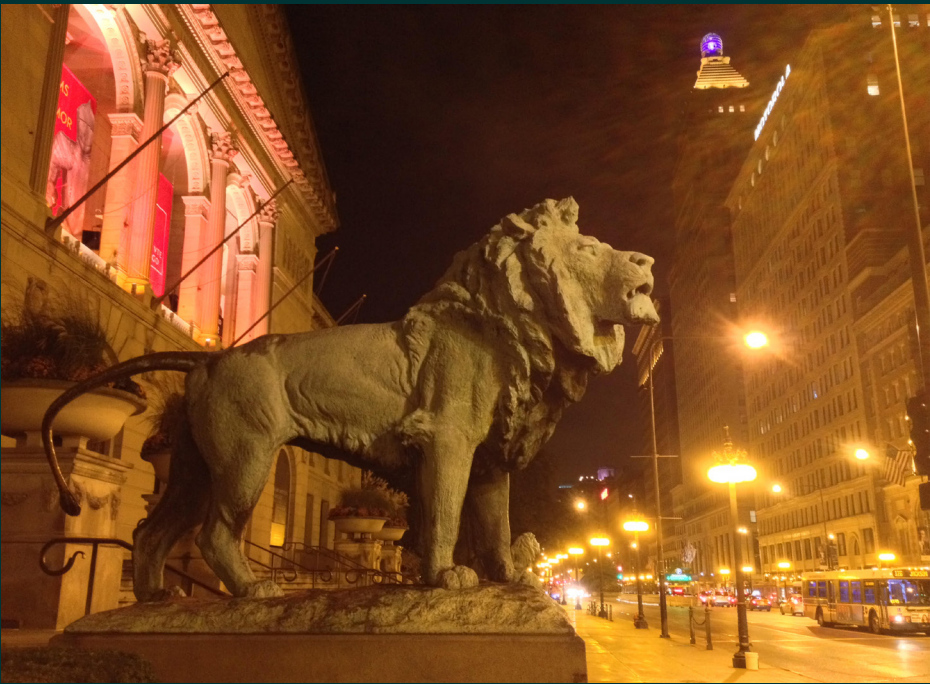
**Northern Flicker**  
Francisco G. La Rosa

*Video*



**All You Need**  
Ryan Mix Smith

*Audio*



**Wet Asphalt's Lament**  
Justin Hauxwell

*Audio*



**Peoria & Montview**  
Will Brandon

I haven't cried in years  
Can't even remember the last thing that made me cry  
Saw a pediatric cardiac arrest in which the patient died  
A small child receiving chest compressions  
Very sad— didn't cry...  
Until I caught the red light at Peoria & Montview

3 a.m.— 2 hours after that experience  
Handled that sight fine all the way to my car  
Forced to stop at Peoria & Montview  
Forced to stop and reflect  
Forced to stop and feel it  
I cried at Peoria & Montview. ■

**13th Street**  
Justin Hauxwell

*Photograph, Intersection of  
13th St. and Logan St., 2014*



**Music Therapy**  
Lucy Bradley-Springer

*Acrylic paints, acrylic ink, pen,  
and collage on canvas, 12" X 19.5", 2020*

**Life Lessons**  
Brian Carter

you speak in tongues  
calling on me to learn your language  
a mute, speaking words of wisdom  
that I too may learn the words only our bodies share

you walk beside me  
summoning me to ponder your journey  
I know not the path you walked  
but I have felt the very fibers that have carried you there

you have shown me beauty  
a fragile vessel built strong through harmony  
your red painted fingernails capture my eyes  
a reminder of your humanity

you remain silent yet I hear your song  
you introduce me to your conductor  
the strings that orchestrate miracles  
to the beat of the drum

your air is my breath  
our shared touch a memory  
as I gaze upon the hollow of your hand  
I fathom you have touched the lives of many

to be one such life  
even after your death  
is my honor and newfound responsibility  
that I too may carry forth your legacy ■

In Excess

Lauren Heery

“Are you nervous?” she asked. I was nervous, and so was she.

“I don’t have to do much except stand there and not touch anything,” I told her. I didn’t want to make it obvious to Ms. M that my presence was in excess.

Fortunately, her sister understood why I belonged. “This must be an exciting opportunity for you,” she said.

“Yes, I’m excited to see her surgery and be part of her care,” I said, feeling like a tourist in this episode of her life.

I would not be part of her care. My patient—as if I had any right to call her mine—was about to undergo a bilateral orthotopic lung transplant. I would assuredly be standing out of everyone’s way while they renewed her life. I was mostly right on this account, but only hours after meeting Ms. M, I was suctioning her native bronchus as the surgeons sutured her new lung in place. In the moment, I was trying my hardest to still stay out of the way and only touch the tools which were handed to me. I was desperately trying to convince everyone that I could be useful.

In my first two years of medical school, I was always surprised by the trust I received from patients. Somehow those magic words I often took for granted—medical studen—gave me the power of trustworthiness. Even when people mistook me for some other type of health professions student or an undergraduate, they still trusted and let me into their lives. At the very least, they let me into their medical appointments. Minutes after meeting me, someone I may never see again told me the secrets of their life, assuming I could help them. They didn’t realize that a real doctor still had to verify and repeat my work. They didn’t know that behind my “50-dollar words” was an incomplete mastery of scientific minutiae. They just shared their stories and time and helped me learn. Somewhere along the way, I stopped being surprised by the privilege of their vulnerability, and focused instead on what I could do for them.

After earning her place, being warned of the risks, and saying goodbye to her family, Ms. M rolled back into the OR, wearing a brave face and her ever-present nasal cannula. She glanced around the room at all the machines and people who would be supporting her life for the next several hours. She gave me a look that said, “All this for me?” I smiled back, forgetting that my face was covered with a mask (which was a novelty then, pre-pandemic). I stepped out of the anesthesiologist’s way right into the scrub nurse. I thought by the end of my surgical rotation I would finally figure out how to be in the right place, but I still didn’t belong. Scrambling carefully around the bed, I helped Ms. M get ready.

We transferred her over to her place at the table, untied her gown in the back, and covered her in warm blankets. I stood there quietly, running through my standard “getting to know patients” questions in my head. How did small talk become so formulaic? I knew she didn’t work, and I met her family in pre-op. So, I asked about her hobbies, and we discussed the future. She told me she was most looking forward to travelling after all of this was over.

Third year rotations magnified my perfectionism in a way I couldn’t anticipate. I spent too much time assuming I couldn’t help anyone, or that I didn’t know enough. I found myself exactly where no one needed me at times. I was pretty sure that feeling useless and redundant was the secret job description of a medical student on clinical rotations. Figuring out how to be useful is another part of the job description that I never quite mastered.

The anaesthesiologist switched Ms. M to the operating room’s oxygen supply. As she took her last breaths with her old lungs, I finally made myself useful. I held her hand. I realized the last thing she needed was more disconnection. At first, it felt like one of those cheesy things I heard about exceptional medical students doing. Like talking to the patient when the team didn’t have time, and discovering some gem that completely changed their care. But this didn’t feel exceptional. It was easy. She was scared. I was scared. Everyone else was busy making sure she would be safe.

Days later, Colorado had its first cases of COVID-19. Two turned into dozens, and soon, our rotations were cancelled. After almost a year of standing in the way—doubling patients’ pain from repeated exam maneuvers and questions and tripling my residents’ work (on a good day)—my fear of my own futility came into fruition. But this interlude of inessentiality was not permanent. I returned to rotations with a new sense of purpose. Ready to be where patients needed me and prepared to learn from their stories, questions, and whatever else they shared.

“If this is like my other surgeries, it will feel like a two-minute nap,” Ms. M whispered to me, in between stilted breaths.

“Have a good nap,” I told her.

I took the glove off of my hand. She squeezed it, and I squeezed back until she stopped, asleep for the last time with those useless lungs. ■

**What's Left Unspoken Between Us**  
Art Elser

Today a somber email announces the death of another classmate, six in as many months. Our dead now outnumbering we who live.

The faster pace of their taking that last breath shows just how close we've come to the edge of this place we call life. I shrug off the news.

This evening before we sit down to dinner; we chat about infections, deaths from COVID, the refusal of some to believe the science.

We talk about that bag of wind—the president—who lies, spews alternative facts, and tweets outrageous comments that divide the nation.

But we never talk about our deep-down fear, that one of us will die first, the other bereft, abandoned, and fearful of being without. ■

**Connecting**  
by Maydha Kumar

Graphite, 10 3/4" x 9 3/4", 2019



Heart In Hand

Joy Browne

I am tiny enough to fit there  
Snug in your hands, wiggling to get comfortable  
Not knowing the risk of your touch  
To my fragile being.

Born too soon  
My existence tenuous  
Only your touch, your voice, your smell  
Afford me something familiar and reassuring

The touch of your skin on mine is different from the warmth and sounds of your  
all-encompassing body—  
working to support me.  
Now strange sounds, touch, smells, and feelings are harsh, overwhelming, unfamiliar.

Only your hands, your body, your voice remind me of safety and protection.  
I thrive in your touch, holding me in your hands, your arms.  
The familiar sensation of your heart beating and your breath in and out—  
I yearn for you to enfold me again into your body.

My existence relies on you  
Your gentle hands and enfolding arms—  
Now giving me hope for the protection of your body and the safety of your comforting hug.  
I yearn to feel my hand in yours, yours in mine—  
Pulling me into my future.

Your heart in my hand and mine in yours. ■

Chillin' During COVID Lockdown  
Christina Hobson

Photograph with digital enhancements, 2020





**Bone Colored Quilt**

Mary Bone

Shades of beige  
warm tones  
with sandy beaches.  
I am snuggled under  
the patchwork of  
my bone colored quilt. ■

**Keep Smiling**

Vladka Kovar

*Oil on MDF board, 24" x 24", 2020*

Compressing Time

David Shepard

*Do you have moonlight in your eyes,  
though you rush down a path so bare?  
Who can ever imagine heart beats that radiate?  
Hairs float as wafts on currents,  
aromas of senses that sing.  
I am intoxicated by air so perfect for every creature.  
I call to you so that you can slow or again may flee.  
Gone is the whisper of a breath.  
Numbing silence, it calls to me,  
darkness her voice.  
Lavender calming my soul, soothing an itch, settling my sleep.  
I am restless, unable to sit,  
to dream, beneath a still vibration.  
To wander in reverie, to capture it.  
You fly, unable to leave my mind in quiet repose.  
The color of your curls, fireworks in the night.  
To recall how the corner of your mouth,  
by a mind too blank, turning up with a flair.  
Instruct me, unintended to fall,  
a misstep, accident of desire.  
A muse to dare my need for inspiration.  
To tease me again, overboard I sink.  
Go again, try all you demand.  
Time never to be contained.  
A dance I must avoid,  
its rhythm, too steep,  
A depth too deep to reach.  
A depth to lose. ■*



Coalesce  
Cassidy Stratton

Acrylic on canvas



**Together**

Arek Wiktor

*Photograph, 2019*

**Virginia Dale**  
Matt Hickey

A haven, wrought in open spaces—  
Roofed in sunlight and in stars,  
Framed by aspen, fir, and stone,  
And windows on the wild.

North, past powdered waters,  
canyons, and ridges draped in red—  
a place of peace,  
cloistered  
beyond the Benedictines.  
Following fences carved  
by hand, and axe,  
and the silent labors;  
of earnest men,  
and patient years.

The trail meanders,  
through dirt and mud,  
Nudged by knolls,  
and dales;  
Serpentine, and seeking.

At the last,  
To tarry, still the soul,  
and listen—  
to alpine silence,  
and arias on the wind. ■



**Turbulence**

**William Mundo**

Third-year in the midst of COVID has felt like constant turbulence  
Although difficult, learning to become a physician has been marvelous  
It's been scary not knowing if you are infected or protected  
Or if you are doing well enough, striving to feel accepted  
Leaving 2020 behind, no room for mournfulness

New year, new me, but same inequities?  
Still suffering 500 years later, where are the remedies?  
To discuss the matter is not to accuse or to point fingers,  
it's only to remind us to be aware of the effect that lingers.  
So here we are, ready to create change in our chosen specialties.

Now tell me, how much do you really care to be aware of the unfairness  
in my community?  
Is it enough to take this opportunity to stand with me in unity?  
Joining forces to fight against structural violence  
Don't live your life on the side in silence and compliance

This defiance shows us that it's a time for an alliance of resilience to  
overthrow the turbulent flow.  
There will be times that we hit the low and undergo a detrimental blow,  
but let us always persist, as we continue to resist and co-exist. ■

**N'est Pas Crazy**

**Therese (Tess) Jones**

*Acrylic on canvas, 20" x 20", 2021*

**Picnics And Fireworks**

Elmo Frickman

Her son was hanged  
on the 4th of July  
and he hated the 4th of July.  
He called her, at least twice  
during the picnics and drinks,  
the blankets, food and fireworks.  
See you next Monday or Tuesday.  
During the last call she now recalls the sound  
of him slowly dragging the trunk in the garage. ■



**Autumn, Beautiful Even In The Darkest Of Times**

Christina Hobson

*Photograph with digital enhancements, 2020*

## The Superman Effect

Mel Lake

He looked apologetic as he explained the procedure. I don’t remember his name. His office was a cramped closet in Tucson’s second-largest hospital, the same one where I’d had surgery. I wondered if he made more money to be there instead of a typical Arizona medical office, decorated in soft greens and desert pinks. Wondering made it easier to ignore my rage at being here again.

“You have a *really* bad back,” he said, arranging his face into a look that conveyed enough sympathy to cover the fact that he was typing while he said it. “I’m sorry” was left unspoken but it floated around the room. A neurosurgeon did my first back surgery shortly after my thirtieth birthday.

After he explained where the needles would go, he said, “Be careful of the Superman effect. It happens when a chronic pain patient experiences life without it. You’ll feel like Superman but you’re not. Superman effect.” He nodded and checked his watch.

*Not Superman*, I thought. More like Bane. He uses steroids to make himself stronger and he broke Batman’s back. Superman got lucky. He doesn’t need a needle in his spine to make him Superman. All I have in common with Clark Kent is that I, too, look better in chunky glasses. Instead of replying, I nodded back, silently kicking sock-clad feet against the metal base of the exam table. Arguing with men about comics is a fool’s errand.

Before I left, he handed me a pamphlet. Two weeks later I had needles inserted in the joints at the base of my spine. I felt anesthetic floating around in my body from the inside, like jelly in a place it shouldn’t be. I gripped a paper-thin pillow and swallowed down panic.

He was right about Superman.

After the shot, I kickboxed, shredding my knuckles as I punched anger into a bag. I was Superman, an alternate version of me with a different outfit and no back pain. Mornings, I ran on the Rillito River path that circles Tucson, running parallel to dry riverbeds. Coyotes and javelinas sometimes ran it with me. As Superman, I ran faster than I had chasing 5k race t-shirts in my twenties. I ran, heart pounding and feet aching. My lower back, though, didn’t. I lived on earth as a Kryptonian, experiencing pain the way most people did—an effect easily traceable to a cause. I lived in another world.

Then I came back.

#

Dr. K said, “Don’t get shots. They help, but don’t.”

He didn’t have a laptop. Dr. K had a bristly mustache and an Indian accent. He moved me this way and that, hmmmimg for what seemed like ages, then brought me into his office. It was cluttered, with magazines in piles and pictures of his family on the wall. His diploma, from a school in India, hung above a giant mahogany desk. Finally, almost an hour after meeting me, he consulted a computer.

“I could do surgery on you,” he said, “but I won’t. There are surgeons here who will, but not me.” Dr. K showed me my lumbar spine. I knew the basics: white spaces are the discs that cushion your spine from impact, dark spots are where discs should be but aren’t. Dr. K explained far more, answering every question I had like a teacher speaking to a child.

“If you do surgery, I would make several thousand dollars and you would feel better. For a while. You are young. But in ten years you would come to me and say, Dr. K, why do I still feel pain?” All I could think of was Superman, back on Krypton where he wasn’t special anymore. “Many doctors in America, they do surgery anyway. I won’t. What will I say to you in ten years? Huh?” It wasn’t clear if this was a rhetorical question.

Dr. K patted my knee and said, “You will have pain for the rest of your life. Even if I operate on you now, you will have pain. If you can live as you are, do, because this is it. You can find another surgeon but it will not help. How do you exercise?”

When I told him I hiked, his eyes lit up. He closed my MRI and we spent the last ten minutes of my appointment looking at mountain ranges on Google. Dr. K told me which trails had the best views and which ones were too overrun by out-of-staters to bother with. I nodded along. He didn’t need to know I hadn’t been in Denver long enough for my blood to thicken after years of Arizona heat. Dr. K looked proud when I left, holding printouts of trailheads and exercises I probably wouldn’t do.

I managed not to cry until I got to the parking lot.

#

Dr. M smiled as he explained the procedure. He was the kind of movie-star handsome you don’t expect to see in real life. I wished I was wearing a bra. I only ever managed a few of Dr. K’s trails before even the beauty of the Front Range was overshadowed by the pain in my lower back. Every summit became a screaming match inside my head. After Bane broke Batman’s back, he recovered just in time to save Gotham. But you don’t see Bruce Wayne doing stretching exercises so he can stoop to load the dishwasher without crying. Or walk up a mountain. Yelling at my own aching back didn’t help me up any mountains because there was no one to yell at except me. Dr. M gave me a winning smile and another shot of Superman.

I drove home, wondering if I would recognize a world without pain, slowing to a halt on I-25. My foot pressed down on the brake and I waited for the corresponding ache in my hip as I shifted positions. This time it was hard to tell if I was Superman or not. Dr. M hadn’t mentioned the high might come with a steroid headache. For a few days, I lived with an ice pack on my forehead, like Superman pretending to have a hangover to fit in with the earthlings. After a week, I was just Clark, loading the dishwasher and screaming in my head at the pain.

#

*continued on next page...*

*The Superman Effect (continued)*

The next doctor was not as handsome as Dr. M.

Superman shots graduated to radiofrequency ablation of the nerves, with a series of three blocks first to prove it would work. The needles left eight pinprick bruises down my back like I'd done something untoward with an octopus. The outpatient surgery center where the average-looking doctor had replaced Dr. M was across from a movie theater and a comedy club. It was gentrified Denver: white and glossy and new. Maybe I could be, too. Even Superman gets a new outfit now and then.

A post-op nurse gave me terrible coffee and chatted afterward. When she asked if I'd ever tried acupuncture, I tried not to remember the eight needles that had been in me not twenty minutes ago.

"Yeah, I have."

She gave me a bag of Chips Ahoy! for the road. I pressed my lips into a smile and waited for the high that had gotten lower and shorter each time.

#

"After the RFA, you'll feel like a new person!"

Average doc was gone, replaced by a Matthew McConaughey-type. He was all slick smiles and shaggy blond hair and *alright-alright-alright*. I fully expected him to do finger guns at me. Dr. M and the average doctor's names were scrubbed from the clinic website. I didn't care, I just wanted another slice of Krypton.

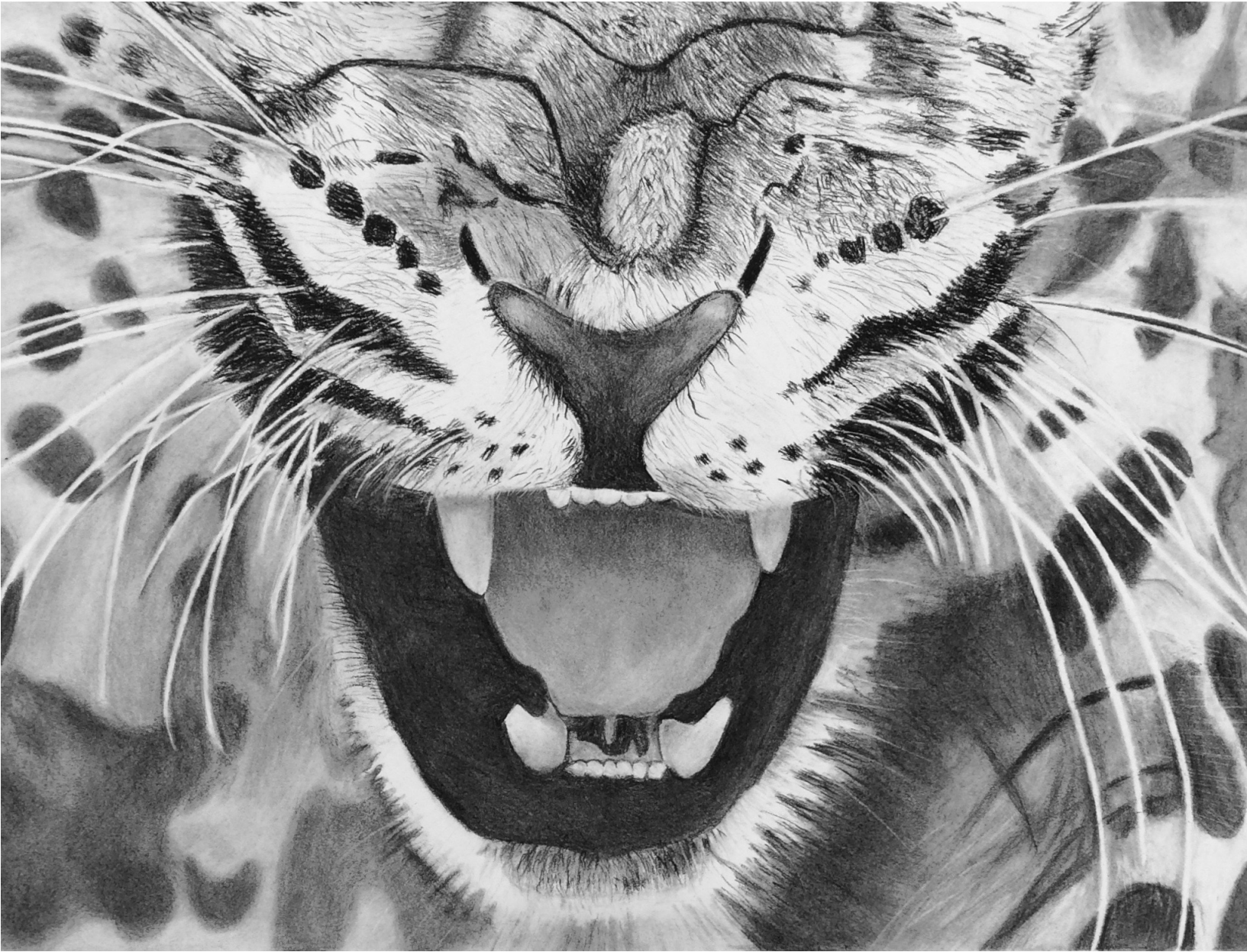
When the first jolt of electricity went into the nerve, I ground my teeth.

It was like static shock when you walk on shag carpet, the kind that stuns you for a minute, but on the inside. Doctor McConaughey chose dubstep as his background music. It pulsed in my head as I tried not to move. When I left the surgery center, I took a Twinkie for the road. The eight little red puncture marks on my back took a month to disappear and by then, I was somewhere between myself and Superman.

Radiated nerves take about two years to grow back. The procedures gave me a taste of Kryptonian life. I know what it's like to unload the dishwasher without crying. I got to live as a normal thirty-something who goes about their day without an internal screaming match. I got to be Superman for awhile.

But I'm not him.

I hurt, every day. I can't get revenge on Bane for breaking my back because no one broke my back except me. Sometimes, I think about going back for another shot of Superman. Then I remember Dr. K and his mustache telling me this is my world, I have to learn to live in it. ■



**Bite**  
Elizabeth Magnan

*Charcoal on paper, 2015*

8

Sally Peach

when i was eight,  
my father left.  
i know because my mother  
made him  
tell us.  
i was alone in my room before  
and after.  
i must've gone skiing that winter,  
because i remember  
flying down an endless icy slope  
not knowing how to  
stop. ■

Seattle Reflections  
Wagner Schorr-Ratzlaff

*Photograph, 2018*



**Kitchen Recalled**  
David Shepard

Kitchen, well worn,  
Wood splintered, hardened,  
Cracks dirty with greasy grime.  
Spilled, out of a cast iron skillet,  
so hard that it might have dented my dry veneer.

Well used with an old crusty coating,  
From years  
of seasoned salts.  
A patina of life,  
A pan on the stove, aged its use.

Burned hardwood,  
blackened it burned.  
Charred against our warmed lives.  
Simmered meals of content,  
years of time, that passed.

Donated to a kitchen.  
Our souls survived  
The old dull floor,  
of dry, creaking steps.  
Petrified wood of stone.  
It was just a kitchen,  
but it was mine. ■

**Kitchen**  
Kyla Cecilia Best

Procreate, 2024 px x 2024 px, 2020





**Changed In Form**  
Cayleigh Brown

*Photograph, 2020*

**Changed In Form**

Cayleigh Brown

Oh why would I discard thee  
Though you are  
Wilted  
I do believe  
There is beauty  
In both life  
And death

Perhaps I hold on  
To you  
For I could not hold on  
To my father  
As he died

I wonder  
Are his ashes  
In your petals  
Keeping them vibrant  
Reminding me  
To live life with color  
Even when  
I feel dull

Wilting  
Isn't weakness  
Isn't sadness  
Isn't a loss  
Only a change  
A change in being  
A change in structure  
A change in what once was

My memories of him

Are wilted  
Faded and missing  
Just as you are  
Yet  
I see that  
A beauty still exists  
In splashes of color  
And in wisps  
Of perfectly crisp  
Dried petals

Without him  
I'm not whole  
My soul wilts  
My petals fall  
But  
I still smile  
I still hold on  
I still live and breathe  
For him  
For he isn't gone  
Only  
Changed in form

Though I feel  
Loss  
I also feel  
Strength  
In how much I've endured  
Though there are  
Heartaches and tears  
Without it  
I'm not whole  
Because now  
I do know  
True happiness  
I know good days  
I know pain

I exist  
In splashes of color  
In moments of memories  
And in wisps  
I feel him around me  
Wilted  
And I do believe  
Perhaps now  
I myself  
Have  
Changed in form

Bed 5

James E. Carter, Jr.

I wish I had a device  
a probe perhaps  
to measure the breadth of inequity

The chief complaint  
is fever  
but I suspect  
an agonized existence  
festers abashedly

Through no fault of their own  
a heaviness of living  
smolders beneath somatic cries  
Maybe, I muse,  
it is a discomfort of living  
I cannot detect  
with algorithmic depersonalization  
and evidence-based deliberation

As I ponder  
Bed 5  
preoccupied with determining  
what label I will affix  
to their distress  
It occurs to me  
perhaps I require  
a bedside tool  
to unmask disquietude  
to assist in calculations  
of their risk of being  
allowing me to prescribe expectations  
potent enough  
to soothe swelters of their fears

Maybe cramps and fits of tears  
are in reality pangs  
for empathy  
for soothing awareness of plight

Perhaps a handheld scan  
would permit me  
to capture with precision  
side effects of peril  
to reconcile the gravity  
of their night  
when they repose weary  
worried not only  
if their temporary shelter will have a  
bed  
but also whether  
their necessities  
a toothbrush  
a lighter  
a worn pair of wool mittens  
will still be theirs  
at daylight

To provide the care I care to provide  
I need a monitor  
to display the expanse  
of swollen misery  
to illuminate disparity

Without these metrics to consider  
I find it disingenuous  
to forge an evident notion  
So instead I pull up a chair  
and listen ■



Nostalgia

Cayleigh Brown

Photograph, Chicago, 2020

**The Many Paths**  
Justin Hauxwell

Descend upon me angel wings  
And give to me a love that sings  
Of Nature’s rhythms, life, and beauty fine

Both Earthly love and spirits cherish  
Through meditation, pastor’s parish  
And all the roads that lead to things divine ■



**Coyote Ice Fishing**  
David M. Weil  
*Photography, 2021*



Winter Delight

Andrew Glugla

A snowflake floats onto a cold nose—cross-eyed dog

What Are You Lookin' At?

Allison M. Dubner

Photograph, Alaska, 2011

**A Time to Gather Stones**  
Annette House

She walks slowly  
along the shores  
of their lives

She is the keeper  
the historian, curator  
of all that is remembered

She is old now  
the stones are heavy

She must decide  
which to throw into  
the waters of forgetfulness

And which to keep  
in the shimmering  
gleam of remembrance



**Fall In Rocky Mountain National Park**  
Mitra A. Razzaghi

*Oil paint on oil primed cotton canvas,  
24" x 30", 2020*

I Knew You Were Bad At Math

Erica Worley

Now I knew you were bad at math  
But I accepted you with all your flaws  
Let me tell you  
I have had my fair share of mistakes  
Boy do I hate double-checking  
But at some point, for you  
Careless mistakes became habits  
See I grew up learning  
That one plus one equaled two  
Not three  
And when one enters a relationship  
It's made up of you and me

But I guess you learned something different  
Simple addition seemed too far out of your reach  
Because to you being a couple  
Didn't mean just two  
It meant three or four  
Or "she didn't count because we only kissed"  
But I forgave you, and forgave you  
Till I had memorized your lies  
"It won't happen again"  
"You're the only one, I promise"

I didn't know how to react in this situation  
And I didn't know how to solve this equation  
I couldn't understand why this function  
Was not functioning  
So I began to think  
Thinking critically, thinking creatively  
Thinking in any way to get me where I needed to be

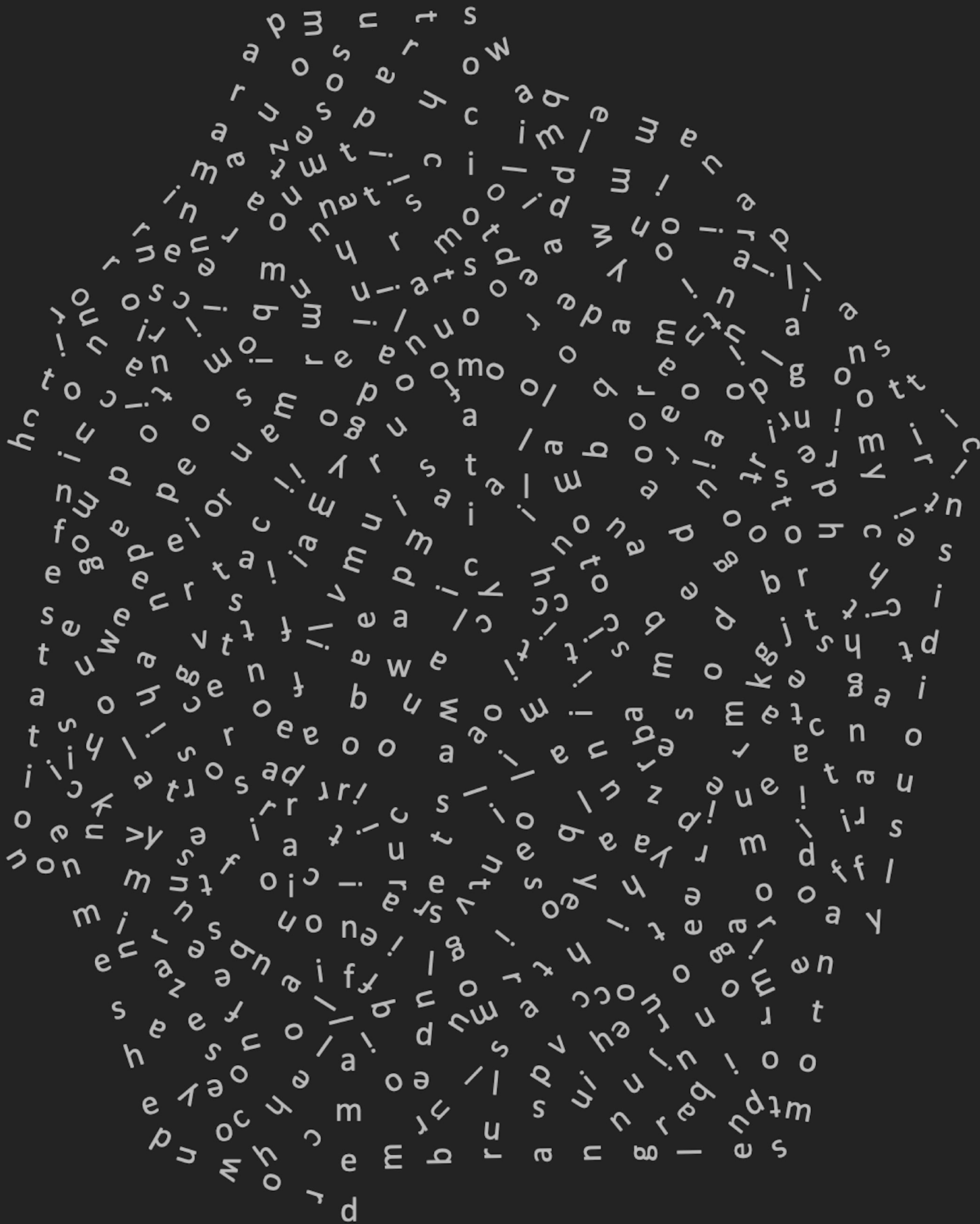
And finally, finally I came to a conclusion  
One that was long overdue  
The only conclusion that could solve this mess we called love  
Was to subtract myself from you  
And so I made you my X  
And at first it was scary  
Because as they say  
One is the loneliest number  
But it is also a very important number  
And somewhere along the way I forgot that

Now I know you aren't very good at math  
And I fear you might never be  
But that's someone else's problem now  
For I have found my solution ■

Stand Up  
Gayla Elliott

Acrylic on canvas, 18"x36", 2021





**SKIN...In The Game**  
James E. Carter, Jr.

This is where I live

I guess  
I am home  
Might as well make myself  
comfortable  
All these years  
of disconnect and attitude  
circular climbs  
in depths and façades

I could never leave

It was not my fault  
to be desirous of platitudes  
pining to scrub my ebony  
with their acceptance  
disdained  
casting my dreams  
alone

This is where I live  
where I have always been

I require no approval  
from tyranny  
puppeteers and saints  
rulers and mimes

I merely require  
a safe good place  
to be ■

**Cobweb Pain**  
Christopher Hamblin Schifeling

*Digital Artwork, Powerpoint 2020*

The Absence Of Heart Sounds

Amanda Glickman

I know his heartbeat.  
I heard it this  
morning.  
“Faint,  
obscured  
by mechanical  
breath sounds,”  
I wrote in my note.

“It’s time to stop all this.”  
She wipes her eyes,  
jostling her mask  
off her nose.  
I hug her.  
My face  
shield,  
awkward,  
collides with  
the top of her head  
as she leans on my shoulder.  
We take five breaths together.  
It’s worth it, I think.  
Though later,  
at home,  
I carry  
my son  
up to bed,  
his breath hot  
on my neck, and  
I know we are not safe.

No tube in his mouth  
or up his nose,  
turned over  
on his  
back,  
I see  
his  
face  
for the  
first time.  
“He looks like  
he’s sleeping,”  
she says, as his pulse  
beneath my fingers fades.  
I place the plastic stethoscope in my ears.

The drum makes a soft suction sound  
as it meets the skin on his chest.  
I feel her wedding ring under  
my gloved hand on hers,  
clutching his arm.  
I listen for  
silence.  
I stare  
at his  
pink  
nipple  
and think  
I will never  
forget its shape.  
I lift his swollen eyelids,  
blocking her view with the flashlight,  
so she won’t see his eyes, his black pupils still.

“Is he gone now?” she asks.  
I nod, but she doesn’t see,  
and asks again,  
“Is he gone?”  
I say, “Yes.”  
“Time of  
death?”  
someone asks.  
“Seventeen forty.”  
Which happens to  
be the address  
of a house  
where I  
used to  
live. ■



Sunrise Fishing

Allison M. Dubner

Photograph, Inle Lake, Myanmar, 2014

Chaos Narrative  
Kelly Blackwell

There he lay on a bed of suffering from which he would never rise.  
The bedclothes were drenched with his heavy, panicked sweat,  
pinning him to the mattress and the undeniable inescapability  
of this final act.

His anguished dying,  
his visceral, soundless, gut-wrenching, heart-breaking, palpable distress.  
He had come to the end of himself, to the brink of despair, facing the abyss  
of what comes next.

His closets were stuffed with skeletons and old shoes  
that had walked down lonely roads. They were damp and dark and locked, given  
no opportunity to spill  
out into the light of the room.

If he had been able to leave, planning to drive away,  
he would have been blocked by his baggage piled high on the curb,  
disabling his escape  
from this prison.

The situation untenable.

There he lay on a bed of suffering which we would never forget.  
Three daughters, three brothers, three wives.  
All with entangled unresolved stories in which  
he was the protagonist.

We loved and hated and lost ourselves in his narcissistic way.  
Helpless in his life and helpless in his death, no way out,  
left to wrestle with unresolved and tear-streaked memories.

He ensnared us all in a web of deceit, peppered just so with palatable treats  
that enticed us to care and sacrifice ourselves  
on the altar of his greed for secret alliances that protected  
his dark truth.

If we had been able to leave, planning to steal away unnoticed,  
we would have been helplessly tethered  
by the invisible twisted ropes of metal strands that held us captive in  
his selfish unyielding arms.

The situation forever scarring.

There he lay on a bed of suffering which could not be palliated.  
The pain pump pulsating and filling his veins with rivers of morphine  
could not allay his distress which rose too high over the banks  
of his misery.

Calming medications and soothing words met with staunch refusal to bend to relief,  
demanding instead restitution and punishment  
that were withheld for a lifetime of guilt and shame, left unanswered until now  
by his wounded soul.

Existential burden too great to bear had the last word on this tenuous journey of exiting  
humanity and entering the unknown where all is revealed  
in the sacred space where clinicians were unable to tread into the depths  
of his being.

If he had been able to leave, to escape this dying misadventure, planning to keep on  
living and hiding and wreaking havoc on lives battered about by the winds of his quiet storm,  
The force of nature would halt him against his will.

The situation failure and chaos. ■



Climbing Kilimanjaro  
Vladka Kovar

Oil on canvas, 48" x 36", 2018

24  
Sally Peach

tiny  
hands  
grasping at the mask, trying to disconnect,  
as if he knew  
he ought to end it.  
he once pulled out his tube—  
self-extubation—  
stayed off the vent for 7 days.  
born at 24 weeks,  
blebs for lungs,  
he thought he could escape.  
tiny  
hands  
pulling out IVs,  
while we watch him grow into some  
kind of monster.  
today I called his mother, her phone was out  
of service.  
I called grandma, did not leave a message.  
she called back immediately,  
said how she was so  
proud  
of her daughter for holding her grandson.  
grandmas are afraid of wires,  
but her daughter is brave.

so  
I forget about the meth,  
or the thought that he should die.  
I focus on his vocal cords parting,  
& the ET tube entering,  
& Maneesh's voice as he  
walks me through the steps.  
I stop thinking of tiny hands  
putting an end to hard work.  
someone loves him,  
even if that love is  
fleeting and  
undocumented and  
tiny ■

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Maureen Sweeney Ackerman

Until 2017, Maureen Sweeney Ackerman, a lifelong writer, reader and runner, lived on Long Island, where she taught English and Creative Writing to high school students and facilitated reading and writing workshops for adults. She is currently a patient in the cancer clinic at UCHealth, Anschutz, and a participant since its inception in the Writing with Cancer program sponsored by Lighthouse Writing Center. She and her husband now live in Denver.

*This Going, This Grace*, her first poetry book, was published in 2019. Love Brimming, her memoir about teaching, will be available in late 2021.

Michael Aubrey

Michael works to find each transplant patient their best matched donor at ClinImmune Labs. When not matching he loves hiking, looking for plants, and photographing. Usually all three at once.

"Which of my photographs is my favorite? The one I'm going to take tomorrow." -Imogen Cunningham

Ignasis Gutierrez-Beasley

Ignasis is a third year medical student at the CU School of Medicine. She was born and raised in Colorado Springs, CO and received her Bachelor of Science in Human Physiology and Minor in Music at the University of Iowa in 2015. She worked as a Nursing Assistant for two years at the University of Iowa Hospital in Neurology/Neurosurgery and was accepted into a post-baccalaureate program through CU Anschutz before starting medical school in 2018. During her first two years she implemented an LGBTQ+ clinic night at the student-run free DAWN Clinic. She is very passionate about minority health, latinx health, LGBTQ+ health, women's health, and health disparities. In her free time, she loves hiking with her husband and puppy, spending time with her family and friends, eating ice cream, and dancing. She plans to apply for residency programs in either Family Medicine or Obstetrics and Gynecology in the fall.

Oliver Bawmann

Oliver Bawmann is a first year Internal Medicine-Pediatrics resident at the University of Colorado. He attended CU for medical school and was very excited to get the chance to stay here for residency.

Kyla Cecilia Best

Kyla is a PRA in infectious disease. Drawing and painting have always been a comforting activity for her. Her favorite thing to make is life.

Kelly Blackwell

Kelly Blackwell, Certified Senior Advisor®, RN, Palliative Care Community Specialist has worked in the hospice and palliative care field for more than 25 years. She is passionate about journeying alongside people through the variety of seasons the fourth quarter of life brings. Kelly attended UCDenver Anschutz Graduate School and earned an Interprofessional Graduate Certificate in Palliative Care in 2019.

Devin Boe

Devin Boe is a human who likes science, medicine, art, music, cuisine, and people in general! Born and raised in Chicagoland, he unexpectedly came to Colorado years ago as part of his graduate education and since then has come to really love this state and its people. Currently he is in medical school on his clinical clerkship rotations after several years in the lab doing research. Apart from his biomedical life, he enjoys all sorts of culture and activities, particularly cooking and music, and occasionally pretending to be an amateur writer and photographer. Cheers!

Mary Bone

Mary has had two books of poetry published. Mary enjoys drawing and painting in her spare time. Mary struggles with gout and enjoys the warmth of her bone colored quilt. Mary enjoys reading The Human Touch Journal and is a friend of the Anschutz community.

Lucy Bradley-Springer

Lucy Bradley-Springer, PhD, RN, retired in 2015 from her appointment as Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Colorado Denver where she was the Principal Investigator and Director of the Mountain Plains AIDS Education and Training Center. She began working in the area of HIV infection in 1988. Dr. Bradley-Springer is a Vietnam-era veteran of the U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps and a past president of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC). She served on the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) from 2014 to 2017 and was the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care from 2007 to 2018.

William Brandon

Will Brandon is a third-year medical student pursuing a career in internal medicine. He grew up in the small town of Westcliffe, Colorado where he was heavily involved in ranching and other agricultural endeavors. Will received a scholarship to the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs where he studied biochemistry and worked as a children's autism therapist. Will became interested in medicine after seeing the health disparities faced by rural communities and will strive to improve rural disparities in medicine throughout his career.

Cayleigh Brown

Cayleigh is a Colorado native and has a passion for healthcare and helping others. She is the Education Programs Specialist for the University of Colorado's Division of Hospital Medicine, where each day she feels inspired working with and supporting the incredible providers who treat UCH hospitalized patients. She enjoys art in all forms and loves to express her creative side. Her natural artistic ability and eye for photography, inherited from her mother, allow her to see life and everyday objects as a piece of art.

Joy Browne

Dr. Joy Browne is a Clinical Professor in Pediatrics and Psychiatry, University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus. Her professional work is as a Pediatric/Developmental Psychologist, Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist and Infant Mental Health Clinician. She consults nationally and internationally with newborn intensive care professionals and community-based early intervention specialists. Her work is focused on support of medically fragile babies and their families.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Brenna Cameron

Brenna is a fourth-year medical student at CU Anschutz who will be starting her residency in pediatrics this summer. When not at the hospital she enjoys being outside in the mountains, writing, and reading just –about everything.

Thea Carruth

Thea Carruth is a retired School of Medicine, College of Nursing and Children's Hospital staffer. Artwork is her lens to explore the natural world. The Center for Bioethics and Humanities zoom programs were her way of maintaining contact with CU during 2020.

Brian Carter

Brian Carter is a first-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He has a strong interest in becoming a general surgeon and hopes to strengthen the practice of socially responsible surgery throughout his career. In his free time Brian enjoys hiking Colorado and drinking coffee, and can often be caught doing both at the same time.

James E. Carter, Jr.

Dr. James E. Carter, Jr., MD graduated from Haverford College in 1982, with a degree in sociology and obtained his medical degree at SUNY/Downstate Medical Center in 1986. After residency at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn, he completed his cardiology fellowship at the University of Chicago and interventional cardiology fellowship at University of Maryland. Board certified in internal medicine, cardiology, and vascular medicine, Dr. Carter is a certified functional medicine practitioner, focusing on social determinants of health and systems biology. Dr. Carter sees complex patients in vascular medicine clinic and the Advanced Wound Care clinic. As Director, Service-Learning for University of Colorado, Anschutz School of Medicine, Dr. Carter hopes to positively impact young learners. Dr. Carter writes essays and poetry to foster resilience and to emphasize the patient’s story as a path to healing and recovery.

Yaswanth Chintaluru

Yaswanth Chintaluru is a first-year medical student at University of Colorado School of Medicine. Prior to starting medical school, he earned a B.S in Biology from the University of Colorado, Denver. From the aftermath of a year of turmoil, he hopes that reflection will lead to growth.

Evan Cornish

Evan is a second year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He studied classics and ancient history at University of St. Andrews and Columbia University. He is deeply grateful to be part of the CU community and misses his classmates dearly during the pandemic.

Amelia J. Davis

Amelia J. Davis is an MD/MPH student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Colorado School of Public Health. She cares deeply about health equity, and, in a nod to her undergraduate studies in English literature and biology at the University of Denver, she often contemplates the intersection of medicine, humanities, and ethics, especially as a way to connect with patients and hear their stories. She hopes to serve marginalized and historically oppressed communities with a career in either primary care or infectious disease.

Lisa Diamond,

Lisa Diamond, DNP, FNP-C is an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus. Her writing has appeared in various journals and newspapers. She enjoys hiking, travel, reading, writing, and knitting. She is a member of Lighthouse Writers Workshop.

Allison M. Dubner

Allison is a 3rd year PhD student in the Integrated Physiology program at Anschutz. She grew up in Atlanta and moved around a bit before settling in Colorado with her husband and their two adorably troublesome cats. Her hobbies include reading, traveling, SCUBA diving, cooking, and video gaming. Allison has loved photography since she was a child, receiving her first camera from “Santa” at age 5. She continues to use photography to document her adventures and share them with her friends and family.

Gayla Elliott

Gayla Elliott an art therapist at the Marcus Institute for Brain Health on the Anschutz Medical Campus. She enjoys painting from her imagination, inspired by memories of traveling in Southern Utah. This painting was completed on January 6, 2021 just prior to rioting that occurred in our nation’s Capital. In light of that incident, the painting took on a new meaning, with a vague resemblance to the Capitol dome, and the powerful red/orange colors on a dramatic vertical axis, expressing timeless strength and a persevering call to Stand Up for justice and for support of our precious democracy.

Art Elser

Art Elser received a triple bypass at University of Colorado Hospital in 2011 and has been in the care of UCH cardiologists and internists since. Art Elser's poetry has been published in many journals and anthologies. He has published five books of poetry including *To See a World in a Grain of Sand* and *It Seemed Innocent Enough*.

Elmo Frickman

Elmo Frickman is a Clinical Professor in the Dept of Family Medicine where he has taught students for over 30 years. His poetry has been published in many journals including the *Mountain Gazette*, *Burning Bush*, *Semi-Dwarf Review* and *Brobdingnagian Times*.

Arturo Garcia

Arturo Garcia (1974, Mexico) is a full-time artist living in Denver, Colorado. Arturo has exhibited at The Denver Art Museum, The Yellowstone Art Museum, The Mexican Cultural Center, the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Fulginiti Pavilion and has collaborated with CU Boulder, Metropolitan State University of Denver, the Butterfly Pavilion as well as other non-for-profit organizations. Garcia’s art collections include “Tatanka: The Spirit of the Land,” an exhibit where the American Buffalo is the main character in a story about the American West; “Yaxche—The Tree of Life,” an art exhibit about the correlation between trees, wildlife and humans, and “Literary Giants,” which has traveled to Public Schools and libraries in Colorado’s Front Range in an effort to awaken kids’ interest in both literature and art. Garcia believes in storytelling through his art and he strives to deliver that in his work. His work is visible at [www.arturogarciafineart.com](http://www.arturogarciafineart.com).

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Amanda Glickman

Amanda Glickman is a first-year Psychiatry resident. She has a particular interest in Palliative Care. Being an intern during the COVID pandemic has been a difficult, but often deeply meaningful experience. In her spare time, Amanda enjoys spending time with her family, making blueberry pancakes on Saturday mornings, and scuba diving.

Andrew Glugla

Andrew lives with his wife and two rambunctious cats in western Aurora. He enjoys reading, video gaming, and woodworking.

Justin Hauxwell

Justin grew up in rural Montana with a unique upbringing on the Northern Cheyenne reservation as the son of an Indian Health Service family doctor. Navigating multiple cultures on a daily basis prompted his fascination with different viewpoints and the machinations of human thought. This background lent itself perfectly to his role as a dual-boarded physician in Family Medicine and Psychiatry.

Lauren Heery

Lauren is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She is pursuing a career in Internal Medicine and is passionate about incorporating social justice, narrative practice, and medical education into her future work. She’s been writing prose (and occasional poetry) here and there since kindergarten. Outside of medicine she enjoys spending time with friends and family, cautiously trying out Colorado’s outdoors activities, and taking up new hobbies in crafting and cooking.

Matt Hickey

Matt is a Professor at CSU, where he serves as the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Health and Human Sciences. He is a great lover of open spaces and mountain air, and thankful for the abundance of both in Colorado.

Christina Hobson

Christina Hobson is a HR/Payroll Coordinator with the School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine on the Anschutz campus. She enjoys photography and editing the pictures she takes to try and capture the essence of the picture in a unique way!

Annette House

Annette is a 1965 graduate of the University of Colorado School of Nursing. She is retired now after a 40 year career. She’s been writing poetry since 2014.

Madeline Huey

Madeline Huey is a 4th year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She is a Colorado native with a love of the outdoors, good food, and hot coffee. She writes to reflect on her experiences, big and small.

Rachel Johnson-Koenke

Dr. Rachel Johnson-Koenke is an Assistant Professor at the College of Nursing, University of Colorado, Caritas Coach, and a research social worker. As a social worker, she was the first interdisciplinary Ph.D. student at the College of Nursing at the University of Colorado. She is also the Clinical Core Lead at the Denver/Seattle Center of Innovation, Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center. Dr. Johnson-Koenke is interested in using narratives to help people living with chronic illnesses like heart failure and long haul COVID 19.

Therese (Tess) Jones

Therese (Tess) Jones PhD is Director of the Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program and Associate Director of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities on the Anschutz Medical Campus. Her passions include painting, viewing and talking about film and television, and literature.

Justin Kesler

Justin is a senior at the University of Colorado Denver. He is a pre-medicine biology major and volunteered regularly at the University of Colorado Hospital. Outside of school he is heavily interested in art, photography, science, medical history, and antique collecting.

Vladka Kovar

Dr. Vladka Kovar is a board-certified preventive medicine physician and epidemiologist with a background in psychiatry and a “side” degree in art history, theory, and criticism. She works for the Community Epidemiology and Program Evaluation Group (CEPEG) and her unique background allows her to conduct research and evaluation in a variety of areas including public health, behavioral health, medical education, and systems design. Vladka’s professional interests stem from her volunteer efforts in Africa working in health care system design and quality improvement projects as well as disease prevention and health promotion campaigns. Before joining CEPEG, Vladka 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 University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Maydha Kumar

Maydha is a bioengineering student where the junior and senior years are typically at Anschutz University. She believes that art is an important form for communication and is intrigued by narrative medicine.

Lisa Kurth

Dr. Lisa Kurth earned a BFA from CU, Boulder. She has been an art instructor at Colorado Mountain College, Steamboat Springs, and a visiting artist at CLU in Thousand Oaks, CA. She utilizes an impressionistic perspective, relying upon nature to inspire her. Her artwork has been displayed in art galleries and competitive art exhibitions across Colorado, Georgia, and California, and is included in private collections nationally. She is a clinical health psychologist and Certified Brain Injury Specialist in Fort Collins, CO, where she treats children and adults diagnosed with ADHD, ASD and individuals with TBI. She is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics (Developmental Section) and researcher at UCSOM. Her artwork includes nature photography, watercolors, acrylics, and batiks which depict a fresh and colorful impression of the wilderness. Her affinity for nature provides balance to her scientific work and calls her back to places in the wild she visits often.

Francisco G. La Rosa

Dr. Francisco G. La Rosa is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pathology and a member of the University of Colorado Cancer Center. He is an active clinician, researcher, and teacher and specializes in genitourinary, renal, and heart pathology; and pathology informatics with emphasis in telehealth and telemedicine. His main hobbies are photography and video, and he has created several educational websites. He has 95 publications in peer-reviewed journals and is an active member of many national and international organizations,

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

including the College of American Pathologists, American Urological Association, Catholic Medical Association, American Telemedicine Association, Asociación Iberoamericana de Teleslud y Telemedicina, and Peruvian American Medical Association. He is founder and editor-in-chief of the journal “Revista de la AITT,” is a member of the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) Genitourinary Committee and collaborates with several research groups in innovative technology for the diagnosis and treatment of prostate and urinary cancer.

Mel Lake

Mel Lake lives in Denver with her partner and a very good dog. She received an English B.A. from Northern Arizona University and an M.S. in Technical Communication from Northeastern University. She is a technical writer by day and enjoys creative writing all the time.

CT Lin

Dr. CT Lin is a practicing general internist at University of Colorado Hospital since 1995; a physician informaticist since 1999 and the Chief Medical Information Officer since 2007. He picked up the ukulele in 2010 and used it to start writing parody songs for the Electronic Health Record.

Elizabeth Magnan

Elizabeth Magnan is a new Colorado resident (Sep. 2020) and Professional Research Assistant with the RESTORE Physical Therapy Lab. Magnan graduated from Connecticut College in May 2020, with a B.A. in Behavioral Neuroscience and Dance and has enjoyed combining her interests and applying them to research at CU. Previously, at the Rivers School in Weston, MA, Magnan received the 2-Dimensional Arts Prize for her work with charcoal (drawing) and has since made work in her free time.

Chelsea L. Mason

Chelsea L. Mason is a Clinical Research Coordinator at the Anschutz Medical Campus. She has been on the campus and in the cancer center since 2014. Currently, Chelsea works with oncology patients on clinical treatment trials, specifically with the sarcoma team, and is looking to pursue graduate school in the future.

KC Moore

KC Moore is a third year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine who, in the midst of her clinical rotations, has been ruminating on the nature of love, empathy, and life in the face of the new experiences that clerkships provide.

William Mundo

William Mundo is a first-generation medical student and the son of two immigrants from Acapulco, Mexico. He is an older brother and the oldest cousin in his family. He was born in urban East Los Angeles, California, and raised in rural Leadville, Colorado. On top of having a burning passion for medicine, he is also enthusiastic about diversity, equity, and inclusion. He has an appreciation for civic discourse, social justice, history, and politics. He likes spending time with his family, spending time outdoors, writing poetry, mixing music, and playing basketball. He earned a BS in Public Health and a BA in Ethnic Studies from the University of Colorado Denver and received an MPH from the Colorado School of Public Health at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

Aakriti Pandita

Dr. Pandita is Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Department of Medicine at CU Anschutz. She writes about patient experiences and narrative medicine.

Jeff Patton

Jeff Patton received his BFA from CSU in 2001. He is hoping to begin painting again in 2021 after such a long, hard, and thought-provoking year. He recently started work as an I.T. Professional for the School of Medicine and is very excited to be working with so many smart and talented people, as well as supporting so many important projects. It’s been some time since he has thought about art and his own artwork, and he is very thankful to see this project, The Human Touch.

Sally Peach

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 completed her undergraduate education at MIT, where she received the Joseph D. Everingham Award for her theatrical performances and playwriting. She’s been writing poetry since she was but a tiny Peach, and this is her 6th year publishing in The Human Touch.

Jacob Pellinen

Jacob Pellinen graduated from University of Colorado School of Medicine in 2014 and now is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurology specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy.

Nicole Prete

Nicole Prete is a graduate student in the CU College of Nursing studying to be a pediatric nurse practitioner. She grew up in Austin, Texas, and completed her BSN in San Diego, California. She has spent the last five years working as a nurse in the pediatric ICU. Nicole has enjoyed the visual arts since she was very young and is constantly looking for ways to connect her creative side to her career in nursing. She most frequently works with acrylic, watercolor, ink pen, colored pencil, and linoleum block printing. The included pieces explore how the human spirit connects with, adapts to, and influences the external environment.

M. M. Ralph

M. M. Ralph is grateful to work in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics at the CU Anschutz SOM Campus. She enjoys many creative pursuits in her spare time, including writing, painting, and photography.

Mitra A. Razzaghi

Dr. Razzaghi is an associate professor of medicine at the Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine. She practices women's health at the WISH clinic in the Anschutz Outpatient Pavilion.

Christopher Hamblin Schifeling

Christopher Hamblin Schifeling is a geriatric and palliative care physician in Denver who did residency and fellowship training at the University of Colorado. His creative work has been featured in JAMA, Annals of Internal Medicine, Intima, and Colorado’s Best Emerging Poets.

Wagner Schorr-Ratzlaff

Wagner is an Associate Professor at the School of Medicine and an enthusiastic mountain climber.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Ilona Schwarz

Gone skiing.

David Shepard

Retired Psychiatrist after 33 years from the Colorado Department of Corrections and Kaiser Permanente. Dr. Shepard published a book of poems and is working on the second one. He has taught PBL and Hidden Curriculum for several years in the School of Medicine.

Ryan Mix Smith

Ryan Mix Smith is a musical combination of styles, sounds, and techniques used to make music that may or may not fit a particular style. We all like variety as well as something familiar we can relate to, and Ryan Mix Smith searches for both. Ryan Mix Smith is the partner of Dr. Sullivan who received their doctoral degree from Anschutz. Dr. Sullivan is currently at Anschutz working as a post-doc. "All You Need" was written for and inspired by Dr. Sullivan.

Hayley Specht

Hayley is a third year medical student at CUSOM.

Laura Strand

Laura works in the Anschutz Office of Advancement managing the Patient Engagement program.

Cassidy Stratton

Cassidy Stratton is an elementary art teacher. In her art, she tries to illustrate the connection between people and nature. Each element of her art is carefully woven together to portray this connection. The images are blended and intertwined as one to create a unified whole. She is connected to the Anschutz community through her mom, who is a CU affiliate and works for the Rocky Mountain VA Medical Center.

Avalon Swenson

Ava is a first-year medical student at CUSOM, having moved to Colorado from Minnesota just this year to begin school. She has a background in medical history and biology, obtaining both a B.A. in History and B.S. in Biology from the University of Minnesota in 2017. She has always been drawn to the history of anatomy, specifically, and anatomical art given the immense detail that it requires. Ava has drawn (unprofessionally) for most of her life, with her favorite medium being pen and ink (though she did sell sidewalk chalk drawings to neighbors at the age of 3, helped by her father). Currently, Ava resides in Denver with her boyfriend and their dog, Walter. She loves hiking, yoga, running, baking, and particularly loves exploring used bookstores.

Kristina L. Terrell

Kristina has worked at the University of Colorado for 26 years as a Professional Research Assistant studying HIV/AIDS/Melanoma/Breast Cancer. She enjoys photography, exploring four wheel drive roads, gardening, and spending time with her corgi, Posey.

David M. Weil

David M. Weil manages operations and educational technology for the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. He enjoys biking, hiking, camping, snowshoeing, paddling, and is an avid fiction reader.

Arek Wiktor

Arek Wiktor, MD, FACS is an Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Colorado SOM where he practices Burn Surgery and Surgical Critical Care. He enjoys coffee, personal fitness, archery, and BBQ.

Erica Worley

Erica is a recent college graduate that was given the incredible opportunity to work for CU Anschutz. Though she has only recently been accepted into this community, she says it's been a pleasure getting to know the incredible people who make it what it is.



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BACK COVER ARTWORK



**Connecting**

by Maydha Kumar

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