The Beat
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
Dear readers,

Thank you for picking up the 19th edition of The BEAT, the arts and literary magazine for the David Geffen School of Medicine. We’re honored to share some of the brilliance and insight of the UCLA Health community with you. Whether in the ICU or under a night sky wheeling with stars, art helps us make sense of the complexities of human experience and captures glimmers of a world we might otherwise miss. We hope that the thread of human connection woven within these pages will inspire you to find beauty and meaning in every moment.

And the beat goes on...

Jacqueline Ngo, Rose Shan, and Victoria Sun

Contributors

editors in chief
Jacqueline Ngo
Rose Shan
Victoria Sun

faculty advisor
Neil H. Parker, MD

layout editors
Cindy La
Michelle Miller

literature selections committee
Emmanuel Aguilar-Posada
Ben Amendolara
Cindy La
Michelle Miller
Farnoosh Nik-Ahd
Xiao Song

art selections committee
Ashley Kim
Michelle Miller
John Nesemann
Farnoosh Nik-Ahd
Sean Piantka
Jessica Poon

Contents

LITERATURE

ART

Ka Man Law
Huan Dong
MY FIRST NIGHT ALONE
ADOLESCENCE

Jeanne Radies
5
THE JOURNEY OF MEDICINE

Arifstel Williams
Mary Rose Denaco
6
WARRIOR PRINCESS
THE PATH OF THE GOLDEN ROSE

Eviola Nakhla
Jessica Poon
7
GREASE AND APRICOTS
YELLOW SWALLOWTAILS AND ORCHIDS

Lisa Stern
Victoria Sun
8
BEAD IN THE NOSE
TAICHUNG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STEPS

Sofia Liu
9
PSYCHIATRY ROUNDS

Satiro De Oliveira
Justin Shiram
10
SERAPHIM
KEEP CLIMBING

Shaharoh Chism
Sally Elliott
11
NOMADIAN
THURSDAY SILHOUETTE

Eric Miller
Bryan Huebner
12
OPERATING IN THE DARK
BAHAI TEMPLE AT NIGHT

Michelle Miller
14
VISUAL PROCESSING

Eviola Nakhla
Victor Sigalov
15
CHESS NIGHT
BETWEEN YIN AND YANG

Nelli Ghazaryan
16
VIBRANT

Sataree Khuansawan
19
DESERT BLOOM

Eric Chang
Rose Shan
10
ICU
MIND AND HEART

Satiro De Oliveira
Issa Luft
21
 IMPERMANENCE
ON OCCASION

Jennifer Ritch
Angela Wong
22
HIS LEGACY
BOYLE HEIGHTS VIEW

Mario Eason
23
AMERICAN IDOLS

Jacqueline Ngo
Jeffrey Hsu
Angela Wong
24
NEW YORK
WARRIOR

Paula Stoessel
Suman Dutta
25
SAGE
BUDDHA HEAD, ENTWINED IN ROOTS

Matthew Hill
26
TO BE HUMAN

Esther Jun
27
UNTITLED

Dorothy Yim
Rose Shan
30
VISITOR
BREATHE

Stevie Shiled
Matthew Palia
31
A THRILL THAT KILLS
OVER AND UNDER

Christina Harview
Katherine Bailey
32
PANAMA CITY
WAITING

Issa Luft
Neil Parker
33
BECOMING SOPHISTICATED PEOPLE
LOOKING THROUGH A GLACIER

Trevor Mooney
Serapio Baca
34
INTERVIEW WITH CORMAC MCNALLY
DINGLE, AT NIGHT

Zhuang Fang
37
FALL IN JIUZHAIGOU

Martin Mwangi
Jessica Poon
38
AN INTRODUCTION

Paula Stoessel
Thomas Luong
40
GRAVITY

Eviola Nakhla

41
MITOCHONDRIAL NETWORKS, THE
SOURCE OF CELLULAR ENERGY

Benjamin Amendolara
42
DEATH MARCH

Priscilla Lee
43
BUSTER

T. Warner Hudson
44
DINNER READY SHORTLY

Jacqueline Ngo
46
THE ART OF SURVIVAL

Joe Pierre
47
DOCTORING

Michele Miller
48
SKULL STILL LIFE

Nelli Ghazaryan
THE ETHICS OF BIOENGINEERING THE
NEXT GENERATION

Eitan Novogrodsky
Andy Trang
49
DRAPED AND SCRBUBBED
FIBER OF LIFE

Billy Nguyen
50
IF ONLY TO BE ME AGAIN

Manash Paul
51
ELIXIR

Suman Dutta
52
THE HORIZON

Eviola Nakhla
53
UNDER HIS LIGHTS

Stephan Chiu
54
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Jonathan Warren
55
SOLAR THE SUN VOYAGER

Huan Dong
58
CORONA RADIATA

Ishan Mehta
59
UNDERWATER EXPLORATION

The BEAT is a non-profit journal produced by students at the David Geffen School of Medicine. All rights are reserved. Nothing may be reproduced without written consent.

All medical student submissions are eligible for Vital Signs Awards. Pieces for publication and the Vital Signs Awards were selected based on anonymous ratings by the selection committees.

We welcome submissions from all faculty, staff, and students at the UCLA Health Sciences community at medschool.ucla.edu/current-the-ucla-beat.
My first night alone

I was probably five or six at that time.

I had asthma attacks since I was two, especially during the transition from Summer to Autumn when the temperature difference between day and night was too much for my young self. I remember sitting upright in the middle of the night when the attacks came and telling my parents that my airway was very ‘stiff’. My parents would give me my inhaler, sit by me and wait, hoping the medicine would work. Sometimes, I would make it through, but a lot of times, they would bring me to the emergency room in the middle of the night. Once, I was sent to the children’s ward. I cannot remember whether it was the first night of my stay in the hospital, but I distinctly remember I did not feel sick that night. The ward was dark with the only light coming from the nurse station at the far end of the ward. I was awake, but knew that I should not leave the bed or the nurses would not be happy. I sat up and stared outside the window as I was placed on a bed next to the window during that stay. At that moment, a nurse came and asked whether I was feeling unwell. I told her I was fine, but couldn’t sleep. Then, I asked her where my parents were. “They’re sleeping in the next room. You’ll see them next morning.” She said kindly.

She allowed me to sit up for some time, but made me promise that I would lie down the next time she came.

Actually, I did not mind the absence of my parents, probably because it was not my first time staying in the hospital, but still it is comforting to know my parents were just in the next room. I was not alone in the ward. Besides the nurses who were on duty, there were approximately six to seven children sharing the ward with me. The quiet stillness in the ward filled with sleeping children was not interesting, so I silently returned to the view of the streets outside the window.

The streets were lit up by the yellow light coming from the street lamps. The occasional flashes from the headlights of the passing cars on the streets were the only sign of activities at night. I was captivated by them. I remembered myself counting the number of cars passing the streets, not out of boredom, but was more likely to reassure myself that there were other people awake at night.

I did not know how long I had sat up nor did I remember how many cars had passed by. People often said young children are afraid of darkness and being alone. However, all I could remember now, as an adult, is how tranquil the night and the darkness were and the strange, comfortable feeling related to them. Granted, it was not absolute darkness and I was not alone, but I keenly felt the stillness in the ward and lack of life outside the streets all the same.

Eventually, the nurse came back and made me lie on bed. I asked her when morning would come, and she said it would come in a few hours and so as my parents. As any people suffer from asthma will know, the attack is less severe as morning approaches. Therefore, I know since I was little that when morning comes, all the things will be better; and all I can do, is to wait for morning to come.

I cannot remember very well what came afterwards. I probably drifted to sleep and stayed a few more days in the hospital. When I grew older, I finally knew my parents were not sleeping in the next room when I was hospitalized. Those were just the comforting words from a nurse who thought I would be scared if I knew my parents were far away.

I was hospitalized a few more times after that and would sometimes be awake in the middle of the night. However, that particular night left a deep impression in my mind. It was my first time to know how it felt of being alone and the first time I felt the tranquility of the night.
Warrior Princess | Arlistel Williams

A fiery air of strength radiated from the core of her being
Her aura proceeded her
Tempered by a secretive depth
True face veiled behind an esoteric truth
Revelation of which — is solely at her discretion
All expressed in the lifetime of a singular moment
An amalgamation of wonder and allure
Beauty of spirit slunk around her meticulously cultivated armor — as a sweet mist
She smirked, ever so softly
The corners of her lips curling back down as quickly as they had up
She could not be possessed
Like a fawn — cautious and aware
Only to be viewed from afar

I was swept into the undertow of curiosity
Had Venus been upstaged?
Who was this Warrior Princess?
Duality encompassed in one
The heart of battle tested mettle
Her shield cast from the lessons past
Sword forged by the fires of combat
Unvarnished in her drive for victory
Her army ever on her shoulders and mind
Still, somehow, not invulnerable
Upon my conclusion — in an instant, she was gone
Beckoned back to the mist
All that stood in her void was a desire
To exchange just a word

The Path of the Golden Rose | Mary Rose Deraco

The brightness is white buds streaked with pink
And the sticky-sweetness of tart apricots
When our tree blooms in the spring.

Grease and Apricots | Eviola Nakhia

He parts the soil with oil-stained hands.
“Bring me the shovel,” he says. His voice reaches me
Through thick, green olive leaves,
Tired, yet soft as cotton.
I kneel beside him, always his little girl,
Worn jeans denting the mound of warm earth.

Sun filters through the branches overhead.
Deep wrinkles engrave his eyes,
Muted, dark blue circles hover under
Fourteen years working the graveyard shift.

He works with heavy iron and a bright yellow vest.
The shrill bite of metal on metal and
Booming echoes of train whistles break the night calm.
Dark sky lit by stark bright construction lights,
Five men beside him, sweating and grunting.
He changes the 5000 lb wheel of a Metro train.
Warm black coffee and the thought of us keep him going until dawn.

But here, the stains come from soil,
Soft, smelling of dead leaves and earthworms.
There is no grease. There is no oil.
Here, darkness is cheating the sun under a canopy of leaves,
Not the strain to see steel-colored trains in the moonlight.
Here, our soft laughter is carried on the wind of the tree.
There are no bright vests, neon and distorted in the pale light.
The brightness is white buds streaked with pink
And the sticky-sweetness of tart apricots
When our tree blooms in the spring.
If you are a parent, you can probably imagine a scenario where you never learned in medical school. Disclosure: This is one of the most practical things that I can do as a pediatrician. The task without the cognitive ability to comprehend its intricacies that other species dream of. Starting at 9 to 12 months your baby is picking up small objects: food, paper, trash, lint, etc. Said items usually end up in the mouth, the easiest and most accessible opening. But, in close proximity to the mouth, there are other oriﬁces that are equally enticing: namely the nostrils and ear canals. This perfect baby or young child now has a skill set that enables them to execute a fine motor task without the cognitive ability to comprehend its ramifications. So imagine… your young child gets her tiny hands on something beautiful like colorful beads and she gingerly picks one up with her pincer grasp. Now what? ‘Hmmm, she thinks, what should I do with this bead? Maybe I’ll put it in my nose!!! It will fit perfectly. Wouldn’t that hurt? Not sure, let me find out.’ In general, kids do things just because they can. They are impulsive and don’t have the problem solving skills and experience to set off that internal alarm that says ‘Bad idea’. They can’t imagine repercussions. But now………As soon as your baby has a pincer grasp, the possibility of something ending up inside that adorable little nose becomes a reality. In truth, babies don’t have the dexterity to put something up there except for pureed sweet potatoes so there isn’t too much to worry about. The problem starts when they are toddlers, especially nose-picking toddlers. Anything small is fair game: foods like peas; small toys- especially beads, Common household item that can be balled up being inserted into the nostril. Second, there has been a covert operation and said item was placed in the nose without being seen. This second option has two outcomes: A) the child comes to you and says that she but something in her nose or B) No confession is forthcoming.

So let’s break it down. If you saw something placed up the nose you are way ahead of the game. You actually know what was inserted and when. The item should be removed in a timely manner but it is NOT a life threatening emergency so don’t panic. Foreign bodies exist in 2 main groupings: those that hold their shape meaning they are solid and things that are more amorphous and will mold to the shape of the orifice. As a pediatrician and mother I take pride in a range of wacky home remedies that all pediatricians and parents should have at their disposal. This one I actually read about in a throw-away journal and was struck by its simplicity and usefulness. Filed it away and sat in wait for my first practice run. I will always remember my first time (don’t we all?). I was excited when I entered the exam room and was faced with a bead in the nose of an adorable three year old girl. I explained the options to the mother and she immediately responded that this technique seemed like the least invasive, least traumatic procedure. She was giggling a little as she ‘kissed’ her surprised daughter’s mouth and the bead came flying out on the second puff. I was hooked. This home treatment to remove foreign bodies from the nostrils is easy, safe and something only a parent or grandparent would want to do. Depending on the type of foreign body it has a fairly high success rate. Either way, try this first before seeing your doctor. You must see a doctor (a pediatrician or ENT will have the most experience). I don’t recommend inserting a tweezer into the nares as you will most likely cause trauma, scare the child and make it more difficult for a professional to deal with the problem later.

Just a heads up about a few scenarios: If there is a foul smelling odor coming from a nostril most likely the child put something up there days or weeks before. You can try this technique but it is less likely to be successful. You should be probably/visit the doctor. Also, a short course of antibiotics might be prescribed.

Since that first time, I have shared the wisdom of having instructed many parents in this one who called while he was in a packed emergency room during flu season. The father put the phone down on a chair and I talked him through the maneuver. The bead came out easily and the father happily walked out of that germ-laden waiting room. Mission accomplished.
I've seen an angel and now I wake up to cry.
It will bleed, because tears are not enough,
It will scar, because screaming is not enough.
It hurts to dream away, it dies to live by
Heart is not in pace
Silence is the lullaby.

Sinking in our fate,
Dreaming beyond my destiny,
To live is not a crime.
I don't wanna see it again
I don't wanna say goodbye.

I should have known, I should have seen it,
Pain has no meaning
Regret and time don't get along
Darkness and sadness don't go by.
I have spent my days hiding from light
Haunted dark corners of my apartment at night
Feeling wrong at every breath
Numb to everyone's sight.

I fade away on my own
As life passes me by
Little by little I get along
Gently,
Simply.
Definitely in time,
Blessed by an angel
I breathe
I cry
I am alive.

Chasing the sun today is only a means to
Get somewhere else so I can stand under the blue
Bleeding the dye, no longer painting by numerical strategies
Leaping over the cracks of the earth and I'm starting anew
Life—Wife—Knife—carving who I will be
Strife—Plight—I'm—no longer afraid to be the girl
Who steps up to the plate even though the menu doesn't always include
The meaning of life and the ways of the world

Passing the moon traveling at full speed
Space is the realm where I can live eternally
Spiraling out of the earth's gravitation field
Form an illusion—only thought is for real
Link—Blink—Think—how I've lived so many lives
Here—There—Where—time is of no relevance
Neither is class, creed or any color—not even race
The hourglass has no effect on this place

I am in
That I fear
Didn't ask
But I'm here
Choosing
Using
Learning
Living
After a quick discussion with the hospital's chief resident, the staff members, who had remained in house for a long day of prior surgeries, were asked to prepare the operating theater for yet another surgery. The single light that hung above the vintage OR table was clicked on at 1 AM. The anesthesiologist used an oxygen concentrator to quickly fill large plastic bags with valuable air. The bags would serve as an oxygen lifeline in the event that power was lost during the surgery; an ominous thought. The unconscious woman was brought in, moved to the table, anesthetized and prepped for surgery.

Standing across the table from Mbingo's chief surgery resident, we began the exploratory surgery. A midline vertical incision revealed an abdomen swelling with dense, clotted blood. Given the degree of blood loss we suspected blunt abdominal injury with consequent damage to a major organ. However, a meticulous and rapid examination of the liver, spleen, major vessels, and kidney beds was normal. We paused to adjust our retractors, aimed the light towards the pelvis and the source was soon illuminated. An irregular 15 cm density was easily palpated as it bulged through a severely distended fallopian tube, a tube that under normal circumstances should be pencil thin. Adjacent to the swelling was a disorganized bundle of delicate, friable, and irregular tissue spilling blood at a worrying rate. We quickly recognized this misplaced tissue as a placenta and concluded that she was suffering from a ruptured ectopic pregnancy with concurrent life-threatening hemorrhage.

Our primary mission became to control further blood loss. The borders of the hemorrhagic bundle were identified and with concise, directed actions, the fallopian tube was incised, carefully separated from surrounding structures, and the fetus delivered. It would take another 18 weeks of development before its fetal lungs were mature enough to function and with a single, feeble attempt to breathe it expired.

A brief update from the anesthesiologist let us know her status was waning. She desperately needed a blood transfusion, but this was a luxury resource not available at Mbingo hospital. Simple isotonic fluids would have to do. We were gaining ground and with each suture ligature, the blood loss was abating. Our confidence to achieve complete control was growing when suddenly every light, instrument, and oxygen machine clicked off. In that moment, a power substation operator, likely hundreds of miles from the hospital, made the decision to cut electricity to Mbingo Hospital and surrounding villages. Power rationing was common practice.

We found ourselves standing in unexpected darkness punctuated by profound silence. At that point, half the woman's circulating volume had spilled into her abdomen and the loss would not abate in the absence of electricity.

Under my breath, I said, “Just open your eyes and the surgical field will reappear!”

But, my eyes were open. With our hands frozen in their prior working position, the reality of the situation was validated when liquid warmth could be felt rising up my fingers and wrists. As I cycled through feelings of confusion, frustration, and helplessness, the chief resident was poised and composed. His calm response to this all too familiar situation was a direct indication of his own unique training experience. After a few moments, I asked, “What do we do now?” He answered, “We wait. We pray.”

My sweat soaked surgical gown felt like lead and my back was well aware of the fact that I had been standing for over 24 hours. The manual mechanical bellows could be heard as the anesthesiologist personally delivered each individual breath. Seconds felt like hours and in those obscure moments my mind couldn’t help but compare the environment of my home institution. Within the walls of one of the world’s most technologically advanced tertiary care hospitals, twenty-four climate-controlled operating rooms were guaranteed to be teeming with energy. Most rooms would be equipped with networked computers, unfailing overhead lights, lines of compressed gas, automated anesthesia machines and even highly sophisticated robotic consoles. As my exhausted mind pondered the comparison, I sensed my entire being attempting to pull a mere fraction of energy from those high-tech halls. The volts and amperage needed to electrify a single component would allow us to finish our interrupted task.

With my head swimming in thoughts of a dreamlike abundance that existed over 8,000 miles away, I was jolted back to the Mbingo operating room. A hazy, dim light had materialized around us as a few precious electrons started flowing through that single overhead light. Perhaps oblivious to the import of his task, the hospital custodian had traveled up the hill 100 meters above the hospital and manually started the hospital’s generator. The first few attempts failed, but as the tired cylinders of a World War II era motor filled with carbureted fuel vapor, the rhythmic pulse of combining energy was converted to electricity.

Light and hope restored, we worked furiously in one final push to identify and ligate exposed vessels. While our original mission was to staunch all blood loss, the simple presence of ongoing bleeding let us know there was still a life to be saved. Obeying the surgical tenant that perfect is the enemy of good, we accepted the fact that a few small vessels would remain open and vulnerable to some additional loss. Her depleted army of platelets and clotting factors would be expected to fill the gaps. The abdomen was closed and she was transferred to the surgical ward.

After a few short hours of rest, I awoke and walked to the woman’s bedside. Even though the surgery had proven to be immediately lifesaving, in the absence of maximal medical support I was worried her body would not endure the stress of the event. However, as I approached I could see that she was awake and exhibited an aura of profound and reassuring strength. She had made it through one of the darkest nights of her life and in the next several days it was evident that she would make a full recovery. An acquaintance arrived to the hospital later that day and would remain at her side as her primary nurse and caregiver for the duration of her inpatient stay. Several weeks later she left the hospital and made the long walk home on her own accord.

This recollection is not meant to stir feelings of guilt over America’s abundant resources; nor is it meant to sum mon pity for those residents of Cameroon. Its purpose stands as a crucial lesson that each resource, each learned technique, and each passing second should be valued and respected. A multimillion-dollar robotic tool or a single light 1312
bulb should be cherished and used with the focused goal of cure or benefit in those who need it most. A physical exam in Cameroon should be no less telling or essential than an exam that precedes a whole body CT scan in the United States. Moments spent perfecting one’s skill, both clinical and surgical, carry equal value no matter where on earth those moments occur. As my training continues and my experience accrues, each time I adjust a light to improve my field of view at the operating table, I give thanks for those lessons learned while operating in the dark.

Lila’s father glared at me with beady eyes from across her small dining room table.

“What you study, Nooah?”

The way he mispronounced my name, although Lila must have clarified it for him a dozen times, Noah, made the hairs on my neck prickle; I gripped my fork tightly as I answered.

“I’m studying Philosophy.”

“Philosophy! What kind of job will that get you?” He asked, face pinching into confusion.

“He’s planning on getting his PhD, Baba. Isn’t that exciting?” Lila interjected.

Lila always had this way of bringing the sun in with her whenever she entered a room. Her calm yet sure voice and radiant smile could undermine the tensest of situations. It was one of the many reasons I fell in love with her over the years. We were finishing up our last year at Boston University and despite our many differences, here we were, eating dinner with her parents.

“PhD, eh! What will you do with that?” Her father asked.

“I’m not sure yet, but I would like to teach at a university someday,” I answered. I shot a small glare his way, never breaking eye contact.

“That sounds very nice, Nooah. It is high position. God bless you,” her mother said.

She quickly looked down at her napkin, her deep red dyed hair falling over her eyes, and got up abruptly.

“I go make tea for everyone,” she said, smiling.

“No, Mama, it’s okay. You’re my guests; I’ll make it, Lila said, pushing away from the table as well.

Lila’s mother exuded calm warmth, and although I knew she wouldn’t accept me right away, especially because I was not raised in their Egyptian culture and did not practice their Orthodox Christianity, her white cheeks flushed fiercely when I had entered the apartment carrying a box of Godiva chocolates for her. She had welcomed me with the softest voice, the sound of wind running through trees. Her large eyes appeared small behind her thick glasses and her face changed from ivory to red throughout the course
of the evening. Lila’s mother was nothing like mine, with her sharp-angled hair, highlights, and yoga body. Growing up, just the two of us, my mother’s criticisms cut like ice: ‘Your hair grows too fast, Noah. Why don’t you like football like your cousins? You’ll never pass Algebra if you take that long on your homework. Only when graduating high school did I see her triumphant happiness, as if my father leaving when I was a toddler had not ruined her ability to successfully raise me.

I had met Lila at a dinner for a mutual friend a couple years back, I remember it so clearly, how she walked in to the dimly lit restaurant late, clutching a small gift close as if to steady herself as she walked. The only chair left was one right in front of me and she slid in quickly after greeting the birthday girl. She didn’t look up at me for a full minute. When she finally did, her cheeks looked a little flushed, and I wasn’t sure if she was just shy from being late or just didn’t want to introduce herself, but she did.

She didn’t particularly stand out that night: ordinary black dress, dark wavy hair, maybe a little eyeliner, but she had this way of holding my gaze when she spoke that made me think too hard about the fiercest of gazes. The birthday girl counted down and the friends circled around for the show, and Lila was giving me the hunched over the table, perspiring water glasses magnify way, I’ve been arm wrestling a lot lately. Care to have a go?”

“You paint? I’d love to see your work sometime. By the way, I’ve been arm wrestling a lot lately. Care to have a go?”

“I went easy on you,” she said.

“I know, that’s a lot about her after our match. We were in the same psych class and she had the lecture hall because she was left-handed and could never find a lefty seat during exams. She apparently lived off black tea from Sri Lanka, hated blue cheese, and had never been to Vegas. I thought we hit it off well that first night, but when I asked her number as we were getting ready to leave, she stared at me a while and said, ‘I’ll give it to you the next time I see you,’ and left without waiting for someone to walk her to her car.

Lila and her mother were hunched over the stove preparing the teakettle. They whispered to each other in hushed round tones of Arabic. The smell of mint wafted over and mixed with the odors of stuffed chicken and lamb kabob we had devoured. I wasn’t much of a tea drinker, but I knew not to ask for a beer. I had handed her a list of jobs and don’ts for her parents’ visit, and had pleaded with dove eyes: Don’t cuss. No substances of any kind. No physical contact. Avoid Politics. Avoid Religion. Compliment Dad’s suit. Smile at Mom. Although some seemed ridiculous, I could not help thinking about how she had run to me the night before to give me the list. Waves of thick, dark brown hair framed her warm face, a catch at the nape of her neck. She wore a soft smile and her emerald eyes, round like silver moons, twinkled in the light of the street lamp outside her apartment. I was a sucker for her eyes, and I would do anything to make her smile. Pleading her parents was my top priority tonight, but I hadn’t realized how much of a challenge it would be.

Her father ate the last of his stuffed grape leaves, cleared his throat, fried thick, aging fingers, and gave me his piercing attention once more. I looked into his dark eyes, the color of the Turkish coffee he drank, and found a tired old man. The deep creases that lined his eyes extended down his face, carving in around his mouth. His graying, curly hair flew up at wisps at the edges of his comb-over and his down tea and her mother’s freshly made Baklava in front of us; this was going to be a family event. I inhaled slowly; my steady pulse. He moved his knight. There was some more movement of pawns and finally, the first piece was won; he rippled our reflection out.

The sunlight caught her round cheeks, and a fat fly landed on her forehead. I couldn’t help but laugh myself. I busied myself outlining a pair of white geese that were ruffling their majestic feathers in our direction. I held the brush lightly and stroked, dipped back into the acrylic, mixed some gray in, stroked, mixed again, stroked, blended, angled, and the pattern continued until two pairs of glassy black eyes stared at me from my work. I thought I could hear the geese honk right out of the canvases. I went back to rendering Lila’s face and we talked about high school for a while until I finished. When she finally saw the painting, she hugged me tightly, tears in her eyes. We walked by the river and stared down into the murky water; I saw our silhouettes, her’s soft and delicate, and mine tall and wrapping around hers my ash blonde hair lying lightly on the top of her dark waves. Looking at our fusion, I felt sure of us. Lila was not like most girls I had met at college parties, the ones whose shallow conversations made my ears ache. No, she was firm in her beliefs, intelligent and supportive. She was difficult at times, and although this was our third date, she had not allowed me to kiss her yet, which didn’t bother me since I knew her beliefs were what made her so different from every other girl I had met. I stroked her hair as a round mud-green fish’s gulping mouth suddenly broke the surface of the water and rippled our reflection out.

I sat opposite her father behind my white pieces and moved a pawn. Lila and her mother had returned and set down tea and her mother’s freshly made Baklava in front of us; this was going to be a family event. I sat with a Wolfe-golden-green fish’s gulping mouth suddenly broke the surface of the water and rippled our reflection out.

I sat opposite her father behind my white pieces and moved a pawn. Lila and her mother had returned and set down tea and her mother’s freshly made Baklava in front of us; this was going to be a family event. I sat with a Wolfe-golden-green fish’s gulping mouth suddenly broke the surface of the water and rippled our reflection out.

I sat opposite her father behind my white pieces and moved a pawn. Lila and her mother had returned and set down tea and her mother’s freshly made Baklava in front of us; this was going to be a family event. I sat with a Wolfe-golden-green fish’s gulping mouth suddenly broke the surface of the water and rippled our reflection out.
“Baba is quite the chess player; I’ve only beaten him twice,” she said, winking at me, far from her parents’ gaze. “I suppose I’m a bit rusty,” I said, playing along lightly.

“Your religion is pathetic.”

I felt as if my head was being submerged in ice water and I could not breathe. Everything else happened in chaotic fast-forward, the thin air filling my lungs, the pressure on my chest. I was planning on proposing to her that spring, goddamnit! The beige walls closed in around me and my collar became too tight. My temple throbbed.

“Please,” I said. “I’m sorry… please… go,” she said, voice muffled in her mother’s chest.

My legs were rooted in place, and I had to pry them out the door. Her father was sitting alone, staring at the carpet when I walked by. I opened the door slowly and walked out into my new life without Lila, although I couldn’t imagine it without her. I thought I knew her. I thought I understood her difference; it was this difference that I valued so much. Yet somehow I had overlooked her family’s struggles to assimilate into a new culture, her father’s set ways, and how much it mattered to Lila for me to win their approval because of her respect for them. I did not see it until then. I knew I had to win her back, but all I could do that night was pace my apartment, still heated and on edge from the unexpected turn of events. A silhouette portrait of Lila’s face and hair seemed to mock me from my mantel, but I left it hanging.
The tube down his throat clouds and unclouds like the afternoon outside that we both haven't seen for quite a while.

As I watch the fog roll back I wonder what it would be like to live life through a straw. Like drinking a thick milkshake.

“He's overbreathing the vent,” I say to the student beside me, though I still don't quite understand what that means. This becomes clear as I struggle to say whether this is good or bad when I finally see his wife kneeled beside him.

I divert by talking vent settings, taking solace in the squeak of the dry erase markers on the white board. “We're just talking shop,” I say to the wife, pausing when my marker reaches I love you Uncle Socks scrawled by a child’s hand in the corner.

The straw in my coffee is green, like the meadow outside he hasn't seen for quite a while. My mom texts. My uncle has jumped off his roof again. His ankle is shattered, but he clearly has bigger fish to fry, the doctors told her.

The next week I am off service. I see Jake getting a coffee. “How is he?” I ask. “He died,” Jake says. “We did chest compressions for over an hour.” “How was it?” I ask. “Tiring,” he says. “My chest was burning all day.” Jake tagging in for the incessant beating of the heart.

Poems forget industry when they sing the heart's praises. The heart does not ask for a day off, better work hours, or complain about the grind. The burn in your chest a reminder of how difficult it is to be alive.

“The heart does not ask for a day off, better work hours, or complain about the grind. The burn in your chest a reminder of how difficult it is to be alive.
There you go again
With your pride and her prejudice
Walking away
Not touching the ground
She makes sure of that
And everything else
And everyone else
There you go again
With the lightest of loads
And your feet
Never touch the ground
And she makes sure of that
The shadow you cast is large
Or so I've been told
Flowers and other living things die in the darkness
And you make sure of that

Chained together, we marched
...as free men
...as slaves
...as prisoners, we marched
Lynched for sport
Whipped to submit
Raped then jailed for pleasure
Cultured faith and broken trust
Martyrs for Christ's promises
Minds enlightened
Voices uplifted
Praise the Almighty
Forgive!
Race is a figment of my imagination
Imagination mirrors reality
Life made easy by broken backs
Fathers and Mothers who weren't just black
Their eyes staring me down, an inquisition
Where is your contribution?
What have you done for us?
Where is your Daddy?
What are you anyway?
Millennial blacks
Made in His own way
Hues of the past
Shades of the present
Color is circumstantial
Race becomes circumstantial
First we were Niggers, then Negros
We were Colored; we are Black
We've become African Americans
Brotha's, Niggah's reclaimed
Still without identity
Invested in fabricated celebrations
Adopting hand-me-down hopes and dreams
We are human nature evolved
We are here, we are hope, we are precipice
This pigment revolution is real
Blacks, Africans and Niggahs alike
Up in arms, afraid of the other
Civil disobedience over ordained racism

His Legacy | Jennifer Ritch

Boyle Heights View | Angela Wong

American Idols | Mario Eason

Thugs, CEOs, Mothers and Whores
The cracked community, material hoarders
Four wheels are not our best yet
How high or how low, it's just a show
Farmers and field hand, genius engineers
Athletes – “Everyone wants to be like Mike.”
Evolutionary slaves of revolving owners
Career cornerstone manufacturers
Investing in America's growth
The soul of America, a movement in sound
Worshipped like American idols
It is everything to emulate in awe
Not just breathe and bone
But, possessions and gaffes
Eyes on the ground, we walk, profiled fear
Target practice: a rookie mistake
A cowboy's disregard for civil rights
Americans dream to live through the night
We marched, armed together
Without spear; without rifle
The nation stopped
By mere hope and benevolent action
And now...
It's just enough to catch your breath
We cannot hide the bruises and bodies
Any one of us is next,
A parody to law enforcement
The chosen profile
Slaves once more; imprisoned still
Just Niggah's reclaimed for slaughter
Cowboy's cattle, branded and corralled
American idols; targets for sport
new york | Jacqueline Ngo

heat presses down like a wet towel, the city holds its cargo of dead rats, dreamers, Laundromats.
beneath the hungry streets, the rats boil deep in the sewers opened like veins, something in the city runs swift.
on Broadway in the blank room with the blank walls i awake, steamed in my bed like a bun, the walls drip with wisps of a dream: babies crawling in shallow water, cockroaches big as loaves of bread.
the streets call for blood inside, the walls sweat. something boils. heat rises. the city hums a tune, savage and profound.

The Warrior | Jeffrey Hsu

I am the messenger, 
Warning him of the army afoot, 
Steadiy inching its way toward him. 
Quickly, he raises his shield of 
Courage, proclaiming his will to 
Fight. 

But this battle, instigated by a 
Bloody cough, comes with a prognosis. 
As the merciless soldiers approach, 
His shield becomes heavier. 
And heavier. 
And heavier. 

As my attempts to slow the soldiers 
Become more and more futile, 
I find all I can do is lend 
My hand, to help keep his 
Shield from 
Falling.

Sage | Paula Stoessel

It takes awhile to reach the place 
Where I can finally inhale 
The scent of sage:

On a thin windy trail overcome with mustard, 
Past the brambles 
Where the rabbits and wild ground birds graze.

But it is there that the birds 
Become suddenly quiet 
And I can almost hear the eucalyptus peal.

You sent me to walk these hillsides 
Almost a year ago where I have 
Traveled through the changing of the seasons 

At times I felt the seasons pull 
At me and almost lost my gravity 
But you were there with a quantum force 

Last week you grounded me 
With such a weight 
That I felt I was falling through the earth.

Buddha Head, entwined in roots | Suman Dutta
I kissed him for the last time that night, noticing that he'd neglected to shave. I smiled at the thought while he was dragged away from my presence. It was a tradition in my family to separate those engaged to be married the night before the wedding. I felt the anxiety crawl up my chest at the thought that this would be the last night I would be unmarried.

I took a deep breath and closed the hardwood door that cut my view off from his car as it sped away. For a moment I regretted informing all of the wedding party to meet at the venue tomorrow so that I could have my rest. The pre-wedding jitters were getting the best of me, and I could tell that I wouldn't get much sleep.

My parents had even vacated the premises to allow me to have a quiet night, it was very thoughtful of them. Up in the cold mountains, secluded from any bustling cities, I was allowed to do whatever I wanted. I had decided to turn on the big screen T.V. that rested gently in the living room entertainment center. I searched on a bookshelf full to the brim with DVDs my father had collected, enough to fill several lifetimes of footage.

Without hesitating, I slid my favorite movie off the shelf and popped it in the Blue-Ray player. I opened the door, allowing two big Rottweilers in from the cold before snuggling up on the couch with them. The movie began with the light tones of a piano, and my anxiety slowly lifted. Before I knew it, my eyes were drifting and I was falling asleep.

The next thing I heard was the light tapping on my forehead. I took a deep breath and stretched before opening my eyes to a new day. The sun was barely peeking over the hills, and I knew that it had to be time to get up.

"Well good morning, bride to be!" A voice boomed before looking around for the culprit.

"Bae, he's coming in. You're gonna have to wait your turn," the voice continued.

_I laughed in my head at my appearance. I could barely recognize myself. I shrugged, knowing somebody would handle that._

To Be Human | Matthew Hill

---

"It's fine, let's just take the back way." I asked as I got in the car. My brother was in the driver's seat and he was just starting to get nervous and wanted to focus on getting me down the road. I took a deep breath before handing V my card.

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Yes, that's exactly what he said. What does that mean, sweetie?"

"He's probably in traffic or something. He won't be here for a good twenty minutes or so if we're lucky, but that's a big if. Call Jen and let her know, she'll correct the problem," I shrugged with a smile. Just another day in the life.

"Okay, and just to confirm, your mother is walking you, right?" She nodded with a cheery smile.

"That would be correct, now if you'll excuse me, I need to get dressed." I cleared my throat, "V, are you ready to go?"

"OH shut up with that. You're the one who's a sloppy mess. Your poor parents, I picked everything up and opened the door for the dogs. Will they be okay here?" She sighed, turning her head at my wardrobe choices.

"They'll be fine. My parents are coming back up here to change anyway. Let's head out," I said with a growing smile.

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Well get dressed. You can't be late for your own wedding!" The blonde rolled her eyes.

"Oh ha-ha, very funny Nira. I'm actually very early! Now get out! I need to change!" I stuck my tongue out at her.

"Seriously you look like death warmed over!" The dark haired commented with a smirk.

"Get out. Can one of you find Macy and start getting the ball rolling!" I hollered as they walked away.

I shrugged, knowing somebody would handle that. I was just starting to get nervous and wanted to focus on something else for the time being. I took another deep breath and unzipped the bag that held my tux. Everything was a nightmare with her at the wheel. She'd be here in—

"Let me guess, five minutes?" I cut her off.

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Okay, and just to confirm, your mother is walking you, right?" She nodded with a cheery smile.

"That would be correct, now if you’ll excuse me, I need to get dressed." I cleared my throat, "V, are you ready to go?"

I wandered further inside the dressing room to see if I could find a bathroom to change in. I looked terrible for my wedding day. I took another deep breath before handing V my card.

"No honey, this has been paid for already. It’s time to go get your tux, darlin’!" Veronica cocked her head with a big smile. She wore dark brown glasses with a beautiful pair of turquoise earrings.

"Bae, he’s coming in. You’re gonna have to wait your turn," I proceeded with my usual routine and stepped out. I was still in my own world, trying to wrap my mind around the fact that today was my wedding day. A knock at the bathroom door shook me from my own little upstarts world.

"I’m coming V, great. You’re like a Pomeranian," I called back before slipping on some shorts and a ratty t-shirt.

As I opened the door, I waited while V finished collecting things around the house. The short woman hummed to herself while she tidied up after me. Veronica had always been my best friend, and she would probably always be there for me. She had been there from the beginning of my struggles, and now she was on walking me into the next chapter of my life. I cleared my throat, "V, are you ready to go?"

"OH shut up with that. You’re the one who’s a sloppy mess. Your poor parents, I picked everything up and opened the door for the dogs. Will they be okay here?" She sighed, turning her head at my wardrobe choices.

"They’ll be fine. My parents are coming back up here to change anyway. Let’s head out," I said with a growing smile.

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Well get dressed. You can’t be late for your own wedding!" The blonde rolled her eyes.

"Oh ha-ha, very funny Nira. I’m actually very early! Now get out! I need to change!" I stuck my tongue out at her.

"Seriously you look like death warmed over!" The dark haired commented with a smirk.

"Get out. Can one of you find Macy and start getting the ball rolling!" I hollered as they walked away.

---

To Be Human | Matthew Hill

---

It seemed I was zoning out again, because once I came back to the real world, I was standing in the dressing room with the rest of my wedding party, while Veronica chatted with the rest of the group. A blonde woman in a pants suit zeroed in on me once she noticed my presence and came over right away.

"Hello, Max. So glad you’re here on the big day!"

I looked at her with a pang of dread, "Hi Macy. Of course I’m here. What can I help you with? What has gone wrong so far?"

"Your father is running a little late, but he promises he’ll be here in—"

"Let me guess, five minutes?" I cut her off.

"Who’s leading you to the altar?"

"Yes, that’s exactly what he said. What does that mean, sweetie?"

"He’s probably in traffic or something. He won’t be here for a good twenty minutes or so if we’re lucky, but that’s a big if. Call Jen and let her know, she’ll correct the problem," I shrugged with a smile. Just another day in the life.

"Okay, and just to confirm, your mother is walking you, right?" She nodded with a cheery smile.

"That would be correct, now if you’ll excuse me, I need to get dressed."

I wandered further inside the dressing room to see if I could find a bathroom to change in, only to find a portion of the room had been blocked off with a big sign stuck to it: Baby Brother’s Space! I smiled and took the sign down before looking around for the culprit.

"Where are you? I know you’re in here somewhere!"

I called out.

A tall blonde woman accompanied by a dark haired woman appeared from nowhere, "Hello Brother!"

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Well, get dressed. You can’t be late for your own wedding!"

"The blonde rolled her eyes.

"Oh ha-ha, very funny Nira. I’m actually very early! Now get out! I need to change!" I stuck my tongue out at her.

"Seriously you look like death warmed over!" The dark haired commented with a smirk.

"Get out. Can one of you find Macy and start getting the ball rolling!" I hollered as they walked away.

---

To Be Human | Matthew Hill

---

I frowned, thinking I looked chubby in some areas. I felt as though I could see my acne through the make-up, and that was a big if. Call Jen and let her know, she’ll correct the problem," I shrugged with a smile. Just another day in the life.

"Okay, and just to confirm, your mother is walking you, right?" She nodded with a cheery smile.

"That would be correct, now if you’ll excuse me, I need to get dressed."

I wandered further inside the dressing room to see if I could find a bathroom to change in, only to find a portion of the room had been blocked off with a big sign stuck to it: Baby Brother’s Space! I smiled and took the sign down before looking around for the culprit.

"Where are you? I know you’re in here somewhere!"

I called out.

A tall blonde woman accompanies by a dark haired woman appeared from nowhere, "Hello Brother!"

"Guys, this is embarrassing!" I gave them a big smile.

"Well, get dressed. You can’t be late for your own wedding!"

"The blonde rolled her eyes.

"Oh ha-ha, very funny Nira. I’m actually very early! Now get out! I need to change!" I stuck my tongue out at her.

"Seriously you look like death warmed over!" The dark haired commented with a smirk.

"Get out. Can one of you find Macy and start getting the ball rolling!" I hollered as they walked away.
ful sparkling black dress. She looked absolutely fantastic, and I couldn’t help, but smile even bigger.

“Mom, you look amazing! You’ve lost so much weight for the wedding.” I gave her a big hug.

“Oh Max, you’re too nice. I still need to shed a few more pounds, but I think I’m headed in the right direction. Now, we have to get to our places, it seems it’s about to be time.”

I took a deep breath as both of our mothers handed our hands to each other in front of the Judge who presided over the marriage. That judge happened to be my future father-in-law, who grinned a big goofy grin as we faced him,led over the marriage. That judge happened to be my future father-in-law, who grinned a big goofy grin as we faced him, and I said, “I do.”

I took a deep breath as both of our mothers handed our hands to each other in front of the Judge who presided over the marriage. That judge happened to be my future father-in-law, who grinned a big goofy grin as we faced him, and I said, “I do.”

I took a deep breath as both of our mothers handed our hands to each other in front of the Judge who presided over the marriage. That judge happened to be my future father-in-law, who grinned a big goofy grin as we faced him, and I said, “I do.”

Behind him was a massive blue ocean tank, where neon colored fish darted through the waters. The lights were dimmed, and a spotlight slowly lit the area around Darren and I. The hairied man before us, standing in complete judge robes opened a book that had roughly scrawled notes in it.

Welcome family and friends to this joyous occasion between Darren and Maxwell as they join in holy matrimony. Friends and family have come together to celebrate two people who have found love and commitment in each other. Today, they will be sealed in marriage, and their love will be strengthened by the bond of marriage. This is a momentous day, and we are honored to be a part of it.

I grabbed his hand and we stood next to each other in silence. The otters swam around grabbing objects and tossing them back into the water with a kerplunk. He put his head on my shoulder and the world seemed right for a moment.

“How do you feel right now?” I sighed.

“I’m really happy, and I don’t want this to end,” He chuckled to himself.

“Let’s go to the reception. Are you ready?”

“Yes, let’s go Mr. Lenaghan.”

We returned to the venue where the room had been rearranged with seating for everyone and the dance floor had been installed. As we approached, the room applauded. We waved them off until someone in the crowd demanded boisterous laughter and applause. We busted the best moves we could manage, ending the song in a full drumroll.

It was an odd request for her, but I didn’t hesitate. I shuffled quickly over to the deep brown coffee table and grabbed the remotes. It took a while to find the right order in which to turn everything on, but eventually I managed to do it successfully. I flipped to CNN only to see a bright red banner scrolling across the screen:

Breaking News: Obergefell v Hodges has been overturned today by the Supreme Court 5-4. Marriage between same gendered individuals is now illegal in the United States.

I dropped my phone and stared at the screen in absolute disbelief. I took a deep breath and sat down on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

“Is it possible that we can still file it today?” I asked with tears beginning to well in my eyes.

“No, it’s effective immediately. Even though we had a marriage ceremony yesterday, we are not legally married…”

He trailed off and sat next to me on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

W e were completely silent, knowing that the happiest day of my life had just been completely voided out by the government. I took my husband’s hand, my partner, my anything, but husband’s hand. Our now useless, expensive rings clinked together lightly. A tear ran down my face, and we both looked at the bleak future, hoping that there would be light at the end of the tunnel.

Welcome family and friends to this joyous occasion between Darren and Maxwell as they join in holy matrimony. Friends and family have come together to celebrate two people who have found love and commitment in each other. Today, they will be sealed in marriage, and their love will be strengthened by the bond of marriage. This is a momentous day, and we are honored to be a part of it.

I grabbed his hand and we stood next to each other in silence. The otters swam around grabbing objects and tossing them back into the water with a kerplunk. He put his head on my shoulder and the world seemed right for a moment.

“How do you feel right now?” I sighed.

“I’m really happy, and I don’t want this to end,” He chuckled to himself.

“Let’s go to the reception. Are you ready?”

“Yes, let’s go Mr. Lenaghan.”

We returned to the venue where the room had been rearranged with seating for everyone and the dance floor had been installed. As we approached, the room applauded. We waved them off until someone in the crowd demanded boisterous laughter and applause. We busted the best moves we could manage, ending the song in a full drumroll.

It was an odd request for her, but I didn’t hesitate. I shuffled quickly over to the deep brown coffee table and grabbed the remotes. It took a while to find the right order in which to turn everything on, but eventually I managed to do it successfully. I flipped to CNN only to see a bright red banner scrolling across the screen:

Breaking News: Obergefell v Hodges has been overturned today by the Supreme Court 5-4. Marriage between same gendered individuals is now illegal in the United States.

I dropped my phone and stared at the screen in absolute disbelief. I took a deep breath and sat down on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

“Is it possible that we can still file it today?” I asked with tears beginning to well in my eyes.

“No, it’s effective immediately. Even though we had a marriage ceremony yesterday, we are not legally married…”

He trailed off and sat next to me on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

W e were completely silent, knowing that the happiest day of my life had just been completely voided out by the government. I took my husband’s hand, my partner, my anything, but husband’s hand. Our now useless, expensive rings clinked together lightly. A tear ran down my face, and we both looked at the bleak future, hoping that there would be light at the end of the tunnel.

Welcome family and friends to this joyous occasion between Darren and Maxwell as they join in holy matrimony. Friends and family have come together to celebrate two people who have found love and commitment in each other. Today, they will be sealed in marriage, and their love will be strengthened by the bond of marriage. This is a momentous day, and we are honored to be a part of it.

I grabbed his hand and we stood next to each other in silence. The otters swam around grabbing objects and tossing them back into the water with a kerplunk. He put his head on my shoulder and the world seemed right for a moment.

“How do you feel right now?” I sighed.

“I’m really happy, and I don’t want this to end,” He chuckled to himself.

“Let’s go to the reception. Are you ready?”

“Yes, let’s go Mr. Lenaghan.”

We returned to the venue where the room had been rearranged with seating for everyone and the dance floor had been installed. As we approached, the room applauded. We waved them off until someone in the crowd demanded boisterous laughter and applause. We busted the best moves we could manage, ending the song in a full drumroll.

It was an odd request for her, but I didn’t hesitate. I shuffled quickly over to the deep brown coffee table and grabbed the remotes. It took a while to find the right order in which to turn everything on, but eventually I managed to do it successfully. I flipped to CNN only to see a bright red banner scrolling across the screen:

Breaking News: Obergefell v Hodges has been overturned today by the Supreme Court 5-4. Marriage between same gendered individuals is now illegal in the United States.

I dropped my phone and stared at the screen in absolute disbelief. I took a deep breath and sat down on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

“Is it possible that we can still file it today?” I asked with tears beginning to well in my eyes.

“No, it’s effective immediately. Even though we had a marriage ceremony yesterday, we are not legally married…”

He trailed off and sat next to me on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unbreakable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

Darren came back into the room with tears running down his face. His mom must have given him the same information. I looked at him trying to find some glimmer of hope, something that we could do. There was no way it could take effect immediately!

W e were completely silent, knowing that the happiest day of my life had just been completely voided out by the government. I took my husband’s hand, my partner, my anything, but husband’s hand. Our now useless, expensive rings clinked together lightly. A tear ran down my face, and we both looked at the bleak future, hoping that there would be light at the end of the tunnel.
Visitor | Dorothy Yim

Heart is a six story cottage with banana trees that grow to the moon. At night, the orange glow from the fifth floor faerie lights makes the pumpkins in the corner look like suns; the nighttime tulip garden performs Chopin’s Nocturne in E beneath the kitchen windowsill, where pomegranate pies sit cooling for a late night snack.

You are welcome into the heart of fifty seven bedrooms, messy and strewn with children’s plushies and empty cigar boxes. When dawn rises over the balcony, the lawn will be aglow with dandelions and the tallest sunflowers because no one has mowed the lawn in over twenty one years.

There was a time when a hare snuck in through the back door and made its home on the hearth, right next to the lilac sofa that seated two. Later that summer, it found residence on the open porch steps, where a cool breeze would bring in the scent of cinnamon and apple leaves. The hare left when it was time to go but that winter, the back door was always left open.

This heart, here, is the only six story cottage with banana trees that grow to the moon; there is no payment to stay but you may be occasionally asked to pick the fruits up top. In return, you will see the moon and stars. There will forever be a glass of iced tea on the lawn tables beside the kumquat bushes—you only have to know where to look and when you decide it’s time, please: leave the door open as you go.

The jasmine will whisper Thank you for coming.
I hope you visit again.

Breathe | Rose Shan

A Thrill that Kills | Stevie Shield

The flame is lit like skies with stars so bright
She’s on my lips like white on rice or snow
Her smell hits me with joy as much as light
Shines hard to make all things eat, breath, and grow
What runs away are thoughts of purity
Beneath my skin a friend speaks sharply harsh
Alas, my heart does feign security
No dam was built to hold this type of marsh
Again, these flames sway me to jump for joy
A type of joy that gives my soul no rest
Except when time tells joy it’s not a boy
So joy tells me no time is left to test

Smoke swirls inside these lungs to leave her mark
Pain cries to cancer, ‘stop!’ but death is dark

Over and Under | Matthew Plaia
Sometimes, when I hear music in the trees
And sweet distant barks,
I am taken back to that place again
Panama City in your old apartment;
Ants scavenging in the kitchen.
A jet plane takes people somewhere,
I can hear your voice in its engines.

The dirt under your fingernails tells a story
And this grimy city eats breakfast.
We walk to the market
And I pretend it’s the thousandth time.
This place belongs in my history.
I buy you flowers from the old woman
And steal samples from the fruit stand.

Time takes me there still;
A ripple in memories mirrored onto another reality.
One where it really is the thousandth time.

Then your cry brings me back,
And I am okay here too,
Barefooted on my porch in Los Angeles.

---

Waiting | Katherine Bailey

Becoming Sophisticated People | Issa Lutfi

Looking through a Glacier | Neil Parker
Interview With Cormac McNally
Trevor Mooney

“Err, hi...” I said, quickly glancing at the patient’s chart, “what brings you in today, Mr. McNally?”

“Is that yer first wish?” Mr. Cormac McNally glibly responded with a harsh, Ulsterite inflection. He was a wee naked bearded man, no younger than 50, casually reclined on the exam table, legs splayed almost as if to announce his rudely disproportionate member. A pile of red, rain-soaked garments lay in the corner of the room, and the exam robes sat disregarded at the head of the table, still cleanly folded with a smoke pipe placed neatly on top.

Not sure how to respond, I simply nodded my head and took my seat at the head of the table. “You sure you don’t want to use the robes?”

McNally let loose a booming laugh. “Ha! I din’ hop and skip over a beagle’s gowl to have you dress me in your proper...what, you think I would just drop trou for no medical-thingy license to figure out my cure: Pot o’ Gold be my remedy!” Pot o’ Gold is a popular gentlemen’s establishment in the fringes of Belfast, frequented too often by men like McNally — men who spoke fluently in religious allegory yet held no compunction about violating conjugal vows. Come to think of it, Pot o’ Gold is likely where he met his “dear friend” O’Malley. An expression of deep concern suddenly sprouted on McNally’s face. “Hey doc, could ye do me a wee favor and not share that last bit with me dear wife? It was just a jest. I’ve only seen the place once. I was maybe a touch tipsy, and O’Malley convinced me to go inside the forsaken place before me wits returned.” His sparkling blue eyes fixated on the floor. “’tis why me and O’Malley had a...” he paused, choosing his next words carefully, “minor scrap.”

I was taken aback by his sudden display of contrition. Perhaps I had been too hasty to judge the man. In my two years as apprentice to the venerable country practitioner Robert O’Mooney, I had treated enough drunken adulterers in my apprenticeship to shake my conviction in the sacred vows of Christian matrimony. Ironic, perhaps, that my Catholic faith could weather Ulster’s Protestant storm, but threatened to buckle under the weight of a couple Ulsterite drunkards who literally pissed on their eternal vows. That’s one of the things I really admired about Dr. O’Mooney: in all his years of practice, he never missed a Sunday service. His “one intractable vice,” he would sometimes joke.

“Oh, of course, Mr. McNally. Mum’s the word.”

McNally exhaled, demonstrably relieved. “Thanks doc. And go ahead and call me Mac. Mr. McNally is me dear old father. If he wasn’t deaf as a damn doorknob, he’d be my remedy!” Pot o’ Gold is a popular gentlemen’s establishment in the fringes of Belfast, frequented too often by men like McNally — men who spoke fluently in religious allegory yet held no compunction about violating conjugal vows. Come to think of it, Pot o’ Gold is likely where he met his “dear friend” O’Malley. An expression of deep concern suddenly sprouted on McNally’s face. “Hey doc, could ye do me a wee favor and not share that last bit with me dear wife? It was just a jest. I’ve only seen the place once. I was maybe a touch tipsy, and O’Malley convinced me to go inside the forsaken place before me wits returned.” His sparkling blue eyes fixated on the floor. “’tis why me and O’Malley had a...” he paused, choosing his next words carefully, “minor scrap.”

I was taken aback by his sudden display of contrition. Perhaps I had been too hasty to judge the man. In my two years as apprentice to the venerable country practitioner Robert O’Mooney, I had treated enough drunken adulterers in my apprenticeship to shake my conviction in the sacred vows of Christian matrimony. Ironic, perhaps, that my Catholic faith could weather Ulster’s Protestant storm, but threatened to buckle under the weight of a couple Ulsterite drunkards who literally pissed on their eternal vows. That’s one of the things I really admired about Dr. O’Mooney: in all his years of practice, he never missed a Sunday service. His “one intractable vice,” he would sometimes joke.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” I said, happy to have finally elicited McNally’s chief concern. “And are you in pain when you urinate or otherwise?”

“No pain. Maybe my feet, but that’s only because I feel like I’m running laps from my room to the john and back!”

“And your urine itself? Is the color normal? Any blood, for instance?”

“Me wife confused it fer a bloater on our wedding night!” McNally exclaimed. He was a strong man, so tall that the ceiling seemed to gather at his shoulders. His nose was a ruddy, rynophytic bridge of his bulbous nose. “Two promiscuous beagles! One of them's fur was red as an infant, minus the ruddiness and wild hair. And, of course, his very large penis, I noted briefly as my eyes scanned downward.

“Take a gander at my willy, why don’t ya,” Mr. McNally laughed, clearly paying attention to my eye movements. “Me wife conflicted it fer a bloater on our wedding night!”

“You don’t say,” I replied, trying to keep my tone as professional as possible. “Now, if you don’t mind, Mr. McNally, could you tell me why you’re seeing me today?”

“Right, yer first wish!” exclaimed McNally. “Well, doc, I haven’t been bravely for quite some time, now.” “Oh! And when did you start feeling un-...” I paused, struggling to remember the term, “brave?”

“Well – er – doc, this is just between you an’ me, right?”

“But of course. Everything you say here is confidential, unless I have reason to believe you are a risk to yourself or others.”

McNally’s mouth. I paused, knowing already that this wasn’t going to be a routine visit. Not even close. Mr. McNally’s breath reeked of fetid cabbage and Guinness stout, a mix that doesn’t please the nares even before it sublimes back up the offender’s gullet. His nose was a ruddy, rynophytic blob, deviating violently to the left, no doubt the handiwork of a well-placed left hook. All in all, McNally was no spring chicken, and his nasal telangiectasia suggested that they seemed to merge seamlessly with a raging tangle of brown hair matted across the top of his rather large head. I’d imagine that Mr. McNally didn’t look too much different as an infant, minus the ruddiness and wild hair. And, of course, his very large penis, I noted briefly as my eyes scanned downward.

“Take a gander at my willy, why don’t ya,” Mr. McNally laughed, clearly paying attention to my eye movements. “Me wife conflicted it fer a bloater on our wedding night!”

“You don’t say,” I replied, trying to keep my tone as professional as possible. “Now, if you don’t mind, Mr. McNally, could you tell me why you’re seeing me today?”

“Right, yer first wish!” exclaimed McNally. “Well, doc, I haven’t been bravely for quite some time, now.” “Oh! And when did you start feeling un-...” I paused, struggling to remember the term, “brave?”

“Well – er – doc, this is just between you an’ me, right?”

“But of course. Everything you say here is confidential, unless I have reason to believe you are a risk to yourself or others.”

McNally’s blue eyes glinted with mischief. “Oh, you don’t have to worry about me harming me’self. As for others...well, no guarantees — I owe a knuckle or two to my dear friend O’Malley,” he said while gently tapping the bridge of his bulbous nose.

“I chose to ignore that last bit. McNally seemed like one who was quite accustomed to settling his disputes extralegally. “You can trust me, Mr. McNally. Now, go ahead and tell me what ails you.”

“As you wish! You see doc, my willy isn’t working properly...what, you think I would just drop trou for no bloody reason?”

“Well, no,” I replied unconvincingly. McNally was no one who was quite accustomed to settling his disputes extralegally. “You can trust me, Mr. McNally. Now, go ahead and tell me what ails you.”

“As you wish! You see doc, my willy isn’t working properly...what, you think I would just drop trou for no bloody reason?”

“Well, no,” I replied unconvincingly. McNally was no one who was quite accustomed to settling his disputes extralegally. “You can trust me, Mr. McNally. Now, go ahead and tell me what ails you.”

“As you wish! You see doc, my willy isn’t working properly...what, you think I would just drop trou for no bloody reason?”

“Well, no,” I replied unconvincingly. McNally was no one who was quite accustomed to settling his disputes extralegally. “You can trust me, Mr. McNally. Now, go ahead and tell me what ails you.”

“As you wish! You see doc, my willy isn’t working properly...what, you think I would just drop trou for no bloody reason?”

“Well, no,” I replied unconvincingly. McNally was no one who was quite accustomed to settling his disputes extralegally. “You can trust me, Mr. McNally. Now, go ahead and tell me what ails you.”
I couldn’t help but smile at this one. “One of the many health benefits of Guinness,” I rejoined. My medical educators always told me it was a sin to normalize alcoholism, but I had just enough clinical intuition at this point in my career to know that McNally had no designs on slowing down. He was in the “pre-contemplative” phase of cessation, in our profession’s needlessly imperious parlance. McNally boomed again, but for the first time today, not at me. “I’ll drink to that, doc!”

“Maybe not with O’Malley next time, though,” I responded half-jokingly. “Ok. Mr. McNally – I mean, Mac – I think I have enough info to go and give you a proper check up. Before I do that, is there anything else you’d wish to tell me?”

Thoughtfully stroking his brambly beard, he paused. “Well doc, your second wish be my wish to tell you… I’m a wee Leprechaun!” At this, he jumped down from the bed and performed a jig, looking weirdly like a tripod with a wobbly third leg.

At this, both of us were roaring with laughter. With surprising agility for his age, McNally leapt back up to his shoulder-height bed and assumed his casual reclined position. He propped his right leg on his left knee, and turned to me. “And what be your third and final wish?”

Wiping tears of laughter from my eyes, onto which the image of his bare-assed dancing would be forever etched, I collected myself and said, “Okay, leprechaun man, you’re not going to like me, but I’m going to need to check your prostate. I have a feeling it is enlarged, which is why you are experiencing nocturia – er, that is, frequent nighttime peeing.” Only two years removed from medical school, I occasionally forgot that many patients did not share my medical vocabulary. It was “one nagging vice,” Dr. O’Moooney would forget that many patients did not share my medical vocabulary. It was “my one nagging vice,” Dr. O’Moooney would have said, had he been here to be the one to say.

“Okay, deep breath!” I inserted my finger, facing down, and appreciated the tone of his external anal fixation. McNally gasped but didn’t say anything, setting a completely new precedent. In my experience, it was best to complete the rectal exam quickly and efficiently, and address the patient after it was all done. I moved my finger to palpate the prostate gland. The prostate is normally the size of a walnut, but McNally’s was more in the ballpark of a plum. Large, but not severely so. Plus, it felt firm and healthy, no abnormal masses or signs of “bogginess.” Infection was unlikely in the first place, given his history. Finally, I palpated both halves of the rectal wall, and found nothing of concern.

I pulled my finger out, discarded my gloves, and addressed Mr. McNally. “You can go ahead and lie down normally, or however you prefer.” McNally turned and faced me, perhaps a hue ruddier than normal (truly a feat unto itself), and his pride clearly wounded. “It seems to be as I expected,” I continued, trying to ease his discomfort by effecting a professional Null and Void on the rectal exam. “No need to worry too much about, many perfectly healthy men have this condition. Just be sure, I’m going to order one or two blood tests as well.”

Still smarting from the exam, McNally grunted. “Hmph. And what about the pissing? Is there anything we can do about that? Can’t I get a bloody night’s sleep.”

“Why yes, in fact. I’ll be prescribing you Terazosin, which will relax your bladder a bit and help you urinate more fully. Just be warned that it can make you a little dizzy at first,” I replied. “And this Tera-thingy, it won’t disappoint me dear wife,” he said, his blue eyes gleaming. “But things being confidential between you and me, I’ll say you’ve earned yourself a visit to ye old Pot o’ Gold. While yer there, do me a favor and set that gobshite O’Malley straight with one of yer rectal maneuverers.”

I smiled. “Take care, Mac. See you in two weeks, hopefully under sunnier conditions.”

“Oh, I’d say the conditions were quite sunny today,” McNally retorted, gesturing at his crotch. With that, he opened the door and disappeared in a flash.

Shaking my head, I walked over to the desk and dialed the pharmacy, hoping to put in McNally’s order before the oft-drunk pharmacists took off on one of their notorious three-hour lunch breaks. “Those worthless piss artists,” I grumbled, raising the receiver to my ear and waiting vainly for someone to pick up. As the phone rang ineffectually, I looked out the window above the desk, surprised that the morning’s deluge had abruptly given way to brilliant sunshine that flooded the room with natural light. Rays of light refracted through the water droplets still clinging desperately to the windowpane, casting prismatic projections onto the exam table like a hundred dancing rainbows.

Transfered for a moment or two, I broke my gaze just in time to catch the unmistakable figure of McNally jauntily making his way down the cobblestone street. At the corner, where stood the dilapidated steeple of St. John’s cathedral, he turned and waved; even through the rain-mottled glass, his blue eyes were piercing. He then pivoted toward the cathedral and scooped over with his hands raised, adopting a position that looked curiously like genuflection. But I should’ve known better. McNally was baring his buttocks in broad daylight, giving me the “two thumbs up” gesture. I didn’t return so much as a thumb of approval. McNally proceeded to quickly refasten his belt buckle and waved once more before disappearing for good around the corner.

Inside the room, the rainbows continued to dance. Almost tauntingly, I thought – not unlike the patient that had just vacated the exam table.

“Three wishes,” I said to myself, shaking my head in disbelief. “I’ll be damned.”
An Introduction | Martin Mwangi

Margaret Haddoc is sixteen now, at the last juncture of her secondary school education. As wild as her fiery red locks she’s tried to enjoy every minute of her teenage years pushing herself past the innocence of her adolescence. This brings us to the present moment where she’s at match point to win an impromptu tennis match against one of the varsity girls. Maggie’s always enjoyed playing tennis but never joined the team. She couldn’t stand the idea of a blustering coach dictating her schedule. Due to her rather hasty entry into the tennis game, after a few statements by Maggie impugning the skill of the school’s tennis players, Maggie hadn’t taken the time to properly tie her shoe laces. This seemingly innocuous action would have tremendous consequences. With each backhand Maggie slides into position in front of a hurtling tennis ball generating a hurricane worth of force into her stroke that would have been impossible had she been a proper beginner. While Maggie would have been an easy prey for any tennis player to return, What she lacks in elegance she more than makes up for in power. It’s at this point that you are expecting this piece of medical narrative to be about advances in infectious mononucleosis treatment. To the contrary it is about the knot that Maggie should have used to tie her shoes. The same pattern that formed the Herakles knot in the 1st century as an orthopedic medical sling that, over the course of almost 2 millennia, would be modified to form the suture knots used to close up Maggie’s incision. All these finding their origin in the reef knot that grade school children commonly use to tie their shoelaces.

The reef knot would make its initial foray into medical practice with the Herakles knot in the 1st century. Throughout the centuries, the reef knot has since been used, modified, and standardized, ultimately coming to be known as the surgeon’s knot. Maggie was a 2nd-year resident when she was called to today’s present-day Surgeon’s knot adds an additional loop during the first throw to stabilize the knot when tying the second throw. This same knot bound and maintained tension on the incision that formed the Herakles knot in the 1st century. By looping the second strand around the object in the same direction as the first, but is more proximal. After forming the second half-hitch, the knot is finished by tightening the loop. In contrast, the constrictor knot is formed by looping the second strand around the object in the opposite direction from the first half-hitch (a loop). The second half-hitch is created by looping the running strand around the object in the same direction as the first, but is more proximal. After forming the second half-hitch, the knot is finished by tightening the loop. In contrast, the constrictor knot is formed by looping the second half-hitch more distally and then underneath the first loop and tightening. Interestingly, this is the same knot that formed the pattern on the earrings Olive gave to Maggie while she was in the OR all those years ago.

In a multi-varied way, knots have woven themselves intricately into common use ranging from the cosmetic (jewelry) to supremely functional, (maintaining the integrity of surgical therapeutic interventions). Unbeknownst to Maggie, they had woven themselves into integral parts of her most seminal memories. Through their intersection with her life, we attempted to showcase a bit of the confluence of art and medicine in surgical knots. In stitching together Maggie’s story and that of knots, we hope you have gained a better appreciation for the characteristics of knots. That is, their beauty, strength and efficacy, that have advanced them through the centuries. You were probably expecting closure at this point, but then again this IS just an introduction.
I can understand
That being bound
By gravity
Can be hard on a man
Who has traveled through time
Crossed spatial dimensions
Experienced exalted states
Of painlessness and joy
But you must know
That it is all within us
You still live in my center
And I dance in yours.
I believe that all will unfold
When the dragon unleashes fire
And two moons
Laugh in the summer sky.
Forty years ago Gerald murdered a woman. It was 1963 in Lukton, New York and she was a Negro shuffling along the Interstate. When the driver, one of Gerald’s friends, slowed up next to her Gerald fired his gun and the bullet dinged against a stop sign—he was sure it did—but the woman dropped to the ground and that was that. Gerald spent three years in the penitentiary, and from the moment the judge landed the gavel people have been dogging him, saying the ruling wasn’t fair, that it was murder all over again for the ten children she’d left behind. But all Gerald did was shoot a stop sign.

Years passed as unwittingly as that car ride then. Gerald stayed in Lukton, where he had a backbone of support in the small working town that knew him as the rascally but good-natured son of Gerald Walker, Senior. The ones who sneered and crossed the street when Gerald approached were in the minority. Usually they had only lived in Lukton for a few years and, for the rest who had lived there for generations, were just passing through.

Gerald was where he was every day from the hour after he awoke to the hour before he dropped off to sleep: The Steel Lantern, a bar that was as old as the town itself and the oldest tavern left in Lukton. It was winter but it could have been any season, not even Rudolph’s sleigh could tell the difference. It was where he had a bed and where he was on time to continue the conversation but afraid of the silence that would follow. Silences were brutal. They revealed each man’s frailty—his inability to justify his own existence. Words, no matter how tired or untrue, functioned as jobs and families and ambitions did elsewhere. But these men no longer had access to those things.

“Mmm,” Big Bill hummed.

“Still sending you letters?” asked Frank, shining up a glass and shaking his head like he already knew the end to this tragedy.

“If you can call ’em that, They’re gibberish. I don’t even read ’em. Just tear ’em up. No time for that shit,” said Gerald, taking a sip so the others couldn’t see the evidence of his lie, even though it was no mystery how he spent his time. Gerald read every letter—even one of them—even when he was getting a hundred a day. Mostly they were from people who wanted him dead. Others thought what he did was good and right, white nationalists and sorts. There were loons on both sides. But of all the letters he ever received, not one ever professed certainty that he had done it.

“W’ll all be settled in the end,” said Big Bill with a slippery grin. Gerald had the urge to attack him, and if he were a bigger man maybe he would have. But Frank was keen and got things back on track.

“It’s the goddamn media,” he spat. “They see someone wounded and they just want to tear him apart. Don’t care if he’s a good man or not. Vultures,” he said, ringing his hands and flicking away the water.

“He’s not dead, Frank,” Jim, a high school teacher at the end of the bar, chimed in. He started coming regularly about a year ago. Each time he looked more bedraggled and afraid, and he was thinning out like he wasn’t getting home-cooked meals anymore. People understood he was making his bed here for when he’d have to lay in it for good.

“I never said he was dead, Jim.”

“But you said they’re vultures, and vultures—”

“Screw ’em all I was saying!” Frank slammed a glass onto the counter. The melodrama of it made Gerald smile. A part of him was tired of this posturing. It felt like shining a severed stump to glistening false perfection. But a deeper, needier part of him couldn’t stop it.

“Well, what I can say is this,” said Big Bill, “if Gerald was to die, he’d die an innocent man.”

“Amen to that, brother,” said Frank.

Suddenly the door opened and everyone in the bar recoiled from the clean afternoon light. Cold air scuttled up their stiff pant legs.

Gerald, Gerald. The man who came in was breathless. His name was Tom and he was a spindly little man who looked like a pedophile and worked at Wal-Mart.

“Easy, brother. Easy. What is it?” asked Frank.

“There’s two men looking for you. One’s a reporter and the other’s a big black guy. I think he might be— you know…”

“What’s it got to do with me?” replied Gerald coolly, as though his attitude to the situation would determine its severity. But there was enough strain in his voice to arouse concern. A man in the back of the bar, a lumberjack by the look of him though he’d been on disability for decades, stretched himself awake and staggered to where the action was.

“There’s a closet in the back where you can, you know—” offered Frank.

“A closet! You expect me to run when I ain’t done nothing wrong! Innocent men don’t hide in closets.”
“Well, just thought I’d let you know. They’re coming here,” said Tom, leaning over the counter like a kid making his selection in a candy store.


“Warning’s all I ever get,” said Gerald. But the way Frank stared at Gerald shook him. He tapped the edge of his mug, and Frank swooped it up like he was any old customer.

“You’re lucky you get that!” said the lumberjack in a booming voice. “When my old woman shot me, she just shot me down. Now look!” He did something with his leg that only Tom took an interest in.

“We’ve all seen your leg, Gary,” said Jim from down the bar.

“But you know, there is something—” Gerald began, getting up and nearly tripping over his stool.

“Frank.”

“Yeah, it’s me. Here. Take this.” He pulled Gerald away from the wall and put a jacket around him.

“Here. Now get up. Take my hand.” Frank propped him up from under his shoulders and leaned him against the wall.

“My God, Gerald, you’re light as a feather.”

“She had kids, Frank.”

“What!”

“The Negro woman. She had ten kids. I killed them all.”

“Nonsense!” said Frank, hoisting Gerald up with his arm around Gerald’s back. “You didn’t kill nobody.”

“Yes, Frank, I did. I killed her and all of her children. Even that one today. The look on his face.”

“Come on, Gerald. You’re not thinking right. You’re frozen nearly to death and it’s late. I need you to walk with me, buddy.”

Gerald found his feet. Frank used a flashlight to light the way to Gerald’s place, a guest room in the house of an old family friend. Frank lugged him to the side entrance and shoved open the door. He dragged Gerald to the mattress on the floor covered with clothes, beer cans, cigarette butts, and porno magazines. The place smelled worse than a rotting corpse.

“My God, Gerald, what have you been living in?”

Gerald snorted as he wrapped himself in a moth-eaten blanket and buried his face in the bare mattress.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” said Frank, navigating the can-strewn path back to the door.

“Yeah,” said Gerald.

“Me and the guys, we can get this place cleaned up for you.” Frank waited with his hand on the knob and flashlight shining on the motionless figure amidst the refuse of a life gone to waste. He waited for Gerald to say something, but he was already asleep. “See you tomorrow,” Frank said and closed the door.

Gerald felt betrayed. He had wasted his life here when he should have left the moment they let him out. He could have had a life anywhere. He could have found a woman, had a child, lived a normal life with a job and bills and stresses that evaporated at the sight of his beautiful wife and the feel of sinking into a soft sofa with a beer. And when the letters came he’d just rip them up and laugh, maybe even as a family, all laughing together. But he had been afraid. And he was too old now to do anything about it.

Gerald started towards his room a few blocks away, but coming from the other end of the street were two figures loping along like lone survivors of the apocalypse. One was a white man carrying a duffel bag and the other a black man the size of a linebreaker. Gerald instantly recognized them as his executioners. The white man pointed towards Gerald and the black man nodded. When they sped towards him Gerald tried to hurry away, but the cold had turned his feet into stumps and he could do barely more than limp. They were calling after him, but Gerald didn’t look back. The voices neared, growing louder and angrier. A hard hand grabbed Gerald’s shoulder and spun him around.

“Are you Gerald Walker?” It was the black man and his nostrils flared like a bull’s.

“Gerald shook his head. He could feel his eyes widen and afraid.

“You’re not Gerald Walker?” The black man shook him by both shoulders and stared directly into his eyes. Gerald saw that it wasn’t anger or rage that animated this man but something pure and simple. Gerald shook his head.

“Come on, Vic. Even if it’s him, he’s not going to talk,” said the white man, extending his arm between them.

“I know it’s him,” said the black man. He continued to stare at Gerald with terrifying intensity, searing images into his mind.

“Let’s just talk to the folks at the bar. What was it, The Steel Lantern?” said the white man. The black man seemed to be considering something. He opened his mouth to speak.

Then, as though a tightly coiled spring inside him snapped and unwound, he pushed Gerald away.

“Are you Gerald Walker?”

“Yeah,” said Gerald.

“Want a jacket?” Frank was already moving towards the back.

“No, no!” Gerald was tired of the goodwill that once had him in the world of men, active and alive, but that now felt claustrophobic. The others watched as Gerald left.

“Whoa there, brother!” Big Bill patted him heartily on the back. “Someone get this man a coffee!” He laughed. “Put one on, Frank!”

“No, no. I just need—I need to get some air.” Gerald fixed up his flannel and smoothed his jeans. “Besides, if I have to hear how Gary’s ex-wife shot him in the leg again today—”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Fix up your flannel and smooth your jeans. ‘Besides, if I have to hear how Gary’s ex-wife shot him in the leg again today, no.”

“I’m liable to keel over. Of all the things to undo me,” he said, “I never would have thought it would be Gary’s ex-wife shooting him in the leg today.”

“Tell me about it,” Tom agreed.

“Yeah, it’s me. Here. Take this.” He pulled Gerald away from the wall and put a jacket around him.

“My God, Gerald, you’re light as a feather.”

“She had kids, Frank.”

“What!”

“The Negro woman. She had ten kids. I killed them all.”

“Nonsense!” said Frank, hoisting Gerald up with his arm around Gerald’s back. “You didn’t kill anybody.”

“Yes, Frank, I did. I killed her and all of her children. Even that one today. The look on his face.”

“Come on, Gerald. You’re not thinking right. You’re frozen nearly to death and it’s late. I need you to walk with me, buddy.”

Gerald found his feet. Frank used a flashlight to light the way to Gerald’s place, a guest room in the house of an old family friend. Frank lugged him to the side entrance and shoved open the door. He dragged Gerald to the mattress on the floor covered with clothes, beer cans, cigarette butts, and porno magazines. The place smelled worse than a rotting corpse.

“My God, Gerald, what have you been living in?”

Gerald snorted as he wrapped himself in a moth-eaten blanket and buried his face in the bare mattress.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” said Frank, navigating the can-strewn path back to the door.

“Yeah,” said Gerald.

“Me and the guys, we can get this place cleaned up for you.” Frank waited with his hand on the knob and flashlight shining on the motionless figure amidst the refuse of a life gone to waste. He waited for Gerald to say something, but he was already asleep. “See you tomorrow,” Frank said and closed the door.

Dinner Ready Shortly | T. Warner Hudson
It’s only the fifth day and already some of the men are losing it. The donkeys smell like shit and so do the men. Half of us hallucinate infinity: shimmering water, palm trees, ice cream trucks, pin-up girls. Cacti as stiff cold gods, donkeys as smooth-backed lovers. I stopped listening to them hours ago.

Everything’s running lower than we’d anticipated: we’ve cigarettes for only the next two days. Yesterday we woke up to Jensen’s donkey lying in a deep puddle of blood, Jensen nowhere to be found. I pat my own warm Franklin on his neck, the only living thing I care about for a hundred miles around. We move on.

The men are losing their senses—one by one, like coins dropped down a wishing well. There are a hell of a lot of scorpions. They scuttle past in the burning sand, dry and brown as the spines of old books. Maybe if I’d read Tolstoy we’d be in a better place. Though it’d be different here. War and Piss.

Losing track of the days. We pass by the bleached-white bones of some poor animal. Instantly I recognize it as Franklin, I absolutely know it. I look down at his patchy gray head bobbing steadily in front of me to force myself back to reality. In a flash I can see inside his head, I mean really inside, little pink brain nestled in dense skull, bright red blood coursing around the globe of pulsating brain, god damn I didn’t know it was so bright. It’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.

Mark tells me his bag was full of grasshoppers, he had buried the bastards alive because they wouldn’t stop playing the violin. The other guys laugh and laugh, but I understand him. That kids’ tale, an old grasshopper playing the violin with his legs. A nice old guy, the illustration of him wearing a little top hat. Or is that the cricket from Pinocchio?

At night, I can’t sleep. The stars wiggle like marionettes. I blink and they rearrange themselves. Has the North Star always been this neon orange, bleeding?

I haven’t had a cigarette in days. Dragonflies dive-bomb us, smoking Lucky Strikes. Bastards. I want to meditate among the lotuses, but the merciless sun gleams off their shiny wings, cutting red flashes through my eyelids.

Hunger is our king, our ruler. We bow down to it in the cruelness of night. Robbie went off to hug a saguaro. I can’t find Franklin. There is a sharp ache in my right heel, and I pry off my boots for the first time. It smells swampy. A leech has settled. I peel it off, the blood oozing out. Not as bright as Franklin’s. It has left the skin beneath clean and new as a peach. As the earliest stars unveil themselves in the bruised sky, I settle my head in the bare sand onto something moist, flat and squishy. It has eyes on the same side of its face, in a cute cock-eyed kind of way. We doze together, and I dream of sleeping on the seafloor, flattened by a cartoon steamroller, eyes gazing lovely and motionless at the brilliant sea of pus above.

I awaken to hear David make soft sucking sounds a few yards away from me. I sit up, brushing phosphorescence out of my eyes. He’s trying to pry a starfish from his eye. I want to tell him, those suckers can hang on to rocks when the tide sweeps in and out like a power wash. But my mouth is filthy and dry from too many cigarettes. I settle back into my bed of slimy kelp. I don’t turn around for the pop. It must have left a neat little hole where his eye had been.

Night falls. Has it been a week? A millennium? I tread softly away from the group, sinking my feet into the still-warm sand, leaving my shoes neatly arranged as a memorial to Robbie, who must still be standing there, hugging that saguaro, imagining he’d finally found solace. There are worse ways to go, aren’t there?

I climb a small dune that rises softly over the desert. Faraway rocks emerge from the dark sand, big as tombs up close, but from here they look like God’s shit scattered across the desert. The stars dance the tango in vivid swirls, but I ignore the voices. Out here in His elemental garden of rock and sand and a sky dripping with stars, a man can really find himself.

The Art of Survival | Jacqueline Ngo

Skull Still Life | Michelle Miller

Doctoring | Joe Pierre
The surgeon’s scalpel
Navigates the tiny space
Between life and death
The Ethics of Bioengineering the Next Generation

The rapidly changing fields of bioengineering and genetic modification have changed medicine as we know it. Can humanity be trusted with the power that comes along with such changes or are abuses tumultuous? Advances in science during the last three decades have brought about life changing procedures and breakthroughs. They have made the stuff of science fiction, reality. In doing so, they have raised ethical concerns that have resulted in new laws which govern scientific advancement. Next to such issues inherent to their own practice, those who are creators have a responsibility to anticipate the consequences of their designs for medical practice and to ensure that technologies are designed in a manner consistent with and supportive of ethical principles for medical practice.

This means that issues of beneficence and non-maleficence are kept in mind, that patient autonomy is thought of and protected: The equitable allocation of health resources is made available and that human dignity is respected. Furthermore, issues of confidentiality and informed consent are highly applicable. Particular ethical questions arise in applications of bioengineering to human enhancement. Although the devices and techniques developed by biomedical engineers are usually designed for the purpose of therapy or diagnostic support, they may also be designed to enhance healthy human traits beyond a normal level.

It has been argued that if medicine were to engage in human enhancement, it would move beyond its traditional mission, which is curative and preventive. Erwin Chargaff, Professor of Biological Chemistry at Columbia, noted “We manipulate nature as if we were stuffing an Alsatian goose. We create new forms of energy; we make new elements; we create new forms of life; we make new elements; we kill crops; we wash brains. I can hear them in the dark - set and respected. No choice should be imposed upon any of us shades of grey. This is the nature of making a decision that affects entire populations with multitudes of varying people. But a well-known public health campaign serves as an example of our duty to humankind to overcome the limitations set before us. Without the proper level of iodine, many children were adversely affected during pregnancy in utero. Before mass iodization of salt it was estimated that there would be eventual loss of a totaled billion IQ points in the population. We have a moral obligation to one another, to give the next generation the best chance that it can have. No choice should be imposed upon any of us. We are tireless knowledge seekers - celebrators of life. We are also submissive supplicants to the unknowable - wary and respectful of death.

Today we have extended our life span drastically in the last century. We have overcome many of the limitations that are inherent to their own practice, those who are creators have a responsibility to anticipate the consequences of their designs for medical practice and to ensure that technologies are designed in a manner consistent with and supportive of ethical principles for medical practice.

And this manipulation in the human model has led to some remarkable results. Today we have technologies that allow us to save newborns — technology that was not available just 30 years ago. We have pre-pregnies being born and nurtured to health, who go on living relatively normal and happy lives. Through medical and technological manipulation, we have extended our life span drastically in the last century. We have overcome many of the limitations that are ingrained within our genomes and our cultures. Each time we give a vaccine, transplant an organ or take medication, we are changing the natural order of things. It must be mentioned too that the notion of the natural always being good and the unnatural always bad is unsound, as there are natural poisons that kill, and unnatural devices that save the lives of our loved ones.

Instead of a black and white guide to choosing what is good for the population, public health efforts usually give us shades of grey. This is the nature of making a decision that affects entire populations with multitudes of varying people. But a well-known public health campaign serves as an example of our duty to humankind to overcome the limitations set before us. Without the proper level of iodine, many children were adversely affected during pregnancy in utero. Before mass iodization of salt it was estimated that there would be eventual loss of a totaled billion IQ points in the population. We have a moral obligation to one another, to give the next generation the best chance that it can have. No choice should be imposed upon any of us. We are tireless knowledge seekers - celebrators of life. We are also submissive supplicants to the unknowable - wary and respectful of death.

Here in this space, we are all the same. We join forces with those selfless people who gave their bodies to science. We are tireless knowledge seekers - celebrators of life. We are also submissive supplicants to the unknowable - wary and respectful of death.

My mind wanders to a scene revered in the Jewish tradition: the one day a year that the High Priest of the ancient Jewish people would enter the Holy of Holies. Before he entered the chamber, he stripped naked, cleansed, and slipped on plain, white clothing. Perhaps he felt this same responsibility and humility when he donned his white vestments and prayed for life — and for purified, holy death.

Perhaps he too felt the weight of our common human struggles as he checked his clothes at the door.

The same doctor who can keep us from disease would also be clever at producing it by stealth.

- Plato (The Republic)
It’s funny how much more it stings to speak about current troubles than about those of the past. A simple yes, I had brain surgery and it’s all done, glides off the tongue so much easier, so much smoother from hours of rehearsal than: it’s back and it’s tripled in size, A phrase so foreign even you have yet to accept it.

It’s true what they say. Patients never hear anything after the word, Tumor. Time seems to suspend itself in that moment as if in disbelief; as if the world has folded upon itself, with you (the patient) nestled in its warm embrace; as if to protect you (the naïve 13-year-old child) from what lurks outside its walls. Hide in this blissful enclave, where the words can’t reach you, where you don’t have to understand, where you’ll be ok.

Those same words reverberate, jarring notes, falling on deaf ears. You’ll be ok. You’ll be ok, they said, as they sedate you for a three hour MRI scan. You’ll be ok, they said, as they examine the growing mass on the screen. You’ll be ok, your mother cries, face swollen from restless nights, scurrying beside your gurney as they shuttle you into the OR for brain surgery. I’ll be ok. And for a while I was.

I remember waking up, Dazed, weary, incomprehensibly thirsty. I remember the thunderous ache on the side of my head, Burning like branding iron. They had stapled my head together.

I remember fragments: My sister visiting, only to leave the ICU Minutes later, distraught at what remnants Of her big brother lay in front of her. She’s too sensitive I choked out to the nurse.

I could hear my mother, her heart crooning an erratic lullaby, haggard from lack of sleep hands trembling as she gingerly fed me ice chips. Please, go home mommy. Please, get some rest. I’ll be ok.

Months passed. I could see My parents’ relief as I recovered. Recollecting shards of myself, Piecing together the fragments Of all I had forgotten. Relearning how to write— How to walk, sing, smile, laugh— How to be me again.

And yet, All good things come to an end. The same story. The same characters. Round 2. Eight years later. You hear it again, already so numb that you don’t process. You’ll be ok. You’ve done it before; You’ll do it again.

What if I don’t want to do it again? What if I don’t want to be brave again? What if I don’t want to understand the mechanism Of this new experimental drug with a sample size so incredibly fucking small That I can count it all on one finger? What if, just maybe, I can’t go through it all again?

I just want to me again. Normal. Without the pain. Without the fear. The Loneliness. The Tumors. Please doc, I just want to be me again.
A thin string of Christmas lights hangs above the bed
Creating a dull halo of light that encircles them
Love is never spoken, but it hangs in the room, thick as heat
He envelops her with his arms, pulling her close
She moves her legs in between his and lets his body surround her
He nuzzles his face into the back of her neck
The warm breath dances there, heating her skin
She can feel this time is fleeting,
Like the quiet, wet kisses he now places on her lips
With each draw of breath, he takes another part of her soul
She can feel her essence ebbing out with the ocean’s pull
Yet she gives to him freely, runs her tongue on his bottom lip
She tells him how her parents are getting older, of her fear
He talks of his career, the many paths he could take
She wonders if one of those paths includes her
Is this real, like the leaves turning red and falling every autumn?
Will he be there to kiss her hand, as he is doing now
As inevitably as the snow kisses the earth every winter?
He claims to be incapable of love, to be the one who burns
Yet all she sees is the layer of ash surrounding his own heart
Residue from the fire that was lit by another
Proof that someone else had claimed his heart before her,
Still holding a dark possession of it even now, after all this time
How can he not feel her pulse quicken as he bites her ear?
The stillness and the chaos that his presence around her creates?
She lets out a soft sigh, grabbing his face in her hands
Memorizing his features as if seeing him for the last time
The three freckles under his jaw, the stubble on his cheek
The feel of his hair in her hands, the ink on his chest
The rumble of his voice, the warm roundness of his shoulder
As she lays her head upon it, humming the song of her heart
Hoping he sings along with her, but knowing that he won’t.
Biographies

Benjamin Amendolara, MS3 - Benjamin Amendolara is an MD-PhD student in the first year of his PhD who aspires to be a neuropsychiatrist. He considers fiction as a means to challenge one's morals.

Serapio Baca, Assistant Researcher - Serapio M. Baca is an Assistant Researcher in Neurology and performs optical imaging and electrophysiological studies of the brain.

Katherine Bailey, MS1 - I am a first year medical student born and raised in Los Angeles County. I have an interest in exploring areas less traveled and sharing these experiences through photography, drawing, and painting.

Eric Chang, Resident - Eric Chang is a medical resident in the UCLA Department of Radiation Oncology. He grew up in Los Gatos, CA.

Shaharoh Chism, AAAIII - When Shaharoh Chism is not working for UCLA Cardiology, she enjoys writing lyrics, poetry, creating and performing music.

Stephan Chiu, MS4 - Stephan Chiu is a 4th year DGSOM student and a former editor of The Beat. His interests include traveling, photography, music, beer, and food.

Mary Rose Deraco, Nurse Admin - My new series of paintings, “Patterns in Bloom,” began after a trip to Vienna, a city I had longed to visit for many years. I was moved by the Art Nouveau/Austrian Secessionist movement. This style of painting resonated with me and inspired my new body of work through its decorative design language: floral motifs, curved lines, and patterns. My intention was to tell a beautiful story of growth and transformation through stylistic interpretations that connect the simplistic elements of nature, pattern, design, and color.

Huan Dong, Drew/UCLA Medical Student - Huan is a Drew/DGSOM student and currently a NIH-Fogarty Global Health Fellow at Hanoi Medical University in Vietnam. He loves nature and food. He can only take candid photos or photos of scenery because he gets nervous when someone looks directly at the camera lens.

Sunny Dutta, Postdoc - Postdoctoral Fellow @ Neurology Department, UCLA. Electronics Hobbyist. Photography Enthusiast. Proud Father of a little Princess.

Mario Eason, Administrative Assistant II - 7 year veteran of UCLA Health Brentwood with a passion for poetry. Los Angeles native, doing what I do!

Sally Elliott, Medical Student - Sally is a MD/MPH student in the PRIME program at UCLA. She loves the forest, the ocean and the LRC.

Zhuang Fang, Clinical Professor - Zhuang T. Fang, M.D., MSPH Clinical professor, Department of Anesthesiology Nature photographer.

Nelli Ghazaryan, BI Programmer Analyst - Nelli is a Business Intelligence Programmer and Analyst working at...
the Office of Health Informatics and Analytics. She recently graduated with a Master’s in Public Health from George Washington University. She is a lover of art, science, and dogs.

Christina Harview, MS3 - Self-proclaimed scientist, Christina is inspired by the beauty and rawness of humanity and nature in its purest forms. She has been a contributor to the BEAT since 2012.

Matthew Hill, AAII - My name is Matthew Hill, I’m a young ambitious writer working for UCLA DOM.

Jeffrey Hsu, Cardiology Fellow - I am an alumnus of the David Geffen School of Medicine (Class of 2011), and am currently in my third year of Cardiology fellowship. During my Internal Medicine internship at UCSF, I was deeply saddened by my first experience telling a patient of mine that he had cancer. This poem is my reflection on my encounters with him in clinic over the course of my residency.

T. Warner Hudson, Medical Director Occupational and Employee Health UCLA Health System & Campus - Avid outdoor photographer since childhood drawn to adventure and challenge.

Bryan Huebner, MS1 - My name is Bryan Huebner and I'm originally from a small town in northern California, and went to college near Chicago. I've always loved being outside taking photos but only recently found my passion for landscape photography.

Walter Jung, Physical Therapist - I picked up photography to unwind from the busy week. My weekends are often spent trying to capture two of my greatest loves: being from the West Coast, and nature in its purest forms. She has been a contributor to the BeAT ever since.

Bryan Huebner, MS1 - My name is Bryan Huebner and I'm originally from a small town in northern California, and went to college near Chicago. I've always loved being outside taking photos but only recently found my passion for landscape photography.

Ester Jun, Pediatric Resident - Esther is a newly minted Pediatric Intern at UCLA here from very far away...as in Orange County. She attended Williams College, majoring in art history and biology and enjoys molding her love for medicine with drawing.

Sateree Khuanuswan, Postdoctoral Employee - Postdoctoral researcher in Neurology department. Photography is my creative outlet.

Ka Man Law, Assistant Project Scientist - I came to UCLA a few years ago and rediscovered the joy of writing.

Priscilla Lee, Nurse Practitioner - I am a nurse practitioner in the Division of Vascular Surgery.

Sofia Liou, MS3 - Hi! I am a third year medical student at UCLA who, just a few months ago, was inspired by my patients in Child Psychiatry to practice mindfulness through art. It is through my interactions with them that these drawings first blossomed. I have been sketching ever since!

Thomas Luong, MS2 - Thomas Luong is a second year medical student who enjoys exploring humanity through his hobbies which include archery, astronomy, and photography.

Issa Lutfi, Administrative Assistant III - This past spring, I graduated with my Bachelor’s in English, emphasizing in Creative Writing. Originally, I was a biology major en route to medical school. After numerous hours trying to combat my lack of mathematical comprehension (which started to show up in all my science classes), I decided to reevaluate my career choice and thought to myself, what do I love? I have always had a passion for television and the creativity that comes with it. The writers bring into the shows. Being that most television shows are based on old literature stories, I figured, I should know the histories in order to write the new and greatest, and behold, I fell (in love) into English. Working at the DGSOM provides me the opportunity to utilize both my medical and English background and will hopefully create for an exciting narrative one day. With a lit, journal like UCLA BEAT, I know I am not the only one traveling on this road.

Matthew Plaia, Staff Research Associate - Matthew Plaia is a recent graduate from UCLA with a BA in English and a minor in Public Affairs. He previously attended the California Institute of the Arts for Character Animation and continues to work as a contemporary, mixed media artist in Los Angeles. His work seeks to engage viewers through various collages rooted in impressionism, each comprised of alternate mediums from digital to raw formats.

Ishan Mehta, Fellow Physician - I am currently a second year Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine Fellow. I consider myself a die-hard Kentucky Wildcats basketball fan and strongly believe that I bleed blue!

Eric Miller, Urology Resident - Eric Miller is a senior resident in training with the department of Urology at UCLA and an immensely proud alumnus of the David Geffen School of Medicine. He still believes there is nothing more satisfying, rewarding, or fulfilling than being a surgeon-physician. He is an avid outdoor enthusiast and enjoys hiking, biking, climbing, surfing and skateboarding. Following his residency, he plans to pursue a career in academic medicine with a focus on Genitourinary Oncology and Renal Transplantation.

Michelle Miller, MS1 - I played basketball at Princeton before returning home to LA for medical school this year. I have had a life long passion for art and enjoy exploring a variety of media.

Trevor Mooney, MS3 - Trevor Mooney is a third year medical student at DGSOM. He was raised in an Irish-Catholic in a house nestled in the rolling redwood foothills of Northern California. In this crucible, his love for tall tales was born.

Martin Mwangi, MS3 - I am a 3rd year medical student interested in literature with a particular interest in medical narrative submitting a work in collaboration with Diboro Kanabolo (Pritzker School of Medicine MS2).

Eviola Nakhla, MS1 - Eviola Nakhla was born and raised in Southern California. She was a typical Biology major before starting Medical School but also minored in Creative Writing to further her appreciation for the arts. When not running to PBL, podcasting lectures, or poring over anatomy, she likes being outdoors, venturing to new food and coffee spots, exploring art galleries, and creating art with makeup.

Jacqueline Ngo, MS2 - Jackie is a medical student who aspires to become a neurologist. She holds an M.S. in Narrative Medicine from Columbia University.

Billy Nguyen, MS1 - Billy Nguyen is currently a first year medical student interested in pursuing a career in pediatric neurosurgery. When not getting boba and pretending to study, he is found in the confines of biomed library distracting others from studying. Billy enjoys glow in the dark paintings, well-done paninis and extended vacations abroad.

Eitan Novogrodsky, MS4 - Eitan Novogrodsky is a fourth-year medical student at DGSOM. This piece was included in the 2014 Ceremony of Thanks as a tribute to the individuals and families who participated in the UCLA Donated Body Program.

Neil Parker, Professor - When Dr. Parker is not administering, teaching, or seeing patients, he likes to see the world through the lens of his Nikon. Landscapes, nature, and underwater scenes most catch his eye. The old master prefers camera to print without photoshop.

Manash Paul, Project Scientist - I am a Project Scientist and work on lung stem cell and lung cancer working with Prof. Steven Dubinett. I love to express my thoughts through my paintings.

Joe Pierre, Health Sciences Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences - Joe Pierre, M.D. is a psychiatrist by day and samurai by night. His three haikus were inspired by reading Japanese Death Poems.

Jessica Poon, MS1 - Jessica Poon graduated from UC Berkeley in 2014. She conducted molecular biology research at Brown University and earned a certificate in natural science illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design before joining the DGSOM Class of 2020.

Jeanie Radoc, MS2 - Jeanie Radoc is a second year medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine.

Jennifer Ritch, Assistant to The Chief of General Surgery - Jennifer Ritch is growing tired, but she can see the finish line, and beyond it, another starting line. And that is usually enough to get her up in the morning. She pretends well most of the time. She’ll keep getting better at pretending, until someday, everyone will believe, and then she will be able to rest. But for the time being, she’ll get up and do things, and eat and walk and talk and think and hopefully one will see that in the background, the space just behind her eyes, she is counting, and humming, and not paying attention at all.

Rose Shan, MS2 - Rose is a medical student with a lifelong interest in art. She recently picked up watercolor for its convenience, and has since fallen in love with the medium.

Justin Sharim, Medical Student - Justin is a medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine.

Stevie Shield, Fund Manager - Stevie Shield is an emcee/writer/poet, short story author, and filmmaker. His audience at UCLA has been as a research administrator for the Department of Medicine.

Vctor Sigalov, Radiology Senior Staff Research Associate - I work in the Department of Radiology. In addition to photography, I like traveling, teaching, and reading.

Lisa Stern, MD, Medical Staff - Lisa Stern, former peds resident at Brown University and earned a certificate in natural science illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design before joining the DGSOM Class of 2020.

Paula Stoessel, Professor of Psychiatry - Paula Stoessel has recently retired as Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the UCLA Mental Health Service for Physicians in Training. She has a private psychotherapy practice and enjoys writing poetry, reading, and walking in beautiful places.

Victoria Sun, MS2 - Victoria is an MSTP student in her 2nd year of medical school. She loves learning and sharing stories through art.
Andy Trang, Researcher - Andy Trang is a researcher in the Department of Neurosurgery at UCLA. He is passionate about studying many elements and styles of art including portraiture, architecture, technical illustrations, and abstract surrealism. His pieces are predominantly in the medium of pen and ink where he practices the technique known as cross-hatching to render a multitude of textures, tones, and lighting effects through the precise placement of a myriad of lines.

Kenny Vongbunyong, Staff Research Associate - As a pre-med who recently graduated from UCLA, I have spent my gap-year investigating cutting-edge research at the Larry Hillblom Islet Center in hopes of finding novel therapies for treating type 2 diabetes mellitus. I will never forget all that I have learned from my new family at Hillblom. With my research experience, I have come to appreciate the vibrant mitochondrial networks which are essential for multiple cellular processes including ATP production, apoptosis, and even glucose-induced insulin secretion in Beta cells.

Jonathan Warren, MS1 - Jonathan Warren discovered his love for photography on a backpacking trip through Europe when he first picked up a DSLR camera. Since then, he has continued to develop his love for photography and in his free time, when available, looks for new areas to photograph. He has just started his medical career at DGSOM and is currently pursuing a specialty in Emergency Medicine.

Arlistel Williams, AAII - I hail from the majestic city of Los Angeles. I’m embarked on an existential quest for the platinum lining to these clouds hanging above. I’m yearning for the beautiful.

Angela Wong, Asst. Project Scientist - Angela works in the Department of Neurobiology. She discovered street photography by accident. She prefers photographing skyline at night and performance artists.

Dorothy Yim, Neurosurgery Medical Scribe - Dorothy is a scribe in the Neurosurgery Department and graduated from UCLA ’16 with a degree in Physiological Sciences. Even though she has been a writer her whole life, passion doesn’t come close to describing how much she loves writing. She is currently working on a fictional novel as well as a collection of poetry which she hopes to publish one day.