

# The Human Touch

VOLUME 11

2018

THE JOURNAL OF POETRY,  
PROSE AND VISUAL ART



THE JOURNAL OF

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# Poetry, Prose, & Visual Art

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University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

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THE HUMAN TOUCH

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# Volume 11 2018

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## PREFACE

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Welcome to *The Human Touch* 2018—the annual anthology of prose, poetry, graphic art and photography created and contributed by the students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends of the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

This volume is a celebration and showcase of the amazing talents and unique perspectives of our contributors, and we appreciate their support of and involvement in another stunning compilation of work. But behind the evocative words and compelling images is the commitment and creativity of our editors and board members. From inviting submissions to devising time lines to reviewing materials to working with graphic artists to endless proofreading, they devote many hours to producing the volume that you now hold in your hands. And they do all of this in addition to schedules packed with class meetings, study sessions, high-stakes exams, residency interviews and 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 support of an alumnus of the School of Medicine. He and his family have committed to ongoing annual financial support for *The Human Touch*. Their “gift” enables us to create what we hope is and will continue to be our “gift” to the community of the Anschutz Medical Campus: a beautifully rendered and emotionally powerful representation of the artistry and the diversity of our colleagues and friends.

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

Finally, on behalf of the editorial board, I want to thank and congratulate our 2018 Editors-in-Chief:

- Michael Berger, School of Medicine, Class of 2018
- Diana Ir, Colorado School of Public Health, Class of 2018.

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



# Illness

ALICE ABRAMS

---

There are hidden illnesses and breakdowns within, kept under wraps by my will, waiting for me to look away for a moment, to leap forward.

I am alert at all times. Aches and pains, the signals that I am not paying attention, allowing fatigue to creep in, opening cracks to allow seepage of those hidden secrets that know the venue to my own death, the final crumbling of my walls.

It knows the biggest secret. I don't ask it questions. I remain vigilant. There is still much to discover, the outside secrets. I rattle between the two. I bash between the two, learning new outside secrets, racing against other secrets within, inevitably to be known.

The time...the place...the friend that will welcome me. The secret within...that holds me together now. It too fatigues and can only wait so long.



## The Pain

ALICE ABRAMS

---

### The Pain...

Crushed me into a crippled wad  
Within the heart of a ...  
Rubberband ball...

Augmented daily  
Each new taut band  
Twisted...  
'Round...

Exploding in volume  
The rubberband ball  
Bounced...  
Higher...

Silent screams  
Stifled within  
Roared...  
Louder...

You, the surgeon, snatched the ball  
Propelled it to new heights  
So distant...  
Removed it...

As to fade it from sight  
And thought...  
All memory of

### The Pain...



## Pause

FREDRICK ABRAMS

---

Now is the time I've abandoned the strivings  
Past are the days when I hastened tomorrow  
Here in the sun of a golden December  
I am content just to wonder and linger  
Would I could halt the inexorable turning  
Yet I must join the whole world in its journey  
I've breathed the warm air of the slumbering summer  
And chilled with the snow of the crisp and clear winter  
I would not start over yet wish I could hover  
From knowledge I've fled and I'm nearly at wisdom  
I'm blessed with a life that's been filled with good fortune

Now I would

Look

Taste

Smell

Touch and

Listen



## Knowing

---

NINA BALL

Tiny and frail  
Reading her oraciones

Me, shouting to a hearing aid

Her, telling about a tough night  
Telling the toll of her illnesses  
Expressing her readiness for it to be over  
Squeezing my hand to get her point across  
Content with the idea of meeting her God

I leave the room with a "see you after the procedure"  
She calls to me "bye baby, thank you"

I think she knew what we did not.



## Donum Posthumous

---

ELSA ALASWAD

The first incision was like magic  
Running the blade across the faceless skin  
Dreaming of sulci and gyri hidden deep within the plastic wrapping  
Hacking and scraping  
Like a butcher  
In another dimension  
Cutting deep into the spinal cord  
Sifting your thoughts into small imaginary cylinders  
All your memories draining away into metal foramen  
Were you a teacher?  
A nurse?  
A scientist?  
What brought you here before me?  
I wonder what your face looks like  
As I lose myself in your nerves, arteries, veins  
Empty space and lymph nodes  
Brushing against muscles and bones  
Tubercles, fascicles, trochanters, and processes  
I realize  
There are so many features to you  
But none of them tell me  
Who are you?  
What was your favorite dessert?  
Did you exercise on the weekend?  
Did you have grandchildren who worshipped you?  
Did you cook casseroles for Thanksgiving dinner?  
Thank you for being here  
Thank you for giving yourself to science  
To young minds  
To my blade

---

As I pass my vibrating bone saw over your vertebral processes  
I remember

I am dissecting a human being  
And treating her like a construction project  
Except it's deconstruction I'm doing to you  
Taking you apart so I can put you  
Back together in my mind  
Then I will carry you with me  
And one day I will be you  
And blades will be cutting into me  
Fingers pulling apart my ligaments  
Hurting my tendons with their eager probes  
Unsheathing me like you  
Holding your hand through the plastic  
I feel as though you are my guide  
Helping me to understand the enigma  
That is you, me, and everyone  
You will always be my first cadaver  
My posthumous teacher of anatomy and ethics  
You don't have to tell me who you are  
But someday soon  
I will see your eyes and find parts of your soul  
And I will carry that with me too



# Together in a Vast Wyoming Grasslands

MICHAEL AUBREY

---

We have been here before:

"But, as the last ray of sunlight vanishes, a scene of unexampled beauty, grandeur, and impressiveness breaks upon the view. The globe of the moon, black as ink, is seen as if it were hanging in mid-air, surrounded by a crown of soft, silvery light, like that which the old painters used to depict around the heads of saints."

—Simon Newcomb, Popular Astronomy, 1890.

We are here today:

The Wyoming winds paused their incessant press, the light became a frightening metal sheen, even the hot air retreated. Two birds dive bombed erratically, someone yelled "diamond ring" and for two minutes... We wept, photographed, stared. For a shared moment we peered directly into the heart of this universe. There is only one other human experience that brings you so high and lets you down so fast. That experience is for two. But, today, here, in a vast Wyoming grasslands, we thousands were together for two minutes.

Can we join here tomorrow?



## **Together in Wonder**

MICHAEL AUBREY

---





## Cadaver Lab: A Manual on Humility

DYLAN BERGSTEDT

---

Reading through the selected poetry and prose of past medical students, I was deeply moved at the flood of emotions dissection lab can bring to the surface. The experience changes the lives of everyone who has the honor to participate and many authors captured this sentiment perfectly. It is difficult for me to articulate how cadaver lab makes me feel, but I do recognize that I have been given an extraordinary gift as well as an extraordinary responsibility. A living being made the conscious choice to donate their body so that a generation of physicians could learn to heal. It presents us all with a challenge to utilize and respect this gift because it was given to us so selflessly. Without it we would not even be able to take our first step towards becoming physicians, our first step towards understanding the body.

A busy schedule and looming deadlines paired with this great responsibility create a strange dichotomy. One minute I am overwhelmed that this was once a living person with an entire life lived, and then the next I am rushing to finish cleaning a nerve so I can wash my instruments in the sink before the line gets long. I caught myself complaining about how the patient's scoliosis made the removal of the spinous process more difficult. Later I thought of how this may have made her life more difficult. Did she always have this condition or was it simply a symptom of old age? Did it cause any difficulties in her life? Did it contribute to her death? The same thing occurred when an awful hemorrhage in her leg made the area almost unrecognizable. Yes, it made my life difficult for the afternoon, but I'm sure it hurt her much worse. I know I must avoid treating our cadaver as simply a science problem. It's difficult when the instructions read like every other lab manual. There is no note after step five to remind the reader that she was the love of someone's life, or that her grandchildren miss her very much. I often think of how I would want a member of my family treated if they were being examined by medical students. This simple exercise helps me remember to treat the cadaver with respect.

In the lab the cadaver also reminds me of my own mortality. By physically looking inside another body, one cannot help but appreciate how fragile of a vessel the body is. Layers can be stripped away until there is nothing left. Someday I will die, maybe because one of those small vessels gets blocked with a tiny piece of plaque; maybe that ball of cells will divide uncontrollably and destroy my body. It's truly terrifying to view the components that keep us alive; any one of them could break from simple wear and tear and my life could end. Other times the cadaver makes me more confident about this machine that keeps us alive. Understanding how each piece works together to create a working unit is almost mind boggling. When searching for structure from the lab manual, the number of landmarks seems immense. But when you are able to imagine that every thought and emotion ever experienced, that every momentous accomplishment in the history of humanity was a result of this machine, the number of components suddenly seems impossibly small. I look forward to continuing my journey through the cadaver lab. I hope over the next few months I am able to honor this donation to science and make my cadaver proud. I hope to more deeply understand what it means to be human and to be alive.



## Below the Surface

NATHANIEL BROWN

---

Ripples grace a fresh face  
Forming channels that will erode  
Into the fine lines of worry  
And, eventually, the echoes  
Of cases past.

Wrinkles on an aging face  
Bear unreliable witness to the  
Terrain of the soul beneath.  
The flesh around them swells and dips  
Here deepening  
There smoothing  
As emotions come and go.

The surfaces of calm waters  
And stormy seas alike  
Tell no grand tale of woe  
Or joy themselves.  
Deep is the floor beneath  
And rare light flirts when it will.  
It cannot be forced.

Waves that might have scarred  
The bed below years ago  
Now pass with a mere flicker  
On the face,  
Unseen unless caught at the very moment.

Stony indifference and  
Forlorn exhaustion  
Cast the same reflection against the deep.



## Holyoke Fair

KEVIN BUNNELL

---

What is this place  
where the uninhibited sky  
reaches from horizon to horizon?

Where circles of grain and triangles of water  
define the landscape.

Where distant towns are announced  
by massive white columns.

Where every town has more than its share  
of churches,  
one co-op gas station,  
and an abandoned Masonic Lodge.

Where corn fields are  
mile square masses of spiked green.  
And yellow fields of harvested wheat  
make the land a checkerboard.

Where summers are marked by county fairs;  
friends gather to give greetings  
and seek honors for the best of their year's work.

Where velvet, ewes  
and over-fed heifers settle into clean shaved wood.

Where tractors are two stories high  
and have green engines as big as Volkswagens.

Where breakfast is a from-scratch burrito  
that takes so long you could get a sunburn waiting for it.

---

Where heifers and wethers  
share the glories of winning or losing.  
While horses, look on sadly from half-open doors

And where lambs are clipped and washed and blown,  
chins held high with chains,  
until they are like new carpet.

And where the insistent cries of sheep, goats, and hogs  
show they miss each other  
and the lost pleasures of home pastures.

Contestants, hunched--  
a sheep's head held high,  
fix anxious eyes on their nemesis, the judge.

Toddlers shout happily  
playing in the dust at ringside--  
unaware of the drama nearby  
in the knee-deep wood shavings--

--not hearing the amplified. distorted  
voice of the judge,  
pontificating on the results of fingering  
the racks and hips of champion sheep.

And then, the sun waning,  
locals review the day with old friends  
as they absorb barbequed beef,  
potato salad, baked beans, and weak lemonade



## Relapse

BRENNA CAMERON

---

What is it like when at the age of eleven you find out you have a disease you can't even pronounce? *Acute Myelogenous Leukemia*.

What is it like when you're nineteen, you think you have the whole world figured out, and suddenly your arm starts to hurt? Your skin turns black and blue after you bump your elbow on the corner of your desk and you know, you just know, that the cancer is back. What is it like when you call your Mom and tell her to make an appointment for as soon as possible?

What is it like when your doctor—the same doctor that told you eight years ago that that you might not live to see the seventh grade and who hugged you with tears in his eyes when he gave you the news that you were cancer free—tells you the cancer *has* come back? Would you put your head between your knees and tell yourself you knew it all along? You knew it when that bruise just wouldn't go away. What is it like when he tells you it's worse this time—that you have to start treatment tomorrow? Would you cry? Would you call all your professors and tell them you need to take your final exams early? *In March, Sam? I think you might just have to take a withdrawal.* Would you realize that your life is over? For good this time.

What is it like when three months later your doctor tells you there is nothing left to do? Would he cry along with you? Would he stand stock still in the corner or would he leave the room right after the words slip from his mouth? No need to interact with an almost dead patient. Would your mother grip your hand so tight that you have to whisper to her to let go? Would she start crying so hard that the nurse has to come into the room five minutes later and to tell her to be quiet? *You're upsetting the other patients, mam. My son was just told he's going to die.* Would your father sit in a chair next to the examination table, not saying a word, his glasses a little too polished and his shoes a little too clean, his face like cardboard, plain and hard? Would he hug you afterwards, when you got to the parking lot and your mother wasn't looking? Would he put a \$5 bill into your pocket just like when you were a kid, hoping that that would somehow make it all better? Would you say thank you, as if that would make your father okay too?

How would you tell your brother? Would you tell him to drive down from school, that you had news for him? Or would you just tell him over the phone and wait in the pulsating silence as he realized what you had just said? Would you try to console him when he begins to cry? Or would you hand the phone over to your mother? Would she calm Andrew down, tell him that everything was going to be okay? Even though it wasn't. Not even close.

Would your brother come down from school that same weekend? Would he tell you he had dropped out to spend more time with you? Would you tell him to go back on Monday and finish his classes or would you grab his hand when he leaves to go to the grocery store with Mom, gripping harder than you ever have before? *Dude, we're just going to grab some dinner. We'll be back soon.* Would he look at you and know that you didn't want him to leave at all? Would he squeeze your hand back and tell you he loved you?

---

Would you plan your own funeral? Would you pick out a coffin from a catalogue and go to the local florist to choose the flowers that would go on top? Would you choose your favorite songs for a slideshow? Would your brother help, scanning and loading pictures into the computer? Would your mother help pick out the photos, the two of you sitting on the couch one afternoon? *This one was from your fifth birthday, she'd say as she handed you a photo. You wanted that red bicycle so bad.*

Would you start to feel sick? Would you grab your head every morning as if it might explode? Would you sit by the toilet for hours after each meal, swearing that all you wanted to do was throw up, but still, nothing came out? Would your skin turn yellow? Or green? Would you look like a character out of one of those comic books you read as a kid and still have buried in your closet? Would you care? Would you care that your body was transforming right before your eyes, becoming smaller in some parts and bigger in others? Would you recognize yourself when you looked in the mirror? Would you sometimes cry when the pain was too much and all you wanted to do was die right then? *Mom, why can't I just go now? I'm ready.*

---

*continued on next page...*



## **Lion Gulch Trail**

---

DAVID WEIL

---

Would you spend the last few days in the hospital? Or would your mother insist you spend them at home? Would they bring a hospital bed to the front door? Would it take six people to get it in the house and then another six to set it up in front of the TV?

Would everyone know when you were in the final hour of your life? Would they gather around your bed and bend their heads, already anticipating the sorrow that was to come? Would they laugh when you told them to not look so somber? *It's not like anyone is dying.* Would you know when you took your final breath that it was your last one? Would your mother take your hand before all the life slipped away from you? Would your father touch your mother's shoulder, too afraid to touch your dying hand? Would your brother, his eyes already wet and gleaming, look straight at you?

Would your mother walk outside after they all knew you were gone? Would she stand on the porch beneath the sinking sun and find the sky lit up a bright crimson orange? Would she pray to God that you had found your way?

Would your father crawl into his study and make sure the finances were in place for the shop? Would he stare at those numbers all night as if you would somehow be reborn from them?

Would your brother go to his room and turn on the TV, hoping the sound would mute his tears? Would he cry so hard that his eyes turned red and the fabric of the pillowcase became damp like the summer nights the two of you would sit outside on the grass just after it had rained? Would he remember those summer nights when you would give him a wet willy and he would give you one right back?

Would they go to sleep that night? Or would they crowd around the table in the kitchen? One less plate. One less cup. One less serving of chicken. Would they hold hands, say grace, pass the food around as if nothing had happened? Would they sit, silent through the whole dinner, eyes glued to their plates, the sliced chicken not moving from their forks? Or would your brother go out and buy a six pack of pale ale, suggesting they all drink one on the back porch? *It's what he would have wanted.* Would they talk about how you had always been so curious, poking the beehive under the porch railing when you were only seven? *Don't worry, Mommy. I'll be okay,* you had said. Would they talk about how you would have been somebody if it hadn't been for the cancer? That you could have been a world class chemist? Or the best business man in all of Colorado? Or how you could have taken over Dad's shop, fixing and selling bikes all day long?

Will they know from the purple hues that paint the sky and the stars that twinkle bright that you are with them? Will your mother take your father's hand and squeeze real hard? Will she turn to Andrew and say everything will be okay? Will Andrew say something crude like *Well, now that he's dead we can all go on living again?* And will Mom just laugh and laugh and laugh? Like she's never laughed before. Will they all start laughing? Big giant rolls of thunder in the night air, their bellies full of beer and their faces strained from crying and laughing in the same hour.

Yes. This they *will* do. Eventually.



## I Stand In The Corner

MATTHEW DILLON

---

I stand in the corner, not saying anything.  
Get in, get out, move on to the next patient... that's the goal.  
We turn on the lights, we look at the wound, we leave, rinse and repeat.  
As we walk out, the patient's eyes find mine, pleading...  
I fill in the silence, "Nice to meet you, see you later."  
"That would be nice, I don't have many visitors," came the reply.

The hours pass, I repeat my ritual of standing in the corner, not saying anything.  
The sun has now risen and fallen without my knowing.  
I want to go home. They let me go home. I start walking out. I sit in my car.  
Then the pain of guilt hits me. "I'll see you later," I had said. I remove the key from the ignition.  
What had I been thinking. I sigh and turn, walk back into the building. I hit the button for the 9th floor.

I reenter the room. "Hello miss..." What was her name again?  
"Hello" Came the reply. "I was hoping you would come back. Most don't."  
She meets me with a smile. I smile back. My heart melts.  
I sit in the center, talking with her.





## Oblivion

---

### ANNETTE HOUSE

Which of her cherished night dreams  
will most tenderly usher her  
into final oblivion?

She hopes for the tigers  
serenely pacing the wide terrace  
of black and white tiles

Power she feels in her bones  
luminous fur brushing her skin  
their destiny intertwined with hers

She will ask for a cocktail  
laced with mercy and ecstasy  
and wait for the last  
of her sleeping mind's creations



# The Human Eye Through a Window Into Nature

MARK RUSH

---



**Frost**

AREK WIKTOR

---



## Water to Live By

MICHAEL REGIER

---



# Fall in Gunnison County

CHARLES WHITMORE

---



## There Is A Street Between Us

---

SHAYER CHOWDHURY

There is a street between us  
Where we share mangoes.  
I bite into the flesh  
And you hide the heart beneath your tongue,  
Where resin-coated horse hair bows cross  
Spiral wires hanging over bridges,  
Where soft meets sharp,  
Where gratitude swims in my chest  
But apology pierces my pursed lips,  
Where you fold my paper-thin ear inwards  
Against silent shears that slice the edges of my hair.  
Since we last crossed that street,  
I have slept where mountains graze bruised sunsets.  
I have grown wisdom  
and shaved it off.



## Whole Lotta Love

SHAYER CHOWDHURY

---

"Whole lotta love!" You could still hear him  
Humming that famous guitar riff  
Before the corner turned,  
Before the smell of bread toasting in the 24-hour Subway,  
Before the last stripes of sun had sunk  
Behind a pair of shoes, knotted and flung over a telephone wire  
Tiptoeing along the mountaintops.

Led Zeppelin Dave sat on the metal bench,  
He beamed a crooked smile behind chapped lips,  
Held coffee in one hand  
And left the other palm open.  
He wore his heart on his sleeves  
And his sleeves for weeks at a time.

Behind his graying stubble was a reservoir,  
Behind his ribcage was a story,  
Imprisoned.  
His voice grew rust from sitting in his chest for so long  
But he spoke like an engine,  
With fire, with movement.

His speech was punctuated  
With sputtered coughs,  
Cymbals dropping on the floor,  
Static echoing through an empty room,  
A forgotten silence.  
He was my friend and he had a home.

And so you ask me why I'm here:  
Because I am helpless,  
Because I am lost,  
Because I am a child.

And so you ask me how much it costs:  
I will pay, I will pay, I will pay.  
Time will become my currency,  
And suffering will become theirs.

---

And so you ask me where I find time:  
It is tucked away in the soft promises we make  
And the oaths we carve into bone:  
"I will keep pure and holy, both my life and my art."

And so you ask me what is correct:  
As if there is a way to suffer correctly  
Without aspirations aspirated  
Like shouts left unbottled on distant shores.  
You lie in your bed and listen to the purr of the urban ocean  
Where cars come and leave like waves.

And so you ask me what field I'm leaning towards:  
An empty one  
Where grass sways and sweeps  
Like a wild horse's mane  
Under the wind's open palm.





## Music Therapist

TONY EDELBLUTE

---

When my patients call out to me in the hallway  
or introduce me to their parents on the elevator,  
I am either “the music guy” or “the music teacher.”  
Even though they are in the midst  
of learning how not to die,  
of figuring how to speak truth to their own power,  
rarely do patients address me as “therapist.”  
Somehow the title doesn’t stick.

The part of me proud of the letters I place after my name,  
the part of me cranky that I’m still paying off those letters,  
wants to say Hey! I’m more than that!  
I was a “music guy” long before I sported these credentials, and  
I was a “music teacher” once upon a time  
when saxophonizing in beer-smelly bars wasn’t paying the rent.  
C’m on, kids, respect!

The better part of me knows  
recognition is a doorway to relationship,  
knows that sending sounds across a room  
is anything but trivial,  
whether that sound is “Hey, I know you!”  
or a tentative backbeat on an unfamiliar drum,  
or Fur Elise but just the first 9 notes,  
or quiet singing that escapes nervous lips  
like a gray moth frantic for the nearest light.

We want to know the part that shines,  
the part that finds its way out of darkness,  
the part that is bigger than the bullies,  
calmer than the fights with my family,  
sweeter than my unforgiven past,  
kinder than my hatred of myself,  
more daring than this damn anxiety,  
more Jedi than the whiplash mood swings.

---

Some part of us knows that brilliance is our birthright.

If only the sun wasn't so bright and burning.  
If only vulnerability wasn't such a high dive.  
If only courage felt as brave as it sounds.  
If only the water wasn't such a shock.

So we practice.

We take hold of our breath and shake hands with space and silence.  
Sometimes we are the shout, sometimes we are the echo.  
No one wants to be alone in their rhythm.  
We find words that fit and make melodies of them.  
We join voices in the service of song,  
we learn that we each have a part to play.

We are nervous, we are vain,  
we draw ourselves out, we hold ourselves in,  
we shepherd the bits of sparkle  
into something that might light a path.

If this is what it is to be "the music guy," I'll take it.  
I'll put down these letters after my name,  
I'll let go of the word "therapist"  
if it frees up my hands  
to release the caged birds in your throat.



## Shark Attack

TONY EDELBLUTE

---

I have been prescribed medication.  
The doctor said "bipolar."  
The doctor said "mood stabilizer."

Here's the bad news:  
I think it's working.

Here's more bad news:  
I don't know who I am.  
I am floating on calm water.  
I am looking straight up at the sky.  
My frame of vision has no horizon line.  
I may as well be space debris  
floating aimlessly.  
No feelings, I mean,  
who feels anything  
anyway?

My moods used to be shark attack.  
My ups were frenzies at the smell of blood,  
my lows were deep murky water  
where any moment, great white jaws might close in.

Even pain can contain the comfort of the familiar  
and without the bone rattling shivers  
I'm not sure what living is.

As far as I can tell the person I was  
lives now behind plate glass, saying  
"break in case of emergency."  
I could wrap my fist in a rolled up shirt,  
break through this strange sanity.

I was 5-alarm fire,  
now I'm friendly reminder.

I was roller coaster,  
now I'm carousel.

I was life of the party,  
now I think of parting from this life sometimes.

I was whitewater raft,  
now I'm a rowboat,  
but see, the whitewater raft leaked.

---

At least this rowboat  
floats.

I am zoning out, watching  
the light reflect off the water,  
as the shark attacks happen below  
this boat's little bobbing.

I have to admit, I kinda miss the sharks.  
I can't promise I won't jump back in.

Maybe someday I'll buy a glass-bottom sailboat  
so I can watch the ferocity,  
so I can remember myself:  
the tenacity,  
the ancient persistence,  
the flight of prey as I chase.  
I am matter of fact,  
I am killing machine,  
and now  
I am kill switch.

I will watch  
thru the glass.

I will invite you to join me.  
I will cruise you out to the deep in my boat  
and show you how the sea makes no apologies.  
I will show you through the glass  
how the shark has survived prehistory,  
all that time between death and the future.  
I will show you how everything is eaten by everything else,  
how I am learning to surrender,  
and how I find this all  
as beautiful as it is terrible.

As I navigate my way to the far shore of sanity,  
I am still wary of rows of teeth appearing out of the murk,  
I am still prone to frenzy.

But also, I find the sunlight  
off the surface  
of the water  
to be dazzling.



## Just Words

CAROL EHRLICH

---

Words are not real...  
not the ache in the gut that lingers with loss...  
not the swell in the chest from knowing success...  
not the scent of cinnamon and coffee at breakfast...  
not the blazing gold of fall that takes my breath away.

Words are none of these  
yet with them I know them all.  
I can feel the ache and swell,  
taste the cinnamon and coffee,  
see the stunning colors on the mountainside.  
What power—words.

### II

Words are our tools. Our human tools.  
They let me pass wisdom to my children,  
and spill out joy, sorrow, anger—  
“I’m sorry.” “Please.” “I love you.”  
No limits to my reaching you  
with the gift of words.

Words allow me to dream,  
to carry my thoughts, my wishes,  
my ideas—  
even create them sometimes.  
What potential....words.

### III

Not always wise...not always what we intend  
when we use words.  
Sometimes cruel, sometimes twisted  
and twisting.  
Like a hammer, some words can bludgeon  
and damage.

Then again they can be gentle.  
Healing. A soft cocoon to shelter us.  
A needed breeze for comfort.

A mixed blessing, indeed,  
words are a gift with thorns.  
They are essential but...  
they require care...in the choice,  
the delivery, the interpretation.

Don’t tell me they are  
just words.



## In The End, Beauty

---

CAROL EHRLICH

"It's beautiful," our visitor breathed,  
Watching the children play in the yard.  
My son listened, curious.  
"What's beautiful, Mom? What is it?"

I took his hand, thinking hard.  
All around us, so much beauty.  
How do I choose, what do I say?

"It's there, Love, in all we do.  
We each decide what speaks to us—  
Color splashed on canvas  
or mountainside,  
Music in the creek's meander  
or choir's anthem,  
Movement in grace from pas de deux  
or windblown wheatfield,  
Yes, even the art  
in words of poets and orators,  
in help for those in need who haven't asked,  
In loving a child freely as a true gift from the heart.

You and I might not agree, son,  
But in the end they are all one...beauty.



## Tears

---

CAROL EHRLICH

Jewel-like, they slip out shiny, wet,  
easy, salted with human essence,  
free to carry the burdens of  
sorrow and pain  
outward  
where they can breathe  
and harm no more.

The soil from which they come,  
no longer leaden  
with its load of feeling,  
can regroup, restore,  
come new again with hope.

"I don't cry easily," Margo said.  
How sad.  
Without tears  
the lump in her throat remains an ache  
that lingers long,  
that holds her life hostage.  
Tears could flow to release the dark.  
They would wash out what she cannot bear.

I would give her the gift of tears  
if I could.



## Morning Dose

PAUL EIGENBERGER

---

Behind a plexi glass window,  
she hunches over,  
holding him with one arm

Struggling to find her I.D.  
she says her name, her dose,  
the centrifugal pump whirs,  
a machine for the math,  
endlessly counting drops of methadone

She knows it takes two hands,  
one hand for the red measured syrup,  
the other to gather water

You know it's important to wash out  
the stubborn remainder

I walk towards a heavy door,  
and press a button,  
it makes a sound like,  
a jail cell  
or,  
a chorus of cicadas

You handed me your son,  
dressed for fall and new snow





# The Dancer

JENNIE HAMMETT

---

She cries every time she remembers  
She is reminded by only one thing  
She sees the endings and not beginnings  
Wringing out

She forgot her husband  
But remembers her sixteen boyfriend.  
He had a convertible  
He spun her wildly when they danced  
whoosh  
Hot blood in her face

They had a secret code for when to leave  
And when to come back.  
Then he left, no secret code.  
He died while being a man.

She feels the wall with her fingers when she walks,  
Her IV drip very steady  
She wants you to know  
She was so pretty and spicy  
A real Italian meal, just like in a restaurant  
She wants you to know about her heart  
And how she came to love the mountains

She forgot her name and what day it is  
And no one reminded her today  
Her skin is peeling off  
Remembering that time in the sand

The economy of her tongue  
Knowing what matters, then the holes get in the way  
So bright, that silver,  
So bright.

The girls she knew  
Pink dress  
Snowcap  
Pink dress  
Smile.  
She really did enjoy the company of men  
Pink dress  
Remember your name?

---

Clambering out of bed again  
Those crazy socks do nothing for your figure.  
Going home  
My mother made applesauce again  
Or one of my pills tastes like cinnamon

Then I got to dance in Chicago for the people to watch  
Oh, my feet, these socks  
They really do nothing  
For the line of your leg.  
The audience would prefer  
A longer shin.  
I am pointing my toes as hard as I can  
My buttery arches displayed to great admiration

Her son comes by and toots a trumpet  
He has a name she thought up out of a book  
She thinks it is the name of a mountain

This walk is too long. Ouch!  
I guess I get to wear my nightgown all day  
I am not sick I feel fine.  
Walking in the mountains with my friend. I don't know his name, but the snow was  
shining like diamond.  
And my friend came through with this photograph  
So I would never forget.

That song in the distance—  
That song.

Tears and vomit are both body fluids—  
Output.

I remember her standing under the green awning of our house  
Looking at the first car on the block  
A Roadster, patent-pending.

Every night was some festival

All good forms of transportation must groan.

That tower is not a lighthouse  
It is dripping in my arm

---

*continued on next page...*

---

Return the compliment  
Come home and dance  
This medicine tastes just like cinnamon  
And big drops of honey  
This medicine smells just like a field of clover

I am so free now  
I don't have to worry  
Dance.  
My sleeper car headed west,  
Headed slowly along the rocking corridor  
Milwaukee to Montana

So I wear this nightgown all day?  
It does not flatter  
The line of the leg.  
It does not show my long, beautiful thigh  
And it is much too floppy to dance in.  
I used to have a dress—  
Could you bring it to me now?  
This thing feels like a cardboard box  
It really does not flatter the thigh.

My son toots twice  
He is a good boy, but  
This is not dancing music  
Don't look so sad.  
My pills are tasty  
though finding my dress would be a very helpful thing.  
I remember my breath coming in quick swallows no room for air  
And my dress getting tight

Ladies come around and say  
My food looks good on me.  
It really doesn't do much for the figure  
Still I won the prize  
For the best adorned

The lights are so bright  
But I don't want to read  
Just close my eyes  
And I wake up in Montana  
I decide the next stop  
It is Montana  
This car is rocking me to sleep  
These is something more to tell you  
sleep



## Two Rose Poems

JENNIE HAMMETT

---

Mrs. Judd brought blood samples home  
from her hospital job. Good  
For the roses, she said.

draining the blood to feed the roses  
giving new placentas to her trees  
the plants thrived and overgrew the house  
her children, when they came to visit,  
couldn't find her.

They give the blood you lose back to you  
in this way, you are both parent and child.

When we worked in the hospital, we thieved  
Linens from the laundry room.  
We knew the beds would never go naked  
My father strapped to his bed. A crucified Christ.  
"He tries to get up & walk around," the nurse explained.  
He had a bump on his head from falling.  
In a crisis, we can strip veins from our legs  
and put them next to our hearts  
the practical with the emotional.

Mercy with your shredded wheat in the morning  
Write "concert" on your calendar and leave it there  
Pick out a tune on the piano and go away.

---

Trees are blooming  
where I come from  
Roses dark  
red. They  
take the light inside  
up into them  
like a woman  
who might give birth to a saint  
or the sun  
we can see it  
translucent light glimmering  
through a petal  
it burns without scarring  
softly,  
softly  
then disappears  
into a dark velvet fold.



## Man Overboard

STEVEN R. HEAPS

---

When a third post-surgical  
rise in PSA earns me  
an invitation for  
an eight-week ride  
in the radiation Tilt-A-Whirl,  
I know I should  
ignore the extra  
chills and thrills with  
lovely names like  
strictures, fecal incontinence  
and rectal bleeding;  
should be grateful  
that it is possible while  
sun-burning my rectum  
(Dr. Lee's phrase)  
to ravage malignant  
adenocarcinoma  
with ionizing rays  
akin to those  
that gave Madam Curie  
her Nobel (before killing her),  
but it's hard to hear  
"salvage radiation" without  
feeling like a  
mud-mired,  
barnacle-crusted  
shipwreck.



## My Irregular Leaky Wonder

---

STEVEN R. HEAPS

Too focused  
on its latest leaks and  
ill-timed beats,  
I am reminded  
again to marvel  
at the human heart,  
fist-sized miracle  
driven by electric spark  
springing from within  
to pump life fluid through  
our Columbias  
    our Mississippis  
        our Missouris,  
down tributaries  
to flood the rete of  
hair-thin capillaries  
until a Baikal of  
red corpuscles  
one-by-one  
slip oxygen across  
membrane barrier to  
waiting muscle fiber  
and gland.

Whining when my pump  
sputters in its eighth decade  
is about as reasonable  
as chastising the  
'46 Ford V-6  
of my youth  
for needing a new  
head gasket and  
clutch repair, but  
I'll be damned if  
I can stop.



## Whiny Lifestyle Lament

---

STEVEN R. HEAPS

nothing is fair in terms of health  
the time you die's beyond your wealth

be active for your every day  
no smokes save first in bales of hay  
eight hours soft slumber for your night  
of red meat there's not e'en a bite  
munch green and red, orange and yellow  
perfect yoga till you're mellow  
relax, wind down, stay cool and calm  
immersed in ever-prayerful balm  
despite these plans, this style of life  
disease still slips through like a knife

your neighbor does advice ignore  
sofa-bound, movement just a bore  
brown stain lies upon his finger  
spot on lung will never linger  
consumes without desire's restraint  
watchful regimen all too quaint  
see him skate with no malady  
train-wreck near were he you or me  
and never think your rice and beans  
will ever trump his lucky genes

nothing is fair in terms of health  
the time you die's beyond your wealth.



## Buddy, Where'd You Put the Map?

---

J. NORMAN K.





# Colors of Nature

JUSTIN NGUYEN

---



TOP **Japanese-Brothers**

BOTTOM **Milky Went To Heaven**

---

KAORU IWANABE



# Layers in the Rain

MICHAEL AUBREY

---



## Stargazer

MATTHEW HICKEY

---

The approach was long and steep,  
above the tree line, where the air is thin.  
The hut is spare, the meal is forced;  
stacked on bunks, we chase fitful rest-  
Our minds on the ice, and the work that waits.

Midnight calls; we dress in the dark.  
The crunch of boots, and the first labored breaths.  
Headlamps like a train wind through the notch.  
Hours of this; then the glacier looms-  
whispering in the dark; is it me you seek?

On the border of two worlds; rock and ice,  
we don more gear, our boots now fanged.  
Rope, harness, axe, and anchors.  
The water's already frozen, and even thirst evaporates.  
Three on a team, and we step out on the sea.

The clouds have flown, wind pierces the dark,  
and beneath us echo the groans of the glacial crawl.  
The sky; bright and silent, beckons above.  
It's different here; The Southern Cross.  
This Andean canopy, with its own celestial arc.

And then a star streaks across the stage.  
Breathless; yes-this dancer draws a gasp.  
A flicker of astral flame; it winks, then moves on.  
The dark so clear, and silence that sings.  
Such rewards; why climb indeed.



## She Loved You Anyway

---

CAROLYN HO

When you were born  
You were mildly described  
As somewhat of a mutant  
With all too much hair  
And a set of two tiny sharp teeth  
That you immediately used  
To chew straight through your pacifier  
And she spent panicked moments  
Making sure you didn't choke  
On the remnants of your destruction  
But she just huffed  
And loved you anyway

When you were three  
You wanted to blow bubbles  
So, she mixed the bubble soap  
And gave you a straw  
But you were young  
And easily confused  
So you sucked instead of blew  
And she spent ten minutes  
Wiping up the bubbles  
You hiccupped out your nose  
But she sighed  
And loved you anyway

When you were nine  
Glorious, glorious nine  
You told her you were a ghost hunter  
Because it was the obvious best career  
And she spent months  
Oh so many months  
Searching for wayward pots and buckets  
Because all good ghost hunters needed helmets  
But she shook her head  
And loved you anyway

When you were a teenager  
You fancied yourself a woman of adventure  
An Indiana Jones of sorts  
And while you were older  
You were still easily confused  
And thought it was a good idea  
To test your theory of "expedited fossilization"  
Through the burial of chicken bones in the yard  
And while she spent that month  
Gagging through the scent of your experiment  
She just shuddered  
And loved you anyway

Then, when you were in college  
You thought you were at the top of the world  
But lost your way  
Because of your arrogance  
Because of your foolishness  
And in your anger and disappointment  
You blindly lashed out  
And spoke words  
Words you could never take back  
She turned and walked away  
And you later found her crying in the dark  
But she just wiped away her tears  
And still loved you anyway

---

And in these last few years  
When you stood in the midst of the chaos  
With your pressed white coat  
And shiny new stethoscope  
Dreaming of saving the world  
While fighting your fears  
Fighting off your insecurities  
You failed to notice her battles  
With her own subtle demons  
Like the ones  
That make it harder to walk each day  
Or the ones  
That bring more fatigue  
Where there was none before  
And the list goes on and on  
But you missed them all  
Missed the greying hair  
And missed the thinning skin  
But she still quietly moved forward  
Forgave you for your blindness  
And went on loving you anyway

And decades down the line  
When you will probably still be full of confusion  
Full of foolishness  
And full of faults  
Despite your best efforts  
And you will probably never be worthy  
Of all the things she has given you  
Of all the things she has sacrificed for you  
But you will always hope  
Will always pray  
Will always beg whichever higher power who will listen  
That she'll still be there  
To love you anyway



# Bill Me

RACHAEL RUFF

So you're saying it's something I can't see with my eyes,  
You're saying it's something in my mind...

*Yeah, but it's fine. Nothing to fear:  
abnormal is normal, it happens all the time.*

---

## F33.1

### Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent, moderate

*Good to see you again, how are things?*

Um...

well...

you know...

I'm still

quite tired and...

I don't like

those pills you

gave me last

time, I just...

feel

dull...

numb

*Hmm, have you tried any other therapies?*

...

*No. Well, I think I have*

## F41.1

### Generalized Anxiety Disorder

*just the pill for you!*

That's great and all,  
but what about my insurance?  
I don't think I'm covered so can't you just say it's for  
sleep or something?  
But what if they find out, what then? Something bad  
probably, maybe I just shouldn't do this at all what if—

*Hold on. Why don't we take  
a moment and*

---

**F43.10**

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

There is no Help I need  
You can't tell me I'm Weak  
Don't ask me to Talk about this  
Can't you see I just need Time  
to be Me again

*calm down?  
Now you can get the  
help you need.*

*It's not a bad thing*

**F90.9**

**Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder**

Hey mom,

*this is  
awesome!*

Are you sure?

check it out

*for him to be this active*

Sometimes I just don't know

Mom

*Well—*

*can we go yet?*

*there are medication*

Mom!

*What do you think those  
other people are here for?*

how to handle him.

*options—  
that we can try*

I want ice  
cream

*Can we get ice  
cream?*

*if you want,*

That could work

---

*continued on next page...*



---

**F42**

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

*I can  
refer you to  
a therapist.*

I don't want  
someone to  
tell me what  
to do. I don't  
want to be fo  
rced to sit in  
a bunch of g  
erms. I don't  
want to chan  
ge how I live.  
I just want to  
feel better th  
an how I feel  
now. I guess  
you can't hel  
p me at all all  
all.

---

*Well, thank you for coming in.  
I hope you have found what  
you're looking for.*

It's fine. I suppose  
I'll take this prescription,  
and you can

Bill me.



## Journey

---

### ANNETTE HOUSE

a woman's soul  
has been loosed  
upon the night wind

floating through her  
curved glass windows  
she has left her  
house of light

her soul rests lightly  
in its filigreed container  
edges adorned with  
complex fractals

purest notes of children's songs  
move through the  
crystal prism that  
is her core

radiance  
is nearly hers



## A Navy Corpsman but First a Nurse

SUE KAMMERZELL

---

I lay among my fellow marines, glancing around at the vast number of injured in the theater hospital. Moving my hands around my body, touching my arms, feeling my legs, embracing my face. Aside from a few bandages, I seem to be intact, I am alive.

I begin to recall the enemy attack. It feels surreal, so hectic, with no time to think or analyze the situation. The images, the adrenaline, the gunfire fading to white noise in the background. Thinking back to my fellow marines who quickly became my patients. I am engrossed by their faces, their life-threatening wounds, remember the pleading for help and treatment. After a brief, brisk, and focused assessment, relying solely on my personal and professional morals, I clamped the hemorrhaging arteries and provided nursing care while we waited for transport.

The marine lying on the cot to my left is missing his right arm, my hemostat remains clamped just below his shoulder. I wonder if he is right handed, I wonder if he will be able to handle his rifle again or even tie his shoes. I try to focus on his respirations, eupneic and his color is good. He appears to be sleeping but grimacing and holding his phantom limb. He appears hemodynamically stable and I think, I hope that he is going to live a long posteriors life.

Turning to my right is the familiar marine with grave injuries. He lays there with only one leg and no genitals. He is lying motionless aside from the rise and fall of his chest, he looks pale, probably needs some blood and oxygen. I question his prognosis, wonder if he will make it out of the theater alive, and I am not sure I want him to. What kind of life will he endure if he makes it home? And what about his family? Would they want husband/daddy back like this? Oh God I pray, what have I done?

Rotating supine and staring at the ceiling, yearning to focus on me, my morals, my ethical responsibilities. First a nurse, second a navy corpsman. My obligation is and always will be in the best interest of my patients. I try to recall the American nurses association code of ethics. Non-maleficence and Justice are the two that come to my mind. Avoid harm and equal, fair distribution of resources. Then I think about Paternalism, making diagnosis and treatment for the patient.

There was a threat to life, limb, and organ. Providing critical lifesaving care,

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I was able to degrade the medical evacuation from urgent to priority with the few hemostats at my disposal. Ethically, I never considered the long-term consequences of my actions, never anticipated future resources needed: Medical evaluations, surgical interventions, mental health treatment for coping, loss, and depression. Reflecting on the chaos, the split-second decisions, I knew that I could not fix this marine to get up and fight but could not take away his autonomy as he begged for help, all patients have worth and dignity (Fowler, 2015, p. 26).

I start to question my career, my own morals, my survival guilt. My mind wanders back to the triple amputee. My actions in saving his life may have ruined not only his but his entire family's life. The people who rely and depend on this marine. Possibly, examining the situation a few minutes longer would have led me to question the ethical obligation to the feminist theory when I had the chance. Looking to the left and then to the right, my mind is racing and I cannot think clearly. Letting him bleed to death would have been torture, putting him out of his misery is homicide.

Laying there surrounded by fellow wounded marines, I try to redirect my mind again to my own family. My ability to move my arms and legs. Selfishly thinking about my children waiting for me to come home, trying to envision my future. My eyes blur up and tears start running down my face when the commander appears standing above me and ask, "Why did you save that triple amputee knowing what kind of life is waiting for him? Why not just let him die?"

## References

Fowler, M. D. (2015). *Guide to the code of ethics for nurses with interpretive statements: development, interpretation, and application*. Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Association.



## Medicated

JOSEPH KARWIN

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

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

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

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

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

Really  
I feared I'd find sanity.



## When the Liver and Kidney Give Out

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JUDAS KELLEY

I'll always feel like I didn't prepare you the way I should have.

I promise

It wasn't because I didn't think you deserved better.

When we talked that morning, I was so fresh

So naïve.

My lack of knowledge is what misled you.

I am sorry for that.

I did not understand how bad things had truly become.

With clueless gestures

With subtle positivity

I made you feel like things could get better.

They couldn't.

This path had been set in motion

Years before we met.

When I came back with "our team",

I had only sadness to share with you.

Before stepping in your room, I had been educated.

I truly understood how sick you were.

My "team" decided I needed to tell you

You would not live to see a new year.

I had about 4 minutes to process this.

4 minutes to accept and be prepared to explain

We are not going to fix you.

I put on my bravest face and delivered the news

As best I could.

I will carry this guilt.

I'll always feel like I blindsided you.

I promise

It wasn't because I didn't think you deserved better.



## Hearing From the Far Side

LEN WHEELER

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I was sweating, despite normal room temperature. I was in the hot seat and was confined within a small interview room with a man who was clearly delusional, a paranoid schizophrenic. I had just come on to the psych service during my internship in Rochester, N.Y. I was scrambling to find my footing, and it was my turn to interview.

The name of my patient on that memorable afternoon might have been John Underwater, his real name being long lost. Conversely, I clearly remember the name of our psych Resident: Dr. Rod Katsman, who was a capable, take charge man who loved to teach, and showed our novice intern group unwavering respect and kindness.

Dr. Katsman suggested how the interviews were to be conducted. We would start by introducing ourselves to our patient inside the interview room, which was a closet-like area with minimal air circulation. The space was equipped with what then was a state-of-the-art feature: a one-way mirror. Dr. Katsman and my fellow interns could see in, but I could not see out. Neither, of course, could John Underwater. Sound transmission was meant to be unidirectional as well, but prominent noise from outside the box could still be heard within. Communication from the Far Side would not be concluded until there was a knock on the door by the psych Resident to let us know the interview should be concluded.

However, infinitely more onerous, damning and dreaded, was another message, even when only faintly discerned. If the intern in the hot seat was doing poorly, my fellow interns bearing witness would quietly groan, make faces, roll their eyes, change positions—and most significantly, cause their chairs to move noisily on the hard floor surface. This in turn sent an unmistakable, nonverbal message to the sweating novice on the other side of the Big Divide. If the chairs moved often and even in unison, the more empathetic became the message: *you are really screwing up!*

This was precisely what was happening that day during my interview with Mr. Underwater. I had lost my bearings, and wallowed like a flounder on some unfamiliar sea bottom. I sensed my patient was obscured by swirling sands in unfamiliar corral.

Before the interview, I remembered Dr. Katsman telling us that patients with major psychiatric disorders often were unable to establish eye contact. Nevertheless, I was still unnerved to perceive this mystery form before me, as he looked steadfastly at a some unremarkable crack at the bottom of our seaweed-filled confinement.

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"Mr. Underwater, what kind of work are you in?" (I thought the question was sufficiently non-threatening),

"I'm in dark work?"

"Dark work?" came my quick, too intense query. In addition, I had just telegraphed incorrect body language by quickly leaning forward in utter puzzlement. (Relax, Wheeler, futilely told myself. A deep breath was no help.)

A lengthy pause followed. I shifted in my seat.

Finally came "Yes?" His gaze was still fixed downward. The tide was rapidly coming in, filling the room. Drowning threatened me, and probably him as well. Then he added: "Dark all around me."

Long pause again. I couldn't resist folding my hands and surreptitiously checking the pulse in my sweaty wrist. My God: 110! My intern anxiety scale headed even further off-scale.

"Big building...," he went on. No light. Were enclosed..." ("So am I!" I wanted to scream.)

I was unable to raise his eyes, to peer into his sea bottom, muddled world. I felt I had to push on, asking for possible clarification, "Would you be able to, uh, elaborate on what you've just said—I, uh, I'm not quite clear yet..."

I just told you!" he responded angrily, showing his teeth. He then pressed his lips close together, scowling. (At least I could read that message. He's getting openly hostile. Octopus-like, will he dart out of his briny lair and strangle me?)

By this time, the chair-scraping messages from the Far Side had been heard repeatedly. Doggedly, I kept fumbling on, and eventually learned that Mr. Underwater actually worked in the dark room at Rochester's huge Kodak plant, stuffing film into canisters. That setting, a safe haven for low-functioning patients with major thought disorders, required minimal contact with other human beings. Minds filled with delusions, hands filled with repetitive tasks, for hours he would fumble under swirling salt water.

After a lengthy time, Dr. Katsman donned his diving helmet and came to my rescue. He knocked and entered, supplying desperately needed oxygen. I quickly surfaced and drew huge gulps of fresh air. Rising from my chair unsteadily, and uttering a totally false "Glad to have met you, Mr. Underwater," I stumbled out the door into the Far Side, looking for deep grooves under the chairs. A helpful lesson, learned in a then-unfamiliar ocean setting.





## Healing

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PRIYA KRISHNAN

Staring over the guardrail into  
the thicket of green, we shook our legs  
and chewed our lower lips with anticipation.  
In the distance, we could glimpse a  
twin waterfall churning and cascading,  
could hear its roar echo  
into a pool far below. Another hiker,  
clambering up through the woods,  
swung his legs over the rusted rail.  
"I saw an elderly lady climb down," he said,  
mopping the sweat from beneath his cap.  
"If she can do it, you can."

And so we gave ourselves  
to the mud and the roots,  
goopy patches of dirt sticking themselves  
to our hamstrings, crumbled leaves turning  
to confetti in our hair as we lowered our bodies  
down through the steep tunnel of forest,  
helped along by frayed ropes,  
their tails wound around nearby branches  
by some kind hiker before us.

The trees gave way to a vast turquoise pool,  
and I swam through the deep blue  
'til I was underneath the waterfalls,  
each drop like a music note,  
coalescing into melody,  
singing away all my grime.



## Little Earthquakes

PRIYA KRISHNAN

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The first time I see him, he is sitting upright, face pressed up against the bars of the crib with the peeling pink paint. His head bobs uncertainly on his neck, sending his bangs spinning like windmill blades. His eyes flit uncertainly around the room, settling briefly on a magenta bottle of hand sanitizer, a faded poster of dogs and cats playing, a nearby baby, but focusing on nothing in particular.

Beside the crib, beneath a broken plastic mobile whirring lopsided overhead, his mother snores on the unforgiving tile floor, an infant ensconced in her arms.

I never see him smile, never hear him talk. During rounds, a flurry of white coats surround him – *it must be like being in a life-sized snow globe, or a collapsing igloo*, I think – and he scowls, head wobbling. A doctor listens to his lungs with his stethoscope, and he whimpers.

Each seizure is like a mini-earthquake, his body twisting and thrashing to escape its confines, tongue gnashing against his teeth. One morning, on the staircase to the terrace, as the ground rumbles beneath, I grasp the railing as my tea makes oceans of itself, and all I can do is wait for calm. *Perhaps this is how it feels.*

No amount of CT slices, held up to the light every which way, examined and marveled at like the stained glass windows of Sainte-Chapelle, can reveal the swirling undercurrents of his story: an older sister lost in the earthquake, no money to defray medical expenses beyond this hospital stay, the looming possibility of being deposited on the doorstep of an orphanage along the dusty road home, the certainty of growing up with an intellectual disability.

The last time I see him, he is wearing what his mother tells me is his favorite outfit, a green T-shirt decorated with a big red dog that reminds me of Clifford. The hair on his head is matted; his mother, with the baby balanced in one arm, hands me the hairbrush. We smooth out the tangles, and long after his fever breaks and the doctor releases him home, he cries and cries.

Afterwards, his head lolls backward into a fitful sleep, a bewildered expression on his little face. I pray he has good dreams.



## Huntin' with Room 301

JOSH MARES

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The aroma from the coffee gave me even more excitement for the day ahead. I had been waiting for this day all week. We cleaned our shotguns last night, loaded the decoys in the back of the truck, and set the rest of our gear by the door. Even the dogs were ready for the day ahead. A day filled with shootin' the shit and shooting some ducks. But likely more shit than ducks. He hadn't been in awhile- life had taken some turns. But you'd never know by the look on his face as we planned this day.

I was up before him. He liked to sleep in. I was forced to become a morning person. I always felt bad waking him up but today was different. Today was the day! The day we had been waiting for. I put on my coat and opened the door to his room. He began to wake as I pulled my chair next to his bed. This was the day HE had been waiting for.

You should have seen him out there. He never missed a shot. Not even the drains from his abdomen and IV lines next to his bedside could stop him.



## The Moment You Realize You Are Free

SALLY PEACH

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# Window Shopping in Georgetown

MAXWELL LI



## Touching Death

ANDI HUDLER

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# San Juan Guardian

ERIC SAWYER

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## Catapult

RACHEL PAULEY

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I used to go to movies alone –  
to the art films where nothing exploded  
and nothing became clear at the end.  
I liked movies where people  
bought houses that were actively burning  
and Danish art curators  
contemplated what we owe to each other.

For a long time I avoided action movies.  
When the rugged protagonist  
slides down the face of a skyscraper  
as it collapses in a glass cascade  
sending shock waves through the city  
that catapult cars into the air –  
I'm thinking: life is so short.  
And crying.

In the hospital,  
when my patient told me  
that she was missing  
the newest superhero movie  
that she'd planned to see with her nephew  
who lived far away  
and was leaving town,  
I looked at the images of  
the bone-breaking metastases  
and thought about how much of life  
an MRI could catapult  
into the air.





## **Wamkelekile eKhayelitsha– Welcome to Khayelitsha**

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WILLIAM KROMKA

Reflecting upon everything that the South African township of Khayelitsha has left me with, and that I have left with Khayelitsha, is as large of a task as confronting it all in the first place. Over the course of eight weeks working in the Emergency Department of Khayelitsha District Hospital, I have felt inspired, empowered, humbled, confused, frustrated, and thoroughly moved, both emotionally and intellectually. The bounty of our human subjectivities and the limitations of the objective reality within which they must exist has never been clearer and felt so real.

Day and night, my mind is left flashing with images from everything that is Khayelitsha: a man laying face down in triage wrapped tightly in his blanket next to a pool of blood from his battered face that has been dripping for the hours he has waited to be sutured and cared for; an indistinguishable face calling to the countless deaf ears that pass by him as he clutches the prison-like bars of the district hospital's psych ward, known endearingly as the "thunderdome;" the look of sad acceptance from the eyes of a man with a broken ankle told he cannot have a wheelchair or crutches and must hobble his way out of the emergency center to find his way back home via public transportation; the smell of brandy and urine seeping through my N95 mask as a man jokes with the attending physician and myself as we sew his nose back into place after being nearly hacked off by an axe hurled at him in anger by his neighbor; a fragile woman, bruised throughout her body, bleeding from above her swollen orbits, describing the beating her intoxicated husband gave her; the feel of the veins of a cachectic HIV patient rolling beneath my fingers like undercooked spaghetti as I try to start an IV line; the man with the "township smile" thanking me for "making him feel like a king" because he was treated so poorly throughout life, telling me I "know how to treat a human;" the resilience of the 13 year-old girl still dressed in her dance team apparel while I splinted her fractured wrist; taking ECG leads off of a man as we closed the curtain around his bed to let him die; staring through the corner of a fogged facemask as I leaned my elbow onto a woman's stomach during a C-section, forcing out another baby boy into the world; the muffled sound of a patient with active tuberculosis gasping to speak behind the hiss of a nebulizer; the agonizing scream of a man covered in sand after being caught in a shack fire.

The extreme poverty, violence, disease burden, and segregation of the townships are exactly how it was designed to be. These townships were designed to be such places by malevolent, criminal, and sadistic social planners, politicians, and apartheid proponents. Much of this violence is derived from gangs composed of boys with no direction, no other option within an opportunity-barren landscape beget by a lack of community bond, itself a product of the destruction of vibrant communities by the Group Areas Act and apartheid policies. This poverty and marginalization doesn't seem like a tragic relic of a bygone era, but rather an artifact being actively preserved and restored in a new light, put on display in a different way. Unquestionably there has been a massive shift in society and people are no longer the apartheid era racists that they used to be; however, 20 years later, there are still sizable inequities that are too blatant to be ignored.

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Sitting on the rocks of Clifton beach #3 was a moment that captured the inescapable polarities and opposing forces at work in South Africa: the sun setting over the ocean in a peaceful, sublime way, splashing itself on the jettisons of Table Mountain, seemingly in sync with the rhythmic *snap* of the electric fence placed atop a layer of barbed wire, protecting the white family's beachside mansion behind me. Structural violence of this nature is not just an inconvenient burden that can be tucked away into the Cape Flats, Southside Chicago, the favelas of Brazil, or any other area. Leaving a portion of a society to languish in destitution will bear repercussions for all.

A transformation toward a more equitable society does not happen overnight; yet, as members of the global medical field, we can help galvanize it by mustering within ourselves the same self-preservation and fortitude exhibited by those who are marginalized. It is easy for a physician, particularly an emergency physician, and particularly a physician engaged in global health and working in a setting such as Khayelitsha, to be broken and grow jaded. Even within the brevity of our eight-weeks working in the emergency department of the Khayelitsha District Hospital, there were moments at the end of a trauma filled weekend that I began to lose the energy that brought me there. However, the intensity of these experiences also continually underscored how working in an emergency setting, or even a hospital in general, puts one at the receiving end of a large sieve that has filtered out the communities, relationships, and everything else that composes an individual and presented you - the physician, the nurse, the student, the technician - with someone at their most vulnerable.

At the end of a particularly violent and chaotic Saturday night at Khayelitsha, the attending physician solemnly told me: "What you witnessed was not the best display of humanity and you must remember to stay strong." I vowed never to forget that outside of these stabbings, shootings, assaults, overdoses, and preventable deaths lies a community of over one million people, a majority of which just want better lives for themselves and their loved ones. Every human desires a sense of safety, yearns to be loved, acknowledged, and protected. We have a common interest that we mustn't let be obscured by the more grotesque features of society that percolate in our emergency rooms and hospitals.



## Numbers

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LINH NGUYEN

How many pills did you take?  
At first, it's 15, then 20... finally, he admits to 40  
I look at the patient  
14 year-old biological female who identifies as male  
Tylenol ingestion with suicidal intention

Exactly what time did you take them?  
More numbers and more questions follow  
Acetaminophen level in the 80's  
Liver enzymes in the 100's  
Treat with acetylcysteine 4,400 mg over 16 hours

Why is your hair blue?  
The remnants of his Halloween costume this year  
His mom helped him dye it  
Liver enzymes in the 300's  
Repeat acetylcysteine 4,400 mg over 16 hours

What shows do you watch?  
Steven Universe and Gravity Falls  
We mourn the mere 2 seasons of the latter  
Liver enzymes in the 1000's  
Repeat acetylcysteine 4,400 mg over 16 hours

What are your friends like?  
He goes through his phone contacts,  
explains all the stupid nicknames he gives his friends  
Liver enzymes in the 3000's  
Repeat acetylcysteine 4,400 mg over 16 hours

What do you like to do?  
Drawing different characters  
We discuss how difficult hands are to draw,  
how much easier it is just to hide them, forget they exist  
When the liver enzymes reach the 7000's,  
I implore every higher power in this universe for their decline  
But all we can do is rinse and repeat, repeat, repeat

As a distraction, I look over his medical notes  
And wince when he is referred to as she  
Wince when they say as a doctor I can only think of him as a girl  
Wince when they defend their misgendering by saying he is too pretty,  
looks too much like a girl  
Wince when providers keep saying she, she, she, she, she

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When the enzymes go down  
Relief floods me, knotted tension releases  
Held anxiety heaves from my lungs and I can breathe again  
No more acetylcysteine 4,400 mg over 16 hours  
I stop obsessing about numbers→  
But then the attending says, maybe 10  
He was maybe 10 pills away from a liver transplant



### **Three Pond Park Spring**

TRUDI SCHMIDT

## The Ferris Wheel

ELI O'CONNOR

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Sounds swirl about me, a cacophony of colorful noise that is at first blinding in its initial synesthetic bombardment. The darkness, just seconds ago filled with a deep, ghostly stillness that thickened the air, is ripped away by a rushing symphony of motion. I blink, trying to whisk away my abrupt confusion, yet a flurry of images rush at me. I see my father's smile, so different than it is nowadays. This smile is younger, more vibrant. This smile doesn't know the pain and challenges that are to come. It only knows a forceful, wild ferocity that is all at once charming, and reckless.

I haven't seen that smile in so long. The memory brings a wash of pain—for what I'm losing, and for all I lost back then. I don't go there much; there is no need. The pain and misery I carried back then still defines me, but it no longer carries its home in my heart. I have my forgiveness, one that's allowed me to tuck that part of my past away.

So it is not the memories of that time that sadden me so, not really—just its stark contrast to the here and now.

The memories swirl further, sweeping me along. Now my father's strong hands hold me high, swinging me about as he laughs and I squeal in delight. Then it becomes dark, though this one far less ominous than the one recently torn from me. Stars flood across a blackened sky, the hazy-white spill of the Milky Way leading their charge. I hear his soft baritone, his nimble fingers plucking out a jaunty tune from his old wooden guitar. He sings for me and my sisters and the night.

What I don't hear is his wailing. I don't see his mouth stretched wide, contorted in pain. I don't hear my own cries, nor feel the hot rush of tears streaming over my cheeks. My ears are blind to the screeching chirps of the machines, to the screaming orders and the squeaking of soles against linoleum. I don't smell the dissipating odors of sterilization.

I'm nowhere near the chaos around me—its inevitable outcome so eager to unfold.

I embrace the night of stars and singing. I reach out for my father's hand—this one young and warm and strong—and I clutch it, following the memories away from here. I laugh with him, cry with him, tracing a long path backward, further and further. The slap of my feet along this trail grow louder, harder, faster.

Suddenly, everything becomes still.

The quiet is as deafening as the chaos was raucous. Yet here is peace. The seat I sit in is cold, but my chest is warm. The air around me is chilled, but soon a warm breeze lifts my hair, tickling my face with it. The world, so chaotic and frenzied up until now, is so very, softly, still. My eyes sweep the horizon, eating up the scenery stretching out before me. I can see it all. Everything.

"The world will start again soon," I hear from beside me.

I turn and see my father. We sit at the very top of a Ferris wheel, one much larger than any I've seen before. He sits in the open seat next to me. His hair is once again dark and thick, his bright green eyes clear and wide. He smiles at my face, and it is almost that smile from before. Almost. Youth resides in it still, but this one is softer, wiser. He tilts his head back and laughs. I cannot help but join him.

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"These moments are so rare, and have always been my favorite," he says, his eyes twinkling as they sweep the wide-open world around us. "Life is like a Ferris wheel. One second it's up, next second it's down. And it's always a whirlwind of movement and emotion. Joy, pain, laughter...tears," he turns to me, swiping a finger over my damp cheek, "It's often so confusing, and we tend lose ourselves in all of the commotion. But every once and awhile, life stops you right here, and when you look out—," he grabs my hand and I can feel his warmth, "everything suddenly becomes clear."

Warm tears slip from eyes, more gently this time. "I can see it. All of it."  
And now, finally, it makes sense.

"This is where I'll always be, sweetheart." The warmth from his hand is beginning to fade. "Right here in these moments, waiting for you."

My throat constricts, tightening with love and grief. I can only whisper the words *I love you*, which slip out of my mouth even as the wheel starts moving again. This time the blurring images and sounds do not startle me. I let myself fall into them. I move through it, until I find the silence once more.

This time the air is colder, more antiseptic.

I look up, my fingers clutching the pleather fabric of the recliner I'm perched on. The room is still. All the doctors have left. The nurses, too. They have left me alone with him. Left me, so that I may say goodbye.

My legs shake when I stand, not quite ready for this trek. My shoes don't squeak across the yellow-gray linoleum as I step towards the bed. Nothing looks disheveled, which surprises me. I expected some proof of the wild scene that I'd worked on escaping—something showing the mad rush to save. If I didn't know better, I would think my dad was only asleep.

But I did know better.

I lay my hand on his, which is resting on top of his chest. There is no rise and fall, but there is still warmth there. A single tear slips free, dropping on our connected fingers. "You were such a blessing in my life." I lean down, placing a kiss on his forehead. Like an overturned teacup, the angles forces more tears from my eyes. I clutch his hand, lifting it, holding it tighter as I straighten and stare down at his face—which is finally at peace.

"I love you, Dad," I say, around a throat too constricted for anything other than a whisper. My heart aches, and I collapse onto the chair placed by his side. I let my tears run free, unable to hold them back. "I *will* see you again—I know I will." I lift my head, and smile. It's not strong, but it's steady and true. "I'll see you on our Ferris wheel."



# Amnysthesia

SALLY PEACH

kreisler wore a coat the color of C-sharp minor  
the day we raced sailboats and slept in treehouses.

he was taking amphetamines  
and his heartbeat felt like discothunder,  
his irises the flavor of melancholy.

but by the time the sun rose,  
his lips were shadows,

then nothing.

a brief amnesia:

.

◆



# Running Store

MAXWELL LI

## When I Was 20, And This Was Still New, I Turned To You

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SALLY PEACH

from: sally peach <thepeach@mit.edu>  
to: capeach@carolina.rr.com  
date: mon, oct 15, 2007 at 5:42 pm  
subject: hi

hey dad,

i just wanted to see how you're doing.  
feeling better by now, i hope?

it's been a long time since i called you, sorry i'm a bad daughter like that.  
but...  
i'm sure you're feeling better now!

one of my patients died last night.  
i was working the overnight on the ambulance. sundays are generally pretty quiet,  
but you never know how these things go...  
we got called to "sudden onset death" at our medical facility on campus,  
and walked into a room with a patient who wasn't breathing and had no pulse.  
have you ever done cpr before?  
i have, now.  
it's funny how you don't even need to think, you just do it.

i've never had a patient die before.  
i saw a dead guy this summer while on shift. heroin od, doa, stiff as a board because  
the rigor mortis had set in long ago.  
but it's a little different when the life is still in them, and you can feel their essence  
just barely in the room...

i feel weird.  
i guess you feel less weird with time?

it doesn't make me want to work ems any less,  
it doesn't make me want to be a doctor any less...  
but i still feel weird.

maybe you can help?





# Letting Go

MICHELLE PINEDA

---

Beep. Beep. Beep.  
Never has there been no beeping.  
Not for a single day.  
High beeps. Low Beeps. Loud beeps. Soft beeps.  
An orchestra of beeps. Constantly going. Constantly changing.  
Beep. Beep. Beep.  
Tracking my every move, my every breath, my every heartbeat.  
My internal life always on display.  
Beep. Beep. Beep.  
Panic-causing changes.  
Too long. Too short. Too many. Too frequent.  
A rush of helpers. So many helpers.  
Beep. Beep. Beep.  
Familiar eyes looking down.  
So much love.  
And Pain. Agony. Helplessness.  
Beep. Beep. Beep.  
Maybe a break.  
A break from all the beeping.  
For them.  
Just for a moment. Just for a second.  
Beep. Beep. Beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee



## Remembering

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MARY POOLE

Will I remember, when I'm very old, our first sweet kiss?  
Your lips so soft, your cheek brushed mine. You pulled me close.  
Will I remember where we first made love, our hidden nest?  
Your need so strong, yet gentle, too. Our bodies fused.  
I will remember that you loved me then. So long ago.

Will I remember how you proudly brought me each new babe?  
The fuzzy heads, the rosebud mouths seek swollen breast.  
Will I remember when they grew up and moved away?  
A mother's joy. A father's pride. Our task complete.  
I will remember that you loved me then—we two alone.

Will I remember when our life was good and work fulfilled?  
Both at our peak. Our goals achieved. Then illness struck.  
Will I remember as your breath grew short, your heart beat fast,  
You did not speak, pushed me away. And then you died.  
Will I remember that you loved me then? I must believe.



## Heaven

MELISSA POWELL

I wish I could imagine  
you watching over me  
from some far-away place  
whispering encouragement  
and silent comfort

I wish that you could be  
an unbroken you  
to answer my questions  
and reveal to me  
the great truths of life

I wish I could believe  
I would see you again  
a tunnel of light at the end  
and you would appear  
to guide me somewhere new

but I watched you disappear —  
not in one awful moment  
but shrinking  
little by little  
until I looked away

and you ceased to exist



## Shore

MELISSA POWELL

Water caresses the sand  
gentle, fleeting kisses  
slyly stealing grain after grain  
with each cool sweep,  
stealing warmth with careful fingers,  
bringing gifts of beautiful green jewels  
to drape over the flesh of his beloved.  
Cool, dead diamond-shells  
and all the while he takes.

Hungry waves roll in  
faster and faster,  
begin to crash upon her rocky breast  
taking more with each icy breath.  
The sky darkens  
and he is relentless,  
falling upon her again and again  
until he has consumed the last of her heat  
and retreats.

And she weeps, her broken treasures  
reflected in the foamy water.



## Drawing My Legs On The Bed

KAORU IWANABE



## Pangea

MELISSA POWELL

---

The first continent,  
whole and close  
Mother earth and Father heaven,  
and I, safe in the middle

Cracks begin to form,  
slowly, barely noticed,  
until the fractures open;  
tendrils of water creep in

The gaps grow wider,  
the earth splits,  
violent tremors -  
shifting and colliding

Gulfs become oceans,  
distance grows  
and disconnected -  
all are now separate

Separate,  
but the shape remains  
like pieces of a puzzle  
spread across the floor



## Molt

HOWE QIU

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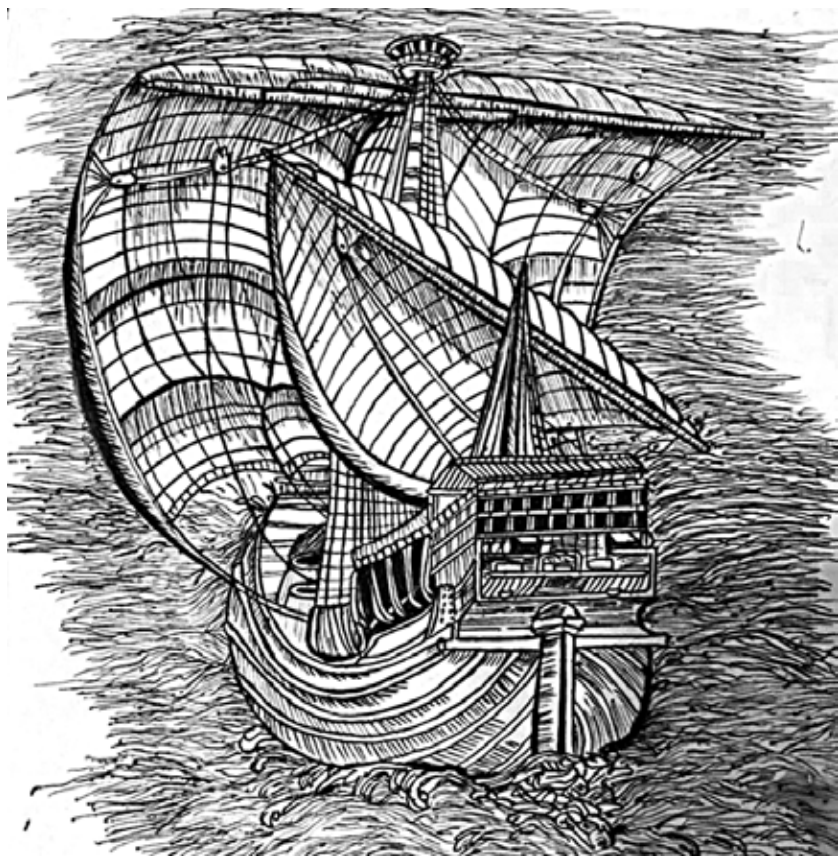
In this season, I am molting.  
Is there advantage in my vulnerability?  
I wince my eyes against both scorching and freezing winds  
Throughout this time of growth,  
Discomfort and doubt clung onto me constantly.  
Acceptance, coming to terms, remodeling  
Who will I be once a new veil of feathers clothe me once more?  
Will I be ready, when this season returns again



## Boat

CHHENG KUY ING

---



## Next Time

MEGHAN RALPH

---

As his face brushed my hand, I felt tears break loose and slide down my face. This is what I'd wanted, what I'd waited for, to be this close. It wasn't like I thought it'd be. There was a sweetness to it, but some was missing. An unseen hole in the bottom had funneled it away and replaced it with something else.

I tried to smile. I knew it would help him, I was hoping it would help me. It didn't. But I smiled anyway.

"It's time." Came a voice from behind us. I half turned my head and nodded.

His eyes were pleading. He opened his mouth to speak.

"Don't." I stopped him.

He shrugged and drew a breath. When his mouth started to open again, I stopped him again.

"I mean it. No." I said. He looked disappointed. "What could you possibly say?" I asked.

He started to answer.

"Don't." I stepped forward and put my hand to his lips.

He ducked away from it with a wolfish smile. "I'm still glad I came." He said.

My eyes slid closed. His voice was honey putting all the sweetness back where it was needed. Behind my closed eyes, visions of us played out and time stretched. He didn't leave. We found another way. Together, we walked forward. He held my hand. We laughed as we sat in front of a fire. There was peace. It was simple, he was there. And I, never again, had to try to smile.

---

I felt arms slide around me. I folded myself into the warmth of them.

“Keep them closed.” He said. “Don’t watch.”

He softly kissed my cheek, then both of my closed eyes, one at a time. And then my nose. Last, and I knew it would be the last, he kissed my forehead.

I let my arms slip from him. I felt the space between us increase, I forced my eyes to stay shut.

The light intensified, my eyelids filled with blue.

“Next time.” I heard him call. “Next time, I’ll...”

My eyes snapped open. The room was dark. He was gone.

I looked around. No one met my eyes.

I let out a breath, bracing myself, waiting for all the sweetness to bleed away.

It didn’t. Instead, I found a small smile settling on the right side of my face as two words repeated though my mind.

“Next time.”

I nodded to the space where I knew he’d been, though there was no longer any evidence of him in the world.

“Ok.” I whispered. “Next time.”





## Entrainment

RACHEL REVELLE

---

The music therapist brings her guitar into an ICU room.  
Monitors are sketching the rhythm of a human heart.  
She picks up the line, brings down the tempo.  
Rest, now; break, now, from the weariness of being here.

The cardiologist prepares for the next procedure.  
A heart is offbeat – a dangerous discord.  
A finely targeted burn could correct the circuitry.  
Singe, now; heal, now, bear the mark of an altered heart.

Family sprawls in the shrinking lounge space.  
Fear and fatigue contort every brow.  
Some wander – one to the coffee shop, another the chapel.  
Wait, now; pray, now, that life can return to (not quite) the same.

The chaplain and nurse discuss an idea:  
*Can we help him with the entrainment of his soul?*  
*I think the key is to slow down to hear it.*  
Here, now; pulse, now, with the sacred rhythm of a human heart.



## Veterans PTSD Group

MURRAY SALLENBACH

---

How is it so, that we can be  
So different from each one,  
And yet, we come each week to share,  
The many things we've done.  
We come from different service stripes,  
From places all around.  
Yet still we share a common feel,  
Somehow, we each have found.

We vets have been in service to  
Our nation's highest call.  
And given it our very best,  
For some, they gave their all.

Now facing life, disabled, all,  
The challenges are great,  
To come to terms with a state of mind,  
We often love to hate.

For who can know the things we've seen,  
The memories we hold.  
In color, sounds and smells so real,  
Sometimes we want to fold.

And yet, our service makes us who,  
We are for good or ill.  
Still we can find the best in us,  
To take and hold that hill.

That each of us must surely climb,  
To overcome our pain.  
So we can live a life worthwhile,  
And find our balance again.

Our service gives us strength above  
What few, but vets can know.  
With hope and trust in god above,  
We'll find our afterglow.



## To Be

MURRAY SALLENBACH

---

When life is good, and seldom tried,  
T'is easy to grow lax and slide.  
From day to day our path goes on,  
Without much thought of future dawns.

Then one day comes-a-trial great,  
A path for some, that sorely breaks  
The peace of mind once held within,  
Replaced with thoughts – “what might have been.”

Yet every challenge in our way,  
Contains a hidden gem that stays  
A part of who we then become,  
As step by step, each battle is won.

With sorrow, we may sometimes see,  
A part of who we used to be.  
Lamenting choices that we've made,  
And clearly see the price we've paid.

But through it all, if from within,  
We draw upon the strength to win.  
Our spirit will unconquered lean,  
When through the lens of knowledge seen.

Each step in life, a test we'll face,  
With strength from each, a quickened race,  
As body, mind, and spirit grow  
The seeds of mounting wisdom sow.

And so it is, this mortal plain,  
Is steeped in times of grievous pain.  
Yet from it all we come to see,  
The whole of who we're meant to be.



# An Official Reminder of the Most Important Thing

ARIAN KHORSHID

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Every great day begins and ends with a satisfying squeeze. Detrusor contracts, sphincter lets go, and, on average, 21 seconds of euphoria ensues. Days on which this ritual is neglected are decidedly bad days. This is especially the case for older folk, though you are likely young and may think yourself impervious—but, be warned! Enough of these bad days added together can equal a rather explosive day. That's when your kidney blows up. Except, yours won't. Because you have me.

I am bladder.

Keeper of urine, protector of kidney, and co-master of water in your body.

You have probably heard of me. I am a big deal. And sometimes I can become quite huge—more than a liter, in fact—due to too much intake, or more often in your case, daily field trips to various hospitals seemingly bereft of any designated bathroom breaks. And yet, when was the last time I failed you?

Oh, I remember! It was that time you were 4 hours into your 12-hour ortho stand-in after a 3-cups-of-coffee morning, and then suddenly you had urine all over you, but this never actually happened because I HELD IT ALL IN. FOR 12 HOURS.

What recognition did I get?

Do you even notice my routine heroics?

If asked to name your favorite organ, 90% chance you pick either heart or penis; you may even choose brain or breast, but literally no way you would ever consider bladder. This is very unfair. Despite a perfect service record since early childhood, I am neglected daily. The only time you acknowledge my existence is on your brisk walks to the bathroom.

I am not asking to be at the top of your priorities—second or third is acceptable. Please, think of me more often. A few, unhurried minutes each day, dedicated to bladder. Take care of me, like I take care of you. And together, we can enjoy many decades without infection or incontinence.

Your one and only,  
Bladder.



## In Life and In Death

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DELIA SHASH

Body already exposed  
Cuts already made  
I stand back, timid and slightly afraid  
Not sure where to begin  
The others dive right in  
Like an ocean to be explored  
I slowly lean forward  
Take in the scents and sights  
Someone needs to read directions from the computer  
I volunteer, still too timid to participate  
This is someone's mother  
This is someone's lover  
This is someone's sister  
Was  
This was someone's mother  
This was someone's lover  
This was someone's sister  
I take a deep, steadying breath  
Pick up the scalpel and tweezers  
And dive in  
She will teach me  
She will save lives  
This is her life now  
This is her death



## Sunset at Suppertime

ANDI HUDLER

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**Kilpacker Goddess**

KATHRYN UTSCHINSKI

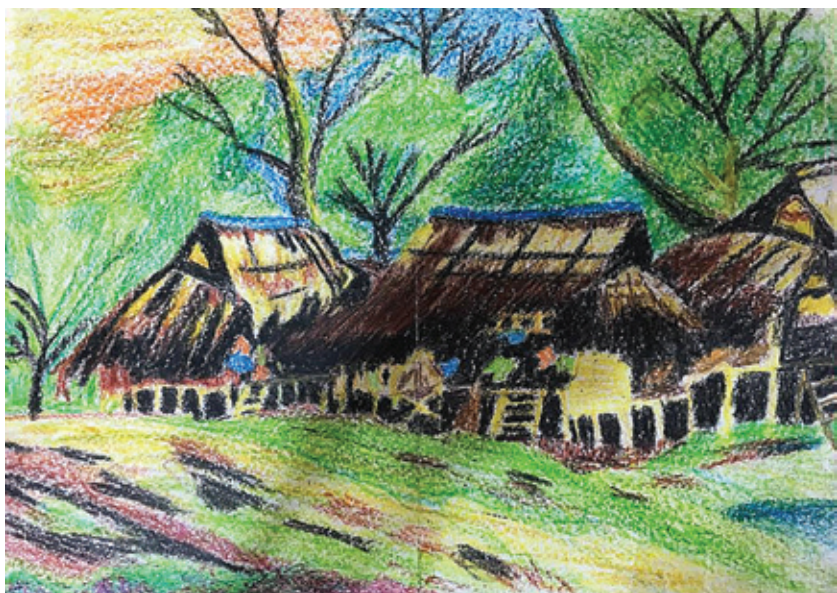
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## **Khmer Village**

CHHENG KUY ING

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# Pudding Creek Beach

JIM WONG

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## Life Cycles

DAVID SHEPARD

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A leaf separates from its twig,

Spirals to the ground slowly settling on a softened pile

An umbrella of snowflakes parachute to earth.

Autumn's long sunlight stretches far, elongating my somber thoughts

Thoughts of a colder time to come, insulate me from harshest Winter

The flat dim moonlight is frozen, while a slow extended

Nap awaits all mammals for a long hibernation.

Again Spring will refresh the trees with twigs and buds, furry and fuzzy giving way to

Yet another start, as if winter had been a dream, and fall had only copied the memories of

Eternities

A leaf attaches itself to a twig, tightly holding onto life.



## Love and Loss are Both Sides Now

NANCY SHARP

*I've looked at life from both sides now,  
from win and lose, and still somehow  
it's life's illusions I recall.*

*I really don't know life at all.*

*—Joni Mitchell, "Both Sides Now"*

Life divided for us after my husband Brett's cancer diagnosis, our fairy tale rendered imperfect. It was 1998 and he'd just been given the news that he had a brain tumor, a medulloblastoma, which typically affects children ages five and under. He was 32.

His prognosis? Well, it was hard to say. At least a percentage of children with medullas lived, but in adults, who knew?

"I'll do whatever I can to fight this," he said.

Surgery was scheduled the next week to remove the tumor followed by a year of radiation and chemotherapy. It was a grueling regimen, yet Brett remained determined, upbeat, focused. Within weeks he was back at work, at Time Inc. in New York City, helping to steer the company's pathfinder network, one of the first Internet portals. The work thrilled him and filled his days with purpose.

I was happy for him that he had a place to turn beyond his cancer, even though his optimism eluded me. *Really*, this wasn't supposed to happen. I'd just turned 30. What about the trip we'd been planning to Vietnam? What about our dreams of starting a family, buying a house outside the city. No, this wasn't part of the plan.

Some days my fears about losing Brett were so overpowering that I had trouble getting out of my pajamas. I worked from home, doing freelance PR, so often I never had to face people. Except for Tony, the kind Fed Ex deliveryman, who neither judged nor asked anything more of me beyond, "How are you doing today, Mrs. Sharp? How is your husband?"

The first year passed without any sharp swerves. All visible traces of Brett's cancer were gone and a new rhythm took hold. Brett felt healthy, strong, confident. He even got recruited to join Business Week, which he did.

Now there was an urgency to our love. Life was happening all around us and we were ready to be part of it again. Picture 1999—Y2K fever, the advent of Facebook, and the dawn and promise of the new millennium. Why not plan for the future? There were no guarantees, of course, but we so wanted Brett to be cured that we simply made it our narrative. *We made him cured.*

It was against this hopeful backdrop that we decided to have children. One, two, three times we went through in vitro, before getting pregnant with twins. To be back on the winning side of life again was miraculous.

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As it happened, life and death virtually collided some 30 weeks into my pregnancy. The twins were born: our daughter Rebecca came first, weighing a scant 2 pounds, 8 ounces, followed six minutes later by her brother Casey, slightly larger at 3 pounds, 2 ounces. There was so much bustle in the operating room and neonatal unit that it took hours for us to really believe that we were parents, and that the babies, while still seriously underdeveloped, would be all right. It was only later that day, May 20, 2001, that we relaxed, falling asleep in each other's arms on my twin hospital bed. Sometime later, Brett startled when his phone rang.

"Hi, Dr. Balmaceda," he said, looking at me with horror on his face.

*My mind shut down. I can't recall the immediate hysteria I must have felt, the betrayal, or the doubt that followed. Surely there was a mistake; the test should be redone. You were healthy, a father at last. Parenthood was our future—not cancer.*

*I do not remember the "we have bad news" phone calls to our families, or the way we must have held each other, with tears of disbelief running down our faces. I do not remember the way I might have clutched at you with my fists in tight, defiant balls, begging you to do something that you could not do: to take it back, to make your cancer disappear.*

*When I think back to this moment, when life collided with death, the abyss sucks me under. One moment we are on top of the mountain, having made the hard climb stronger and more whole. We stand appreciating the view until a vulture swoops down without warning and pushes us forward. We fall, and we keep falling.*

*It was all so haphazard, the ordering of our lives, the lack of divine direction, and our own human frailty. This is what unraveled us most. We felt that sense of vulnerability, of being disposable, impermanent, targeted.*

*Why, on a day of new life, were we staring into the rim of death?  
I didn't understand it then. I still don't.*

*\*From Both Sides Now: A True Story of Love, Loss, and Bold Living*

I never imagined loving my husband enough to want him to die, and yet so many nights I planned his funeral in my dreams. I had some perverse sense that willing Brett's death might prevent it from happening. None of it was rational, of course, but my mind played awful tricks on me during the many years he was ill, not just at crisis moments, but also over the long stretches of wellness. Just when I began to trust that maybe he—we—would get lucky, a screeching premonition came to me in the form of a violent dream, like the one in which an old acquaintance broke into our apartment and began tearing out our bathroom fixtures while we stood mute as victims.

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By Thanksgiving of 2003 everything exploded; new tumors had grown in Brett's brain and down his spine. Enter Norma, our hospice aide, who was built like a linebacker, ready with a firm arm to catch him each time he stumbled against the walls of our apartment. What mercy that Brett seldom knew he was home.

Some two months after Norma came to us, Brett had a grand mal seizure. It happened at night, when the twins, now two, lay sleeping in their apple green bedroom. The ambulance took him to Cabrini Hospice and then to his final resting place at Calvary Hospice in the Bronx.

Each morning I'd arrive at his bedside, room 443, to find him dozing with his torso elevated, head propped against a flattened pillow and pale arms resting limp at his sides. Normally his eyes fluttered when I entered the room, but sometimes, when he slept heavily, I'd lean over and whisper, "Brett, I'm here," so that he wouldn't startle.

I trusted such moments, when he felt my presence, even if he was unable to convey how he felt in words. By now, the demon tumor had rendered his speech unintelligible. Everything was mangled together for him, the doctor said, his brain a patchwork of crossed wires, and eventually he stopped trying. It was only yesterday, it seemed, that his wavy chestnut hair dipped over his eyebrows, his green eyes brightened when he told a joke, and his midriff offered a generous inch to hold. He wasn't that man today: he was bald and scarred and gaunt, his eyes muddy and lined with dark circles beneath.

Still, he was my world.

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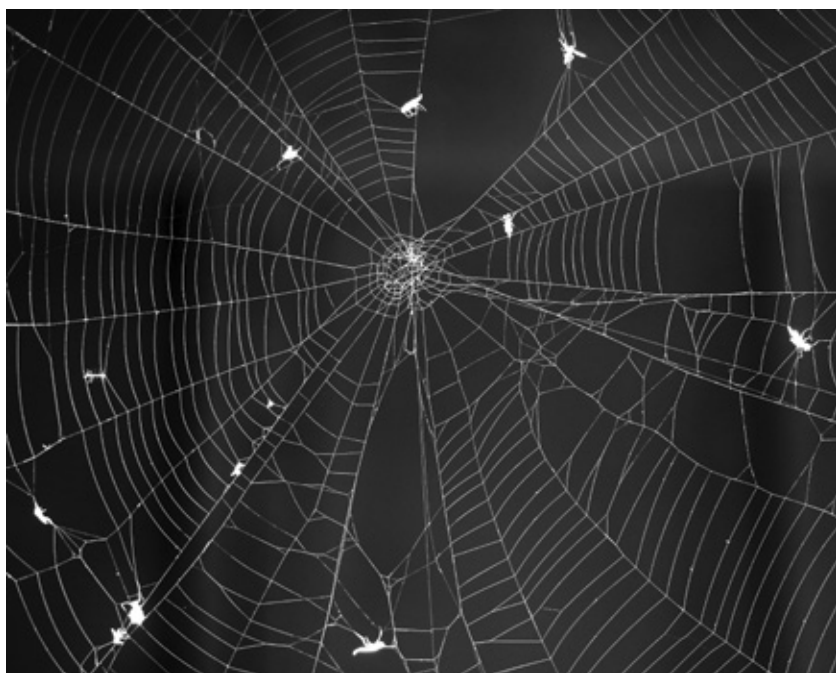
And when it was all over, and we buried him at the plot in Long Island that his parents purchased, there was the very daunting work of mourning to be done. Everything was real.

Love as I'd known was not in our apartment, not in the hospice, not on Earth. In its place was a cavernous space that would take long months to fill. I couldn't have realized then how life would be forever tinged with gray.

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But love was so much fiercer and more mysterious than I recognized. It presumed itself when I could scarcely mother my children, times I felt the tiniest flicker of gratitude when my three-year-old twins tugged at my knees insisting on being held. It presumed itself when I had trouble making conversation, when a neighbor whom I barely knew gave me the key to her penthouse apartment so that I could enjoy the sunshine and flowers on her patio. It presumed itself when an old colleague offered me a part-time job with health insurance so at least *that* worry would be lifted. Friends brought meals, drank wine with me, and assembled Ikea furniture. Siblings took the twins on afternoon excursions and beloved grandparents hosted weekends to give me a break. Love was always there, even amid numbing pain.

In time I would come to live by Joni Mitchell's words: *"Well something's lost but something's gained in living every day."*



## Life and Death

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GEORGE HO

# The Forever Journey

JENNIFER SMIDT

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I slowly sat down as the call ended. I heard the words being spoken, but was unable to comprehend them.

I desperately grasped to try and understand, but only knew today might not end as I previously planned. My life forever changed it seemed and made me wonder what will be.

The blue chair engulfed me as I put my feet up in the air as if I were at home in my reclining chair. Looking at strangers who surrounded me, searching for my husband to find comfort inside me. My chest bared for all to see this foreign object which protruded from me. A needle entered my body and fluids filled my veins. A second bag arrived which bared a foreign name, it came wrapped and hiding in a brown plastic bag.

This process was now my reality.

The poison slowly trickled from the tubes and into my body. All I could think of now is what would happen to my body. The genetic report in my hand shouted my ultimate fate, and I had to swiftly look away.

The sun faded to night with no change in sight. The days passed by like freight trains racing into the night. Head pain. Aches. Side Pain. Confusion. Fatigue engulfed me like an optical illusion.

Aloneness continues to shout its name to me.

The tests. The numbers all have become my reality. The bathroom had become my normal scenery.

Rareness wasn't the gift I'd dreamt it to be. Knowledge unavailable to me. The unknown continued to surround me.

I'm strong and must go on. I wait for day's end to seek rest and hide in false normalcy.

I sit as a shell of who I once was, looking in the mirror at who I now see. Wondering what happened to me.

I struggle to find peace and adjust to the new me, trying to find acceptance of what was now to be.

I stand up. Find strength to journey a bit farther. I must stay strong and fight a little harder.

I ache for moments and memories and search for joy and positivity. Needing to touch one more life and love one more time before eternity.

The journey is not so long so it seems.

I fight to find hope. I fight to continue life. I fight to ensure I continue to see Luna shine bright each night.



## Reincarnation

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KEVIN BUNNELL

Here under the bridge  
the creek runs easy and clear.  
On the other side lies  
a monument to September mayhem.

A pile of twisted, crushed and weathered branches  
awaits its next incarnation.

Flood water flinging wide its angry arms  
amassed these tender trees,  
ground them with stones and mud  
and threw them thoughtlessly aside.

Today they shelter a quartet of songbirds.  
Invisible in the wreckage,  
a cello buzzes and a violin sings the melody.

These joyous songsters  
are safe in their new concert hall.  
They know nothing of the mayhem that shelters them.





## This is Heartbreak

SHANNON SON

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I love my job. Ask anyone who knows me and they will tell you that I am a fiend for obstetrics. I crave it and can never get enough. Maybe it is the emotion, witnessing these beautifully strong women transition into a time like no other they have experienced, convincing themselves that they are not capable or strong enough, but are ultimately triumphant, exhausted, and in love. Maybe it is the adrenaline rush, the surge of knowing that split second decisions can change lives for the better or the worse. Maybe it is the challenge, knowing that I can always do better, provide more compassionate care, give more to my patients, be a better surgeon, a better doctor, a better person. Something about the experience is entirely unexplainable and unattainably addicting.

And then you have shifts like the one I just finished.

Usually a butterfly is a joyous sign. In obstetrics, however, when patients come in with a fetal loss, a picture of a butterfly is placed next to their name and on their door to symbolize a loss. Each time I see this, my heart drops. Losses come in all shapes and sizes, all magnitudes, and they come to all people in different ways. I have never lost a baby of my own; I have never had to grieve the physical and emotional pain while also trying to filter all of the “why” questions from family and friends who are grieving. I have never had to go home and box up baby clothes for a child that will never wear them. As a provider, however, I have borne witness to many losses. As much as I try to desensitize myself, the ache never leaves me.

Yesterday, at the start of a 24 hour call shift, I walked onto labor and delivery optimistic about the day ahead. I looked to the patient census and I saw three separate butterflies. My heart sank. Three women, and their families, who at the start of their day thought that they were going to have a normal uneventful Saturday, instead had a day filled with tragedy.

I don't know how to explain what it is like to deliver a baby that is not quite far enough along to survive. These babies, often born moving and with a heartbeat, will not survive even the most intensive resuscitation efforts by experts. They are just too early. Extensive counseling provides information to families so that they understand that sometimes these babies live for moments or for an hour, but not long-term. As much as you try to prepare a mother to see her baby born, moving and gasping, there is nothing that will truly make her ready to watch her baby die. No matter the length of time that their baby lives, there is an inevitable moment when the mother clings to the hope that a miracle will happen, that by some powerful act, her baby will survive, her baby will be the first.

THIS is my heartbreak.

At the start of my shift, of the three butterflies on the board, two had delivered and one was still laboring. Shortly after arriving I was called to the labor room. The patient was bleeding, a lot. When I entered her room, I introduced myself and apologized for all that she had been through already. I told her that I was there to help in any way

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that I could. I told her that nothing I could say would make this easy for her but that I would do my best to help her through this.

I make sure that every woman I care for knows that I am there to care for HER in a way that is as much in line with her wishes and goals as possible. It is her body, her pregnancy, her labor, and her baby. She calls the shots. In cases of loss, in many ways, “the shots” have already been called for these women and are beyond their control. They didn’t choose to have early labor or to have a baby die, so if I can provide them with the tiniest piece of control in a situation full of chaos, I do.

I had approximately 15 seconds to try to do all of this for my patient, in Spanish. I wish that I had longer. I wish that I could have spent time sitting with her to thoroughly reiterate the associated complications with delivering a 21 week baby, but she had already bled a liter and I didn’t have the luxury of time.

I see a lot of bleeding in obstetrics and am accustomed to walking through a very quick evaluation and action plan. In this situation, it was because her placenta was separating away from the uterus; her baby was coming. As she was sitting in a pool of blood, I asked if I could examine her. I went on to discover that her baby was delivering while still in the bag of fluid. That little baby, a boy as I would soon find out, was kicking and moving in this bag as he quickly moved from the protective environment of the uterus to the outside world. Before this, we didn’t know if the baby would be born with a heartbeat and movement or still and lifeless. In a moment of pause before the baby delivered, I reiterated that her baby would likely be moving when he or she was born and that, while these were true movements, it did not mean that he could survive. I asked her if she wanted to see and hold her baby, she said “no.”

He delivered, quickly. With a single finger, I broke the bag of water open and brought this baby from what is supposed to be a safe environment into the place that he would ultimately die. Because his mother was not ready to see him yet, I held him low, out of her view. I held this beautiful little boy. As family members cried, I quietly told him that I was sorry. I gently rubbed his back and tried to provide comfort to him. He gasped, his heart beating, and he moved--a lot. Minutes later, we clamped and cut his umbilical cord and passed him to one of the nurses who swaddled and cared for him. He lived for over an hour; through it all he moved. No matter how well prepared they are, the families nearly always ask “Are you sure he won’t survive? He is still moving and trying to breathe.”

THIS is their heartbreak.

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I then got called to another room for one of the other butterfly patients that delivered prior to my shift. I hadn't met her yet but the second that I walked in, I could tell that she was not happy with me. I hadn't been in the delivery of her pre-viable baby but, because I was a doctor, she felt that I had failed her. After talking to her family, the patient felt strongly that her baby should have survived and that we just let her baby die. She told me that her family said we could have saved the baby but that we just chose not to. She felt that we didn't give her baby a chance, that if we had just done our job, her baby would have survived and would grow up to be a normal child, teenager, and adult. These words, flying through the air at me like daggers, came from a place of grief. I tried to reassure her that her baby was far too early to survive and that she did not cause this. She yelled at me, saying that I was **WRONG** and that we were not good doctors. When I told her that I was sorry, she told me that I was lying.

THIS was her heartbreak.

I walked away from that shift having experienced the extremes of life and death in one 24 hour period. I helped to bring five healthy babies into this world while also helping a family transition into what is likely to be one of the hardest times of their lives.

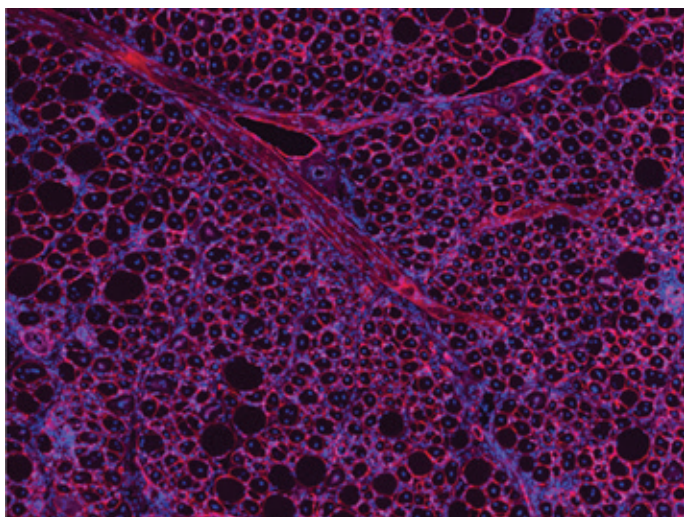
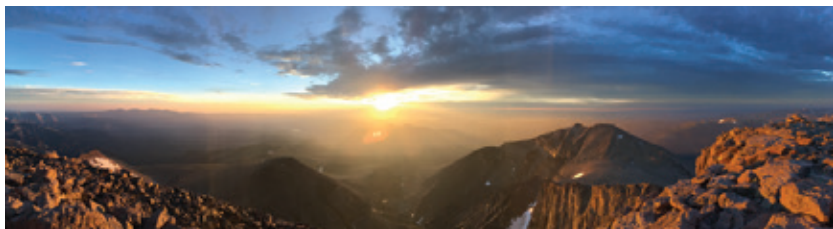
So yes, I love my job, but it does not come without heartbreak. I feel fortunate to share such powerful moments with women and their families. Sometimes these moments are rainbows with a beautiful healthy baby at the end and sometimes they are butterflies. Each event is powerful, impactful, and emotional. As providers, we too carry these losses, we grieve them, but even after shifts like this, it is truly an honor to be in this field and I am incredibly lucky to be part of it all.

**Dedication:** This reflection is dedicated to John Voetelink CRNA, who, through the years, provided compassionate, individualized, and genuine care for all. John taught me more than I could have ever imagined and I am forever grateful. I will carry his lessons and smile with me always.



TOP **Sunrise from Longs Peak**  
BOTTOM **Regeneration of Muscle**  
THOMAS VOGLER

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# Get Lost in Nature

JUSTIN NGUYEN

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## Gloucester

MAXWELL LI





# Frameshift Mutation

TAM MINH NGUYEN

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## A Dawn After a Death

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KELLY STANEK

Morning blue  
Mourning blue  
How it paints the room  
All grayscale  
With a touch of blue  
It recalls sorrows past  
And hope anew  
As the wavelengths widen  
And light reveals reds yellows purples  
And more shades of blue  
The midday sun becomes a broom  
Sweeping away the morning gloom  
The distinct  
Morning blue  
Mourning blue





## On Strangerhood, Intimacy, and Fake Pee

READE TILLMAN

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It was Saturday night, trauma unit 1. A 26-year-old female was brought in by ambulance from a motor vehicle crash (MVC). We gathered in the trauma bay waiting for the paramedics to arrive; as they rolled her in, the beautifully synchronized chaos began – doctors calling out findings on their primary survey, nurses reporting vitals, paramedics giving the handoff to the hospital team. I cut her pants off with my trauma shears and helped turn her so we could examine her posterior. She was writhing and moaning, maybe from pain, or maybe from the ketamine that was given to her en route. As the team moved on to the secondary survey, I was called away to a septic patient in the next bay over, then to a kid who had been hit by a car, and later to a cardiac arrest. I never saw her again during that 10-hour shift. To be honest, I forgot about her.

Sunday morning, I came back to round on some patients I had met during my Emergency Department (ED) shift; Charlie, a 50-year-old man in cardiac arrest, whose heart I helped come back to life, whose wife Mary in Indiana I talked to on the phone, and whose son Adam I talked through an anxiety attack. Then Margaret, the 77-year-old lady whose hand I held underneath the sterile drapes while she had a central line placed. I looked up their room numbers in the medical record system and noticed on the list a patient I recognized – 26-year-old, MVC, admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) the patient I had forgotten about. I didn't recognize her name, because I had never known it in the first place.

I went upstairs and rounded on Charlie in the cardiac ICU, and met his wife Mary; she gave me a big hug, and we chatted for an hour. I rounded on Margaret, who thanked me for holding her hand during the central line placement. Then, I looked down at the last name on my list: the 26-year-old MVC patient was named Jasmine Sanchez. Even though I barely met her in the ED, I decided I might as well make one last stop.

I walked into the ICU and introduced myself to Jasmine's nurse. She said, "I'm so glad you came. It's just so sad – no one will come to see her." I walked into the room and introduced myself. "Hi Jasmine, my name is Reade Tillman; I'm a medical student who met you in the ED last night. How are you feeling?" Just then, the surgeon came in to round on her; he looked at her, said a few sentences, watched the Broncos game for a minute, and walked out. As he left, Jasmine asked me, "Who was that guy?" I told her a little about what happened in the ED last night, and what I had read in her chart about her injuries. She had several vertebral fractures, a grade 3 liver laceration, and some rib contusions. She was still in a C-collar, and her hair was matted. When I asked about her family and friends, she began to cry.

Jasmine moved to Colorado from the Midwest a few years ago with her boyfriend, and is estranged from most of her family. She and her boyfriend had been fighting when she was in the accident, and despite her calls, he refused to come see her. I gave her a tissue, and held her hand. She kept crying, and I kept standing there, and we both kept not talking, for 45 minutes. She asked about her car, and her possessions; EMS had not brought her wallet, her purse, or her phone. I said I didn't know, but I could try to find out. I told her she needed a new boyfriend. We made small talk for another 15 minutes or so, about the Broncos, about Colorado, about

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her new job, about the random events in my week, anything I could think of; I even showed her pictures of my nieces and nephews. All of a sudden, this girl I had forgotten about was Jasmine, my friend.

Over the next couple of days, I worked with Jasmine's nurse and case manager to get a notarized letter that would allow me to pick up her belongings from her vehicle at the tow truck lot. When I stopped by the hospital early before heading to my regular clinic, Jasmine was in surgery; I left her a note, saying I picked up the letter and would be back soon with her belongings. The letter, stamped and legally notarized, said, "Reade Tillman has permission to pick up my belongings from my car. Reade Tillman is my nurse."

I drove to the towing company's property, and they led me to her gold minivan. It was completely totaled, and I had to pry open the driver's side door to get in. I spent an hour scavenging through her trashed car for her personal belongings; it was an incredibly intimate look into the life of someone I barely knew. I grabbed her clothes, her car insurance documents, anything of value that I could locate. Her phone was completely smashed up, and hidden in one of the side pockets. There were wrappers and trash intermixed with the parts of the engine that had broken off in the crash, covered in oil, and way too heavy for me to lift. I wished I was wearing something other than dress pants and a blouse.

I couldn't find her wallet, so I kept digging. The central console had a small container of fake urine in it; the price sticker was still on it. Apparently fake pee costs \$8.99. I remembered reading in her chart that she had been positive for marijuana and alcohol when she arrived at the ED. I looked in the backseat, and found a piece of paper with various things scribbled in red ink – things like, "he can't treat you this way," and "He takes you for granted." I doubted she ever imagined that a medical student she met twice, only once worth remembering, would be seeing these scandalously intimate parts of her thoughts, of her life. Should I bring them with me? Would she want them? I brought the paper, but left the fake pee.

I drove back to the hospital, and carried in bags of Jasmine's belongings. I never did find her wallet, so I called the police department and the sheriff's department, trying to track it down. They asked me what her social security number was, or her drivers license number, or where the accident happened, which law enforcement jurisdiction she was in. "Her name is Jasmine Sanchez, and her date of birth is June 2, 1991. That's all I know, I'm so sorry," I had to say, because the truth is, I really don't know Jasmine. I have no idea what happens when a car crashes and EMS takes the patient; I am the least qualified person to be doing this, I thought. It felt odd for me to carry a stranger's belongings up the stairs in the hospital, as though I were her emergency contact. She was still in surgery when I walked up to her room. If I stayed any longer I would be late, so I left her things in her room and went to clinic – back to business as usual.

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*continued on next page...*

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The next day I stopped by again, and found Jasmine in her room. Her c-collar was off, the surgery was successful, and she was grateful to have her belongings. I apologized for not being able to find her wallet, and gave her a few numbers to call. The minivan was in bad shape, I told her, probably totaled. Her boyfriend still hadn't come, 5 days later. A recent social worker had noted that she was planning on staying with the boyfriend on discharge, and my heart sunk. I reminded her one more time that she deserved a better boyfriend. She thanked me for getting her things, and said no one had ever done anything like that for her before. Jasmine discharged before I got to visit her again. I'll never know what happened to the boyfriend, but I hope she dumped his ass before she even left the hospital. I went from forgetting about Jane Doe in the ED, to holding Jasmine's hand while she cried, to digging through her smashed up minivan for personal belongings, to deciding what to do with her fake pee, to likely never seeing Jasmine again. She and I experienced such extremes of strangerhood and intimacy in only 72 hours. But what a privilege it was, to be there for her when she had no one else, to advocate for her, to go a little (or a lot) above and beyond on her behalf, to see the inter-workings of this stranger's life: this is why I chose medicine.

**Author's note:** All names, dates, and identifying information have been changed to protect patient confidentiality.



## Salt

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STEPHANIE TORRES-NEMETI

He said I was salty  
Like the sea  
Punishing but unavoidable

He said I was disarming  
Like the waves  
Playful but catastrophic

He thinks he knows me



## Barriers

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SHARON WHITE

A knock. The moment before entering- my anticipation, knowing that there is a brick wall beyond the door in front of me. A frustrated look as she sees me entering the room, another barrier to meeting with her doctor. So it goes each time- three times now.

We have developed a dance that starts with me on my tiptoes, her with her arms crossed. I sit as she motions and postures to let me know she is upset, that she is in pain, and that I am not there to help her. I mirror her- you are upset, you are in pain, and you are frustrated because you feel that I cannot do anything to help you. And suddenly, we are in step.

We move as one jutting out hip, shoulder, then back. We describe each painful detail. We plan our next steps.

I leave the room, satisfied that we have made it through the dance. Knowing, though, that despite this rehearsal, that despite the other two, the opening moves will still be awkward and out of sync. A knock. Me on my tiptoes. Her with her arms crossed.



## Lets Pretend We Dont Exist

SHARON WHITE

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## L-Dopa

CHARLES WHITMORE

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he was crippled by a tremor  
shuffled gait and lacking affect  
he would try to force a smile  
while feeling stranded, trapped, and tired

walking once was simple, mindless  
never mindful of those actions  
now you lack the drug L-Dopa  
and your life is left in shambles

sliding down a sloping timeline  
towards that plot when sleep will take you  
never waking from your future  
stripped and shuttered –nothing's left



## Run Far From Home

CHARLES WHITMORE

---

Run far from home  
Once troubled by  
The light of those  
Whose fears were lies

You've seen more now  
Than those before  
Who've brought you here  
To rest no more

In darkened rooms  
With heavy doors  
That sweep across  
These polished floors

Locked up by law  
For fear you'll die  
By your own hands  
Or those nearby

My mental health  
Keeps us contained  
Whose thoughts and moods  
Must be restrained

Locked up by fear  
One lives in doubt  
About the ones  
Who wield such clout





## Neon Blues

LINDSEY WHITTINGTON

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He was meticulous, unforgiving, but soft. His fingers were an extension of himself, moving methodically as if they had their own tiny beating hearts. She took a long sip of her drink, her back to him as he played. She would imagine resting her arm gently against the wooden side of the piano where he sat, leaning in, smile shy, lips quivering. What would she say to him? Maybe there would be no need for words at all.

Instead, she listened to his flourishes from her place at the bar. She swirled the drink in her hand in long, drawn out circles, wondering if she would ever reach the bottom of her glass.

The lights were low, the neon behind the bar bouncing off the flushed cheeks of the patrons. Her face was shadowed as she turned to see him. His legs were spread outward on the cushioned seat at an angle, his hips thrust lightly forward with his back hunched over the breadth of the keys, his elbows jutting out like a Swiss Army knife, all pointed and prodding. His hands oscillated casually across the ivory keys, each finger extending and retracting, flexing, knuckles whitening then reddening. It was not a dance, but instead a symphony of his joints curving and untwisting. The piano strings were splayed out, the inner organs open to the air, clipping and pumping with each flit of his fingers. If she watched close enough, the whole instrument was waving to her in swift, measured moments. One, two, three, four. She took another sip from her glass. The vodka burned the back of her throat, the ice cubes kissing her rough lips.

He sometimes took a break and came to sit three seats away from her at the bar. He would order a whiskey some days or just water the next, sometimes even a large glass of milk. They would nod at one another from the small distance that separated them, accustomed to each other's glances, accustomed to each other's smiles, but mostly accustomed to each other's habitation of the bar stools, the small niche where they had come to coexist. After so long, it became their place.

He played the piano all night. The sharps and flats blended as each new note passed by in an elusive haze as thick as the cigarette smoke that filled the air, blacks and whites blurring to a sheet of gray. She wondered what his fingers might feel like against her skin, wondered if his touch was calloused or smooth. She traced the pattern of his tight jaw and noticed how perfectly those eyes of his were hidden beneath the brim of his hat. But she could not bring herself to take her eyes off his hands for too long. They traced the length of the keys so fast and quick, then slow and sensual. Something stirred beneath her stomach, but the feeling was coated with more than just longing. A hint of sadness. Perhaps, she was afraid he might just disappear.

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It would be his last song. He bent his head down as if in prayer, his forehead nearly touching the backs of his hands. He was young, like her, but there was a wisdom about him that she could not explain. She wanted to ask him, wanted to know what had brought him to this place, like her. He closed the cover over the keys, and, even with the chit chat blooming around her, it echoed with finality. He stood. He grabbed his coat off the rack near the front door. She wanted to call out to him, to ask him to sit with her and have a drink with her. She wanted to stand and touch his arm and ask him, "How did you learn to play like that?"

But she couldn't do it. His tired, sad eyes looked too much like her own. Oh, what man he might have been before, if she could have found him earlier. Another regular shuffled up to him and whispered something close, and he began to laugh. His laugh flooded into the music of the somber bar, and it was all that she heard. His face came back to her, his hands returning to his body, folding inward, gentle, as if, for a moment, he was cupping her face with his delicate palm. He turned to her then, eyes alive, smile alive, hands alive. He nodded, gently touching the brim of his hat towards her, perhaps even to no one at all, and then walked out the door.

She supposed she had always loved him from afar. Turning back toward the bar, her elbows resting against the grain, she signaled to the bartender without completely meeting his eyes. The music now came from an antique jukebox in the corner, pumping low from the ancient speakers and sounding almost like the whole contraption was submerged under water. Her head was beginning to feel heavy. The bartender's hands clinked against severally different handles of vodka. And again, with another drink in hand, she would try to remind herself that she was alive, too.



# Wheelchair Dreamer

ALICE ABRAMS

Shuffle, Glide, Stride,  
Wobble, Limp, Leap,  
Stumble, Slide, Sprint,  
Reel, Sway, Meander,  
Stroll, List, Swagger,  
Lurch, Hop, Jump,  
Amble, Scramble,  
Ramble, Stagger,  
March, Strut, Totter,  
Saunter, Slip, Jog,  
Trek, Prance, Bound, Drag, Pace, Gallop,  
Mosey, Slink, Trot, Run.....



## Private Conversation

MARK DEUTCHMAN MD

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**Auguste**

JULIA MICHIE BRUCKNER

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## October Colors

TRUDI SCHMIDT

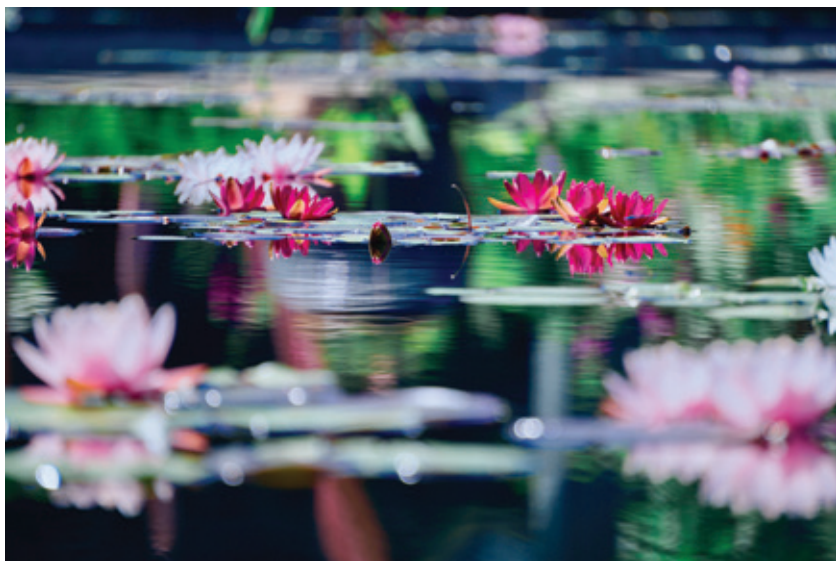
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# Simple Things

JUSTIN NGUYEN

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## Gospels of February

NICK WILLIAMS

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A six-cylinder pastor  
Shook the bolts beneath your leather pew;  
Exorcizing sounds of sin  
And preaching to a rattling choir of exhaust.  
Oxidation christened the frame  
With rustic lacerations of crimson and auburn  
Still sheltered by winter's sacred remains.

This aluminum off-roading coffin  
Parked on a concrete cemetery  
Twenty feet from the warmth of home.  
Inside remained a boy,  
Too afraid to cry for help.  
Yet, he sanctioned holy water  
To baptize his frozen cheeks.

A soul begging for penance,  
No Hail Mary could cure, persuaded  
His hallowed syringe to bring salvation  
To his temple fashioned of flesh.  
This self-induced solvent  
Gently laid his mind to rest  
As the cold extinguished his heart.

And we, his apostles,  
Could not save him from cast steel-crucifixion  
In the February that concluded this gospel.

Andy, I'm here  
For your consecration  
Where the stained glass remains:

Your truck,  
Your grave,  
My church.





## Hear Me Out

NICK WILLIAMS

---

Man, you've been asking me this for some time  
And I can tell you don't believe me when I say,  
"I'm good,  
I'm fine."  
But you're right, I'm not okay, I got a problem.  
It's real and it's mine.  
So, I'll try to get it off my chest  
But please pardon my crimes.

.

I used to think of death when my stereo would  
Stop and skip.  
So, the silence would autopilot and  
I hoped that would just be it.  
Just a swerve off the road to bring an  
End to my trip.  
My name is so simple  
For those who know to forget.

.

Hang on let me finish what I started  
Or It won't work right.  
I love you, stop yelling, Fam  
I promise I don't want to fight.  
Five more minutes is all I need  
And I'll be better, alright?

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I don't feel the same, I just feel ashamed.  
I had all these thoughts of ending it  
Running through my brain.  
I just felt so alone, so wasted,  
Overused, and overstrained  
That this was the only escape  
The beginning to ending my pain.

But it doesn't.

It just passes on the blame.  
My mother, my father, and you all  
Would have inherited my chains.  
And the suffering would continue  
Just in someone else's name.

I'm sorry man, I don't mean to depress.  
I just needed to let it out and  
Get it off my chest.  
I'm a stronger man because of it all  
And I'm not yet ready to rest.  
But thanks for hearing me out, man.  
I'm doing better now,  
Who wouldda guessed?



## Gray Shadow

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GAY WILLIFORD

Standing in the shadow of the C word,  
abruptly cornered  
by its gray presence  
near the end of the hall,  
he withdrew.

Consumed with worry, he pushed me away,  
as though insisting on my preparing  
for the loneliness to come,  
for the widow's independent state....  
and the verdict not yet in.

Distant and preoccupied,  
he refused to talk of tomorrow,  
as though, now, it could no longer come,  
as though he already belonged  
only to the next moment, and no more.

Never good at waiting,  
his impatience screams  
in loud silences and pacing -  
these, more expected  
of a man already sentenced.

Never good at feeling hopeless,  
I wrestle with such desperation,  
and in this darkening place,  
behind his quiet agony,  
grope for a light switch in the hall.



## In Passing

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GAY WILLIFORD

Her face emerges from the crowd  
as though illuminated by spotlight.  
Our gazes meet for a moment...  
a warm spark flies between us,  
an understanding is acknowledged,  
a commonality recognized.

I long for the moment to stretch,  
to allow for germination of this  
new seed of friendship  
as I sense her to be a kinswoman...  
with eyes that look out my windows,  
and a heart that knows songs I sing.

But in the next instant  
she turns away, as do I ...  
pulled by our separate lives,  
and I am missing something I never had,  
with an ache I have felt all too often.



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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

**Andi Hudler, MD** is a second year internal medicine resident at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus where she also earned her medical degree in 2016. Andi has a particular interest in critical care and will be applying for a fellowship in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine following the completion of her chief resident year. In her off time, Andi enjoys practicing yoga and hiking with her husband and their dog.

**Annette House:** I am a 1965 graduate of the University of Colorado School of Nursing. Before retiring I had a forty year career in nursing that included pediatrics, psychiatric settings, home end-of-life care, critical care, geriatrics, rehabilitation, and teaching in schools of nursing. In 2014 I became a poet which has been the perfect way for me to express the many mysterious, inexplicable and fragile human scenarios that I have shared in my career. I believe that bioethics is at the heart of healthcare and care-giving. I greatly value the work that is done in this arena at the medical center. I am proud of my association with this splendid institution!

**Tony Edelblute, LPC, MT-BC,** a musician, songwriter and dad in his private life, has worked as a music therapist at Children's Hospital Colorado (CHCO) in Denver since 2003. As a member of the Ponzio Creative Arts Therapies Program, he has worked with children with psychiatric and medical diagnoses in units throughout the hospital. Since 2013, he has co-lead the CHCO mental health Youth Action Board, guiding Denver-area teens through the creation of advocacy projects related to de-stigmatizing mental health issues. As a professional musician, Tony has toured the US, Canada and Europe with various jazz, blues and rock bands. As a poet, he has written several spoken-word pieces for hospital-related events, and has competed in slam poetry competitions.

**Arek Wiktor, MD, FACS** – is an Assistant Professor of Surgery at University of Colorado Hospital, where he specializes in Burn Surgery, Trauma and Acute Care Surgery, and Surgical Critical Care. He earned his Medical Degree at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 2007 and went on to complete his General Surgery training at the University of Colorado in 2013. His research interests include PTSD in burn survivors, impact of marijuana legalization on burns, and care of the elderly burn patient. He enjoys spending time with his family, strength competitions, and archery.

**Arian Khorshid, BS, MD**—candidate is a third-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He is planning to pursue residency training in Obstetrics & Gynecology. Arian's greatest joys in life are food and sleep; he particularly loves ice cream and afternoon naps. His favorite organ is the bladder. Writing and literature were not always a part of Arian's life, and he only began to pen and ponder through the influence of his favorite teacher in high school.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Brenna Cameron** is a medical student at the CU School of Medicine. She graduated with her B.S. in molecular biology from University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA in 2010. After graduating she moved to Thailand for 2 years where she taught English to school children in a small, rural town. She returned to Colorado, her home state, to attend school and is loving being close to family while pursuing a challenging degree in medicine. When she's not studying Brenna likes to hike and run in the mountains, play soccer, practice yoga, read, and write.

**Carol H Ehrlich, Ph.D.**, Chairperson Emerita of Audiology and Speech Pathology at Children's Hospital Colorado. She did her academic work at Northwestern University and the University of Denver in the 50's and 60's. She has thrived in an almost 70 year marriage. She loves her children, grands- and great-grandchildren, her getaway in the mountains, classical music and writing. but she worries about the state of the world—politically, culturally and environmentally.

**Carolyn Ho, BS, MD** candidate is currently a student completing her third year at the Colorado University School of Medicine program. Carolyn is originally from California and received her Bachelors of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UC Davis. She spent two years working in research at the UC Davis MIND Institute and assisting with a pre-surgical internship program before starting medical school. In the future, Carolyn hopes to pursue a career as an OB/GYN. At the moment, she is currently enjoying her various rotations while taking the time to expand upon her writing. When not working or studying, Carolyn enjoys spending time with family and friends, hiking, sketching, reading, working with clay, and trying a variety of new food items.

**Charles Whitmore, MD, MPH** is a psychiatry resident most interested in public health, substance use disorders, and education. He studied Biochemistry and Africana Studies at Bowdoin College before studying Medicine and Public Health at the University of Colorado. This summer he will begin a fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at Vanderbilt University. His favorite part of residency has been mentoring a group of superb medical students, researching adolescent substance use, and expanding LGBTQ+ communities' access to informed, affirming health care. Outside of medicine, he loves spending time outside with his wife and son enjoying Colorado's beautiful weather.

**Chheng Kuy Ing**, in Sisophon, Capital of Banteay Meanchey Province in Cambodia. My cousin is a student attending the Anschutz Medical Campus in hopes to be a doctor. My occupation is a Entrepreneur. I own a cosmetic and beauty business! On my spare time, I like to play games, draw, and travel!

**David M. Weil, BA**, manages operations and educational technology for the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. He has extensive experience in health/science communications and provides e-learning, graphic design, photography, presentation support and “keeps the trains running on time” at the Center. He is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys hiking, camping, biking, skiing and canoeing.

**David Shepard** has been a practicing Psychiatrist who just retired after a 40 year career in both Hospital and Corrections Psychiatry. For the past 10 years he had treated prisoners at the Colorado State Correctional facilities, while assigned to the University Department of Psychiatry. He currently is a Facilitator for Anschutz Medical Students in the Problem Based Learning program. He is eagerly awaiting the publication of his first book of poetry.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Delia Sultanie Shash, B.S., M.D. Candidate** is a first year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Delia received her Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from Florida State University in 2017. Delia comes from a traditional Native American background and grew up in rural Colorado. In her free time, Delia enjoys writing songs and poetry as well as participating in various activities such as ice skating and skiing.

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

**Dylan Bergstedt** is a first-year medical student at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Dylan earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Sports Medicine from Pepperdine University in 2015 and has worked on a variety of neuroscience and engineering projects at Hughes Research Laboratories. He enjoys running marathons, jiu jitsu, and boxing. Dylan's favorite past time is snuggling his vicious chihuahua Juniper.

**Elizabeth O'Connor** is an account technician within the Bursar's Office at the University of Colorado at Anschutz Medical Campus. Elizabeth worked as a special effects/fashion makeup artist for twenty years before making the transition into higher education. She is an astrophysics enthusiast, and an avid writer who is currently working on her second novel. Elizabeth spends her downtime with her husband and children, and can often be found writing, sketching or playing in her makeup kit.

**Elsa Alaswad** is a first year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, with aspirations to one day become a neurosurgeon. Elsa immigrated from Syria at the age of 9 and later graduated from George Washington University with a degree in psychology and a passion for community service. She enjoys an array of hobbies including playing classical piano, photography, abstract and anatomical drawing, writing poetry and stories about Syria, reading fiction and the New England Journal of Medicine, watching independent films, learning languages, doing stand-up comedy, and playing with her beloved cat Xavier.

**Eric Sawyer, PT, DPT, OCS, STC,** is a board-certified clinical specialist in orthopedic physical therapy who earned a B.S. in Commercial Recreation from the University of Utah, M.S. in Physical Therapy from CU, and his Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences. He is a member of the CU PT Program faculty and practices in a private practice outpatient clinic. A native of Wyoming, Eric is a big fan of small towns and friendly people, and he loves spending time with his family, climbing, adventure travel, and nature photography.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Fredrick Abrams MD** is 90 this year: Graduated in 1954 from Cornell Medical School. US Army Medical Corp 1954 to 1962. Obstetrician and Gynecologist specialist since 1959. He taught biomedical ethics and spearheaded medical ethics programs for health-care professionals, teachers, community leaders, and hospital ethics committees since 1976. Former Executive Director of the Denver University/Colorado University Health Ethics and Policy Consortium, Adjunct Professor at the Graduate School of Public Affairs at UCD and Adjunct Professor of Ethics at the Iliff School of Theology. Director of the Colorado Governor's Commission on Life and the Law. Former chair of the Ethics Committee of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, he wrote the new guidelines for its 25,000 members. Medical Ethics was begun in almost every Medical School in the US as Dr. Abrams traveled across the country to teach in many medical schools. As the new Colorado Medical Schools were built, Dr. Abrams was among the persons who contributed time and money as the Center for Bioethics and Humanities was constructed to become a spectacular center for beautiful paintings, photographs, musical programs and sculptural arts as well as special and out of ordinary medical programs. Dr. Abrams was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Center for Bioethics and Humanities of the UC Health Sciences Center and received the Isaac Bell and John Hayes Award for Leadership in Medical Ethics and Professionalism from the American Medical Association. The Board of Governors of the HealthOne System awarded him the Trusted Care Award for Excellence in Clinical Ethics. He retired 1996, but continues teaching Medical Ethics. The Denver Public Library acquired all of his unique records in 2016 of the Medical Ethics Programs that had begun in Colorado in 1976. Dr. Abrams has been published in *Saturday Review*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, many *Nurses Journals* and other periodicals. He has written two books: "DOCTORS ON THE EDGE" and "ONCE I WAS A LITTLE BOY."

**Gay Williford**, a former teacher, heard of *The Human Touch* through members of her poetry group who had contributed to it. She found time for reflection upon her retirement and in it discovered the challenge and joy of writing poetry. Her poems have been published in several Georgia Poetry Society books and booklets of several writing critique groups.

**George Ho, Jr., M.D.** has been fully retired for five years from Internal Medicine, Rheumatology and Palliative Care and Hospice Medicine. Staying active, connected and relevant are his major pursuits through exercising, hiking, birding, writing, reading, photographing, travelling, volunteering, lifelong learning and grand parenting. In his leisure time, he is sleeping or eating.

**Hailey Hyde** is pursuing her MPH in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. She is currently working as a graduate research assistant on a longitudinal study designed to generate scientific evidence for understanding the dynamics, mechanisms, determinants, and consequences of driving, mobility, physical impairments, and medications in individuals over 65. Her capstone focuses on describing the differences in demographic, medical, and visit characteristics of ED patients > 60 screened for suicide risk. Previously, Hailey worked as a research assistant with TCEQ in Toxicology where she was responsible for conducting a systematic review for a carbon disulfide developmental support document and evaluating current FDA, EPA, and TCEQ standards for methylmercury levels. Hailey is in the process of publishing a manuscript on hypertensive disorders of pregnancy among women living at different elevations in Colorado. She has a BA in Psychology with pre-med credits from the University of Texas and a post-baccalaureate in Biology.



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Howe Qiu**, is a medical student at the Anschutz Medical Campus. He earned a Bachelors of Science in Biology at the University of Colorado Denver. His hobbies and interests include reading, writing, practicing martial arts, hiking, and spending time in nature.

**J. Norman K., BA, MD-candidate** is a student at the University of Colorado: School of Medicine program at the Anschutz Medical Campus. J. Norman K. earned her Bachelors of Arts degree in Molecular Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2010. She learned how to paint in her senior year of her undergraduate degree and has enjoyed the hobby since then. She also likes to take long walks, even longer hot showers, and sailing.

**Jacqueline Gardner, MPH(c)** is a current student at the Colorado School of Public Health concentrating on Epidemiology. She works as Professional Research Assistant and Study Manager at the Nighthorse Campbell Native Health Building. She is also currently an Epidemiology Intern at the Jefferson and Gilpin County Public Health working with stakeholders and focus groups, collecting and analyzing data to complete the Gilpin County Public Health Improvement plan which will prioritize the agency's work over the next 5 years. On her free time, Jackie likes to relax with nature and enjoys hiking and camping with her family, friends, husband and their dogs.

**Jennifer Smidt** currently works as a Clinical Rotation Coordinator a Physician Assistant Program, currently managing student clinical rotations. In addition, she has an extensive background in medical office management. Jenny is married and has 2 beautiful children and several pets. She enjoys time with her family, cooking, gardening, and creating multi-media art.

**Jim Wong, PhD**, is a Senior Research Scientist in the Pharmacology department at Array Biopharma, Inc, and also the husband of Eszter Vladar, PhD, assistant professor in the Division of Pulmonary Sciences and Critical Care Medicine at the Anschutz Medical Campus. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Biology at the California Institute of Technology in 2000 and his Doctorate in Biological Sciences at Stanford University in 2006. After completing a postdoctoral fellowship in 2010 at Genentech, Inc., Jim worked in research and early development in biotech in the San Francisco Bay Area for several years before moving to Colorado at the end of 2017. When not transferring small amounts of colorless liquid from one tube to another, he enjoys working out his shutter release index finger and using his opposable thumbs to open cans of cat food.

**Josef Garrett** has a Master's Degree in Visual Anthropology from the University of Southern California and is the President Elect for the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology. His focus is on education and creating easily accessible information through the use of multi-media. He has created several short documentaries about graffiti writers and urban art in addition to the short film about health, *Barriers to Care*. He currently lives in Arvada, Colorado with his dog Bear.

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

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Judas Zed Kelley** I am a 3rd medical student at the CU School of Medicine. I have 2 small children, Jevyn (3 years old) and Vega (1.5 years old). They are my inspiration for working hard every day. I am planning to become an Orthopedic surgeon. I used to be the lead singer of a rock band.

**Julia Michie Bruckner, MD, MPH** is an attending physician in the Department of Emergency Medicine/Network of Care at Colorado Children's Hospital and an instructor in pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine with interests in art in medicine, narrative medicine, medical journalism, diagnostic reasoning and bioethics.

**Justin Nguyen**, PharmD-candidate is a student at the University of Colorado Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences program at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Justin earned his Bachelor's of Science degree in Integrative Biology at the University of Denver Colorado in 2017. He is currently working as a part-time Pharmacist Intern at Kroger. His career goal is to become a pharmacist in either a clinical or retail setting. In Justin's free time he likes to play basketball, do photography, collect corals for his saltwater aquarium and hang out with friends.

**Kaoru Iwanabe** is an architectural design teacher at the Science and Technology High School in Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. From early childhood, Kaoru enjoyed sketching people or ordinary objects around him. He was diagnosed with malignant lymphoma at the age of 31. While facing the life threatening event, he began drawing his wife and sons, his dog, himself, he captured all the things that were (are) loved by him! Over the past 25 years he has experienced several recurrences, he understands life is precious and this comes through in his art. Teaching architecture & design and coaching Kendo (Japanese swordsmanship) in high school is his life's work and he continues to grow in these areas. Kaoru's sister, Akemi, works for the Primary Care Residency Program in the Division of General Internal Medicine at Anschutz Medical Campus, and encouraged him to submit his work.

**Kathy Utschinski** is a retired employee of the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She worked 26 years as office manager for Henry Claman, M.D., Head, Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, and Founding Editor of *The Human Touch* journal. Because of her love of the outdoors, she retired at 55, and with her friend Lisa Litzenberger-Allen summited all but five of the 54 14,000-ft. mountains in Colorado. She loves to hike and camp, to participate in bicycle tours, does all kinds of crafting, and especially enjoys traveling.

**Kelly Stanek, BS**, is a Professional Research Assistant at the Barbara Davis Center for Diabetes and a student in the Graduate Certificate of Public Health program. She will be entering into the University of Colorado School of Medicine as a MD-candidate class of 2022, beginning August 2018. Kelly has always had a passion for both science and poetry and loves to focus on the beauty of humanity captured in the mental and physical processes of biology and chemistry. Running, snowboarding, and embarking on adventures also holds Kelly's heart and consume her time.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Kevin Bunnell, BA** (Honors in English Lit); **MAT, EdD** is a retired Director of Continuing Medical Education Presbyterian-St. Lukes Medical Center (Health One). His interest in Medical Education emerged while he spent nearly a year in Strong Memorial Hospital as a result of a World War II injury. His doctoral thesis was on the place of liberal education in the training of physicians. The last 15 years of his working life were as Director of Continuing Medical Education at Presbyterian-St Luke's Hospital in Denver. Adjunctive to that work, he served on the Accreditation Council for CME and as President of the Alliance for CME. More importantly, in his context, he served for ten years on the University of Colorado Medical School Continuing Medical Education Committee with chairman Dick Bakemier.

**Len Wheeler MD**, retired 1998, helped 1st and 2nd yr med students in Foundation of Doctoring classes for several years, ~2002 to 2012. I loved that (volunteer) job, with bright, responsive students, great two-way street, small classes (4 students/afternoon), well planned, with excellent 'patients'. But due to the long drive during rush hour returning, and the more complex record keeping asked, I finally quit. Since then, I've been busy with various volunteer jobs, including Hospice, Unitarian church activities, Friendly Visitor, and a half way house work for felons. Happy in a great 28 year second marriage, but slowing down due to my 85 yr old status.

**Lindsey Whittington, BS, MPH-Candidate** is a student at the Colorado School of Public Health pursuing her MPH in epidemiology. She received her Bachelors of Science in Biochemistry at Colorado State University in 2016. She lives in Brighton, CO with her dog, Nilla. She enjoys reading, writing, playing tennis and basketball, and traveling. Besides becoming an epidemiologist, she also hopes to one day become a published novelist.

**Linh Nguyen, BA, MD candidate**, is a soon-to-be CU medical school graduate who will start residency training in family medicine this July 2018. Her medical interests include underserved care, LGBTQ health, social determinants of health, and patient education. In her leisure time she watches anime, snowboards badly, takes naps, and looks at cute pictures of cats on the internet.

**Mark Deutchman, MD** is a Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and has been involved in rural medical practice or teaching for 40 years. He is founding director of the Rural Track in the School of Medicine, a program for students who are planning a career in rural medical practice. He also serves as Executive Director of the Colorado Area Health Education Center Program Office. In addition to an emphasis on rural physician workforce development, he is engaged in interdisciplinary training.

**Mark Rush**. I am a clinical psychologist by profession. I was a patient at the University of Colorado Hospital. I enjoy photography, playing jazz, and travel.

**Mary Poole** is retired from a career in fundraising for healthcare organizations and a second career in consulting for non-profit organizations in their fund development programs. She moved from New Mexico to Colorado 11 years ago and spends her time reading, writing poetry, mostly about getting old and going blind.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Matt Dillon, BS, MD-candidate** is currently a 4th year at the CU School of Medicine at Anschutz. He will be pursuing emergency medicine upon graduation. His home state is Washington where he received undergraduate degrees in Spanish and Mechanical Engineering and would hope to return to the Pacific Northwest someday. When he is not enveloped in his medical studies he likes to bike, hike, read, and have frequent game nights with his friends. He met his fiancé at medical school and is very much looking forward to having a dog, which he plans on getting himself as a wedding present.

**Maxwell Li, M.D.** is an Allergist-Immunologist who completed his fellowship training in allergy/immunology at National Jewish Health and the University of Colorado. His interest in oil painting began after taking a painting course during college. His work is mostly inspired by his travels which include living in Washington, D.C. and visits to London and Istanbul. Subjects in Max's painting include cityscapes and architectural facades in oil. He has previously shown his work at a solo exhibition in D.C. For more information, visit his website [www.painterlytangents.blogspot.com](http://www.painterlytangents.blogspot.com).

**Meghan Ralph, BA,** is a proud member of the staff at the CU School of Medicine, Anschutz Medical Campus. She works as Operations Professional for the Department of Physiology and Biophysics. Meghan earned her Bachelors of Arts from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley for Theatre with a concentration in Acting. She's regularly seen around Denver community theatres. With a healthy love of all the arts, she enjoys writing, painting, and photography when not at work. Her first published anthology, *Crash Philosophy*, will be released in May 2018 under her pen name M. M. Ralph.

**Melissa Powell** is a full-time mother and part-time nanny. She lost her father after a long battle with cancer and financially supports cancer research at the University of Colorado in his memory. Melissa has been passionate about creative writing since her early years and earned a Bachelors degree in English from Metropolitan State University of Denver. While attending classes, she had several poems published in an anthology. She continues to write poetry to share with a small group of talented poets at Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden.

**Michael Aubrey, MS, CHS** is an instructor in the School of Medicine. He works at ClinImmune Labs in the Bioscience 2 building and oversees molecular typing for purposes solid organ and stem cell matching. Michael uses photography as a means to explore his avocations: Hiking, nature, and wild plants. His approach to photography is epitomized by a quote from Lisette Model: "Photography is the easiest art, which perhaps makes it the hardest". He is constantly humbled by the beauty of what he sees, the challenge of capturing it in images, and the tension between the ease of photography and the difficulty of getting it right.

**Michael Regier, MSW, LCSW** is the Transition Coordinator at the Colorado Sickle Cell Treatment and Research Center at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Michael earned his Bachelors of Arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Bible and Religion at Bethel College in North Newton, KS. He earned his Master of Social Work degree from the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis. Michael is a proud single father who enjoys traveling, photography, theatre, and laughing.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Michelle Pineda, PT, DPT** is a recent graduate from the Anschutz Medical Campus. She earned her Bachelors of Science degree in Biomedical Engineering at Northwestern University in 2012 and her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in December 2017. She is currently completing an orthopedic physical therapy residency in Austin, Texas in pursuit of becoming an Orthopedic Clinical Specialist. As a Colorado native, Michelle loves anything in the outdoors including running, hiking, and exploring the mountains!

**Nancy Sharp, MFA, Creative Nonfiction**, sits on the Holocaust Genocide & Contemporary Bioethics Planning Committee and has guest lectured to physicians, medical students and chaplains on the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Campus. Nancy is an expert on resilience and has presented keynotes and workshops to businesses and groups nationwide. She is the author of the memoir *Both Sides Now: A True Story of Love, Loss, and Bold Living*, winner of the Colorado Book Award, and the newly released book for grieving children and families called *Because the Sky is Everywhere*. She also works as a writing coach helping people in the medical and wellness communities develop nonfiction book projects. Nancy is an avid reader, walker, hiker, and foodie.

**Nathaniel Brown** is a physician and an assistant professor in the department of anesthesiology at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. He completed residency and fellowship at CU Hospital during which time he particularly enjoyed participating in small group education through the SOM. He grew up in Denver and his first love was the Rocky Mountains where his thoughts often return to wander the slopes at the height of spring when myriad flowers spread open to rejoice in the glorious sun!

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

**Nina Ball** is a third year medical student, set to graduate in May 2019. She is Cuban American, was born and raised in Boulder, and attended the University of Miami for her undergraduate degree. Isabela Island in the Galapagos is her happy place, she has a godson there and has been three times now. Nina is passionate about women's health and is pursuing a career in obstetrics and gynecology.

**Paul Eigenberger, BA**, is a medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and a member of the Class of 2019. Before attending medical school Paul received his undergraduate degree in English Literature at Colorado State University and completed a year of national and community service with the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps. Paul is passionate about caring for vulnerable and underserved populations and plans to work as primary care provider and addiction medicine specialist when he finishes his training.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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

**Rachel Pauley, B.Sc.**, is an MD candidate in the class of 2020 at the CU School of Medicine. She earned her degree at the University of British Columbia in Conservation of Natural Resources. She is an avid short story reader, food over-seasoner, and cat enthusiast.

**Rev. Rachel Revelle, MDiv**, is a chaplain resident specializing in palliative care at University of Colorado Hospital. She received a Master of Divinity from Wake Forest University and a Bachelor of Arts from Duke University. A native of North Carolina, she moved to Denver two years ago to pursue chaplain training. As a lover of live music and the outdoors, she is having a wonderful time exploring the front range. She is also an ordained Baptist minister.

**Rachael Ruff** is a recent graduate of Fort Lewis College, and now has a BA in Psychology. Her mother, Cathy Ruff, was Faculty within the Physician Assistant Program (2001-2016). Rachael is currently living in Durango, CO, but planning on attending the University of Denver in the next year to obtain a Masters in Forensic Psychology. She also hopes to continue writing and publishing her work. In her spare time, Rachael enjoys reading, writing, crafting, and hiking.

**Reade Tillman, BS, MD Candidate**, is a third year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Reade studied at Azusa Pacific University in Southern California where she received a BS in Organismal Biology and played on the women's soccer team. After several knee surgeries, Reade has happily retired to running, swimming, yoga, and barre class. She makes an intentional effort to travel despite the demands of medical school, often to visit her widespread family in Texas, Saudi Arabia, and Colombia. Her career aspirations are in Critical Care.

**Robyn Gisbert PT, DPT** is a physical therapist, dancer, and musician. She has served as a full-time faculty member for the University of Colorado Physical Therapy program since 2006 and is currently enrolled as a graduate student in the Center for Bioethics and Humanities. Her clinical work has focused on the use of dance and music as adjuncts to traditional approaches. She believes strongly that art and science are two sides of the same coin and feels most at peace when she is creating.

**Sally Peach, MD, PhD** graduated from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in May 2018, and is currently a pediatrics resident at Seattle Children's Hospital. Originally from North Carolina, she went to undergrad at MIT, where she received the Joseph D. Everingham Award for her theatrical performances and playwriting. She's been writing poetry since she was but a tiny Peach, and this is her 5th year publishing in *The Human Touch*.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Shannon Son, MD** is a chief resident in the Obstetrics and Gynecology residency at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. She earned her Bachelors of Science in Physiology from the University of Arizona in 2010 and her Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Washington School of Medicine in 2014. After finishing her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology in June of 2018, she will be starting fellowship in Maternal-Fetal Medicine at the University of Utah. Her career goals include practicing Maternal-Fetal Medicine in an academic setting with a focus on diagnosis and management of fetal congenital cardiac anomalies. Outside of medicine, Shannon's loves include her family (including her dog Beau), laughing, spending time outdoors, and exploring culture through food.

**Sharon White, BBA**, is a medical student at the University of Colorado School of medicine. She had a long journey to medical school that included working at McMurdo Station in Antarctica. Sharon is most proud of her achievements as an avid karaoke artist. She is finishing up her 3rd year and will be applying for residency in urology in the fall.

**Shayer Chowdhury, BS**, is a medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Shayer earned his Bachelors of Science degree in Biomedical Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. He is currently in his third year of medical school as part of the Denver Health Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship. He hopes to specialize in either Family Medicine or Psychiatry. In his free time, he likes to read and write poetry, play tennis, and spend time outdoors.

**Stephanie Torres-Nemeti, BA**, is a Clinical Contracts Specialist in the Clinical Research Administration Office at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Stephanie earned her Bachelors of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Denver. She also earned two minors, Sociology and Gender & Women's Studies while attending DU. Stephanie plans on growing her career with the Clinical Research Administration team as well delving into writing both poetry and short stories. In addition to writing, Stephanie fills her time with hiking, weight training, dancing, reading, and traveling.

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

**Sue Kammerzell, BSN, RN** is proudly employed at the Denver VA, serving America's heroes in the peri-operative setting. With dedication to high quality patient care, she is currently pursuing a certificate in military and veteran health care at the University of Colorado Denver / Anschutz medical campus. Sue lives in the beautiful Colorado mountains. She finds pleasure in restoring old furniture and enjoys spending time with her husband, two sons, and her puppies.

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Tam Minh Nguyen, BS, PharmD-candidate** is a student at the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the Anschutz Medical Campus. Tam earned her Bachelor's of Science in Biology at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs in 2017. She currently works part-time as a Pharmacy Intern at Costco where she confirms that she does not want to work in retail after graduation. Her long-term goals as a future pharmacist include specializing in either the pediatric or geriatric population because kids and the elderly are resilient, interesting, and adorable. When Tam has free time (which is never, nowadays), she likes to read, play the piano, sing, take pictures, and listen to music.

**Taylor Woodward, BS** is a Professional Research Assistant in the Todorovic Lab at the Anschutz Medical Campus, studying neuronal excitability and anesthesia. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Neuroscience in 2016 and will begin a dual PhD program in Neuroscience and Psychology this fall at Indiana University-Bloomington. The project he has been working on for the past year and a half has looked into lasting changes in neuronal excitability resulting from neonatal anesthetic exposure. He enjoys spending time with his wife and 1-year-old daughter, as well as writing, recording, and releasing music under his solo music project, Taylor and the Nerds.

**Thomas Vogler, BS, MD/PhD candidate** is a student in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Thomas is currently in the PhD years of the MSTP studying skeletal muscle regeneration in Dr. Brad Olwin's laboratory at CU Boulder. In his leisure time Thomas enjoys traveling and hiking with his wife and their dog as well as pretending to be a songwriter.

**Trudi Schmidt** served as Administrative Assistant for the University of Colorado School of Medicine Department of General Internal Medicine at the Anschutz campus. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from New York University and studied landscape painting at the Art Students League of Denver. She has been active in the Denver art community for over 15 years and has painted the Western landscape since 2008. In her paintings she seeks to express the beauty of nature using rich color and expressive brushwork.

**William Kromka, MD Candidate Class of 2019**, is a medical student at the Anschutz Medical Campus. William earned his Bachelors of Arts in Integrative Physiology and Anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2010. He is currently finishing his 3rd year in medical school and has decided to pursue a career in Psychiatry. William is a Colorado native and in his free time enjoys snowboarding, golfing, hiking, reading, writing, and exercising. He hopes to one day have a career that integrates global health, psychiatry, and work with healthcare policy.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**There are many people who have helped the journal tremendously, and without whom this publication would not be possible.**

Thanks are owed to: Jeffrey and Molly Hill whose gift supports the publication of *The Human Touch*. Dr. Jeffrey Hill is a 1989 graduate of the CU School of Medicine.

Dr Robert Anderson, Senior Associate Dean in the School of Medicine, for his leadership and generosity.

Dr Tess Jones, for heading up and promoting The Arts and Humanities in Healthcare Program, which sponsors this and other efforts. Dr. Jones's tireless work on the journal for years has shaped it into what it is today.

The Editors-in-Chief: Michael Berger and Diana Ir

All other members of the Editorial Board.

David Weil, Jack-Of-All-Trades and Manager of Operations & Educational Technology for the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, for going above and beyond to help with countless aspects of this project.

MaryLou Wallace, Program Assistant for the Center for Bioethics and Humanities, for logistical know-how and support.

Scott Allison of Scott Allison Creative for his talent and taste in making this issue a beautiful production.

Bill Daley and Citizen Printing for their printing and production expertise.

All our contributors, who have sent us a record number of wonderful submissions.

All our readers, who continue to read our journal and care about its future.  
Thank you!

## MEDIA SUBMISSIONS

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Audio and video submissions are found on the website:

**Barriers to care: Inflammatory Bowel Disease** (documentary)

Created by:

Jacqueline Gardner, MPH(c)

Hailey Hyde, MPH(c)

Diana Ir, MPH(c)

Josef Garrett, MVA

**Scatter** by Anthony Edelblute (mp3)

**My Favorite Color** by Robyn Gisbert (mp3)

**Touch the Sky** by Taylor Woodward (mp3)

