



THE HUMAN TOUCH

A JOURNAL OF POETRY, PROSE & VISUAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

VOLUME 15 | 2022

FOREWORD

Welcome to ***The Human Touch* 2022** — the annual anthology of original prose, poetry, graphic arts, 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 especially during such challenging times. For the past two years, ***The Human Touch*** has gone exclusively digital, and while we feel the loss of holding and sharing an actual book with you, going digital allows us to include more images as well as audio and video files, and it allows you, dear reader, to access and share them with just a few clicks.

Behind all of the evocative words and compelling images of this volume is the commitment and creativity of our editors and board members. From inviting submissions to devising time lines to reviewing materials to working with graphic artists to endless proofreading, they devote many hours to producing this volume, and they do all of this in addition to schedules packed with class meetings, study sessions, high-stakes exams, residency interviews, and even internship duties! We are deeply grateful for their dedication and energy.

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

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

Finally, on behalf of the editorial board, I want to thank and congratulate our 2022 Editors-in-Chief: ***Allison Dubner***, PhD Candidate, Integrated Physiology Program and ***Amelia Davis***, Class of 2022, School of Medicine. 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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This publication is supported by gifts to the Arts and Humanities In Healthcare Program at the Center for Bioethics and Humanities.

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PREFACE

“They can’t get an ambulance,” said Adam, “and there aren’t any beds. And we can’t find a doctor or a nurse. They’re all busy. That’s all there is to it.”

This sentiment would not have been out of place in the early waves of the COVID-19 pandemic when hospitals were overflowing and temporary morgues were constructed in refrigerated trucks. However, this quote is from author Katherine Anne Porter’s short story, “Pale Horse, Pale Rider,” about the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. During that time, Katherine Anne Porter was living in Denver when she was stricken with the flu and almost died in the hospital. It is remarkable to see that over 100 years later, we have experienced something so similar.

Fortunately, through a combination of time, luck, and the hard work of countless numbers of people, we are moving out of the acute phase of the pandemic and slowly returning to our pre-pandemic ways of life, from returning to the office to going out to dinner at a restaurant to hopping on a plane to visit family. However, as we make this shift into the chronic phase of the pandemic, we are left with a sense of self-doubt and uncertainty. *When is it okay not to wear a mask? Should I go to that wedding, knowing that some people will be unvaccinated? What is going to happen with the new variants?*

This chronic stress and anxiety seem to have permeated the collective consciousness during the last year. When we received the submissions for this year’s edition of *The Human Touch*, we were shocked by the number of dark and depressing pieces of art and literature. As a journal of a medical campus, we always have a great number of submissions involving life and death, so this is not unusual for us. However, the number of pieces dealing with these topics this year far outstrips what we have seen in the past.

In preparing this edition of *The Human Touch*, we feel it is important to acknowledge this sense of fear, doubt, and anxiety. This is clearly an important and difficult time for us as a society, and it is normal to experience uncertainty. However, there is also a sense of hope that better times are to come. As with the 1918 pandemic, there will be an end to all of this. Just as Katherine Anne Porter has left us with a record of her harrowing experiences during a pandemic of another era, this edition of *The Human Touch* reflects the human experience during the pandemic of our modern era. In this edition, we strived to present both the feelings of uncertainty and of hope that embody our current reality. As the seasons march on, we hope for a future of continued healing and times that uplift us.

Amelia J. Davis and Allison M. Dubner
Editors in Chief

ONE YEAR

KADI HORN

I. "It's been a hard year for everyone," says my therapist. I want to scream. It has been hard, but my brain has been doing this to me for every year of my life. She gives me the same tips on being engaged. I think about how badly I want to rip out of my own skin.

II. I wonder how long it's going to hurt. I hope I'm up high enough to get the job done. My arms aren't strong enough to hoist me over the edge of the wall. It's a voluntary commitment, but it doesn't feel that way. I don't want to be anywhere. Nurses strip me down and count my scars.

III. Having my own socks is better than I ever would have expected. The dog actually wags her tail when I come back home. My mom never answered when I called her from the hospital, and I keep waiting for her to say something. She never does. My mother-in-law-to-be prays for me.

IV. I stay late at work because I feel guilty for the time I missed while I was away. My fiancé hates her job. I dance around what happened, coming up with excuses why it wasn't serious, why it didn't count. My mom still hasn't said anything.

V. My roommate could use moral support at the hospital. The security guard checking us in is the same one who was posted outside my room three months ago. I wonder if she remembers me, or if I'm just another face that slipped by.

VI. My family is out of school. It's time for a picnic. They keep talking about the kid at school who killed himself at the end of the year. No one was watching out for him. I feel like a bad person for being jealous that they seem more interested in his story than mine.

VII. I'm on the first true vacation of my life. My family is (mostly) forgiven. Laying in the sun at the hot springs with a soft pretzel and smoothie, I look out over the mountains and realize this is the first time I can remember really being happy to be alive.

VIII. There's a tattoo I've been dreaming up for a while now, and it's finally hammered into my skin. We spend my birthday weekend moving my fiancé to Dallas. I only stop eating for a few days before the guilt gets to be too much. She's the one I think of over my cereal.

IX. I'm itching to hurt. The blade is in hand but the tattoo I keep wanting to dismiss and call stupid is staring back at me, and I don't go through with it. I call my fiancé. It's the longest phone call we've ever had. Not a single important thing is talked about. It's perfect.

X. One of the humans I admire most sees his words on my arm. He takes the time to write me a note he doesn't have to. I spend an hour sitting outside on the sidewalk crying. "Kadi, the world is better with you in it. We need you."

XI. Ten felt so old when I was there, but my sister still seems so small. She brings a baby doll with her when she spends the night. We buy unicorn sundaes. They're disgusting. I have an entire folder of photos she took on Thanksgiving. They're all of her laughing.

XII. Our wedding is a dinner and game night. Everyone is getting along and offers hugs and kind words. I'm overwhelmed in the best way. My friend brings back the copy of *Slaughterhouse Five* I lent him six years ago. We stay up until the sunrise. I think I could have kept going.

I. I go up to the roof one day just to see if it feels different. It's not a nice view, but I stand there and take it in for a while anyway. My wife sends me pictures of the houses she wants to buy. I'm creating again, stories and music and tiny stuffed cats. More than ever, there is hope.

BEHIND GLASS

LYNDY BUSH

MEDIUM: OIL ON CANVAS PANEL; 8X10 INCHES

DATE: 2021



ENCHANTMENT

MATTHEW HICKEY

The ridge sits high
above arroyo and piñon,
exposed to wind and sun
and vistas that extend
to where the sunset hides.

A range lies west;
fingers of snow
dot the high points.
To the North,
the Sangres cast
shadows into the canyons.

A storm moves in;
it drops a grey curtain
and stirs the breeze.
It whistles now, then pauses,
interrupted by rockfall
in the canyon below.

Rain, then a burst
of wind and snow.
The sparrows dive
for the cover of home,
and the Magpie
holds its tongue.

The squall moves on,
leaving a cover,
white amidst the
red soil and green branches.
The breeze, now a whisper,
dusts the snow into a memory.

The last hour draws near,
grey turns to gold
and pink and rose
on a canvas of evening blue.
Rock and sand,
cloud and sky,
a patina in the night.

AS THE BUTTERFLIES

HAYLEY SPECHT

Never was one for straight lines
Unaware of the direct paths of crows above
Disciples of Archimedes
Not troubled by the obstacles of the ground

Where footprints create mandalas in the sand
Curves, loops, and switchbacks
Interrupted by the leavings of time
Tracing the paths of butterflies

Yet marvel is tempered by grief
Where county roads follow a grid
And butterflies are more likely than crows
To meet their fates on windshields

A WALK IN THE CLOUDS

DANIEL HASSELL

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; NIKON D5100

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2014



BREACH

JAMES E. CARTER, JR.

Anxiety
my old companion
comes barreling at the door
shimmering the crevices of the night
where I folded peace within wrinkles
set aside for tranquility
inside me
the rumble all too familiar
in cadence and tone
a resonance of ineffective repairs

I often find myself
on the other side of sadness calling
for some reason I
cannot resist breaching
the boundaries to which I committed
to keep myself secure
I peek
curious as to what's there
as if I did not already know

I accept not to drink from purple streams
no matter how magically they wink along the
surface
no matter how enticingly they
camouflage their nature somehow
we re-acquire thirsts for what will harm us
is it a weakness?
a self-rejection of sorts?

I relish darkness

it is hard to reshape
fragments of broken dreams
how do I reimagine
as my future flutters shrinking
agitated by moonbeams
how much of my essence drifted?
why did I allow it to fly?



TOGETHER TOWARDS THE LIGHT

SAUMYA DE SILVA

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE IPHONE

DATE: MARCH 2019

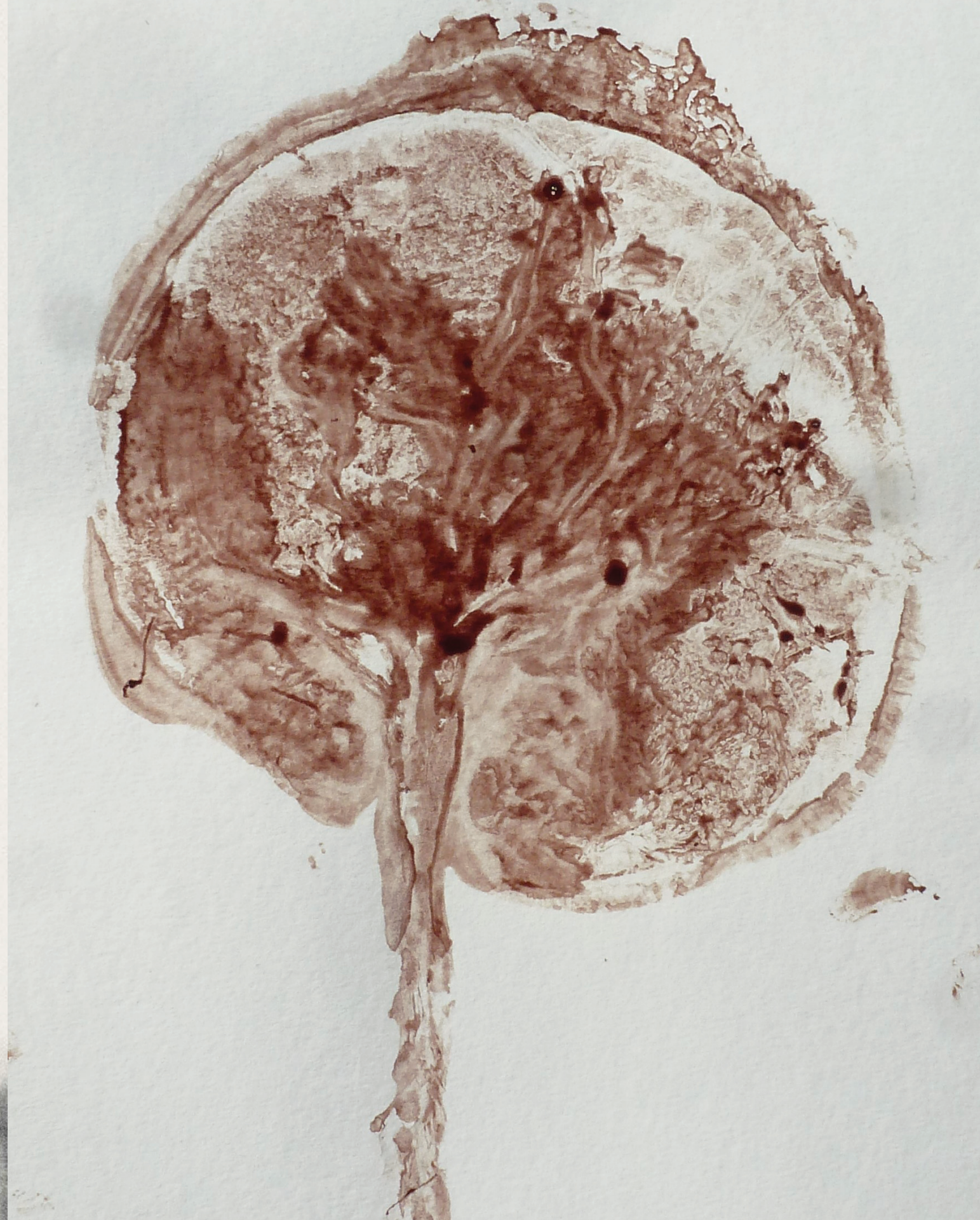
THROUGH VULNERABILITY WE FIND COURAGE TO TRANSFORM

DESCRIPTION: The artist is the principal investigator of a participatory research study co-created with pediatric nurse participants. As a component of this study, participants and research team members produced forms of creative expression to represent their experiences during the pandemic through a reflective process.

This piece represents nursing's vulnerability during the response to the pandemic and demonstrates the ability of nurses to use courage and informed, thoughtful action to overcome challenges to transform and root to their identity. It is within nursing's identity that purpose is found in advocacy, the fostering of authentic relationships, and the provision of a therapeutic presence to facilitate healing in themselves and others. This piece represents the sacredness of the human condition and urges individuals and organized systems to see and honor the humanity of nurses as they care for patients and others in their personal lives.

**LINDSEY MARIE TARASENKO
AND MCKINZEY MURPHY**

MEDIUM: PLACENTA ART--USE OF ARTIST'S PLACENTA
AT THE BIRTH OF HER CHILD TO CREATE A PRINT WITH
BLOOD ON CARDSTOCK; 11X15 INCHES
DATE: AUGUST 2021



WALKING WITH DISCOMFORT

AMY NACHT

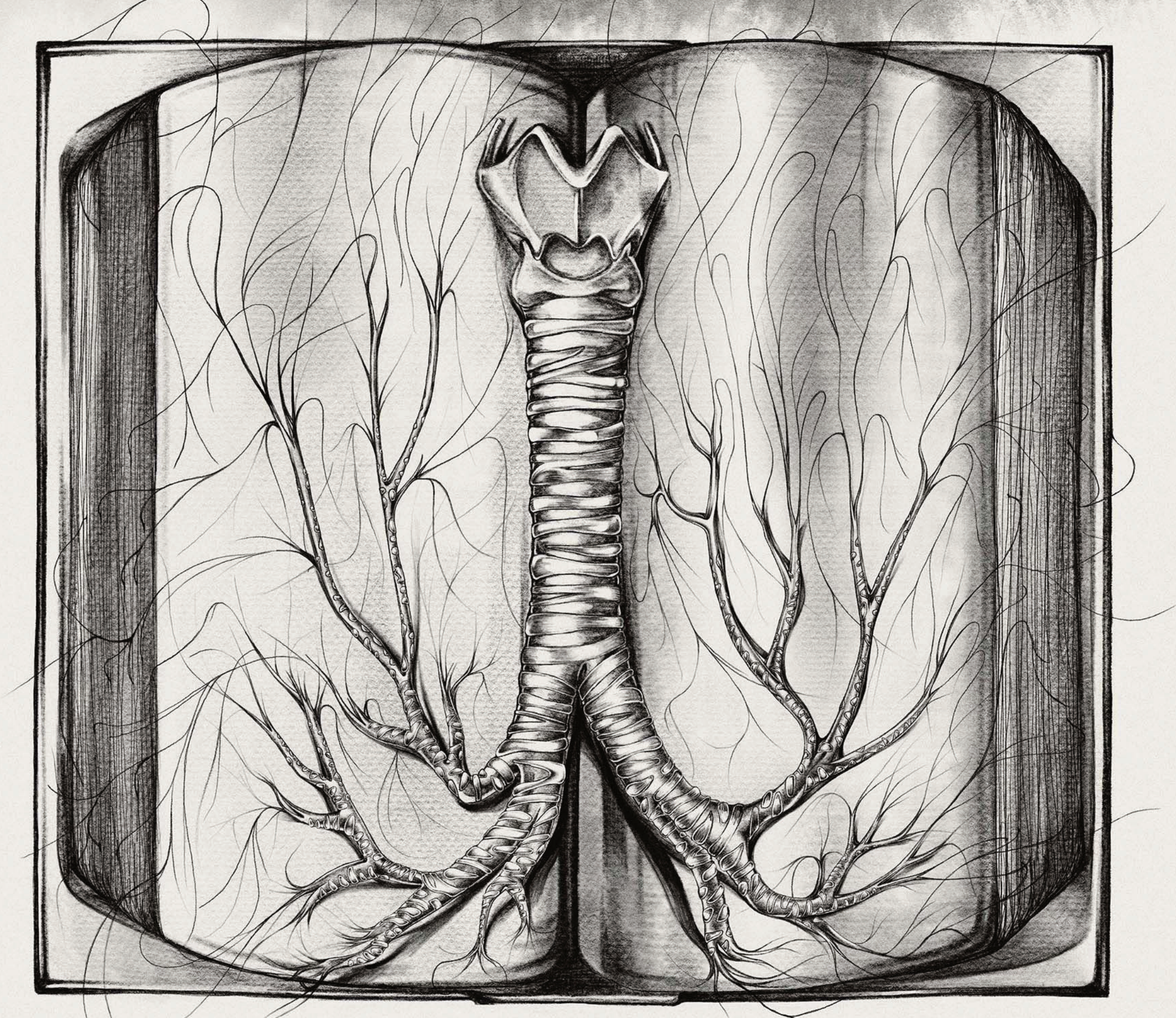
And as she walked into the room, she saw the eyes of all of the people in the restaurant turn toward her. It was not her beauty or her commanding walk that drew them close, but rather a common shared sense of doom that lay across her face that the 10 restaurant goers noticed and seemed to feel alongside of her. She sat at her table, glancing down at her shoes, shoes that had just walked across miles of asphalt, with feet that stung from the heat that rises from NY streets on 90-degree summer days. She walked the 2.5 miles to meet her father for lunch as the subway tunnels induced a feeling of claustrophobia, a fear of being trapped alongside hundreds of other travelers with rats for company, and the distinct smell of urine and rotting food. Her father picked this restaurant because Italian food was his favorite. A meatball sub and a coke were what he would order, she would get a salad and eat quietly while tucking her desire for fat and grease away, similar to the way in which the gentleman at the theatre last night tucked his handkerchief into his breast jacket pocket, with purpose and elegance intertwined. This was not a lunch she was looking forward to, a lunch where silence was the main course, and her father’s depression hung in the air. At least this was a step up from her childhood trips to the bowling alley where his depression mingled with cigarette smoke and men who leered at her as a young girl. Today was her day to say something. To swallow the tears at the back of her throat, quell the tightness in her chest. She looked across the table to smell the cheese that was melted across the meatballs and to witness his rare smiles, a predictable response to the taste of food. While considering her next bite, the waiter placed the check on the table. She stood, looking across the table again, seeking his face. He was not there; she had eaten alone. On her quiet walk home she considered loss, seeing this emotion reflected across the faces of the shopkeepers, the mothers pushing strollers with trailing dogs, and the homeless woman whose scarred face caused pain to course again into her feet. If we believe our feelings, we see our feelings, she thought. And if we see our feelings externally, who is feeling them, the seer or the feeler. These were her days after her father died, moments she continued to share with him. Working to unravel the stories, birth from the cocoon of unconsciousness, and embrace her pained feet moment by moment

BREATHING
STORIES

AVALON SWENSON

MEDIUM: DIGITAL ARTWORK; PROCREATE

DATE: 2021



GET MARRIED!

TINA M. MOSER

Grab your tea and get comfortable-- I want to tell you a true story about my very tiny Japanese mama. She has always made it very clear to me that her job as a mother wasn't done until I got MY job done, which is to get married and have babies. My siblings have gotten married, so her focus was on me. I am the youngest, her last 'hold-out,' and she was determined to crush my 'rebellion' and make me perform my one and most important duty to her. Since the time I was really young, she had been on me like white on rice to get busy with the business of marriage and motherhood. I can



DESCRIPTION: A PHOTO OF MY MOTHER, KAZUE DREW. IT WAS TAKEN BY MY BROTHER, CHARLES C. DREW, AND SHOWS THE FACE OF ALZHEIMER'S IN A BEAUTIFUL WAY.
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; CANON POWERSHOT SX40 HS

vividly remember her trying to arrange something between me and the family's mailman back when I was 13, and you can imagine how that went. My mom wooed that man nearly every day with cookies and smiles. She probably scared the bejeezus out of him once he finally understood what she wanted. Or he simply never could quite put together her broken Japlish/Engrish and just thought to himself, "Gee... there's that friendly Mrs. Drew and her Cheetos again!" Year after year I tried to tune out my mom's scolding voice:

"When are you getting married?"

"Don't be so picky!"

"Tina, when are you getting married?"

"What? You're going to high school? WHY?! GET MARRIED!"

"You're getting very old."

"You're such a lazy girl—GET MARRIED!"

"Quit being disobedient—GET MARRIED!"

"What? MORE school?? GET MARRIED!"

"What's wrong with that one? He's married? Why won't YOU get married?!"

"Where's your husband? What? GET MARRIED!"

Every year for my birthday I received a special gift from my mom. I call it the annual Happy GET MARRIED Birthday Talk (HGMBT). Don't get me wrong--on regular, ordinary days I got The Talk, too. Sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, and sometimes at night I hear my mom and the dreaded M word. There have been many themes and variations on The Talk, and I have most of them memorized.

The HGMBT have been mostly annoying, sometimes distressing, but occasionally unbelievably hysterical. Take the year of my 29th birthday. I went home as I always did for my birthday dinner and cake, and true to form, my mom started in almost as soon as I walked through the door. She was in a very cranky mood that year, though, so it wasn't long before she had worked herself into a screaming fury: "You're just a bad daughter because you haven't gotten married yet!" Without thinking, I hollered right back, "You're just a bad mama because you haven't found me a husband yet!" Oh, that shut her up! But only for a moment. That woman sucked all the oxygen out of the room before she began bellowing for my father to come downstairs to where I stood—legs planted, hands at my waist, chin jutting out, glaring down at my short mama. My dad came running, thinking the worst. Imagine his consternation when my mom calmly—but firmly—told him, "Charlie! Find your daughter a husband!"

My absolute favorite HGMBT occurred the following year. My sister and I had been eating my birthday dinner with our parents, and we had just polished off our plates of cake and ice cream. We kept throwing puzzled glances at each other and staring pointedly at our mom all evening long. She had been curiously silent as she ignored us and meticulously ate her dinner. Then she ate her slice of cake. And then her scoop of vanilla ice cream.... Finally, our mom shooed us away and urged us to go lay down on her futon to rest while she did the dishes. So my sister and I clomped heavily downstairs to the basement, kicked off our shoes, and belly-flopped down onto the homemade futon and started talking.

"Hmmm...wonder why mommy didn't say anything?" she asked.

"I don't know! Maybe she gave up," I replied. I was so naïve.

It wasn't long before we heard our mother making her way downstairs and shhh-shhh-shhhhing across the tiled basement floor to her bedroom where we were sprawled like sheep before the slaughter. She eased her feet out of her slippers by the door, came into the room, smoothly kneeled down by the edge of the futon and folded her hands into her lap. She had this very tragic look on her face as she gazed at me. Kind of like an old actor in a Kabuki theater. *"Tina..."* she moaned in this very plaintive and sing-songy voice. *"Why won't you get married? Isn't there anybody that you like?"* And in a moment of profound weakness, I told my mom about this man that I really liked from my church. He was an Elder, and he was very handsome, quite funny, and we once went to a Christopher Parkening concert together. After listening sympathetically to my tale of unreciprocated romantic longings, my mama asked me, *"Do you want mommy to talk to him?"*

I have been listening to this tiny comedienne and her one-part act for a very long time. I was even starting to get used to it. Then it happened. One birthday, I did not get The Talk. Who knew that I'd take it so hard—I went back to my little studio apartment that night and cried my eyes out because I thought that since my own mama had given up on me, I would never, ever, ever get married. As it turned out, she just forgot that it was my birthday (which explained the lack of cake and dinner, too), and just like that, she simply picked up where she left off a week later. *Nag, nag, nag.*

Well, I've now endured almost 30 years of The Talk which, by the way, has a new variation—she's been skipping the 'get married' section and just heads straight to the 'where is

my grandbaby' part. Frankly, I've given up the hope of ever finding my soulmate, my companion for life, and I have stopped looking. A nice date for me was on the pages of a good book or up on the movie screen. Except for occasional bouts of intense loneliness, I was ok with the "but not for me" scenario. Lately (and especially since the death of my father this past January), I've found myself entangled in a complicated and exhausting web of trying to care for my old mama and deal with her myriad of mental and physical health issues, working on probate and conservatorship stuff, working full time, and trying to adjust to a new routine that leaves very little time for tending to my own needs and well-being. I am a zombie just putting one foot in front of the other. However, I've noticed something that kind of makes me smile through the tears: even though my mom has been displaying really alarming signs of dementia and Alzheimer's, the one thing that remains constant is that she never seems to forget that I haven't gotten married nor given her the grandchildren that she so desires.

"Tina....when are you getting married, huh? When are you going to get pregnant—I want three boys. Huh? When are you going to be a good girl and get married?"

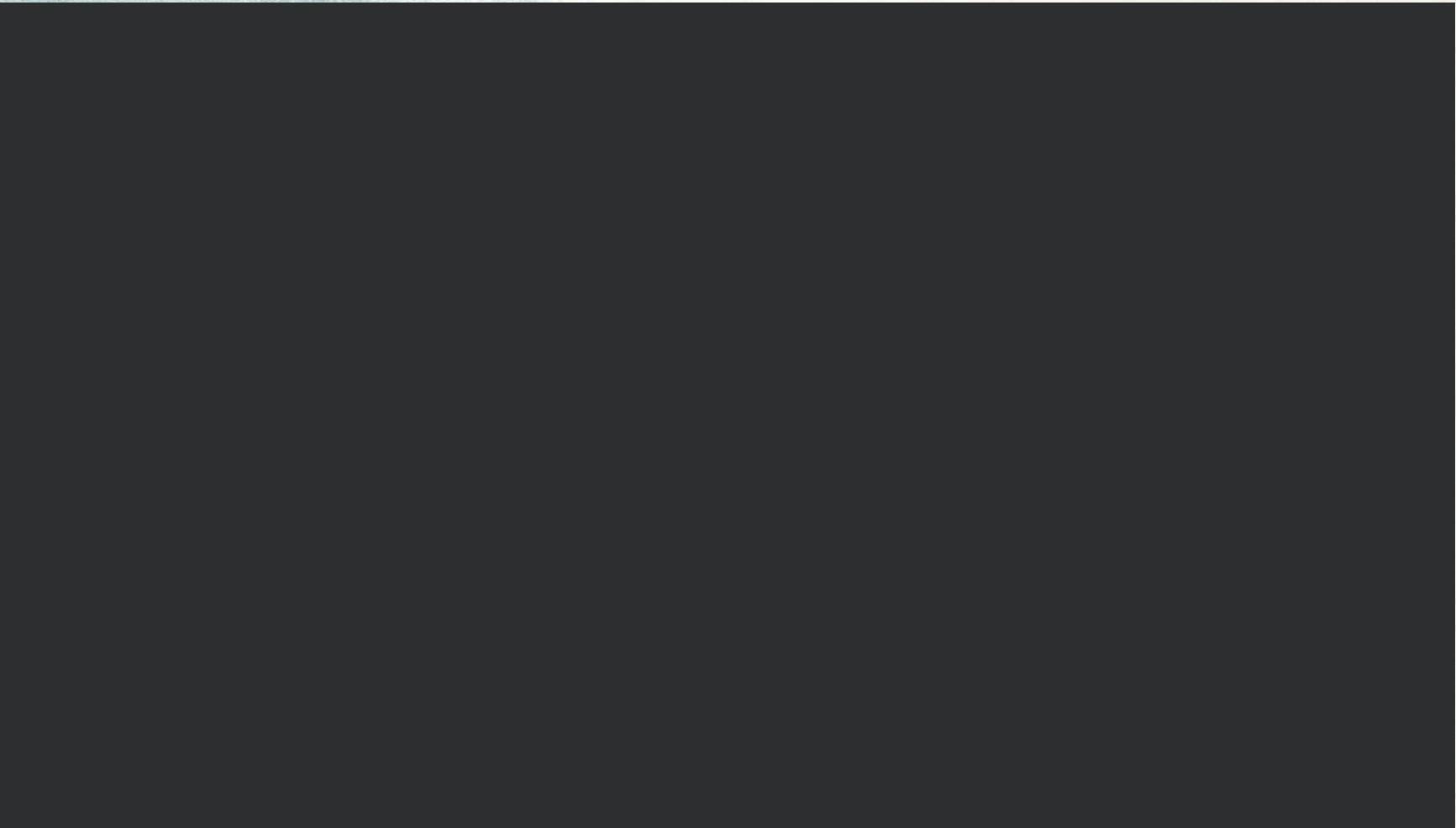
My mama doesn't understand much these days, and her mental confusion is hard to witness. I find myself telling her things that she forgets a few minutes later. I watch her trying to figure out how to turn the record player on or struggling to find the right words to ask me a question. She's constantly asking me where her son is and when her husband is coming back home from the hospital... and occasionally she'll ask me in this most bewildered way, *"Why do I keep forgetting these things?"* I have been listening to my mama getting all the facts of her life mixed up as she enters this new stage in her life. She often confuses me for my sister, or my 9 year old niece, and sometimes, inexplicably, for my father, and I want to just put my head down and cry. And lately my mama can't even understand my words—not only had she forgotten most of what little English she had, but she's starting to forget the special little made-up Japanese-English words that my siblings and I shared with her from the time we were babies learning to talk. So I can't tell her where my dad is buried, I can't tell her why my brother in Dallas can't come over and take her to the grocery store, I can't tell her why eight one dollar bills and a five dollar bill does not equal \$85. And most of all, I can't tell her that I've met the love of my life.

Oh, and that he's a mailman.

HOPE

DEBORAH SAINT-PHARD

DESCRIPTION: LIMERICKS TO COMMEMORATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF GREENWOOD DISTRICT, TULSA, OKLAHOMA RACE MASSACRE.



MAYA

NATHANIEL J. BROWN

Herby, grassy comfort wanders towards my face
from a borrowed ceramic mug.
A chilly monotone sky meets my gaze through the window,
but a parched day in the Colorado foothills, a blazing blue dome overhead,
greet me in the steam from the cup.

The calendula, lavender, chamomile, and piney rosemary
are as familiar as the dusty prairie grasses
that tickled my scrawny, bruise-speckled legs.

I’m in my forties visiting the verdant Oregon coast,
but holding the tea I’m a small boy again, reaching just above my aunt’s knee,
her skirts giddy with the breeze
and their floral patterns mimicking the smells on the air.

She comes back as a fragment of memory, long after the lymphoma stole her—
a memory more invented than real, no doubt—
but no less comforting for being contrived.

THAT MELANCHOLIC FEELING

BRENNA CAMERON

The last day of vacation
A feeling overcomes you
Intangible in its grip and its form
It fills you until you sense a void
A pulling toward home
And a tugging of here

Here:
The sweet scent of plumeria
Of bursting blossoms of deep red hues
Raindrops on tree canopies
 and tin roofs
 clack clack clack
 it pounds into your dreams
Turquoise clear water
 leaves salt on your lips
 salt in your hair
Sand, it lingers
 tucked into the cracks of your luggage
 so that when you arrive home . . .

There it is
That melancholic feeling
A soft pull of the thread
 the unraveling of here
 and the tug toward home
To the coffee pot in the corner
 and the dog with its tail
To sheets that could use more detergent
and the dull ache of routine

You don't want to leave here
 --your plane takes off at 2
But something's opened inside you
A force that makes home feel like it's you
A force that makes home feel more important than here

SUNSET CHASER

KATHY SHAW

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE IPHONE 11
DATE: JUNE 2021





SHADES OF GREEN
ALLISON M. DUBNER
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH
DATE: AUGUST 2009

LATE FOR 10AM SESSION
DIANA BOWLING

I want to be with you. I am excited to see you.
I feel better after our session.
I have mixed feelings about the effort and time and money it takes to see you.
Maybe you have mixed feelings about me.
Maybe you will refuse to see me if I am late.
Maybe I am special to you...your favorite.
So, you will be very disappointed if I arrive late.
Maybe it will make you angry if I am late...so angry that you lose control.
Then, I will be in danger when I arrive.
I am used to being in danger.
Maybe you will feel disrespected when I arrive late.
And I will be ashamed and regret behaving badly.
You cannot force me to arrive at a certain time.
You do not control me.

10:10

I'm here.

I'm here.

BAD TO THE BONE
MALIK A.R. JACKSON
MEDIUM: DRAWING ON BRISTOL PAPER WITH
BLENDED INDIA INK AND COPIC ALCOHOL MARKERS
DATE: JANUARY 2021





505 SWEET

LYNDY BUSH

MEDIUM: OIL ON CANVAS PANEL; 8X8 INCHES

DATE: 2022

LEGACY

ANNETTE HOUSE

In the depths of our lineage buried in mystery and silence

is my great grandmother
she who bore the most lovely of all our names
came across the plains in a covered wagon
left an aborted infant in the dry soil of memory

my grandmother
she who met the storied cowboy riding fence on the XIT ranch
fell in love with the Western myth
left behind a sorrowful hardscrabble life
escaped her last years with her brain in ruins

my mother
she who grew to womanhood in poverty and deprivation
could laugh with absolute abandon
taught us an oft times blazing honesty
and a shining sarcasm

her daughter who is I
she who does not turn away from deep humanist longing
who bears witness to all that has gone before
is now world-weary

she of the old hereditary bones

BETWEEN US

AMELIA J. DAVIS

Age.
The number of breaths in a minute.
The mean arterial pressure
The value of bilirubin.
The platelet count.

All numbers that accompany my early mornings in the hospital.

The clock’s numbers insist I hurry to see my patients before rounds.
These solid, immovable figures march coldly ahead, urging me on,
demanding accuracy and meticulous record-keeping.

Until I enter the room.

In this room, I hear a question asked of me,
Are you Christian? Or a Muslim?

A pause.

A beat.

Time slows,
though the numbers march persistently ahead.

He chuckles.
*I used to be so worried about dying.
But I believe in God. He will get me through.
I am not afraid of dying.*

The lilt of his voice
and the cadence of his speech
lifted his words
across the space
between us.

Our eyes met
as his hopes and fears,
spoken and
unspoken,
lingered
between us.

Numbers are undesirable companions
in this moment.

Thoughts formed,
emotions felt,
and words expressed
are not accounted for
by numbers.

Letters,
meaningless without one another,
burst forth in meaning when bonded with fellow letters.

And when he says,
I’m sorry, my throat hurts too much to talk more.
How else would I ask to
take his hand?
To behold
the lifted joy in the crinkles around his eyes?
To know that
presence and connection
are beyond anything we can count or express?

Between us,
between the numbers,
between the letters,
humanity shines.



LIFE CYCLE
- LARIX DECIDUA

THEA CARRUTH
MEDIUM: GRAPHITE PENCIL
ON PAPER; 14X11 INCHES
DATE: 2021

FLYING KITES

HAYLEY SPECHT

My grandmother found silver linings
Even on cloudless days
When the sun beat down on the plains
Unrelieved by hot prairie winds

Eyes forever creased from squinting
Shielded by a weather-worn hand
She would beam into the glare
A perfect day for flying kites

WELCOME TO
YELLOWSTONE

LISA KURTH
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH;
APPLE IPHONE 8 PLUS
DATE: JULY 2020



HOW TIME HAS WEATHERED ME

ART ELSER

As the pup and I turn to head home
on our walk, a bit sooner than usual,
I think about how the dog, now nine,
has aged recently, trouble with stairs,
turning sooner on walks, sleeping
more, I realize that I too have aged,
perhaps not as quickly or noticeably.
I’ve lived longer, aged more slowly.

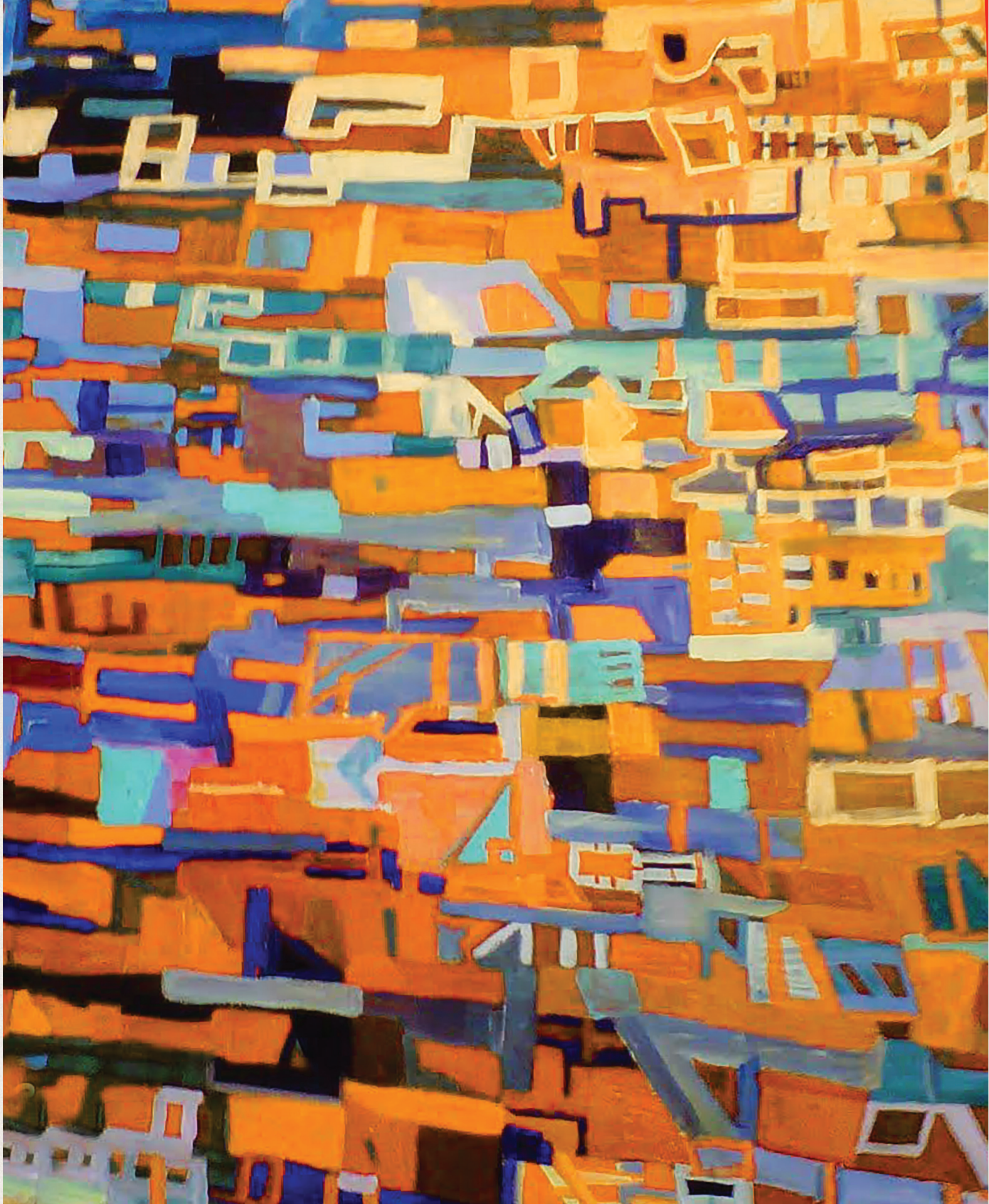
In my twenties, in college, I fenced,
beat opponents because I’d learned
to use my speed and focus my mind
to anticipate an opponent’s moves
and parry them. I then learned to fly,
training my mind and body, skills
that saved my life later in combat.

Then in my thirties and forties, I ran,
five, ten miles a day, twenty-six mile
marathons, using gifts I was blessed
with to build endurance and strength.

Now in my ninth decade, I don’t run.
The pup and I saunter on our walks,
stop to smell the roses. We go a mile,
or a mile and a half, but never farther
than two. The pace not six and a half
minutes a mile, but twenty or more.
I don’t fly except when writing poetry.

When I worry about my weathering,
I think of Monument Valley and how
wind and water have shaped arches,
the mittens, shiprock, other red rocks.
How they sculpted the Black Canyon
of the Gunnison and the Grand Canyon.

I know that I have lost a step or two
but am happy to be weathering still.



MAPPING

STEVEN LEWIS
MEDIUM: MIXED DIGITAL
ACRYLIC PAINTING;
16X21 INCHES
DATE: 2021

SUNSET IN FLIGHT
LAWRENCE J. HERGOTT
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE IPHONE 7
DATE: NOVEMBER 2014



NIGHTFALL
MATTHEW HICKEY

Memories begin to fade
like the lengthening sun
at nightfall -
They linger, reluctant to wholly disappear,
prism'd with color and warmth.

The tapestry of life
accustoms us
to the fading of the day,
the passing of seasons,
and the long march of years.

But the fading of a life -
No preparation suffices -
These are the tears of things
that echo
down the generations.

Time now inverts us;
We bathe and drive
And build boundaries,
Fragile guardians
of the fragile.

Their grasp loosens
to degrees on all things.
And ours seeks for the hands
that we once reached upward for -
our anchor now unmoored.

Our grasp tightens
on them, gently,
That they may tarry
a moment longer
and abide with us.

Remember,
griefs borne together,
days of running laughter,
and the generations that bear,
undimmed, their fingerprints.

THE CAREGIVER

JESSI RIDINGER

I give my all and then some
I get tired but push through
Because I am needed
Because I care
“I don’t know how you do it?” I hear
“One thing at a time and prioritization” I say with a smile
Knowing full well my sick sense of humor and caffeine are the emotional duct tape holding a fragile human together
I tell them it is not that bad, and I can handle it
I tell them this with a straight face
While keeping more plates spinning than any one human should
It is constant
The noise and need
The wars we wage against ignorance, fear, and sadness
Leaving no room for anything but function
Then, I am forced to stop
Stop moving, stop going, stop occupying my ever-churning upstairs prefrontal cortex
With no use for my skills,
I am left with the silence of my thoughts
I feel the oxygen travel through my nose and into my lungs
Where it mixes with my blood
The pump that pushes me onward and is attributed with why I do what I do
Here, in the quiet with only the sound of my breath and the beat of my heart
I recognize my constant and steadfast companion of weariness
I begin to feel the emotion and trauma I compartmentalized and bottled for a later date
Tools I use to get through each day
Skills they do not teach, but are learned quickly
I can no longer maintain the steadfast and professional version of me
The bottle top pops, and the compartments violently swing open
Those warm, salty psychic tears
Filling my eyes to brimming
Breaking through, they make a path down my cheeks
Alongside my nose, into my mouth, and down my neck
Until they fall to their next journey, in which I have no part
They are driven on by anger, frustration, and exhaustion
I do not know what else to do as I sit inside myself in this whirlpool, my version of silence
I have stopped, leaving me few options of how to simply be
How to survive
How to continue
I can no longer distract from this empty vessel in need of replenishing with nothing to put in it
I still care
Somewhere...

ANXIETY

RICHA SETH
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH;
CANON EOS 6D
DATE: 2017



SPACE
LAUREN NORHEIM

Leaving a gap of open space
Has incredible healing powers.
Room to cry, to take a deep breath.
Room for a teen to ask a question
About tampons,
Giggling.
Room for another teen to cry and share
She has been starving herself.
I don't have the right words
But I can offer a space.



“WHEN WE CAN’T HOLD
THEM, WE HOLD THE
MEMORIES INSTEAD.”

– JOHN MARK GREEN

SAUMYA DE SILVA
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE IPHONE
DATE: DECEMBER 2017

JUST LIKE FAMILY

JOHN PIERCE

“Tom and Quetta are just like family,” my mother often said.

As my grandmother liked to tell it, all slaves born on the Scott plantation were given “Scott” as their last name. “Scott” was recorded on their birth certificates irrespective of their parents’ surnames. So 50 years after the Civil War, she explained, there were a lot of Black Scotts in East Texas, who shared a heritage but were not blood relatives. That’s why, she went on to say, Tom Scott and Quetta Scott checked “nonconsanguineous” on their marriage application, and Quetta didn’t change her last name when she married Tom.

Tom and Quetta had a small farm on the bayou. On weekends, they worked for my grandparents. My grandparents lived in town but kept a lake house in the country to which they retired on the weekends and in the summer to fish and hunt. As a child, going to my grandparent’s lake house was a cherished activity. I saw Tom and Quetta every time I visited. Tom and Quetta’s place was just down the road.

Whenever we turned onto the red clay lane that led to my grandparents’ lake house, I would see Tom’s truck before I could see the lake house. He would usually be chopping firewood, fixing a motor, or repairing a boat and would wave enthusiastically as I shouted his name out the car window. Quetta would be cooking in the kitchen and greet me with a huge hug.

Tom taught my brothers and me a lot about East Texas: how chameleon lizards can change color if they were sitting on a green leaf or the red soil; how to tell a friendly water snake from a deadly cottonmouth; and how to know when it was going to rain. Quetta was always interested in me, asking what I liked best about school, who were my teachers, and if I had a girlfriend. Tom and Quetta cared for me just like family. I loved seeing them whenever I visited my grandparents’ lake house.

As children we were taught to use honorifics with my grandparents’ friends and relatives: Mr. Slim, Miss Gertrude, Uncle Jack. But Tom and Quetta were just Tom and Quetta. Tom and Quetta always ate in the kitchen after my family finished our meal and the dishes were cleared, not at the table with the rest of us. And Tom used the privy outdoors rather than the bathroom in the

house. These things seemed strange to me - weren’t Tom and Quetta just like family? But I didn’t ask about it, nor why we never visited Tom and Quetta’s home, and not once did I ask Tom or Quetta if it was really true that they grew up with the same last name.

I never saw my mother cry until a month before my thirteenth birthday. It was right after my grandmother’s funeral service. My mother was 35 when my grandmother died after a long and difficult battle with metastatic uterine cancer. My mother didn’t cry during the funeral service. Not as the preacher read Psalm 23, when my grandfather wept. Nor when the congregation sang “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” while the family filed down the aisle behind my grandmother’s coffin. When we were exiting the church, I looked up and saw Tom’s truck behind a line of cars pulled up for the drive to the cemetery. There were Tom and Quetta, standing beside Tom’s old Ford, Tom with a white shirt and narrow black tie, hat in hand, and Quetta in a long black dress.

I said excitedly, “Look, there’s Tom and Quetta!” and that’s when my mother began to cry. Instead of entering the family hearse to go to the cemetery, she hurried to Tom and Quetta and fell weeping into Quetta’s arms.

“Now, now, Miss Amanda, don’t you cry. Your mama’s at peace now. She’s restin’ in the arms of Jesus,” consoled Quetta.

After a few moments, my mother stopped crying and said, “I am so glad you both came. You don’t know how much this means to me. You must join us at the cemetery, you’re just like family.”

After a long pause, Tom looked away and said, “We’re so sorry Miss Amanda, but you know there ain’t no coloreds there.”

So we buried my grandmother at the cemetery without Tom and Quetta. My cousin explained that Blacks had their own cemetery. I thought to myself, “This is 1965, surely we’re past all of that now.” We had studied in school about the Civil Rights Act; wasn’t that supposed to put an end to racial discrimination? But maybe that law didn’t apply to where you buried people in East Texas.

As the pallbearers carried my grandmother’s casket to the graveside, I looked around the cemetery. There were statues commemorating Southern Civil War commanders and Confederate flags at the graves of veterans who had died fighting

for the South. Yes indeed, I thought, Tom was right, there ain’t no coloreds here.

As we were leaving the cemetery, I realized how disquieting this day had been for me: remembering my grandmother’s long, painful, and undignified death; watching my mother crying in Quetta’s arms; thinking of the sadness and loneliness my mother would face without her mother; and feeling an unkind and unjust sense of exclusion about Tom and Quetta. As a self-conscious and questioning teenager, I sometimes remembered that day and all those strange emotions, but I didn’t talk about it. Talking about feelings wasn’t something I did much of, especially with my parents.

Many years later, I think about my experience of growing up in a segregated Texas, how unnatural and obviously wrong it was. I feel shame and guilt for how we treated Tom and Quetta. I learn the term “White supremacy” as an explanation for this horrible travesty of American democracy. But that doesn’t help me fully understand how it was that my mother, the kindest person I know, tacitly accepted such a system. My father would say it was just the way they were raised. But I wonder, did she ever question the unfairness of it all? How did it make her feel?

We sit together in the quiet of her hospital room, my mother near the end of her long life, one that has been filled with adventure, happiness, and a loving family. Her terminal delirium has been interspersed with periods of remarkable lucidity when we share memories, and she tells stories of her childhood, heretofore unknown to me. It has been a good day for us both. The room grows dim as the setting sun slowly disappears from the window. Despite some trepidation, I recount the sadness I felt many years ago: watching her cry at her mother’s funeral and how Tom and Quetta didn’t go to the cemetery. There is a long silence. Then she sighs and wipes her eyes, moisture on the back of her hand. With a small voice, she says, “When I cried that day, it wasn’t for me or my mother, but for Tom and Quetta and knowing that they could never really be just like family.”



LOVE POPPY

MITRA A. RAZZAGHI
MEDIUM: OIL ON CANVAS; 16X29 INCHES
DATE: JANUARY 2022

FALSE TIMES

TIMOTHY ROBARE

Despair, we are living in the times of despair,
Brother against sister,
Sister against mother,
The world swallows us up and spits us out as we march like ants
Trudging through the muck of self-destruction and doubt.

I hear the words of the wind and see the mountains stand strong
Stuck in the concrete jungle of vibrating bullets,
Lives taken wrong.
I remember the grass beneath my feet as a young boy
Swimming through the lake with no worries.
It's hard to recall a life before violence and viruses ruled the world,
Before the pressures of bills weighed me down like an anvil,
Bringing me beneath the waves while I struggle to surface.

What is the surface? The first layer of the fall,
The crust on top of the caged beasts,
Beasts that fight to swallow us all
With gnarled teeth of lies spoken true,
A severe strangulation,
Dividing me from you.
Eye to eye means nothing
When all eyes are on their phones,
In a world full of people,
We constantly stand alone.
Born to be nothing
In a false conceptualization of home.

I PICK UP THE PAGER

ANNA D. LEE

DESCRIPTION: INSPIRED TO EMPOWER THE VOICES OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING ENDLESS NIGHTS DURING THE HEIGHT OF COVID, MANY OF WHOM MAY NOT HAVE HAD THE LUXURY TO TEMPORARILY STEP AWAY FROM DEATH’S DOOR. PROSE PERFORMED BY ANNA LEE, PHOEBE ROMANGSURIAT, AND CHRISTOPHER LIN.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

BRIAN FORESI

MEDIUM: OIL ON CANVAS; 12X16 INCHES

DATE: 2021





VIEW FROM THE JEEP: ZEBRA
SHANNON HENDERSON
MEDIUM: WATERCOLOR ON PAPER; 14X11 INCHES
DATE: 2018



VIEW FROM THE JEEP: MAASAI WOMEN
SHANNON HENDERSON
MEDIUM: WATERCOLOR ON PAPER; 13.5X10.5 INCHES
DATE: 2016



VIEW FROM THE JEEP: OSTRICH
SHANNON HENDERSON
MEDIUM: WATERCOLOR ON PAPER; 12X9 INCHES
DATE: 2021



THE SUN BATHING SEA LIONS
MADELYN ARNOLD
MEDIUM: DIGITAL ARTWORK
DATE: 2021

IS WHAT IS WHAT WAS?

LAWRENCE HERGOTT

Being a retired cardiologist,
and being at home almost all the time because of Covid,
I think about things I usually didn't.

Yesterday, for example, I thought about my medical experiences
from 1967 to 2018 -
51 years of training and practice.

Like physicians of all types in that era,
the work was both arduous
and awesome -
though the work in the latter was so continuous
it would rarely manifest what we had done.

When a physician decides to leave medicine, though,
there is likely to be more contemplation,
and manifestation,
about what had ensued in those decades.

It was my last week of seeing a new patient, though,
that was the most meaningful of those ensued in my practice –
about something the patient's wife expressed.

I had finished my questions to the patient
and asked him to go from his chair to the table.
As the man began to walk,
his wife – observing meticulously throughout the visit,
and having said nothing before -
surprisingly and gratefully said as she looked at me,
"You care."

You care.

I knew then that I did -
not just from my patient,
but from all the patients I tended.

That was then.
I wonder now,
considering that medicine is greatly different -
what doctors are like,
what they do,
how they feel.

Do they say or think, "Yes, I care"?

Would the elderly woman say so to them?

Would the elderly woman say so to me
if I were still there?

GIFTS

ANNETTE HOUSE

She's been dreaming of late
about an arduous trek
to the pearly gates

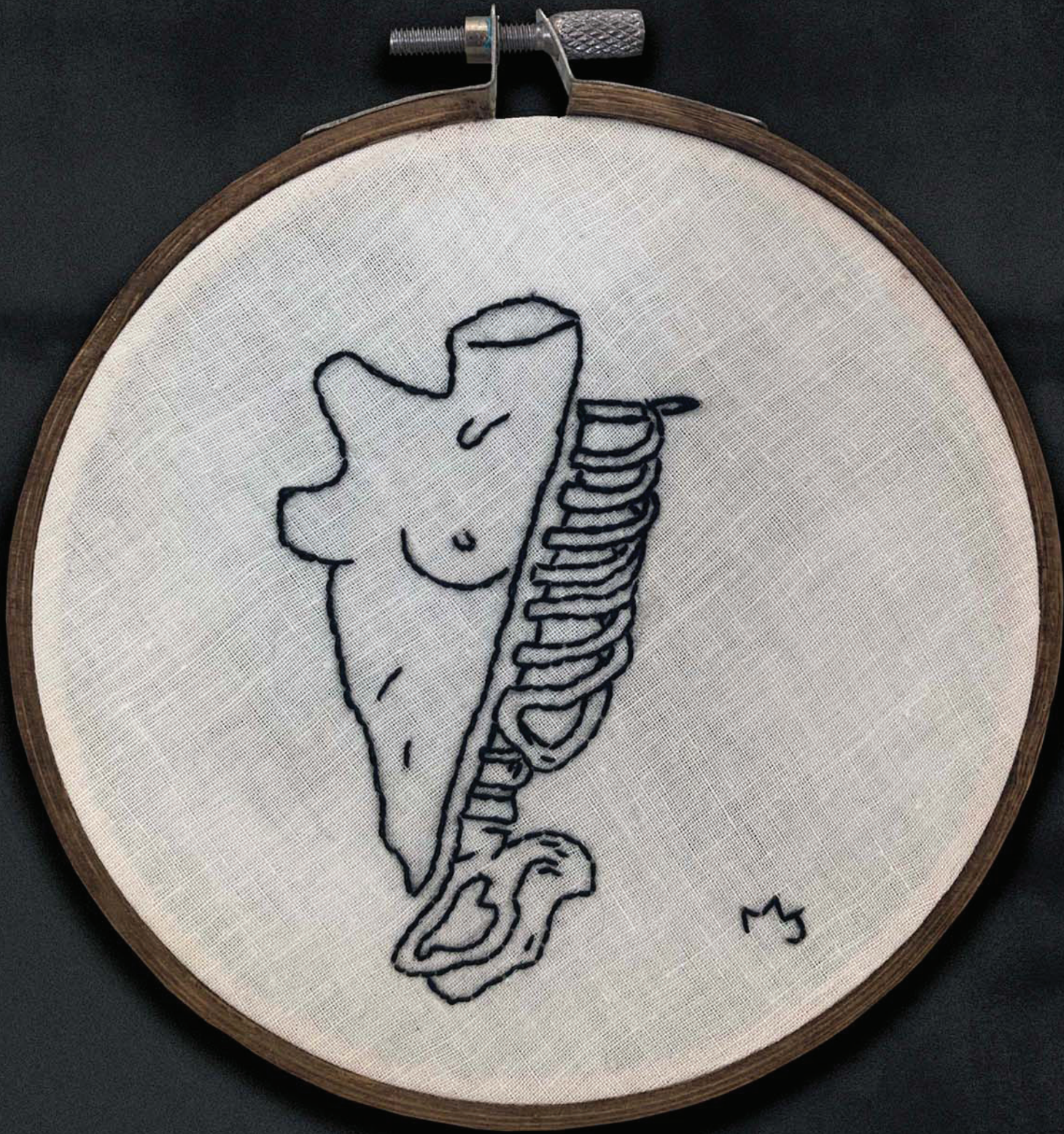
Arriving parched and exhausted
she finds a charmingly rusted
red Radio Flyer wagon
piled precariously with objects
she knows only too well

A Kitchen Aid stand mixer with all its confounding attachments
a Cuisinart food processor with its intricate discs flung about in disarray
a bright yellow Dansk stock pot with its cheerful lid
an exquisitely beaded evening bag spilling forth
gold, diamonds, jade, and pearls
jewels from her formerly decorative life

And sitting atilt on top of this unlikely conglomeration
is an astonishingly large papier-mâché fairy
her clothes glorious, her wings filigreed,
her jewels glinting and discrete
her delicate features fixed in a strange mix of hope and joy

OH, breathed the weary traveler, *I SEE*
the gifts she bestowed with such absolute delight
later to be misunderstood or abandoned by the heirs to her generosity
the ones she wished she had kept for herself

Engulfed in shame she lifted the rusted handle of the wagon
turned back the way she had come
bumping clumsily over the cobblestones of regret
carrying the delicate fairy ever so carefully



DIVINE FEMININE

MALIK A.R. JACKSON

MEDIUM: EMBROIDERY; 6 INCH DIAMETER

DATE: 2018

CENTRAL LINE

HAYLEY SPECHT

‘Now advance the wire into the right atrium’
The surgeon’s voice is reassuring
He is unbothered by the hot lights overhead
and the vigilant eyes of OR staff
Unshaken and unshakeable

My knees are suddenly jello
Alarmingly wobbly mediators of tibia and femur
Teetering to the beat of my racing heart
A recent settler in its new home
Slightly south of my epiglottis

My lungs are full to bursting
The last breath must have been an inhale
Before my adrenals flooded my brain
With chemical emissaries proclaiming
To breathe would be a distraction now

And yet my hands are steady
They know better than to revolt
Under threat of amputation
Still I silently thank the mask on my face
for concealing my panicked expression

‘I pushed that wire into the heart
Can you believe it?’
I whisper to a scrub nurse
From behind protective lead
As x-ray reveals perfect placement

She rolls her eyes



COLOR ME HAPPY

FLORENCE YIP
MEDIUM: MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER WITH
WATERCOLOR, ACRYLIC PAINT, AND PEN;
8X10 INCHES
DATE: MARCH 2021

CYCLE OF LIFE – RAPTORS AND THEIR PREY

GEORGE HO, JR.
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHS
DATE: 2021



RED-TAILED HAWK WITH VOLE IN ITS TALONS FLIES TO PERCH TO DINE ON PREY
11-8-21 BLUFF LAKE NATURE CENTER IN CENTRAL PARK, COLORADO



JUVENILE MISSISSIPPI KITE ABOUT TO GRASP DRAGONFLY IN TALONS
9-14-21 PAK HILL NEIGHBORHOOD IN DENVER, COLORADO

AN ODE TO SUMMER

BRENNA CAMERON

To long hikes that unfold in valleys
and crest on peaks that peer down on subalpine lakes
To dust covered ankles
and sore calves
To sweeping blue skies
and wildflowers that dot the trail’s edge –
bluebells and daisies and rapt, pink Indian paintbrushes

To sliced tomatoes drenched in olive oil and balsamic,
dressed in basil cut straight from the vine
To ice cream that drips down your hand
faster than you can lick it up
To watermelon and peaches –
those elusive fruit that come only one time each year

To dips in pools that are not our own
To the feel of a wet bikini against your breast
the *drip drip drip* down your navel as you rise from the water
To the smell of rain soaked driveways
and the rumble of thunder through bruised colored clouds
To nights spent on backyard porches
searching star strewn skies for comet tails

Oh, how the weeks whirl
and then whip
and then rip past
until it’s August and the day shrinks so it’s
hardly noticeable
But you notice
You notice the breath of cold air on the back of dawn’s early light,
the golden hue on the tips of the trees,
the plastic pumpkins that pop up in the seasonal aisle

Your body pulses with the final beats of summer
For last camping trips
and that sticky feeling of sunscreen on brown tanned legs
For the last BBQ
and the smell of sweet corn roasting on greased grills
For the lingering hours in shorts
and that certain freedom of wearing a dress without tights

Summer is your favorite season after all
because the way you sigh at the end of the day
is grief
in its simplest form



BEARLY CONTAINED

JUSTIN HAUXWELL

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; NIKON D7000 CAMERA

DATE: SEPTEMBER 2017



CHASED BY DEMENTIA

LISA DIAMOND

My maternal grandparents’ minds were entangled with only old memories. My mother’s synapses are firing through a tangled web. Some clear thoughts make their way through the chaotic mess while many others slip away before reaching their intended destination. Mild cognitive impairment. I search for definitions of mild within the confines of being impaired. A driver that is impaired can be quantified. What are the parameters? The lines between normalcy, mild, and the knotted no longer connect.

What are the levels the tangles must avoid in earning that moniker? I forgot to feed the dog dinner the other night until bedtime. Is that the beginning? Apparently, I missed a meeting that wasn’t on my calendar. Then there was something else, the details of which escape me now - so is that a double whammy in the world of forgetting or impairment? I imagine plaque fingers in a chokehold around my neurons, holding on until their life is no more.

Now that I’m skipping half-way through my 62nd year, every little thing I forget, I’m pulling out the various mental acuity scales, testing myself. One wonders, if you are conducting the test on yourself, is it as accurate? I remember apple, table, and penny but I’ve been using these scales for a quarter century; how much is rote memorization? I still cannot count backward by 7’s from 100 much past 79 even in my more spry days; math isn’t my jam. Doing much of anything backwards isn’t my strong suit. In a meeting recently, we went around the room in alphabetical order asking a question until someone - an engineer - suggested we go in reverse. Wait, what? Oh God, my aging mind had to think on the fly.

Is this how it happens? These little daily difficulties that seemingly anyone could struggle with and yet when you’re nearing 63, you do start to second-guess yourself and put your financial affairs in order lest you forget your bank account numbers or even the name of your bank.

I can allow the paralyzing fear of losing my ability to think for myself drag me away from reality. Perseverate into despair and panic. Instead, I put all my money on epigenetics and go through each lifestyle element like a mala bead. Lack of exercise - nope. Animal diet - nope. Depression - not yet. Low educational status - nope. Hypertension, diabetes, obesity - all nope. Lack of cognitive activity and social engagement - mostly nope, pandemic notwithstanding.

Being locked up at home for the better part of two years has made me fatter, weaker in physical strength, an insomniac, and socially isolated. But making me dumber is what lies at the perimeter of thought. Slowly licking at my consciousness like an ebbing creek smoothing rocks. The irony is not lost that lack of sleep also contributes to dementia. Like a hamster spinning around the living room floor in a plastic bubble, once the thoughts begin, the circuitous pattern is difficult to redirect. Harnessing despair from panic, I begin my epigenetic mantra. My neurons calm, fire slower, one synapse to another as if to test their ability to do so, allowing rationality to return.

I vow to not allow this genetic demon to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Bury my head in the sand of a glass half full and carry on. Perhaps that is part of the definition of “mild” - denial.

LORSE CONNEY DR.

LYNDY BUSH

MEDIUM: OIL ON CANVAS PANEL;
8X10 INCHES
DATE: 2021

SPEAK (Scenes from the rally for healthcare access)

DANIEL BOLLINGER
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPHS; NIKON D3200
DATE: NOVEMBER 2021

EVENT: RALLY FOR HEALTHCARE ACCESS ON NOVEMBER, 7 2021 AT THE COLORADO STATE CAPITOL. STUDENTS FROM VARIOUS YEARS AND MEDICAL SCHOOLS SPOKE AND ATTENDED THE RALLY TO GALVANIZE SUPPORT FOR ENHANCING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, FOSTER INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVISM, AND DISPLAY SOLIDARITY WITH ONE ANOTHER.



HEART OF MOUNTAINS

FLORENCE YIP
MEDIUM: MIXED MEDIA WITH
WATERCOLOR, ACRYLIC PAINT,
AND PEN ON PAPER; 8X10 INCHES
DATE: 2020



I AM A KEEPER

ELIZABETH TULLIS

I know your secrets
They have been told
I am a keeper

You want to stop treatment
You want to die
Your secrets I will keep
Those closest to you will never know
You wish death upon yourself
We know, they will never give up on you
They will never let you give up on yourself
They do not understand
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

I hear your confession
I feel your resignation
Relief is in your posture
We know the torture you will endure
to maintain your secrets.
Tests, procedures, adjustments to life.
Pain, suffering, sacrifices for the sake of life.
I am complicit
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

I do not judge
I see your suffering
I respect your choice
I wish you peace
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

I am a shadow
A strength hidden
in plain sight.
A sturdy soul.
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

Death is a friend
I have come to know
He greets many willing souls
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

Many bitterly fight death's inevitable grasp
Few recognize death's sweet release
You desire relief
I know the look quite well,
another weary soul.
A look that few have become acquainted,
they do not know.
We know their intentions,
actions born of love and fear.
I know your secrets
I am a keeper

As you surrender.
I will show the fighter,
who lost the battle.
Hidden safe,
is the wielder of the white flag.

I know your secrets
You bared your soul
I am a keeper and to that I will hold

ATLAS

PAULINE HOOSEPIAN-MER

Tongue the divots of your palate
Batten down the hatch
Hold back the ocean behind your eyes
Don't cross the threshold
You have a lovely home
Exchange niceties, prolong the mundane, swallow the sea
The frosted glass of propriety
No visitors, he's positive
No exceptions
Don't let him [] alone.
Video call. The tablet case is too big. Rolled in on a stand.
I Cee You
Here's your daughter Mr.
Hold up the Atlantic
Suction, keep it sealed
You'll cry at home, homeward bound
Lovely home

He is not home
She's watching you watching him
And waiting together
Tamp down the salted dunes
In your throat
Press hard into pellets of good intention and unease
If only you could let down a drop
Without drowning



CRITICAL EYE-
DROMAIUS
NOVAEHOLLANDIAE

THEA CARRUTH
MEDIUM: COLORED PENCIL, 14X11 INCHES
DATE: 2021

THE MOUNTAIN ONLY GAVE

DANIEL HASSELL

The mountain endured alone.
In its solitude it was mighty,
And yet in its loneliness it had much to give.

Along came storms, and torrents poured.
As water flooded from the clouds,
It needed guidance, and the mountain gave.
For water it formed streams and rivers,
So it one day reached the sea.
Then came grasses, flowers, and trees.
As seeds blew in on high winds,
They needed nourishment, and the mountain gave.
For seeds it provided firm ground and rich soil,
So they grew lush and healthy.
Next came many types of wildlife.
They needed refuge, and the mountain gave.
For goats and sheep it offered open hillsides,
So they grazed peacefully.
For lions and bears it granted deep caves,
So they lived in solitude.

As the mountain gave,
Streams cut severely,
And deep scars formed.
Roots pried into cracks,
And rock fractured.
Wildlife trod heavily,
And trails carved vast networks.

The mountain, hollowed and brittle,
finally could give no more,
and it collapsed with resonating thunder.
In desperation, rain sought new rivers,
Plants lifted their seeds on the wind,
And teeming wildlife scattered.

Of the mountain nothing remained,
For the mountain asked for nothing.
The mountain only gave.



COLORADO
MILKY WAY

JUSTIN HAUXWELL
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; NIKON D7000
DATE: JULY 2020

OFFERING

MONICA FONG

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; 1984 NIKON FG-20

DATE: JULY 2011



MAMA!

JAMES CARTER

Hold my hand boy
Watch out!
That stove is hot
Don't let me see you back here
Till darkness falls
Sure is a lovely night
Mama
I'm thirsty
Hush now
Hush
Thank you, Mama

Look both ways boy
Tie those laces tight
Don't let me see you back here
Till darkness falls
Mama
I'm hungry
Shush
Shush now
I love you, Mama

It sure is a dreamy night
Look!
Look at those stars!!
So brilliant
So bright

Where is that boy?
I knew I shouldn't-a let him
Outta my sight
Why is it so cold
Tonight?

Mama...

MAMA!!!

SPINE

FLORENCE YIP
MEDIUM: MIXED MEDIA
WITH WATERCOLOR AND PEN;
8X10 INCHES
DATE: JUNE 2020



PAIN

CAROL H. EHRLICH

“A number between one and ten?”
He asks in flat voice
as though that’s all it is.
A number.

Pain is more than this.
A startle
a grip, a vise,
a command,
a scythe that cuts you down,
a rod that shoots you out,
a nail that holds you fast.

All these in no order.
Just random, curse-like blows
that come with insult
and go at will.

Like some ghoul
pain shreds peace uncaring,
takes its time
and leaves no salve,
no apology.

THE HEART IN THE SHADOWS

CRAIG STARK

I am a maternal fetal medicine specialist. I care for women whose pregnancies are considered high risk. Usually the mother and child do well, but often I find myself helping my patients and the important people in their lives through times that are among the most difficult they will ever have to traverse.

A routine ultrasound meant to reassure has done the opposite for Heather and Bill. Now, they are here to see me. They are scared and hopeful - scared that something is terribly wrong with their baby’s heart and hopeful that I will tell them it is a misunderstanding. A mistake.

We meet in an examination room that is almost completely dark, lit only by the shadows from an ultrasound monitor and a small bank of fluorescent lights in the back of the room. We talk for a few minutes, but there is little to say, and they are anxious for me to look. Heather lies down on the exam table and exposes her pregnant abdomen. I suspect she has never felt quite this vulnerable. I hadn’t yet picked up the ultrasound transducer, but she and Bill are already looking at the screen in front of them.

Almost immediately, I see what another has already seen. “The heart normally has four well-developed chambers,” I begin. “The most important chamber, the left ventricle, has barely formed and won’t be able to function well enough for the baby to survive.” I try my best to explain, knowing most of the words will get lost in the air between us. It is a birth defect that, without treatment, will quickly lead to the death of their child. I struggle for the right words.

Young, bright, and looking forward to the delivery of that perfect, much-awaited child, their hopes and dreams have been dashed away in silhouettes and shadows.

“Are you sure?” “Could it be something else?” “How many other cases like this have you seen?” These are the questions they ask. Questions I have heard too many times in the past. Questions I will have to answer to other couples at another time. Questions interrupted by tears. It is an impossible time for them.

There is an almost overwhelming sense of guilt and inadequacy. Thoughts about past events and imagined punishment for past actions. “What did we do wrong? What should we have done that we didn’t do?” We talk about those feelings. I try to help them by letting them know that what they are feeling is normal and universal for other men and women facing the same diagnosis. These thoughts will haunt them for some time to come. Almost automatically, they have moved past the pregnancy and are thinking about the future - never get pregnant again. No chance for this kind of pain again. Or get pregnant as soon as possible. Replace the loss. Denial, anger, confusion and depression are mixed up in a cauldron.

I have known them for less than an hour. I ask myself, “Who are these people?” “What are their values and their beliefs?” I am always struggling to keep those parts of me hidden, for they are irrelevant. They will only have weeks to learn to trust me and to form the type of bonds that usually require years to develop and strengthen. I have seen the broken marriages and the broken spirits. I have seen strong, independent people who suddenly no longer want to or are able to deal with the things in their lives that seemed so simple or important just hours before. It will be up to me to help them find the answers that will give them the most peace in the years ahead. Sadness, anger, and the sense of loss will pale with time but never completely go away - a shrinking scar surrounded by numbness.

I ask them to see a pediatric cardiologist for a second opinion and to learn about potential treatment options. The diagnosis is confirmed. A heart transplant is a choice. Rebuilding the heart with several surgeries is another possibility. Both approaches have long recovery periods, and there are often long term physical and emotional effects. Not infrequently, the child does not survive the surgeries. None of the choices seem very good to them, and they decide to forgo surgery for their child.

A few days later, Heather and Bill return with the lack of sleep and overwhelming grief etched in their faces. They’ve had to face the difficult job of telling family and figuring out how to face friends. They don’t want to tell anybody. They want life to go on as if yesterday never happened. They are considering terminating the pregnancy, wanting to believe that when the pregnancy ends, so will the pain. We talk more and get to know each other. I ask them to think about what they want to do over the weekend. On Monday, if they still want to end the pregnancy, I will make the arrangements.

The weekend passes, and we meet again. They have thought and talked it over with each other and their families. They have searched their souls. They have decided to continue the pregnancy. We start to talk about how they will care for their child after birth.

Over the weeks and months that follow, Heather and Bill will continue to seek out whomever they think can help them and use whatever information they find that may help answer the unending stream of questions that prick at their minds. They search the Internet looking for an understanding and new treatments. They connect with other couples who have traveled or are traveling the same road. They examine parts of themselves they never imagined would need examining and consider possibilities they never expected to consider.

They ask me, “What is the right thing to do?” I tell them there are no absolute right or wrong choices. At each visit they ask, “Can we take another look at the heart, just to make sure?” I do my best to help them, letting them know that it is okay to hold on for a miracle. Dealing with the loss of their child is a long process, and they are making their way through it.

Heather and Bill are secure in their decisions to continue the pregnancy and to not subject their son to surgery. I see them weekly. They are growing stronger as a couple. Heather isn’t ready to go back to work. She is afraid their decision will not be understood or accepted.

Heather reaches her due date. The wait has been unbearable. We decide that when her body is ready, I will induce her labor. Family members arrive as the time for delivery approaches. Everyone is together, helping and supporting one another. Jackson is born, eight pounds and screaming, full of life. It is hard for all of us to believe what lies beneath the ribs of this beautiful child. They take turns touching, holding, and hugging him - experiencing everything possible in those first few moments of life. Cameras flash. Irreplaceable moments are captured forever.

Jackson dies at home the next day, surrounded by the family that loved him. A lifetime of joy compressed into a few days. Days not traded for any price.

The chapel is crowded with family and friends. I walk to the front of the room. Jackson lies in a small coffin. Words seem neither necessary nor appropriate. I’ve never been to the funeral of a child, and I wonder how I could survive the loss of one of my own children. It is too painful to contemplate, and I turn away. Heather and Bill read letters to those who have gathered to celebrate the short life of their son. They talk of their love for him and each other and their sense of gratefulness to God for the time they had with their son. This time has brought them closer together and strengthened their relationship to each other and God.

As I sit back in the room, I’m filled with mixed emotions - sad at the loss and satisfied that what little I did helped. It is a humbling experience. As the service ends, I quickly leave and return to my office, knowing that I will visit this place again.

PIANO LESSONS

LISA DIAMOND

Black and whites silent before me
promise of hope and joy.
Tentative fingers, yearning
fear of inadequacy
fear of failure.
A genetic disposition for success?
Wishing he was here to show the way
his talent lost at the bottom of Lake Michigan.



WINTERING

DEBORAH SAINT-PHARD
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH;
APPLE IPHONE 12 PRO
DATE: JANUARY 2022



**THE BEAUTIFUL
BLUE COLUMBINE**
MARCELLA M. RAUST
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; NIKON D5100
DATE: 2016

FAILURE
MALIK A.R. JACKSON

If I fell, I wonder if I'd trip or if I'd collapse.

Surely my arms would extend but
perhaps my legs would crater under me like a newborn.

If I fell, I wonder if the Earth's crust would split and
swallow me whole.

Would the fall take refuge in my gut, giving my stomach butterfly wings,
Or
was I evolutionarily prepared for downfall---
the art of trying and failing perfected by my ancestors?

How many Mississippi's until I hit the ground?

Would my eyes grow wide as the wind whispered
the world's secrets in my ear?

And when I stood again, as I know I would,
I hope I'd dust my knees like the whole thing were rehearsed.

As if I were a stunt-double and my life was the set of an action movie.
Like I was bound to cables and protected by pads
the whole time.

GRATITUDE FOR
A FULL LIFE
GEORGE HO, JR.

What is a full life?
A life well lived and filled with love
Time on earth well spent, not wasted
Fulfilling, satisfying, meaningful

There are places I've not been
There are things I've not done
There are people I've not met
There is knowledge I've not acquired

Yet...my bucket list is empty
As if I had "Been there, Done that"
4,000 weeks or 27,375 days are considered a lifetime
I am approaching these mileposts
Content and satiated, my life has been full
Without having and experiencing everything

It was not like this in my earlier years
I was envious of what others possessed
Jealous of them for this and that
Striving for more and always aiming higher

But I am past my prime now, no longer young
Time and experience have mellowed me
More patient, more tolerant, and much wiser
I have learned my lessons through love

You who acknowledged and accepted my faults
who tolerated my imperfections, my mistakes
who corrected me when I've been wrong
who forgave me when I've been unkind
compensated for my weaknesses and complemented me
My life is good, full, complete because of you

I am happy and I shall not want
For if I should die tomorrow
I will have no regrets, I have no wants
Other than to say good-bye and thank you

My needs have been met and my life is good
Because of you who have loved me and still love me
Who filled my voids, who stood by my side
Who brought me joy, who satisfied me and made my life full

For life is finite as we all know, an average lifetime of
27,375 days or 4,000 weeks translate into 75 to 77 years
Some will die younger, some will live longer, but die we will
The number of days, weeks, or years I'll spend on earth
are not as important as how I've spent my almost 76 years
Sharing joy, laughter, love, and time with you



CHASING A MEMORY
JESSIE WILLIAMS
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE IPHONE 11
DATE: NOVEMBER 2021



PERSPECTIVE

STEVEN LEWIS
MEDIUM: DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH PRINTED ON FINE ART PAPER; 24X36 INCHES
DATE: 2021

TIRED

VALERIE GAO

It was 4 pm, the end of another long clinic day. Our last patient was late, of course, and the sun was already beginning to set before she was finally roomed and ready for me to talk to her. The purpose of the clinic visit was vague: “follow-up.” Before I went in, my resident told me to “try to keep things short” if I could. I was tired, but I went in with a big smile and cheerily introduced myself to the patient. She was an older woman and greeted me with a pleasant “Hello dearie.” As we began talking, she suddenly asked, “So, where are you from?” I knew exactly what answer she was looking for because she definitely wasn’t the first person to ask me this. I was born and raised in Denver but that never seems to satisfy people. I wearily decided in that moment I didn’t have the energy to dance through the usual fake theatrics, and responded that I was Chinese. Usually I get comments about how wonderful China is or how much “I love Chinese food/culture.” But instead I heard today, “Oh, I’m so glad you’re Chinese and not Filipino.” My head snapped up in surprise. I couldn’t believe what I had just heard. My mind raced as I tried to think of what to say next: How much did I actually want to engage with this statement? Was she trying to compliment me? What do you even say to something like that? More than anything, I was bewildered. Out of pure curiosity, I heard myself saying, “Um, why would you say that?”. She told me something about how too many Filipino people were in healthcare and “all of them are nurses.” At this point, I knew it was useless continuing this line of conversation and tried to steer it back to her visit.

I didn’t feel any malice from this patient, but I still felt slighted. I wasn’t expecting to end the day answering questions about my ethnicity and once again, feeling foreign in a place I called home. More than anything I was tired. I was physically tired from clinic all day, from starting rotations in May, from studying for Step 1 since January. I was emotionally drained from talking to patients all day, from dealing with unvaccinated patients treating me like I was stupid, from getting interrupted by attendings, from tripping over my words on every presentation. I was tired of answering the question, “No, where are you really from?” and having to thank people for their stuttering comments about how fascinating and exotic my culture is. I was tired of getting annoyed at the grocery store employee who acted like they couldn’t understand my dad’s English even though he regularly publishes scientific papers in prestigious journals. I was tired of hearing about the “rise of Anti-Asian American violence” in the news. I was tired of fretting about my Chinese-American partner who lives in New York City every time he gets on the metro. I felt my shoulders sag with the weight of this patient’s comments adding to the already existing pile of exhaustion dragging down all my energy. I didn’t even bother to bring it up with my resident when I came out of the room as I presented our interview, because I was tired.



GREEN

LUKE WHITCOMB

The voices crowding into my ears
are too bright for this
gold wallpaper -
They fray the room’s identical carpet
right at the edges.

I live under and above 90-degree angles.

Where is my soul?

Somewhere with the wild sheep,
likely
whispering with Whitman,
Roethke hearing every word,
among the brush and bindweed,
and maybe
still alive.

I pull at my polyester tie,
gazing about the conference room,
bewildered.

Those voices smell like spring.
Perhaps they could teach me
how to find lost sheep,
and braid the weeds bursting
from the hot pavement
into crowns of green.

ROOTED

JESSIE WILLIAMS

MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; APPLE
IPHONE 11
DATE: JULY 2021

LOSS

LAUREN NORHEIM

Loss
I see nothing there,
We wipe the gel off her belly.
No sac, so signs of anything growing.
But there are 3 patients waiting,
I whisper, "you did nothing wrong."
No time to feel the weight of her loss
That she will experience for years to come.

UNPRECEDENTED

DANIEL HASSELL
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; NIKON D5100
DATE: JULY 2014



THE LAST TRAIN HOME

ANDREW SUCHAN

My family drove me to the front of the station and bid me goodbye – it was sweet seeing them one more time. In an hour, I was to take the train to... somewhere. I actually don’t remember where. Looking up, the sky was a bright, cotton-candy pink. The willow trees were swaying, but not in any particular direction. But it was as if I had suddenly awakened forsaken in the desert. No people conversing. No birds chirping. The surrounding world faded into itself as a haze. It was quiet with my melancholy. The words “STATION” were etched in granite 30 feet above the derelict oak door. I leaned in closer and saw a dusty gold plate on the door that simply said “LAB.” Regardless, I had somewhere to be. Opening the door, I was greeted by emptiness, except for an occupied check-in counter in the distance. The shops faced me with iron bars. The lamp posts flickered on and off like a firefly, mostly off. The mountain-high iron beams were intact, at least. I pulled every caved-in piece of fabric out of my clothes and found my ticket in my jeans. The words were blurred and ran together like a black and white horizon. Even the markings of my name were washed away. However, there was one line I could still make out:

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: I9-16

Puzzled, I stumbled further into the station to the check-in counter. There wasn’t another soul in sight except for four people, two men and two women, in pale blue lab coats behind it. Their facial features were indiscernible, like television static.

“Hello, sir, taking the train today?”

“Yes, I have my ticket. Although I can’t seem to read anything on this,” I grimaced.

“What’s your name? I might be able to pull it up on my computer.”

Dejected, I stated, “I... don’t know that anymore. My name is blurry as well. Only thing I can see is my ID number: I9-16. Here’s my ticket.”

One of the women in blue examined it further, and she looked up with an exasperated sigh.

“I know where you are going, John... Business is quiet this time of year, so we can escort you there. Terminal 15.”

“

John?”

“Your name is a mystery to me as well, but I can’t call you I9-16. No person should be treated like that. As long as you’re in our company, you’ll be John. You can call me Isabel.”

“Terry.”

“I’m Ahmed.”

“Claire.”

Their faces became clearer.

The lights stayed on.

We walked down to the terminal, and the station still looked desolate. It wasn’t grimy, but it was in fact the opposite. There was something clean and sterile about everything. Despite that, I felt increasingly at peace with what I was doing and where I was going. My future in the next hour? Who knows? I still don’t. But here we are. On one side of the fatigued tracks was a perfectly laid brick tunnel, and on the other side was yet another thing I couldn’t make out. It just looked like a ball of light. Maybe I suddenly became near-sighted. We sat down on the steel yet pleasant bench. I asked the workers how long they had been at the station.

“This is our first year here, actually. Thrown into the fire. We’ve picked it up pretty fast at the very least,” Ahmed explained.

“We’re here to help others. Our own destination is distant, but I always keep that goal in mind,” told Isabel.

“Want me to hold on to your jacket while we wait? It’s getting quite warm here,” said Claire.

I obliged, and as soon as my leather jacket left my hands, it faded away into a golden dust, swept up by the swelling wind.

Terry murmured, “It’s already beginning.”

He moved closer, peered in, and examined my chest with his stare. I looked down and saw the skin of my torso removed, bones and organs exposed.

“Your heart seems quite large, and your arteries there are dilated. It looks like you have a few sutures along one of the walls as well,” Terry began. “You’ve led an interesting life, haven’t you, John?”

I pondered for a moment. “I still can’t seem to recall anything. My memory vanished as soon as I stepped out of the car, like my jacket.”

“What jacket?” expressed Isabel, perplexed.

Where am I?

Some more time had passed as we sat there quietly, taking in the scenery. Not a whole lot to look at, but everything seemed foreign to all of us. Claire broke the silence.

“You know, we basically just met each other as well,” pointing to the other three.

“It’s been nice to have others to talk to during all this,” Isabel said.

“Yeah, I haven’t been able to see my wife as much nowadays,” lamented Ahmed.

“Oh wow, I didn’t know that, Ahmed,” mused Terry. The others nodded.

Their words flowed from there. Terry played cornerback in college, and Claire was the first in her family to go to college. Isabel grew up on a farm in Iowa; Ahmed lived most of his life in Cairo. Claire sang for a punk band, and Isabel baked cookies every Friday. Ahmed crafted his own furniture; Terry constructed his own computers. Occasionally, they would mention other things they noticed about me, such as something about the musculocutaneous nerve coming off the median nerve. They were inquisitive but also kind. Whenever Ahmed would try to talk more about where we were, the others seemed to cut him off before he said too much. Ultimately, I was happy just to share some extra company. Every now and then, more skin would fade from my body: an arm there, a foot here. I should have been distressed, but I wasn’t. They explored more and more of my anatomy as I became detached from the present.

“You’ve made everything more understandable, John,” articulated Isabel.

“It’s all so clear now...” said Terry, as he looked towards the light.

As my time to leave drew closer, their voices became more hesitant and sullen.

“Five minutes until your train arrives...” Claire bemoaned.

It felt like a bulldozer was being lifted off my lower body. I stared down and noticed both of my legs were fading into that brilliant dust of the ether. As I looked back towards the workers, I saw my whole right arm was also being carried away. A small rain was starting to pour down my face. The lights quieted. I don’t know what Terry, Ahmed, Isabel, and Claire saw, but they didn’t seem fazed by it. Maybe they knew what was happening. They put their arms over each other. I glanced away, and my left arm had already been taken. I had passed my final gate. The sun had set. The wind had grown fiercer.

“I can hear your train pulling in now...” Ahmed gazed at the twinkling stars above, discovering Aries. He smiled as tears enveloped his eyes. “It was an honor to meet you, John.”

“It is my pleasure. I hope you learned what you could from me and that the future serves you well.”

The rest of my body began dissipating as well. As my head became one with paradise, my soul was all that remained.

The train floated in from the tunnel like an angel. The other end flourished an even more radiant beacon of brilliance. The doors burst open.

“I was so absorbed in our discussions; I never got the opportunity to ask you all this. Where am I going?”

For the first time, a voice came on the otherwise silent loudspeaker. Terminal 15. Last train home. Terminal 15. Last train home.

“Where you were always meant to be, John.”

I think I finally understood.

The squall of wind was at its most powerful as my soul entered the train. The doors shut, and the train flashed into the warm, comforting light of the golden wind.



**REMEMBERING
DAD WITH LOVE**

MITRA A. RAZZAGHI
MEDIUM: OIL ON HANDMADE LINEN CANVAS;
30X40 INCHES
DATE: NOVEMBER 2021

“Let the beauty we love
be what we do.
There are hundred ways
to kneel and kiss the ground.”
– Rumi

LAST CONTACT

IAN T.T. LIU

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH.

The rhythmic sound of high-pressure air rushing in and out of the clear facemask was surprisingly forceful. The mask was translucent and pear-shaped with soft edges that fit over the nose and mouth to form a better seal with the face.

When sealed tightly to the face, the sound of the breathing machine pushing and pulling air into and out of the mask is quite loud. When the mask does not fit well—as it did in this hospital room—it is almost deafening. The sound dominated the room.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH.

Above the mask were two large eyes, expressively wide. The attending doctor I was working with had just finished “consenting” the person behind those eyes. He had explained to her (our patient was a delightful, middle-aged, heavyset woman) that based on her current lung infection and increasing need for external oxygen, she would likely require a tube placed down her windpipe (“intubation”) attached to a machine to breathe for her (a “ventilator”). She was understandably scared but also worn down from weeks of severe illness. The attending explained that he believed a ventilator would give her the best chance of survival.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH.

Since having a tube placed down one’s windpipe is uncomfortable, patients are usually sedated with medications. For some very sick patients, the moment before their sedation is their last moment of consciousness. As our patient understood the weight of this moment, her large expressive eyes welled up with silent tears.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH.

The hospital had a draconian no visitor policy, but we asked our patient if she had anyone she would like to call or facetime. She said no; she was divorced, had no siblings, and was not close to her children. I held her hand for a moment.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH.

She was intubated later that week and died several weeks later.

DENALI: EDGE OF THE WORLD

ALLISON M. DUBNER
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH
DATE: JULY 2011



ESSENTIAL WEEDS

LISA KURTH
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH;
APPLE IPHONE 8 PLUS
DATE: 2021



WHAT MAKES
IT HARDER
TO BREATHE?

SOPHIE L. SCHOTT

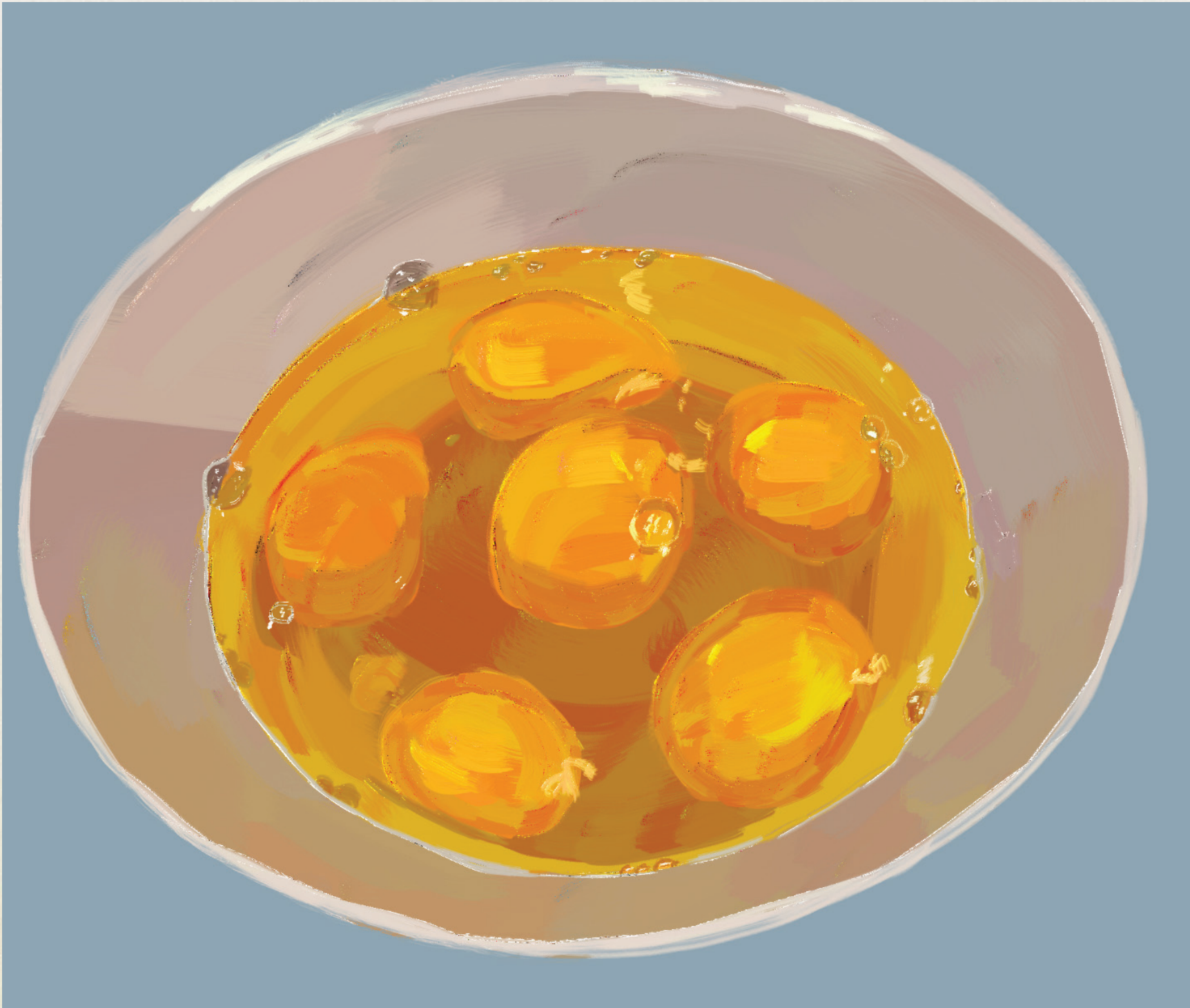
irreversible cessation
then extubation—a forced
education in the language
of medicine and its limits.

breathlessness demanded
attention, outcry swelled
as summertime marches
unmasked

authorities calmly
asphyxiating a Black
man, his stolen breath
resonant in the hum of

ventilators, hospital halls
overwhelmed in a deluge
of panic—an unknown
respiratory pandemic

made death familiar,
then demanded
we grieve from
a distance.



EGG YOLKS
MADELYN ARNOLD
MEDIUM: DIGITAL ARTWORK
DATE: 2021

ODE TO THE LITTLE GREEN STOOL

LISA KURTH

Over at Granny’s house,
on her restful, screened-in back porch,
I had a special place to sit.
Near her sunny pots of red and pink geraniums,
summertime blossoms hid the tiny screen rips,
making everything cheerful and glamorous.
The little green stool,
oddly shaped with three short legs,
was made of thick oak
and was set aside, just for me.
Here, I watched her wise, knobby hands snap fresh pole beans,
shell purple hull peas, dice thick, runny figs
and peel the spotted skins off ripened summer pears,
while curious flies whizzed, seeking shelter from a sweltering heat.
Granny’s back porch was a peaceful sanctuary.
When her hands were not in prayer,
they were busy providing us plenty.
The little green stool was my very own, special place, given to me by her.
Its seat was so small that it barely held me.
But it was solid,
And most of all, it was mine, all mine.



REFLECTIONS

MONICA FONG
MEDIUM: PHOTOGRAPH; 1984 NIKON FG-20
DATE: JULY 2011

WINTER NIGHT MAGIC

ART ELSER

Winter Night Magic
moonlight reflects
off new fallen snow
a Buson scene

tonight's full moon
walks the winter night sky
with Orion

there . . . stalking me
as I walk down the street
my moon shadow

Sirius glints
low in the winter night
framed by trees limbs

earthshine lights
barely visible moon
cradled in silver

I wake at five
the light on the ceiling
has changed to snow

BIOGRAPHIES

MADELYN ARNOLD: Madelyn Arnold’s mother is a pathologist at Anshutz. They started digital art at the beginning of 2021. Every summer, they go to a fine arts camp in Michigan, majoring in visual arts. They were inspired while making their brother’s 12th birthday cake.

DANIEL BOLLINGER: Daniel Bollinger grew up in Baltimore, MD before completing his B.A. in Sociology & Anthropology at Carleton College. He has had an interest in photography since spending his formative high school years hiding in the darkroom. He is currently working toward completing his MD here in Colorado. Besides photography, he enjoys skiing, climbing, and cooking during the several minutes of free time he gets every week.

DIANA BOWLING: Diana Bowling is a licensed clinical psychologist in Denver, CO. She has an MS degree in developmental psychology from Columbia University and a PhD in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology. She has been treating individuals with a range of human conflicts and disorders for over 30 years as well as providing clinical consultation and supervision. She served as a clinical psychologist consultant for UC Health Sciences Center. Recently, she returned to a focus on writing and literature, which were her early career interests during her undergraduate years at Smith College. Dr. Bowling’s recently published poetry book, *Overcoming*, is an homage to the process and nature of psychotherapeutic healing and change.

NATHANIEL J. BROWN: Nathaniel is a staff anesthesiologist at Rocky Mountain VA Medical Center and Assistant Professor at CU’s SOM. He completed residency and fellowship at CU. He earned his MD as well as a PhD in bioethics at Saint Louis University. His interests outside of medicine include poetry, mountaineering, cooking, and singing. He is a Denver native.

LYNDY BUSH: Lyndy Bush is an administrator at the Linda Crnic Institute for Down Syndrome and an oil painter documenting the small, beautiful moments in life from her perspective.

BRENNA CAMERON: Brenna is an intern in pediatrics at the University of Colorado and a graduate of CU medical school.

THEA CARRUTH: Thea Carruth is a retired School of Medicine, College of Nursing, and Children’s Hospital administrative staffer. Scientific illustration is her way of observing nature more closely. She continues to stay connected with the Anschutz Campus via Zoom.

JAMES E. CARTER, JR.: James E. Carter, Jr., MD, is the son of his late father, a retired New York City police lieutenant, and deceased mother, a former administrative assistant in the Long Island Public Schools. He is Assistant Professor of Medicine in Cardiology and Director of Service-Learning at the University of Colorado Anschutz School of Medicine. Board certified in internal medicine, cardiology, and vascular medicine, Dr. Carter focuses on the impact

of social determinants of health and inequities on healthcare outcomes. He teaches and clinically applies foundational scientific principles of functional medicine and nutritional modification in vascular medicine and advanced wound care clinics.

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 primary care.

SAUMYA DE SILVA: Saumya moved to Colorado in the Summer of 2019 and currently works as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics. She inherited her photography skills from her father and loves to capture natural beauty.

LISA DIAMOND: Lisa K. Diamond, DNP, FNP-C, is an assistant professor in the graduate nursing program at the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus. Her writing has appeared in *The Nursing Spectrum*, *Imprint*, *Daily Herald*, *The Human Touch*, *Primary Health Care*, and *Clinical Advisor*. She is passionate about helping her students develop a reflective practice through journal writing as a means of stress reduction. She is a member of Lighthouse Writer’s Workshop in Denver, CO. She loves hiking, art, travel, live theater, reading, knitting, and hanging out with her grandboys.

ALLISON M. DUBNER: Allison is a 4th 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.

CAROL H. EHRLICH: Retired Director, Audiology and Speech Pathology, Children’s Hospital, Colorado. Carol’s first loves are family (including 13 great-grandsl!), her mountain cabin, writing and classical music. Now 94, she does a lot of reflecting.

ART ELSER: Art Elser’s poetry has appeared in many journals and anthologies. His books include *A Death at Tollgate Creek*, *As the Crow Flies*, *To See a World in a Grain of Sand*, *It Seemed Innocent Enough*, *A High Plains Year in Haiku*, and *It Begins in Silence, Ends in Grace*.

MONICA FONG: Monica Fong is a graduate student at CU Anschutz studying human anatomy. Prior to moving out to Colorado, Monica resided in Portland, Oregon where she was a yoga instructor, massage therapist, and kinesiology teacher. Her passion for teaching brought her to CU Anschutz to take a deeper look into the human body so that she can teach anatomy to health care professionals in her future career. She has always had a creative side and wants to incorporate more art in the medical world.

BRIAN FORESI: Brian Foresi is a medical student who paints as a way to express himself and connect with his creative side. The Anschutz community is a friend of the Northeast Ohio Medical School community, which is how Brian was introduced to *The Human Touch*.

VALERIE GAO: Valerie Gao is a current MS3 at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. She has mostly stayed in Colorado, having done her undergraduate degree at the University of Colorado at Boulder and a bit of teaching in NYC before coming back to Colorado to start medical school. As a native Colorado-an, she loves the mountains and activities like hiking and skiing but has also been enjoying the rapidly improving food scene in Denver and trying out new places to eat.

DANIEL HASSELL: Daniel is a professional research assistant (PRA) at Anschutz and loves it. He grew up in the hills of Colorado and daydreams of long alpine adventures with friends.

JUSTIN HAUXWELL: Justin Hauxwell, MD, grew up in Lame Deer, MT, where his love for nature and the outdoors took shape. He tries to capture the beauty of nature and the outdoors in his photography, poetry, and direct experience.

SHANNON HENDERSON: Shannon joined the Anschutz community last year as the PRMS coordinator within the Cancer Center. Shannon has a deep love for travel and has been lucky enough to have seen many parts of the world. View from the Jeep was created from photos that Shannon took while on safari in Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti in Tanzania. The pieces are meant to examine the tourist experience and how visitors engage with and influence the natural sites and wildlife in this part of the world. For better and worse, eco-tourism is central both to the economics and conservation efforts of the area and to the Maasai people who live there.

LAWRENCE J. HERGOTT: Dr. Hergott is a retired cardiologist. He was a cardiologist for 20 years at Kaiser Permanente in Denver and then came to the University of Colorado to care for patients, to teach all levels of medical trainees from medical students to fellows, and to write international essays and poems about interactions with patients and clinicians manifesting the soul of medicine. Dr. Hergott’s essays and poems have been published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *JAMA*, *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)*, *The Intima*, *Ars Medica*, etc. His worldwide photographs were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*. Dr. Hergott has two writing

awards in his name in the U.S. and an international poetry award. His book, *Departure From the Darkness and the Cold: The Hope of Renewal for the Soul of Medicine In Patient Care*, got phenomenal reviews from the *Kirkus Reviews Magazine*, *The Intima*, *Amazon*, etc.

MATTHEW HICKEY: Matthew Hickey is a Professor at Colorado State University, where he serves as Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

GEORGE HO, JR.: Retired from medicine since 2013, George spends his time birding, performing grandfather duties, photographing birds and other wildlife, jogging, writing and facilitating courses to the lay public on end-of-life issues, and making photobooks online in lifelong learning venues. He then spends the remaining part of the day cooking, enjoying his meals, and getting a good night’s sleep so he can repeat everything the following day. He has been a supporter and contributor to *The Human Touch* since 2012.

PAULINE HOOSEPIAN-MER: Pauline is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and plans to pursue internal medicine with interests in global health and infectious disease. As a refugee American, Pauline realizes the distinct social empowerment inherent in health advocacy and aspires to work within underserved populations to that end. After obtaining her Master of Science in Global Medicine, she aspires to apply the global reach of healthcare to communities locally and abroad. Through poetry and creative writing, Pauline aims to learn more about herself and connect better with others.

KADI HORN: Kadi is a dog loving, viola playing, book hoarding, and pun making maniac who has dreams of publishing creative works one day. As a CSU graduate, she begrudgingly accepts CU as her new home. She is a professional research assistant (PRA) in the Otolaryngology department and is the reason why that one wall has blue stains.

ANNETTE HOUSE: Annette House is a 1965 graduate of the University of Colorado School of Nursing. After a forty-year career in nursing, she retired and became a poet. She puts words to the inexplicable nature of life.

MALIK A.R. JACKSON: Malik Jackson is a first-year dental student at CU Anschutz. He comes by way of Grand Junction, Colorado, but has lived on the Eastern slope for the past 5 years. Since his childhood, Malik has enjoyed practicing art of all forms. He feels that human expression is one of the most raw and innate aspects of being. His art journey began with drawing but has more recently evolved into poetry/spoken word, wood-burning, and digital art. In between classes and study, Malik enjoys being outside, traveling, and any type of competition. He has made it his aim to make the most out of each and every day on the CU Anschutz campus through networking and positivity. He lives by the mantras, “Thank God it’s Today,” and “never forget how you once wanted what you currently have.”

BIOGRAPHIES

LISA KURTH: Dr. Lisa Kurth is a clinical health psychologist and Certified Brain Injury Specialist in Fort Collins, CO. She specializes in assessing and treating children diagnosed with neurodevelopmental disorders and individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury. She is Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics (Developmental Section) and Researcher at CUSOM. She is a published poet, author, and visual artist. 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.

ANNA LEE: Anna D. Lee is a first year medical student at the CU School of Medicine. She finds joy in bringing art into medicine and finding how dance can be used as a medium to convey emotions. Her project was inspired by a friend’s experience as a ER resident during the height of COVID and put together with the help of Phoebe Romangsuriat and Christopher Lin. In her down time, Anna enjoys calling her family, hiking, going on coffee chats, and dancing at EVQ.

STEVEN LEWIS: Steven Lewis is a physician double boarded in OB/GYN and Pathology. He is a Clinical Professor of Pathology at Anschutz Medical Center. He has done basic science research at various academic centers including CU’s MCDB and New York- Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center. He has authored a text as well as many papers and chapters. Until its recent closure he was the Director of Public Programs at CU’s Given Institute. Currently he is an Interprofessional Collaborative Practice Facilitator at Anschutz.

IAN T.T. LIU: Ian T.T. Liu is a medical student at the University of Colorado.

TINA M. MOSER: Tina M. Moser is a librarian at the Strauss Health Sciences Library on the Anschutz Medical Campus. She has been working here for over 21 years. “Get Married” is part of a series of writings about her mother’s struggles with Schizophrenia and Alzheimer’s and her father’s struggles with depression. Ms. Moser wrote these as part of her personal therapy during the stresses of caregiving between 2006-2015.

AMY NACHT: Amy is an assistant professor at the School of Medicine, Department of Ob/Gyn, Division of Academic Specialists in Ob/Gyn. She is a practicing Certified Nurse-Midwife and works directly with patients and as an clinical and classroom educator.

LAUREN NORHEIM: Lauren is a PA student in the University of Colorado Child Health Associate/Physician Assistant (CU CHA/PA) program. During her clinical training, she has used poetry as a way of grasping the complexities of humanity interwoven within a typical day working in medicine. She hopes to never forget what a privilege it is to walk alongside people in their most difficult moments or the power of words to unravel the beauty of those moments.

RUSH PIERCE: J. Rush Pierce is a husband, father, grandfather, and retired physician. He serves on the volunteer faculty at CU Anschutz. When encouraged to articulate childhood memories of racism, he wrote an earlier version of this essay for a faith-based group studying racism and White supremacy.

MARCELLA RAUST: Marcella Raust, MS, is a Professional Research Assistant with the Department of Pathology Shared Resources Biobank. She moved to Colorado and started working for the University of Colorado 32 years ago. She focuses her photography on nature. Her favorite subject is wildflowers. She enjoys hiking, skiing, adventure traveling with her husband and spending time in nature. They are working on their goal of visiting every US National Park.

MITRA A. RAZZAGHI: Mitra A Razzaghi, MD is an associate professor of medicine at CU, practicing women’s health physician. She is an artist and a member of Oil Painters of America. She has studied classical drawing and oil painting under instruction of an ARC accredited living master.

JESSI L. RIDINGER: Jessi, L. Ridinger lives with her partner and two sons in Colorado and is a Colorado native with a nomadic spirit that has led her back home. Writing, in several forms, has always been a part of her life and a way to express herself and an important part of supporting her mental health. Jessi is graduating from CU College of Nursing with a BSN in May 2022. She has worked on Anschutz campus in clinical work as well as a research assistant at Barbara Davis during her psychology BA from the Denver campus. She currently works in a local hospital in the psychiatric emergency and the SICU as a tech and volunteering at the DAWN clinic.

TIMOTHY ROBARE: Timothy’s girlfriend is a graduate student at Anschutz Medical Campus. Timothy got his degree from SUNY Plattsburgh in writing arts and has published three books at this current time. A traveler of the world, he has stayed in refugee camps in Palestine, and he has been to the Syrian border refugee camps as well.

DEBORAH SAINT-PHARD: Dr. Deb Saint-Phard moved to Colorado in 1992 to begin her training years specializing in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation followed by Fellowship training in Sports Medicine at Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Her first faculty position was at Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. The past 20 years have found her raising her kids in Colorado and making it a mission to connect physicians with greater information about their Wellbeing, common humanity, mindfulness, and self-compassion. She sees the world through her camera’s lens.

SOPHIE L. SCHOTT: Sophie L. Schott is a poet, ethicist, and researcher. Her writing probes at the multidimensional meaning of her academic pursuits and explores how the humanities might ameliorate some of the indelicacies of illness and human suffering. After completing her undergraduate medical education, Schott aspires to pursue a career as a physician-poet and clinical ethicist.

KATHY SHAW: Kathy Shaw, DNP, RN is an Associate Professor in the College of Nursing. During the pandemic, one of her sources of comfort and enjoyment were driving and hiking in Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge.

RICHA SHETH: Richa Sheth is a second year medical student at Northeast Ohio Medical University. She finds passion in exploring the importance of the intersection between creativity and medicine, both for patients and healthcare providers alike. She finds her unique voice through photography and is constantly chasing the irreplaceable moment in which a person is fully vulnerable in front of the camera, allowing their eyes to tell a story. She feels that both fields of art and medicine share this sentiment - the art of storytelling and carrying human stories at their best and worst. She will continue to search for like-minded individuals and to encourage more humanistic reflection amongst friends and peers.

HAYLEY SPECHT: Hayley Specht is a medical student at the University of Colorado with interests in internal and geriatric medicine. She grew up in the small town of Lamar, CO, which cultivated her passion for rural medicine; she is now part of the Rural Track at CU and hopes to get back to her roots with her future practice. When she is not studying, Hayley can be found playing with her two dogs, hanging out with friends, and finding new creative outlets for her artistic side.

CRAIG STARK: Craig is a semi-retired Maternal Fetal Medicine Specialist. He has a lifelong love of both learning and teaching. An important part of his career has been to teach OBGYN Residents and medical students. He has been an active teacher in the School of Medicine for the past three years. Reflective writing and photography of people and places he has visited is a long time passion of his.

ANDREW SUCHAN: Andrew is currently a 4th-year medical student at Northeast Ohio Medical University. He was born in Burlington, Vermont, and raised in Fort Kent, Maine, before he moved to Hudson, Ohio, in 2010. Writing has always been his second passion after medicine. He loves exploring emotion and personal journey in narrative medicine as well as exploring music rhetorically.

AVALON SWENSON: Avalon Swenson is a current MS2.5/3 (it gets confusing with the hybrid year!), currently rotating down in Colorado Springs with her cohort. She has drawn since a young age, starting with a sidewalk chalk art business back in Minnesota where she charged \$1 per sidewalk square at age 4. Over the years, she graduated to pencil, pen/ink, and paints from sidewalk chalk and has continued to draw. Her preference lies in pencil, pen, and ink to create realistic and often anatomically based art.

LINDSEY MARIE TARASENKO: Lindsey Marie Tarasenko, Ph.D., M.S.N., B.S.N., R.N., is a University of Colorado (CU) graduate. She is a Nurse Scientist for Children’s Hospital Colorado and an Assistant Professor for CU College of Nursing. As a practicing registered nurse for 11.5 years, she obtained her Master’s in Nursing focusing on Leadership and Administration in 2015, and her doctorate focusing on Health Care Systems Research in 2019. She conducts mixed methods work environment research on the interactions between organizational change and role functions, relationships, and outcomes across healthcare contexts. Her passion lies in capturing and honoring the sacredness of the human experience and healing through the arts. Tarasenko is a proud wife and mother to a baby girl and one fur baby.

ELIZABETH ANN TULLIS: Elizabeth is a nurse living in Northern Colorado. On days she is not working or pursuing the Health, Humanities and Ethics certificate, she adores time with her husband and their sweet Labrador. She also enjoys the many adventures that living in Colorado has to offer, including hiking, paddle boarding, snowshoeing, writing, and photography. Writing offers her catharsis to reconcile her various experiences working in healthcare.

LUKE WHITCOMB: Luke Whitcomb is a biomedical scientist at Colorado State University. He studies mitochondria. Outside of the lab, Luke is committed to improving public access to science education and advocating for healthcare policy reform. His writing explores tensions between the perfectionism that medical science demands and the complex, spontaneous, and often-peculiar nature of the humans who participate in it.

JESSIE WILLIAMS: Jessie Williams grew up in the deep woods of Arkansas. Most of her childhood was spent barefoot and running wildly in nature. Jessie now lives in Colorado and still finds herself running to nature, experiencing life’s most beautiful moments. To Jessie, her photography is what she sees and feels. Jessie hopes to capture as much beauty and emotion of what living truly means to her.

FLORENCE YIP: Florence is Chinese and was born in Colorado but spent 12 years of her life growing up in Bangkok, Thailand. From a young age, she has always been in awe of art and how a blank piece of paper can be turned into something so beautiful. Art has always been a way for her to view the world in a different perspective and a tool for her to express herself. She loves mixed-media, and her most recent endeavors have been to merge her love for art and her passion for medicine as one.

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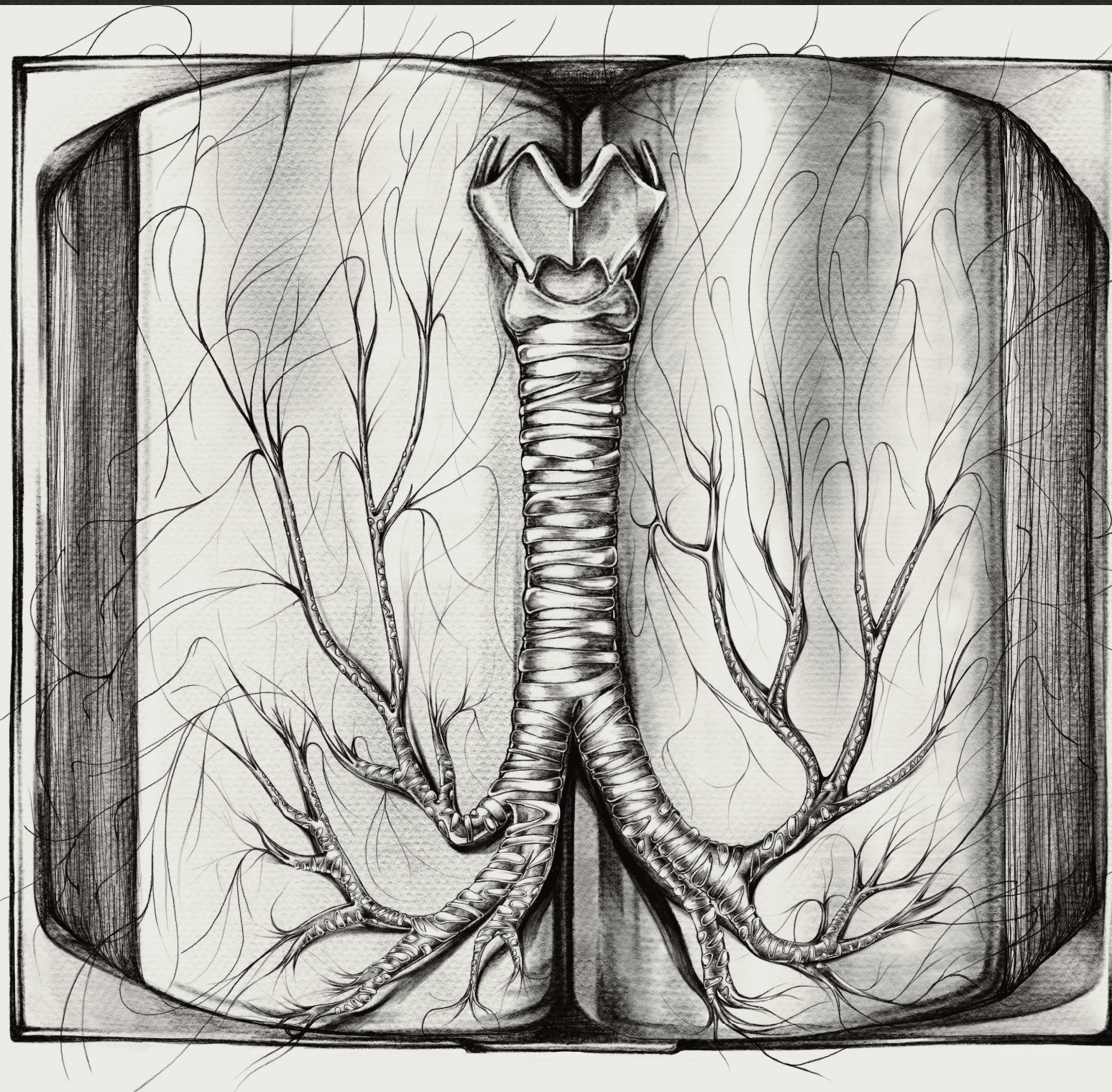
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