

Volume Fifteen

# The BEAT

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UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine Journal of Arts and Literature



## Editor's Note

Dear readers,

As medical students and professionals, we are confronted with a wealth of emotions on a daily basis. Some will delight, while others will inevitably disconcert us. The pieces that follow remind us that we are more than stoic vessels of these emotions—we internalize them and give them substance. They reflect moments of health and love, yet also times of illness and loss. They express the feelings that mystify and move us, and allow us to view the world through another's eyes. The contributing artists have shared pieces of themselves, and in beholding their work, a bond is made. We hope that this year's issue of The BEAT will resonate with your experiences much as it has with our own.

Sincerely,  
Shauna Higgins & Aaron Jen

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### Acknowledgements

*Art Committee Editor*  
Nancy Carballo

*Art Committee Staff*  
Dustin Harris  
Lisa Altieri  
Gloria Kim  
Naomi Serling-Boyd  
Sybil Zachariah  
Ginger Slack

*Literature Committee Editor*  
Stacie Nishimoto

*Literature Committee Staff*  
Megan Sue  
Roxanne Vasquez  
Ziyad Khesbak  
Eric Lin  
Julia Kulik

*Special Thanks*  
Neil Parker  
Meredith Szumski  
Mitsue Yokota

### Vital Sign Awards

*Art*  
First - Dendrites by Sarah Muradian  
Second - Kids, Don't Play With Fire! by Uyen Dinh Chu

*Literature*  
First - A Good Idea at the Time by Clayton Vetter  
Second - Shifting Trains by Maria-Kassandra Coronel

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3	Somewhere in the Middle of Nowhere by <i>Adrian Garcia</i>
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Winged Embrace by Shauna Higgins

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# Lips

*by Ziyad Khesbak*

A kiss makes a seal  
And lips touch as wax  
As Tenderly warmed, drops of the soul  
In gentle cascade  
With flight,  
as woven blades of feathers fly  
With might,  
as armies meet, and clash the night

And in their bind, those lips expel  
a sweetness found in heavens unperceived  
by human minds, though human hearts

may drink from lips, and rest at bliss  
may drink from lips, and rest at this.

Memory by Jennifer Ritch



flesh parts easily  
forgiving the assault  
but never forgetting  
the scar makes sure of that

Dandelion by *Stephanie Chu*



# Mother

by Lew Andrada

Anana stopped moving for a moment and turned around to search for her son. As she expected, Iyaroak was clawing away at a chunk of ice, unaware that he had fallen behind his mother's pace. Anana snorted with impatience. Her breath exploded from her nostrils in a white puff, causing the falling snow around her snout to swirl in a terrifying display. [Come here!](#) Iyaroak wailed in apology and bounded towards her side. He looked up at her, his dark eyes filled with the fear of punishment. Anana considered swatting him but recanted when she noticed his small paw prints in

the snow. Instead, much to Iyaroak's surprise, she licked his furry forehead. He was precious to her, her only cub, her baby.

Anana gave him a low, reassuring hum. [Stay beside me.](#) They couldn't afford to waste time. Hunger gnawed at her insides. She knew Iyaroak felt worse because of his youthful and voracious appetite. The seals Anana normally hunted had begun to disappear from this area. Their breathing holes once dotted the landscape but now lay dormant beneath thick layers of snow and ice. The missing seals disconcerted Anana. Growing up, she and her mother always had

food readily available. She now considered herself fortunate if she managed to catch an unassuming hare, but those meals did little in satisfying herself or her demanding cub.

Iyaroak let out an excited cry and began jogging ahead of his mother. A gust of wind delivered the salty taste of the sea to Anana's panting mouth. She raced after her son, caught up in his enthusiasm. As she approached the shore, Anana began to slow down. The scene before her was not what she initially imagined. Islands of small ice bobbed in the choppy, dark blue waters. That much she expected, but the islands

used to teem with hundreds of seals. Now, only handfuls remained. Anana groaned in disappointment.

Iyaroak, oblivious to his mother's fretting, let out soft growls at the seals. They, in turn, barked at him indignantly. The cub almost leaped into the arctic sea, jaws snapping, but Anana snagged him by the scruff of his neck with her mouth. Her bite was gentle, yet firm. Stop that. She held him in place until he calmed down. Iyaroak was not ready to navigate the sea's relentless currents, and his hunting technique lacked any subtlety. Anana gave her son a playful bite on the ear. Stay here. She ambled away, leaving her son to observe the hunt.

Once out of the seals' visual range, Anana slipped into the frigid, sapphire of an ocean. She used the currents to her advantage, only swimming against them when absolutely necessary. As she approached her targets, a rumbling in the sky disrupted her progress. The seals, alarmed by the sudden ruckus, began leaping into the safety of the ocean's depths with a flurry of splashes and yelps. The hunt a failure, Anana started swimming back to the shore. Her eyes searched the sky for the source of the disturbance. The intensity of the rumble grew into an unbearable crescendo, and as Anana reached land, she spotted a giant monster hovering in the air overhead. She bared her teeth and growled, but the beast came closer. She unleashed a fierce roar. Even that had no effect. Her head and shoulders lurched forward. The fur on her back bristled with rage. She stood ready to strike.

Then something touched her hind leg. Anana turned around to find Iyaroak huddling behind her, whimpering. She

yowled at him. Run! Get to safety! He hesitated, and just as Anana was about to push him away, a sharp pain pricked her back. She screamed. Without thinking twice, she grabbed Iyaroak by the scruff of his neck and began running. Anana managed to drag him for a short distance before she tripped over her own feet. Sudden fatigue engulfed her body, and when she heard Iyaroak cry out in pain, she was powerless to help him. Her eyes closed. Darkness enveloped her.

—

"You're not going to tag the cub?"

"No. With his growth rate, the collar might end up choking him. We'll let him be for now."

"So one down, forty-nine to go."

"Right. Just a few more months, and we'll have an intricate map of their locations and movements. I'm hoping the data will provide some solid evidence of the population decline. Maybe then we can convince the government to step in and provide some funding."

"I don't know about that, Doc. Money's hard to come by these days."

"It's worth trying."

"Well, if it's any consolation, we'll continue to help as much as we can."

"Thanks, Henry. The rangers have already done so much for us. We appreciate it. Okay, looks like my team's just about finished. Let's leave before these two wake up."

"Yes ma'am. We'll fly over the northern ridge next. I spotted another bear there yesterday. If we're lucky, he might still be hanging around."

—

Anana felt something cold and wet press against her left cheek. She stirred

and slowly opened her eyes. Iyaroak gently nuzzled her again, bawling with worry. Anana cooed softly. Be still. She struggled to her feet as Iyaroak cheered her on. The monster had disappeared. She and her son had been spared, but something felt wrong. Iyaroak began biting at something attached to her neck. Anana scratched away with her claws, but she could not remove the strange object.

Nearby, a white hare emerged from its burrow, sniffing the icy air. Anana spotted him, and her stomach gurgled. Whatever hugged her neck would be dealt with later. For now, she craved the hunt. She needed to provide strength for herself, and most importantly, a future for her precious son. Anana gently licked Iyaroak's face. We will find a way. •

# GALLO!

*by Claudio Scafoglio*

—

## I

In the fog of the morning only birds in the distance  
can be heard chirping and singing;  
the moon emerges, still pale, from the blue in the West  
and a flight of ravens salutes her;  
arising in the morning, his head hits the bars  
and again bends down, in fury;  
tossing and turning in the cage that's too small  
his chest is swelling with anger,  
he sighs and he pants,  
he cries and he jerks,  
and bending his quivering head  
impatient he nourishes his rage.

He will release all his pain and his hatred  
in the dark, sweated rooms of the fight  
among drunken shouts, smoke and bets,  
fierce and audacious he will attack,  
violent and blind he will be intoxicated  
by the blood of his fellow fighters.

## II

That night he went crazy:  
in a moment that lasted forever  
his eyes crossed the sad eyes  
of his opponent, ready to fight:  
in them he saw the same rageful pain,  
the same anguish, the grief and despair:  
before the eyes of the astonished crowd  
he spread his wings to his last, glorious flight.

Against the master, Rooster,  
against the tyrant, Rooster,  
against him,  
only against him  
unleash your fervor and hatred,  
against him, who profits and thrives  
by exploiting your sweat and your blood,  
against him, who cynical, evil  
keeps in prison your aching heart  
that needs to fly, forever to fly,  
to fly and to scream,  
to fly and to scream,  
in freedom...  
in freedom...  
in freedom...



Bright Early Night *by Debbie Martins*



Hope by Sarah Park

# The Flight of Quetzalcoatl

by Claudio Scafoglio

*Muéstrese mi sentimiento;  
Yo soy ave roja de la primavera,  
Ya me poso en tierra, despliego mis alas,  
Y allí junto a los atabales  
Se eleva mi canto y va por el mundo.  
...Y todos creyeron a Quetzalcoatl,  
cuando abandonó Tula.*

In a radiance of feathers hovering in the autumn wind  
gently sliding on the silent waters of the sleeping city  
letting fall feather after feather the shades of the past  
the Feathered Snake vanished fast.

*It is time to throw away  
this mask of feathers and turquoise  
release in the wind all revenges and angers  
show to the world the disfigured face  
of the one who really loves peace  
and die.*

The priests wept in silence, in deep anguish, and they hid  
under white tunics the obsidian blood-stained blades  
they wept and mourned and secretly savored the triumph  
of the blood-thirsty gods.

*It is time to leave,  
there's no place for us on this earth  
there's no way to break the endless chain  
of the jaguar who eats the eagle  
and the eagle devours the snake  
the snake kills the quetzal  
the quetzal slays the frog  
the frog swallows the worms  
and swarming the worms grow  
from the putrefied corpses...*

The women wept, wrapped in their wonderful colorful scarves,  
the children wept, clinging tight to their mothers' skirts,  
the merchants and the soldiers wept, for a moment forgetting  
the dreams of riches and glory.

*It is time to die,  
there's no justice nor peace on this earth  
there's never, nowhere peace without war  
there's no rest from violence anymore  
there's no place for us on this earth...*

*But before leaving I will throw away this mask of shining feathers  
and in an endless blaze of tears and chants, regrets and candles  
with no fear and no shame, no doubts and no worries I will show to the world  
the wholeness of my soul  
boundless  
spotless*

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# Last Thanksgiving

by *Jeremy Blumberg*

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**M**y first Thanksgiving in the world of transplant surgery was different. I woke to the high-pitched beeps of my pager and my boss, Jeff, asked if I would go on an organ recovery with him. Recovery—that’s what we call it now, though it has been termed “harvest” and “procurement” in the past. But there’s not a single word that could distill the meaning of removing organs from someone who has died.

What I remember about childhood Thanksgivings was awakening to the smell of food that was cooking during the night and my mom asking, throughout the day, “What are you thankful for?” My brother and sister seemed to come up with heartfelt answers while I just gave the impression of being annoyed.

Not last year. I jumped out of bed, threw on some light blue operating room scrubs, kissed my wife, and promised to be at my in-laws’ for dinner. We were getting used to hollow promises; it was more a way of saying I wished to be there.

Jeff picked me up and we headed an hour south, the highway preternaturally empty for a Thursday morning. “Where are we going?” I said. He uttered the name of the hospital.

“You know how to get there?” Jeff asked.

I didn’t answer.

“You been there?” he said louder this time.

“I was born there.”

From the time I was about five years old I followed my dad, a pediatrician, into this hospital while he examined newborns in the nursery. It didn’t seem strange that someone had died in the building that I was born, but I suddenly felt light-years away from the person I had been during

the thirty-three years leading to this day.

We found the surgeons’ lounge, sipped some stale coffee, and waited for the coordinator from the organ procurement organization to give us details on our patient: Ten months-old, bathtub drowning, unsuccessful resuscitation. I couldn’t listen; her words vanished into the background of the Macy’s Day Parade on TV and the holiday small talk of the operating room staff.

What I did hear was that we’d be waiting for the parents to come and say goodbye. Surgeons loathe waiting—no, we hate waiting—but for this child’s parents we’d wait indefinitely. Their pain was unfathomable.

It was time and so we made our way to the scrub sink where, through the OR window, I saw a miniature belly just cresting above blue surgical drapes. I had operated on infants before and it always felt more forbidden when compared to taking a scalpel to an adult. My hands are usually steadied by the conviction that I’m there to make a child better, but now I couldn’t find this crutch of a thought. This baby would not be well again, frolic in a playground, have her first day at kindergarten. Her parents could never ground her for staying out too late.

I pushed through the operating room doors, hands dripping. My resolve came from the individual’s life ruined by kidney failure and dialysis who would become the guardian of these tiny, yet perfect, kidneys. By now that person had received a phone call from a transplant coordinator to come into the hospital. And so I cut.

Kidneys removed, I sutured the skin over a pulseless, bloodless, abdomen. Her delicate skin edges would never heal.

There was light, however, amongst this

darkness—the kidneys were large enough, by a single centimeter, to be split and given to two patients.

On our way back to Jeff’s car we saw a beaming young couple in the hospital lobby, a tiny baby in his mother’s arms ready to go home for the first time; I prayed for her never to let go. The last time I walked out of this building I was probably holding my father’s hand. Now I held a box labeled LEFT KIDNEY.

We headed back, our precious cargo in the trunk. By now families had gathered, and as we passed thousands of homes en route to our hospital I imagined that classic Rockwellian scene inside: parents, children, a picture-perfect turkey.

I stepped into the second cold, shiny, operating room of the day—this time to give, not to take—and drew a sharp blade across the skin of another patient desperately in need of this baby’s kidney. Our vascular clamps were released; a young man’s blood surged through a baby girl’s kidney turning it a vivid, unmistakably alive, rosy pink.

I made it to my in-laws’ as they were finishing dessert. I was uncharacteristically quiet, my wife pointed out, as my family rambled on about topics seemingly idle in the context of this day. I thought about two parents who would wake up on their blackest of Black Fridays and two patients who would arise with a brand new kidney, elated, their nightmare over. I was thankful, perhaps more than ever, for the health and good fortune of those who surrounded me.

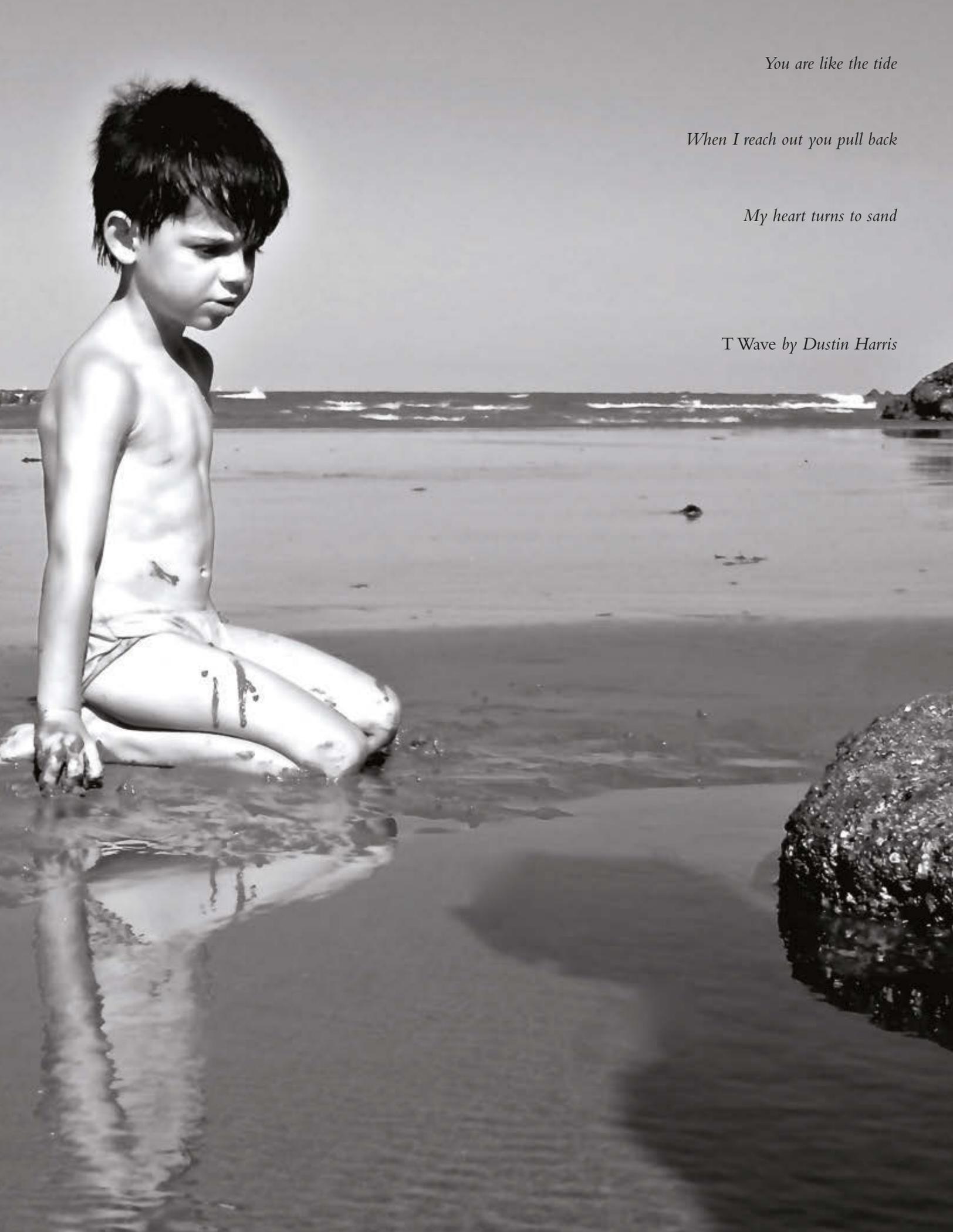
We got home late. I almost called my Mom to answer her perennial Thanksgiving question. And just as I drifted off to sleep, my pager went off again. •



Bonobo by Tyler Kern



*Innocence Reflected by Debbie Martins*



*You are like the tide*

*When I reach out you pull back*

*My heart turns to sand*

*T Wave by Dustin Harris*

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# Shifting Trains

*by Maria-Kassandra Coronel*

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Resound are the numbers of the mundane.  
Monotony may still perpetuate,  
But I am rooted in the shifting trains.

Routines are rigid. They have no champagne.  
No laughs. No passion for you to bait fate.  
Resound are the numbers of the mundane.

I, however, choose to seek and obtain  
A regretless life and exper'enced slate.  
Bored not, I am fixed in the shifting trains.

Don't you see pleasure in a hurricane?  
You don't even try to reverberate  
Beyond resound numbers of the mundane.

I won't fade into you, but will ingrain  
Instead my spirit to change and create!  
For I am rooted in the shifting trains.

I am more than numbers. I am humane,  
Making the change the world needs and awaits.  
Though resound are the numbers of the mundane,  
I, myself, am rooted in the shifting trains.



All of the Lights *by Adrian Garcia*



# Accessories

by *Matthew Hoffman*

The hat called him into being. As he paraded on the city's avenues, one had the unmistakable impression that this was not merely a man in a hat but a hat-man. A symbiotic relationship. The hat was some kind of floating cosmic womb, a straw flying saucer, through which he was delivered. Of course, things were once different.

As a birthday present he had been given a gift certificate. It was from a trendy clothing store. His tastes had always been conservative—flannel slacks, cotton shirts, wool jackets, and a range of color that verged on the achromatic. Undeniably conservative, indisputably tasteful, and, to many, undoubtedly boring. The plainness and simplicity of his dress earned him a nickname: the Quaker. Most people classified him as businesslike. The clothing in the store was what one would call busy.

The store was tastefully unconventional. Large glass windows, open wood staircases, brightly painted industrial materials, neon lighting and television monitors broadcasting incongruous electric montages. The displays were carefully set up to appear as if the articles had been carelessly strewn. A meticulous disarray; controlled lack of order. It was all so generically contemporary. The place may as well have been a restaurant or nightclub. No doubt, were this business to fail, such a renovation could be facilitated with minimal effort. Perhaps this lack of singularity in contemporary architectural interiors could be explained by an idea: As long as the environment is suitably nonspecific, the market is open to all takers.

He was out of place here. The other patrons were obviously in their milieu. Their clothing was vibrant and unusual. Like the merchandise, they were wild and funky. He felt grim, a dark cloud, as he moved through the store's labyrinth of counters, cases, and cubbyholes. He did not blend in. Although people were probably trying to ignore him, he knew that he was noticed. How could he not be? He had been blandly mantled for years. It was a personally selected ar-

mor. In this store, his sartorial self-defense had developed a fatal chink.

What he liked about the city was that it afforded him an anonymity that could be maintained indefinitely. He could walk anywhere, doing whatever he liked, and his presence was, as with the other millions, unremarkable. Because there were so many people, the way one dressed or behaved generally made little difference. He had chosen to join the largest group of nonentities. It wasn't the lack of self-respect or an ego that made him do this; like the tiny dots of which entire pictures are composed, he wished to remain small, virtually indiscernible, but integral to the grand scheme. For the first time, his desire to not stand out was outstanding. He was very uncomfortable.

He would have to make a choice quickly. Despite the expansiveness of the store, he was beginning to feel closed in. Coming back to this place was out of the question. The management would not buy back the certificate. He would take anything slightly reasonable, but even the undergarments were bold fashion statements. Desperately scanning for something feasible, he spotted an object. Above a decorative archway hung something very tame; a stranger. A fedora-style Panama hat.

He quickly located a salesman, which was no small task since management and clientele were identical in mien and attitude. The salesman had stegosauriasis of the scalp, hair pomaded into a spiky Mohawk. When the Quaker remarked that he wanted to buy the hat, he was informed that it was a decoration and not for sale. The salesman must have noticed the shift in his composure at this disheartening news. Maybe something could be arranged.

The hat was so alien to the terrain, they would certainly welcome having it removed, he thought. He would almost be doing them a favor: restoring the decor to a state of greater purity. The salesman returned; the hat was for sale after all. So he was right. It was probably an accidental

purchase in the first place, hung with the expectation that in juxtaposition to its surroundings a surreal effect would result. The effect was to fracture the sterile lines of the high-tech world with an earthy intruder. They would now gladly surrender the disruptive and unwelcome visitor. In order to expedite the transaction he and the manager agreed that the exchange rate was exactly even. That was fair. One certificate equaled one hat. The hat was his.

On top of a wall unit, as a soft sculpture, the hat sat for weeks. He was waiting for the right moment to wear it. Since the acquisition, he had realized a few unsettling things. He happened to encounter an old photograph of the lower deck of a ferry. On deck stood scores of men. The picture was exceedingly grainy. Up close, it resolved into a swirl of white and black granules. An image created by arbitrarily shaking salt and pepper onto a plane. But, from a distance, one thing was clearly defined: All of the men wore straw hats. The hat, once conservative and commonplace, had, through desuetude, become radical and uncommon.

He also surveyed the myriads with whom he walked each day. Nowadays, hats were virtually nonexistent. At best, caps were visible, worn more as a necessity than accessory. Painters, construction workers, and little leaguers monopolized the male hat-wearing set. It occurred to him that if he was ever to wear the hat, he must be resigned to not blend in, to stand out a little.

The day was sunny and windless, according to the radio weatherman. It was time. The hat had to be christened, and he felt this would be a real baptism through fire for himself. He couldn't worry about that. He would have to be daring and break convention.

Before a mirror, he had practiced putting on the hat. It required a specific angle to give it a characteristic jauntiness. The brim had to form an uneven awning off his forehead and partially conceal his eyes. With

repeated attempts, he could automatically place the hat upon his head at the correct tilt. The precision he gained was remarkable; the slant he achieved never seemed to vary more than a degree either way. Bracing himself, for he knew not what, he left home, hatted, and with an uncertain confidence.

On the street, there was a dearth of men in hats. He was conspicuous. At first, he felt inclined to tear the hat down, even stuff it into the nearest trashcan. To denounce the cause and vehicle of his exhibitionism. As he was experiencing this crisis, looking for a receptacle into which he could inter the hat, his partially concealed vision revealed that a woman, a stranger, was smiling at him. He returned the smile.

This had never happened before. In the past, he had been petrified of making eye contact. Just get through the day, dealing with as few people as possible, was the rule. He was, by the hat, emboldened. Because his face was not fully exposed—the brim a male answer to peek-a-boo curls—he could be both visible and invisible. He was a detective behind a one-way mirror; he could remain hidden or switch on a light and reveal himself. He was in control.

The nonentity who donned a hat that morning had become transparent. In its place appeared a transformed entity—the hat-man. Albeit hybrid, a single organism. He thought of himself as a dapper fellow, a natty gentleman, a dandy. Instead of bleak non-display, there was ostentation. Where once there was a part moving with the masses, there was now one apart, striding through the populace. A retiring nature had developed panache. Flourishes were a distinct possibility. How would he be classified now? There were centaurs and sphinxes. What would the half-man half-hat be named by modern mythologists? Manhattan Man in Hat sounded good. With these thoughts he was entirely absorbed. So he did not detect the breeze, subtle harbinger of the coming gust.

The hat is aerodynamic by design. For a minute or so, the air circled the brim and lightly brushed up and inside the crown. A thin cushion of air caused the hat not so much to rest on his head as to hover. The

sudden increase of the wind's velocity thrust, as an engine ignited. The hat was launched. The creature was riven.

Without the hat, his insecurity and self-consciousness returned, greater than before. Worse than feeling naked, he felt dissected. He ran after the hat, which blew diagonally across an avenue and disappeared up a side street. It was impossible. They had been separated. Now he felt really idiotic. Here he was without a hat, sweating and out of breath. He hoped no one would notice. Fortunately, he sensed his sharp edges becoming blunt and soft. He could melt back into the scenery. The hat-man was dying.

It was probably for the best. The woman had smiled not at him but the hat. She didn't approve of his looks so much as she admired a hat on a man. All of his life he had wanted to appeal to someone on a purely physical level. Instead of becoming gradually acquainted, he wanted to know that he was able to attract someone with nothing but exteriors. Now that he had done it, he felt unfulfilled. The hat seemed a cheap contrivance. At least with a superficial attraction, there was a degree of crossover. An aspect of the self might shine through. It wouldn't be a truly unadulterated surface. But the hat was artifice. Undiluted. It said something about him that wasn't true. It was to this falsehood that the woman responded. Interiors? Exteriors? He didn't know what he wanted. The temporary outline, lent by the hat, was fading. Things had almost returned to normal. All in all, he was lucky to be rid of the hat. Just before the retransformation was complete, a voice stopped him. It was another stranger. A woman.

She saw him running after something, she said. Presenting the hat, she asked if he belonged to this? What a funny way of putting it, he thought. He told her yes, it belonged to him. He took the hat and reflexively placed it on his head. It assumed the correct angle. She smiled. He was about to take it off, the still silent liar. She said he looked good in it. It remained on his head. She hadn't said it looked good on him. That was something. Either way, the two were reunited. Either way. •



A Kind of Blue *by Aaron Jen*

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## The More You Know About The Author

*by Clayton Vetter*

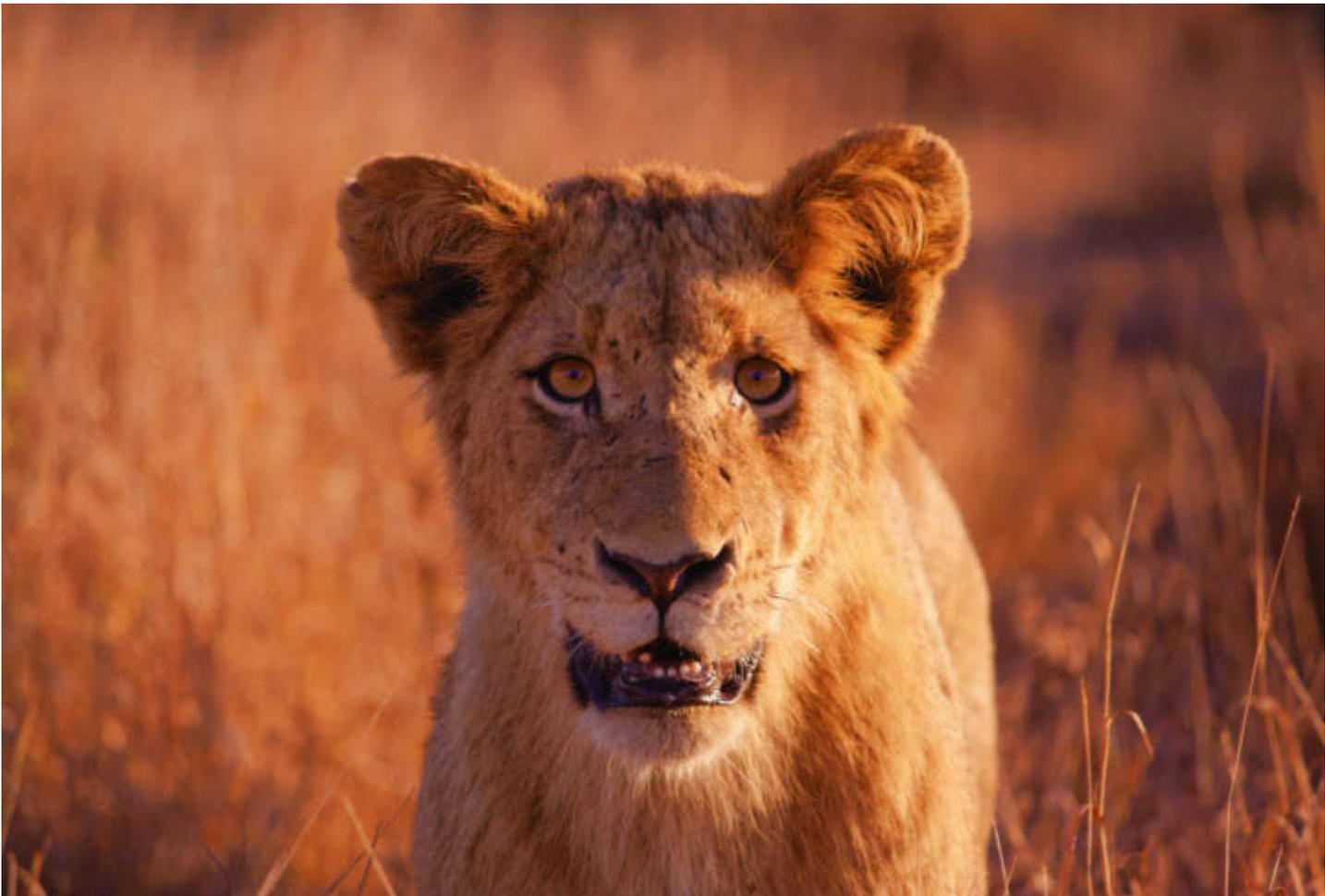
—

Using words like swords  
I can cut you down to size,  
    Deliver your heart  
        On a platter,  
Surrounded by a bed  
    Of adjectives and  
Remove your spine  
    With a gerund.

I can love you,  
    Lift you,  
Exalt you with a  
    Simple verb  
    And caress you  
With rich commas  
    And colons so  
Thick you will gasp.

I will show you  
    Your life  
Pathetic and rich.  
You will love me  
And hate me and  
    Read me.  
    Read me.

    God,  
Please read me.



*Lion by Zach Burke*

# A Good Idea at the Time

Written by Clayton Vetter

Illustrations by Andy Trang & Isaac Yang

It seemed like a good idea at the time. A few hours ago I was standing in my old life, the one with wacky upper middle class twists and suburban turns where all the houses look alike in a comfortable and predictable way. Now I find myself in this antiseptic room sniffing pungent death and listening to the electronic beeps of devices that remind people I have to be watched. I can't blame my wife—the phone ringing at the deadest time of night forcing her from restful sleep into the nightmare of reality without a chance to scream. It was lucky she didn't have a heart attack too; maybe she did. I know she did.

“You had everything. Too much, entirely too much if you ask me.” She pauses and she hangs over my bedside not sure whether to cry or spit. “Is that what this is about?” She scowls as she turns from our predicament and walks away from my shame. She would scream again if she had the energy. I watch her from my neat little window. The nurses have left the blinds open so I can look beyond my own pain and glance at the misery of others. My wife appears red in the glare of a happy coffee machine. Maybe she is just red. Her face is messed up like morning sheets. She has decisions to make. I want to offer her an answer, an explanation, neat and tidy, where fate is the villain and she can run to my side and hold on to me for support. I can't do that. Her cup mocks me as it slips into place waiting for scalding coffee. She looks at me wishing I were in the cup. Her lips are silent, but her eyes scream, “I will never be able to forgive you for

this—never.”

What can you say to that? I did have too much. I could bore you with all the figures and titles: the job, a house, my country club, her plastic surgery. It was all part of the plan, all bought and paid for by me. I delivered that speech to anyone who would listen and especially to those who would not. My God, I was proud of all that. And my son, I would never forget to add my only son to the list. I know how it looks, that he came after the house and country club, but I loved him. I saw myself reflected in him right from the beginning and my purpose with him was so clear when he was little. Then he grew up. I got jealous. I can admit that—his whole life still ahead of him. It got me thinking. It really did.

“Any word yet?” My sister-in-law asks running to my wife's side as she sneers at me. She could care less about my prognosis. The worst news has already been announced. She is an older, scarier version of my wife useful in predicting how my own model will look and act with each passing decade. They have slithered back to sip black coffee and half-whisper scalding words at my side. As though this, with everything the way it is, is not enough. My sister in-law shakes her head. My wife shakes her head. These are shakes heard around the world. Everything will be different from this point. I lean forward and cry. I even vomit. Nurses come. I am not sure. I am sick to death about the future. Swarms of stinging truths and waspy sister in-laws who want me to jump into a lake until I breathe silt and die are chasing me.

It wasn't that I had lost my youth. I know you'll want to say that. Others have. I had not lost it. I had simply used it; like the last drop of the last gallon of the last tank of gas. Lately, looking at my son, I was back there again. It was my friends on the phone or at the door and I could remember their names as clear and crisp as my mother's sheets snapping on the clothesline at our old house. When I went to his school, I found myself in the hallways of my past and I swear I could smell the pages of my own hated history book, passing friends poking me in the side, my fingers fiddling with the tumblers of my locker trying to make some time with a cheerleader type way out of my league. God, were women ever that smooth or tight?

Ancient Mrs. Drake was still standing at her door like a gargoye on a perch, her eyes too big for her bitter face, magnified by two thick coke bottles. She would always snap at me for being late, but it was really that I was handsome and popular and she was a dried up old prune, stuck in a loveless marriage and a job where she was reviled. She must be laughing from her grave, waiting for me now with rulers and eternal detention slips, the joke finally on me. Why shouldn't I die of a heart attack? It would be the noble thing to do today, in light of all this, the perfect ending to a classic tragedy. I hate Mrs. Drake's face. Those smudged glasses glued on the end of her nose, still judging me.

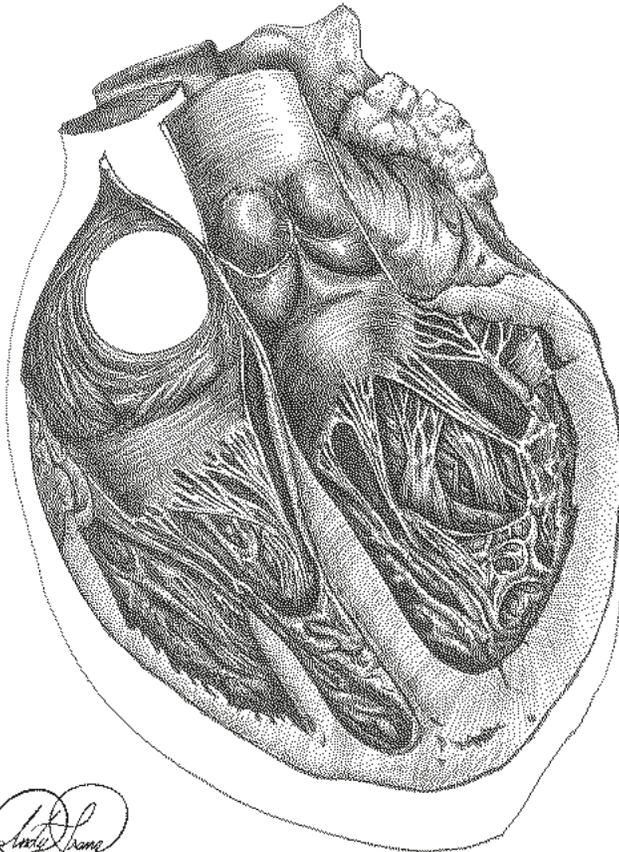
Awake at night, crickets lectured me about my life, asking hard questions to the perfect walls of my den covered

with all the right degrees and pictures proving to the world that I was real and my life worthy of posed admiration. Turning my back to it, I would close my eyes and imagine myself in younger skin, without supplemental health insurance or new clients on the line. The conference room was the lunchroom again and I was trying to make sense of a dirty joke to tell my friends, waiting for bells to ring to set me free in a world of top ten music and greasy french fries. Is that such a crime? I knew it was over, but I wanted something...a relic to touch and hold on to, something to mark a clear beginning and end...something tangible to say "See! I was there. It was my time and God, it was good."

During these midnight vacations where I romped through my youth, kissing lip glossed girls who smelled like Clearasil and Chloe, taking easy tests and planning a perfect world to replace the one adults had screwed up, there was always one constant. In the foreground and background of my fun was one single thing that kept appearing to my delight. When I fell in love, if I was jilted, when I needed to escape from my parent's tyranny or to skip school (an indulgence almost as exciting as an orgasm to a seventeen-year-old) she was there. A friend most faithful and true she was my car, my first car: a brand new, buccaneer red 1977 Trans Am. It was a gift, the only real gift my father ever gave me.

He worked hard, my father, much harder than I. He struggled his life away in the sweaty bowels of an oil refinery that smelled like the bottoms of old shoes left in the hot sun. He took me with him sometimes when I was little and I watched him turn giant wheels so big it usually took three men

to budge them. I can still see him, appearing through steam in slow motion, sweat dripping from his pointed chin as he picked me up in his massive arms. Gushing with all the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old I told him I wanted to grow up to be just like him. Instead of smiling and patting me on the head, he picked me up by my miniature shoulders and shook my tiny frame. "You listen here," he growled. "Don't you end up like me, this don't mean shit" as he gestured to his biceps as big as



*Lucy Drano*

volleyballs.

Carrying me by my shoulders like an infant cub, he pointed toward a fancy building beyond the rust and tar of the refinery stacks. "That's where the smart men are. They wear fancy suits and silk ties and make all the important decisions that keep men like me here." He smiled, pleased with his prophecy. Then he added, like he was sharing a secret of the universe, "Make this strong," and he poked my tiny head

with a sturdy, dirty finger. "Make this strong, boy."

He was right, but more importantly, he was my father and I would have drunk Drano if he told me to, but he didn't ask me to drink Drano. He asked me to think and so I did. He knew I would never have been able to turn big knobs even with the help of five big men. He was proud of my grades and the status of academic honors and certificates, but I might have ended up just another geek if it had not been for that damn car. My father presented her to me on my sixteenth birthday; my mother looking on with the forlorn expression of all mothers and wives. It cost him a fortune, far beyond his means. My face lit up like a Christmas tree when I saw her reflected in my father's eyes that held the only hint of a tear I ever knew him to have.

Most of my friends were lucky to score a used Maverick, maybe a GTO, but I bounded into the school parking lot in a car destined to carry homecoming queens. Girls who might not have given me the time of day were suddenly willing to chat during a leisurely ride home where I could wear them down for a date or two. The giants of the football field forgave my less than stellar athletic abilities for a chance to lean against my wheels at the local hamburger joint where they could push and shove each other into manhood, their perfect faces reflected in my shiny buccaneer red hood. Why shouldn't I want that for my son too? That car made me a God. Shit, it even got me Student Body President my senior year. Now I understood what that car meant. I understood what it meant to my father and he cried and took out a second mortgage for it. That 77 buccaneer red Trans Am was my link, my





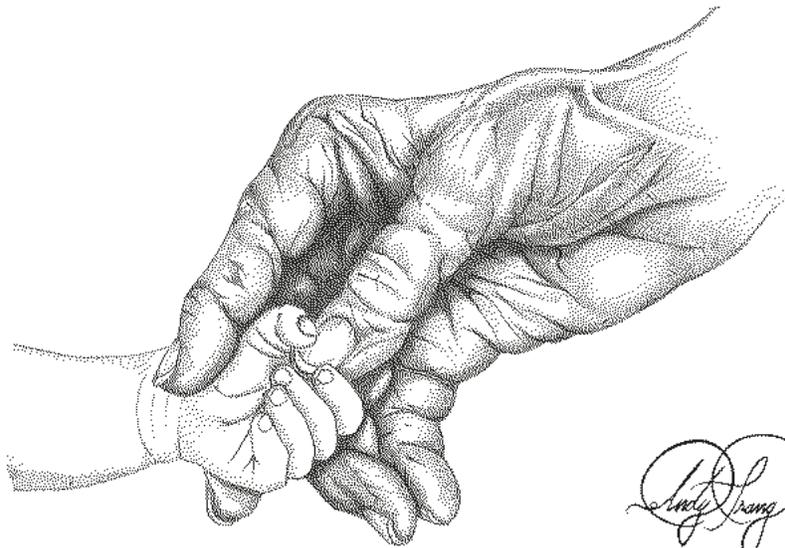
ace up the sleeve.

She followed me right on to college and continued to be my calling card and confidant. Homesickness came to me like an unwanted fever. I could ill afford to have my roommates catch me whimpering into my pillow like some girl, but in the familiar comfort of my car I could find a spot to yell and scream out my heartache. She listened. She never told a soul. She helped me make decisions, big decisions. She cradled me for the first lay and the best lays of my life. How can you let go of things like that? When I smell old leather I still get hard to this day. There is nothing like a perfect lay in the car you love—nothing. Then she got needy, breaking down and requiring constant repairs and the day came when I could not pull up to an important job in a teenager's car, silly and outdated. Black sedans and four doors were calling my name, so I let her go. I had been her first. I had that.

Years passed, times changed. My father died. I wore expensive suits and silk ties and learned how to keep men like my father in the bowels of the earth. I had a son. I bought and sold so many cars I lost track, but I never forgot that 77 buccaneer red Trans Am and when I spoke of her to men my age they never laughed. They knew what that car meant and they were beside me in the passenger seat, popular and slick. They had hair again and tight bellies and their whole lives were ahead of them and this time it would be different.

“Grow old gracefully,” that's what they tell you, the ones who are still young, who don't want anyone messing with their time, who don't know what it means to look in the mirror and

see a sad stranger covering up the person underneath who still wants to be popular, cool and loved. Age, however, can afford money and money affords luxury. Some travel on cruise ships. Venturing to third-world countries and throwing away disposable income on trinkets in lands that appall and amuse them. Far away from the reality of land they pretend it is Senior Prom, but they are rotting vegetables in tuxedos and sequins. Others seek out the secret hiring of clever surgeons who skillfully remove wrinkles and replace chins for unspeakable amounts of stock returns. My co-workers bragged about their cyber affairs where perfect online women promised to do all the things



their wives now refused. It wasn't even cheating and “weren't we lucky to live in such a great time?” I didn't want any of that. I knew what I wanted.

It all began innocently enough, a joke offered up by my own wife after cocktails on a melancholy Monday night as I talked about the Trans Am, again. “Why don't you find the bitch?” She threw it out there like chips in a poker game. I laughed. We both laughed. Later we made sloppy love like teenagers. I was in the drivers seat again, but I didn't tell her that. She didn't need to know how young I felt in the darkness. That was a lifetime ago.

Out there talking to doctors and nurses, she looks older now. They offer her awkward comfort and a prescription for Zoloft.

Around noon the following day, still in the drivers seat at my impressive desk, the drawers full for show, the thought came back. Sober and in daylight, it was logical now, if not a bit profound. Find her? Could she still be out there? Was she buried away in someone's dusty garage or at the bottom of some junk pile, disemboweled for sad parts? The thought sickened me like losing a loved one. It began to haunt me. Hiring a private detective is a luxury. I cannot defend that. All it took was one fat check and he was on his way to find a buccaneer red 1977 Trans Am. He told me he didn't think I was crazy. He told me he didn't think I was crazy at all. He also told me he had never been hired to find a car. “It's for my son,” I lied. He took my money just the same.

Lying is a wondrous thing. The lie that had begun as protection, out of necessity, had now led to a plan: why not get the car for my son? He

had just turned sixteen and earned his license. Fate conspired with coincidence to strike the final blow. My wife would be more receptive to the idea if it involved her beloved boy. It made sense in a way the truth never could or would. The deception connected me to my son in a way nothing had before and both of us to my father, his grandfather. I will be telling all of this to a therapist one day, no doubt, sorting it out like solitaire cards, waiting for someone to remind me to play the red queen on the black king, my aces buried under unplayable cards and sealing my fate.

What a story finding the car would make, if he found it. Hell, we could restore her together on weekends, my son and I together, opening her up and tinkering with her insides. I could tell him stories about myself when I was his age. He was old enough for most of the details. He would really know me and understand why I was gone so much when he was little and how much I really loved him and what I wanted for him. When I was gone, he would think about me. He would smile for me.

My wife was not so easily won over. Wives are seldom won over, especially when their husbands are having a midlife crisis, pacing the house at night talking to crickets and throwing money to private dicks to hunt down their youth. One night she caught me opening and closing the refrigerator for the eleventh time hoping for an epiphany between the orange juice and cottage cheese. "It will be you driving that death trap down the driveway, not him."

"Maybe, but let me do this for him." I wore her down like the shredded cheese in the Tupperware. You can always wear them down. They don't want to grow old either. "What fun," I whispered in her ear, "to have your skirt lifted, your panties pulled down." She smiled. I saw that smile.

"She's probably a twisted wreck at the bottom of some river," she sneered as she dragged her expensive slippers along the kitchen tile for effect.

She could have been right, but I was a kid again, popular and cool waiting for a jingle and I could not keep it secret. My secretary told me I should have spent the money on an abdominal cruncher like the other men in the office. As though a six-pack would really make a difference at this point. How could that compare to a fully restored 1977 buccaneer red Trans Am? I made a mental note to cut her Christmas bo-

nus. If I found the car I might fire her ass altogether.

It only took three days, just seventy-two puny hours. She was still intact, owned by a "William J. Thompson" just three small counties west. Unbelievable. My son and I made a trip of it. Mr. Thompson ("Willy J" to his friends) was missing most of his front teeth and had never worn a shirt in his life. Quite the shrewd businessman standing outside his double wide working a piece of corn from his back molars with a baseball size toothpick, I let him think he was bleeding me dry. We sealed the deal like men. My son gave me a wink.

When I first saw her it was like a dream. It might have been my imagination, but I swear she lunged forward a bit. She needed a new finish, freckled with dings and dents that held secrets and stories of her own. I think she was half mad I had let her go, but what could I do? "You drive her back, Dad," my son offered, feeling mighty proud of himself, stepping closer to adulthood, almost an equal to his old man. It was the car again. She was back, working her magic. I was back.

I was glad he could not see me crying as I drove back home again. There is no way to describe how I felt behind the wheel of my youth, reunited with the past and finally connected to the future. I could still hear girls whispering and giggling, my friends nudging me to speed up and "see what she can do" on our way to pull pranks, get tacos and steal kisses. If my own son had only half of that he would die the richest man in the world. He would.

"Airbags?" my wife pointed out as she walked around the love of my life in the driveway.

"Jealous?" I asked to be cruel.

"Old cars like this don't have airbags, they didn't even make them back then."

"And I lived to tell about it."

"It's blood red death" she threw out, pleased with herself as if she had announced my impudence to the whole neighborhood.

"Buccaneer red." I corrected, because I was right about that.

"Mom!" my son pleaded on cue, throwing his arm around me. "I'll be careful. Look at these sides, real steel! That's got to be safer than the tin most of my friends drive."

"Don't make 'em like this anymore." I added, but I said it like, "take a look at your sagging tits, babe." How could she argue with that?

"Buccaneer red? How is that even a color? I'll see you in the emergency room," and she left, the damage done. Like all things, she was right again. She would have to live with that.

It took some time to get her up to par. I wanted to see her shiny again, but my son liked the old finish. He said it was "cool," reminding me that I was still out of touch, regardless of the car. I think she snickered, on his side now. The betrayal was more than I could face. We compromised with a new layer of wax. He got the honors. She loved it. Maybe it would all work out. At least I was sleeping again. Last night we had the unveiling. My wife came along promising to be on her best behavior. When he rolled her out of the garage it was like a phoenix rising from the ashes. He went to hand me the keys. "No," I said, "She's yours now, you take her out." No one could trump that. There was a tear in all our eyes. I know she'll deny it forever. She will.

"You be careful," she yelled as the car roared down the street.

"Airbags," she turned and said to me again. "There should have been airbags."

I went back in the house closing the door on my past once and for all. The torch had been passed. I could be content with the knowledge my son was out there showing off with his friends

planning to scam a whole new generation of girls. My work was done. I could die a happy man. I almost did, until the phone rang and broke my heart in two, more literally than I want to admit. My wife called the ambulance for me, despite what I had to tell her; she called the ambulance for me.

“Airbags,” she kept saying in the ambulance. “There should have been airbags.”

“Would airbags have made a difference?” I asked the doctor now checking papers and charts that said my heart would be okay again, as though you can really be sure of that on paper.

“You can’t blame yourself,” he answered, proud of his ability to see past the benign and right to the malignancy. I was in no mood for it.

“I asked you if airbags would have saved my son’s life?” He took a long time to answer, but he finally did. Sad past, present and future became one. He was right. It just seemed like such a good idea at the time. •





Hot sand on toes, cold sand in sleeping bags

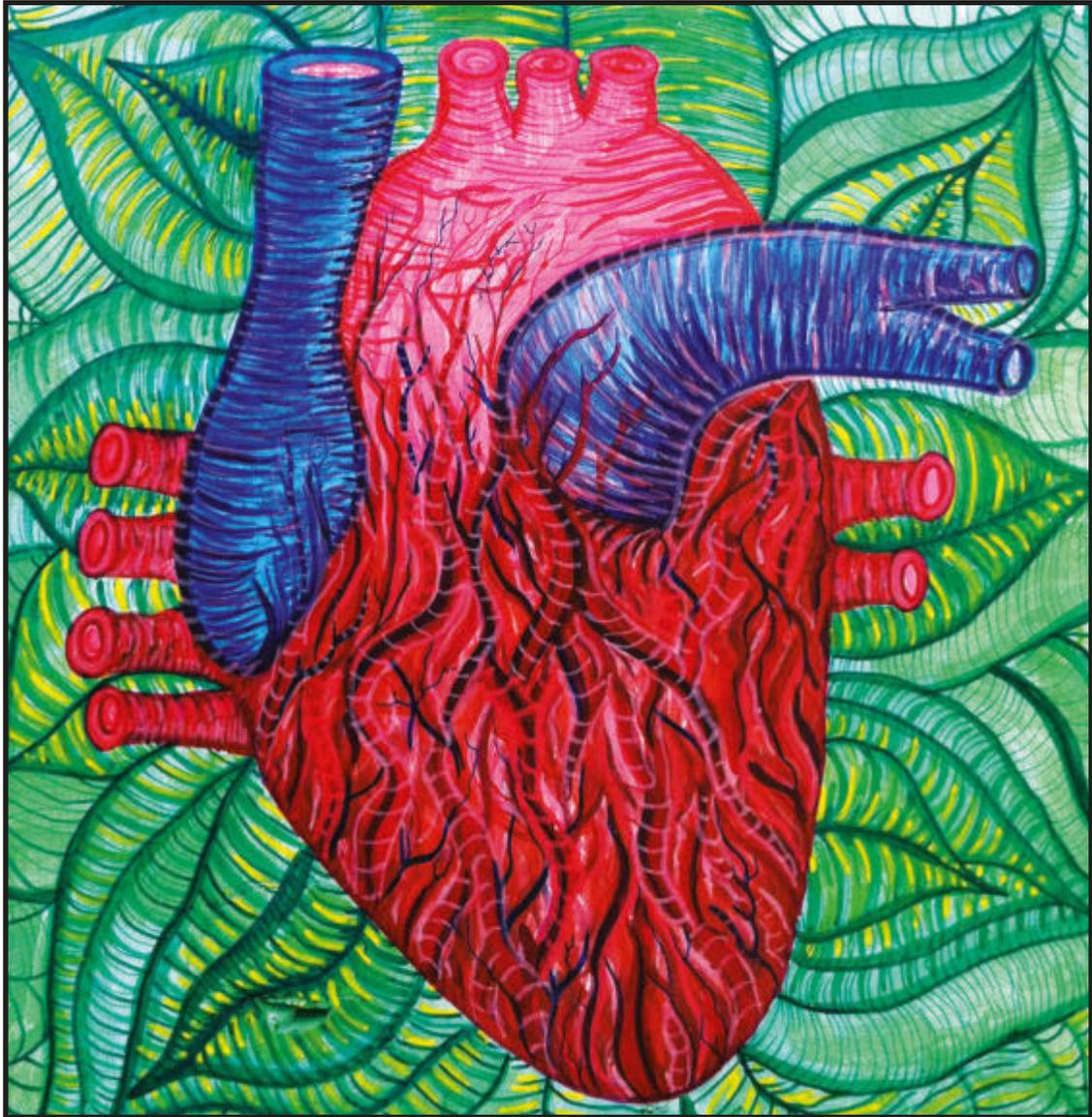
y no tener tampoco es prueba de que acompañe la

tener no es signo de salvado

Fail again? Fail better...

Do the thing which you think you cannot do

El camino es  
acequias  
candales



*A Delicate Heart by Mayra Jimenez*

# Reflection on Death

*by Debbie Martins*

Death  
Pathway to the next life  
Or termination of suffering here and now.  
Permanent.  
Blunt or romanticize? Hard truth or soft truth?  
Keep fighting, or—admit defeat. Accept. Give in to nature.  
Choices.  
Relating to own experiences to reflect on the experience of others.  
Egotistical or Empathetic?  
Delicate balance.  
Consoling the living, those that continue with a loss.  
Consoling those that are passing on, in comfort and love.  
Fragility of the moment.  
Tears filling dry riverbeds on cheeks.  
Better for me, as a physician, to join in grief and mourning?  
Or stay strong in light of the patient and family.  
Take in the moment. Adjust.  
Recognize the fluidity of human interaction.  
Reject static.  
No two patients are ever the same. No two families are ever the same.  
React.  
Each experience is in isolation, each experience is tragic within its own right.  
Respect. Console. Give time and space.  
After, move forward.  
Don't ever treat the next death with less heaviness.  
But don't carry the heaviness around.  
Unburden yourself.  
Strengthen yourself for each next time.  
  
Most of all, keep in mind the universality of death.  
A uniting thread amongst us all.





# Continuity Error

by Bryan Carrigan

Edmund figured it was as good of a time as any: their flight to Vancouver had been delayed, a blizzard had nearly shut down the entire airport, and Karen had just ordered her third bloody Mary.

“Rationally, I know that if I charge the hotel room to my credit card, the company will ultimately reimburse me,” Karen said, “but here’s the thing, my card’s nearly maxed out. If they cancel our flight, I may very well have to sleep on one of those rows of seats that were intentionally designed to be so hopelessly uncomfortable that no one could possibly fall asleep on them.”

Edmund caught the bartender’s eye and nodded towards his empty pilsner glass. “There’s something I need to tell you.”

“Oh God—you’re gay.”

“What—no—I’m not . . . why would you think that?”

Karen said nothing and focused her attention on the celery stick that garnished her drink. She had said she liked ordering drinks that came with snacks; it saved her money on dinner.

“This is why you kept trying to introduce me to your cousin,” Edmund said. The bartender drew him a fresh pint of Rolling Rock. Edmund felt ridiculously sober.

“We’ve spent the last three nights in a hotel room two time-zones away from anyone who knows us and you haven’t tried to jump my bones,” Karen said. “The other option is that I’m completely repulsive. And I’m not—at least, I don’t think I am . . . I probably seem kind of repulsive right now though, don’t I? Don’t answer that. I’ll shut up now.”

Edmund watched the board. He’d always found airports soothing. There was a flight leaving for Hawaii at 5:25, another flight was bound for San Paolo at 5:32—the weather would no doubt delay both, but they would depart eventually.

“I’m from the year 2125,” Edmund said.

Karen choked on her drink. Tomato juice, vodka, and Tabasco sauce dribbled out her nose. She sopped it up with a napkin.

“It’s not as far fetched as it sounds,” Edmund said. “If you could go back and stop the Holocaust, wouldn’t you?”

“Wait—you’re serious?” Karen flagged down the bartender and ordered another round. “Jesus, Edmund, I knew you were a little bent, but seriously? A time traveler? From the future?”

“This isn’t going—let me start over.”

“Sure,” Karen said. “Why don’t you use your time machine and dial us back five minutes? You can do that, right?”

“Listen, you don’t have to believe me, I was sent back to stop something terrible from happening. I did. I succeeded. My mission was a success. Which means I changed the timeline and the future I’m from no longer exists. I should no longer exist. But I do. I’m stuck here.”

“We work in inside sales, Edmund. We’re all stuck here.”

On cue, the departure board updated to show that every flight had been canceled. They were literally stuck. Edmund wrote it off as a coincidence. A fluke. Weird things like that happened to him all the time. He figured it was the timeline having a little fun at his expense.

“This thing you stopped? It was worse than the Holocaust?”

Edmund nodded. “There were four of us. The Four Horsemen. We were each sent back to a single point in the timeline to try and prevent history’s great tragedies. The Holocaust still happened, so obviously Jeffrey failed. We still have the Black Death on the books, so there’s that. And Red takes White, the Bolsheviks won the Russian Revolution, check mate.”

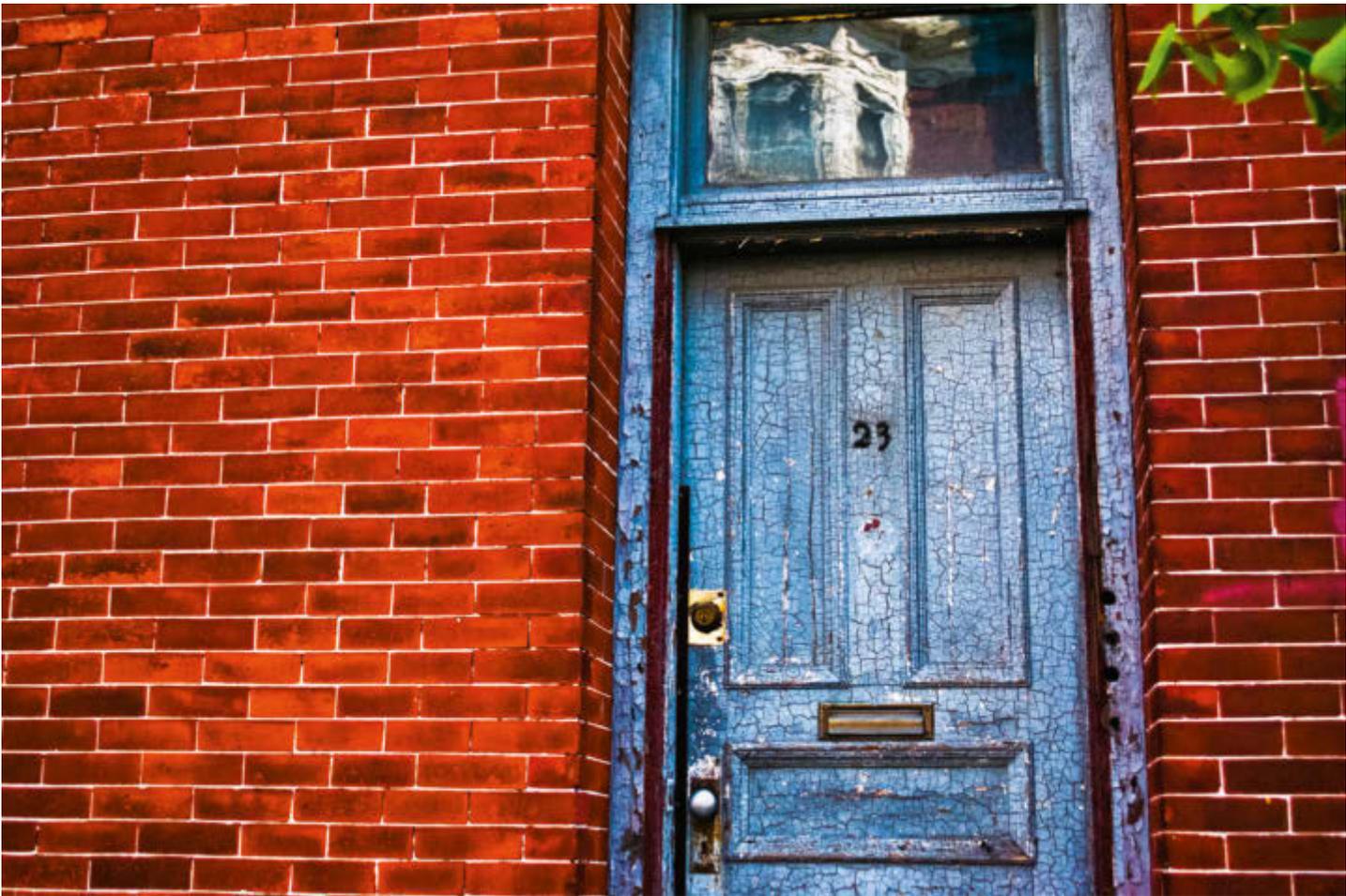
“What was it you stopped?” Karen asked. The bar was nearly empty. Most of the other stranded travelers were making their way over to the airport Hilton.

“Does it matter?” Edmund had gambled his whole life on the notion that it very much did matter, but the people to whom it mattered no longer existed. He wasn’t sure if they ever would.

“I don’t want you to take this the wrong way,” Karen said, “but as lines go, I’ve heard better. I’m still going to sleep with you—that is, if you don’t find me repulsive.”

“I don’t,” Edmund said. “That’s why I had to—”

Karen leaned in and kissed him. •



Door 23 by Florence On



# Hunger

by Brian Moseley

Lunchtime began like any other. Attempting to ward off the cold with little shivers, most of the second graders huddled under Mrs. Gerhardt's umbrella. I remained on the outside, inviting the rain to soak my hair, bulky jacket, and baggy jeans. As we neared the cafeteria, I peeled off to make my way towards the main office. That's where I found my "other" desk.

The desk and lunchtime had become one. Both were found at the far end of a hallway, isolated from the sights, sounds, and smells of the rest of the school.

"So, what are you in for?" I was asked as I took my seat.

Twisting backwards, I saw the new janitor leaning over my shoulder. He reeked of window cleaner. To prevent myself from gagging, I buried my face in the sleeve of my jacket.

"You must have done something bad for them to stick you here."

I returned my gaze to the desk. I opened

my bag, ceremoniously throwing away a soggy, uneaten tuna sandwich.

"Let me guess, you don't like homework."

I removed a package of cheese and crackers. Playing with the plastic knife, I began spreading melted cheese.

"Did you pick a fight?" the janitor asked, his voice growing softer.

I intently focused on spreading the melted cheese, nearly breaking the cracker in two. As the janitor was about to turn away, I muttered, "I want to be here."

"Why? Wouldn't you rather be with your friends?"

"Not in the cafeteria. The smell there . . . just thinking about it . . . hurts."

"But it's Sloppy Joe Monday . . ."

I continued piling on the cheese. No matter how vigorously I swiped, I couldn't shake the janitor's suffocating smell.

"Are you nervous?" Reaching into his pocket, the janitor fetched a handful of

beef jerky. "Here, take this. If you're like me, this'll calm you right down."

Holding my breath was useless. The smell of the jerky stung the back of my throat, and I struggled for breath. Like the tide, the all-too-familiar nausea flowed in and out between my deepening gasps.

"What's wrong?"

"Those things . . . they make me sick too."

The janitor reached for my shoulder. His hand sank deeply into the sea of my jacket's Teflon. He must have been shocked by how deeply he could press until he felt any resistance.

"Anthony, is that you?"

The janitor and I spun around to see my mother standing at the other end of the hallway. One hand was on her curvy hips; the other drummed the flap of her knockoff purse.

"The secretary told me you'd still be here. Have you finished your lunch?"

I nodded my head.

“You’re sure?”

Using my back as cover, I rounded up the uneaten crackers and shoved them into the bag. Before approaching my mother, they were reunited with the tuna sandwich in the trash.

“Anthony, I told you to use an umbrella today,” my mother whispered as we walked away. “You look like a mess.”

—

When my mother and I reached the school psychologist’s office, we played our usual game. I had nicknamed it “breaking and entering.” My mother would stand a few feet away, on the lookout for nosy teachers or students. If the coast was clear, she would wave for me to come into the office. If anyone walked by her, she would prominently brandish some of my old homework, which she kept in her purse for these occasions. “Oh, boys can be so forgetful!” she would merrily say even if she wasn’t asked.

My mother and I waited 15 minutes for Dr. Swetz to arrive. While I dangled my feet above the old, stained carpet, my mother preoccupied herself by staring into a compact mirror. She alternated between powdering her face and combing the strands of her bleached curls. However, no amount of makeup could hide the bags under her eyes.

“I’m sorry I kept you waiting,” Dr. Swetz said as he opened the door and hustled behind his desk.

The doctor reached out to shake my mother’s hand. “Ms. Pittman, it’s a pleasure to see you again.”

My mother tugged at the ends of her sleeves. Regardless of whether it was snowing or 100 degrees outside, my mother always wore long sleeves. I used to have problems understanding why. I thought that the cuts on her arms were the most beautiful, honest things about her.

Dr. Swetz swiveled backwards in his chair to claim my inch-thick file from his cabinet. Out of his eyeshot, I rapidly fanned the surrounding air from my face.

“What’s wrong sweetie?” my mother whispered into my ear.

“He kinda smells like a chimney today.”

A wide grin spread across my mother’s lips. She loved talking about others behind their backs. The only time she was silent was when someone asked her how I was doing.

“Well, Anthony sure is a good student,” Dr. Swetz said as he swiveled back around. “Straight A’s again this quarter.” He attempted a smile, exposing his brown-stained teeth.

“I wouldn’t expect anything less from my son.”

“But it looks like he’s had more problems with choking and gagging in front of the other students,” Dr. Swetz said as he rummaged through the file. “We even got a parent complaint last month.”

“I’m really sorry about that,” I said, burying my head in my lap. No matter how hard I tried, swallowing was never easy. Just the thought of food would cause my throat to tighten. Hunger was nothing compared to the fear of suffocating.

My mother tugged at my hand. Looking up, I saw her mouth the words be quiet.

With his head still buried in the file, Dr. Swetz continued, “We had to do something. I came up with the idea of setting up the desk out in the . . .”

“That’s what I’m here to talk about,” my mother interrupted.

“Oh, there’s no need to thank me. Anthony and I thought it might . . .”

“Thank you? It’s an awful idea.”

Dr. Swetz glanced in my direction and furrowed his brow. Telling my mother about the month-old move to the end of the hallway was something I conveniently forgot to do. At least until her surprise lunchtime visit last week.

“My son needs to go back to the cafeteria right away. That desk out in the hallway makes him look like a freak.”

“But, Ms. Pittman, Anthony and I had a talk about this before, and we both agreed that it was for the best.”

My gaze returned to the carpet. I cringed at the thought of Dr. Swetz’s elaborating on our conversations. Before my first appointment, my mother had made me swear not to discuss unpleasant things, like the late-night visits to the ER for IV fluids. Those were just “traps,” she said.

“I’m glad kids know what’s best.”

“Ms. Pittman, Anthony is getting worse every day. Sarcasm isn’t going to make the problem go away.”

“Oh, is that so?” My mother sighed loudly. “Well, we’ve all seen how successful you’ve been.”

“There’s only so much I can do here at school. I think it’s time Anthony saw a professional outside of school.”

My mother’s fake fingernails dug into my knuckles. Even my attempts to pull away didn’t make her realize the pain she was causing.

“Anthony, sweetie,” my mother said in her sugary voice, “would you please wait outside for a moment?”

My mother yanked me out of my chair and guided me out of the office. Waiting outside was pointless; the thin walls held back nothing.

“Just what do you think you’re doing?” I heard my mother shriek. “Would it hurt you to say something encouraging once in while?”

“Your boy is the thinnest child I’ve ever seen. His teacher can’t even find a spot for him on the bottom of his class’ growth chart. Let’s face it, Anthony is going to have to see a psychiatrist sooner or later. Then your son can be prescribed the medication he needs to . . .”

“Medication?” I could picture my mother’s eyes widening. “Are you nuts? I’ve seen what those things do. I don’t want a zombie for a son. I just want him to be . . . himself.”

“Trust me, Ms. Pittman, if Anthony became a zombie, it wouldn’t be because of the drugs. Have you . . . have you ever considered . . . family counseling?”

Suddenly, the door swung open. Its whack as it hit the doorstep told me that no further games would be played. Like a suitcase on wheels, I was dragged out to my mother’s car in full view of everyone.

“You’re never to see that man again,” my mother said before slamming the passenger door shut. “It’ll give him some extra time to feed off those filthy cigarettes.”

—

“Come on dear, finish your dessert.”

With an outstretched arm, my grandma offered me a piece of an oatmeal raisin cookie. Although I usually enjoyed when my grandma came over to my mother’s apartment to babysit, mealtimes were the exception.

“I don’t want to,” I repeated between each shake of my head.

“Please, I promise you won’t choke.”

Finally I relented. Placing the cookie on my tongue, I began to roll it around my

mouth. My grandma used to say it reminded her of a cow munching on grass. I would do anything to avoid the grainy texture against my throat.

Keys clinked from outside. After three locks were unfastened, the apartment door creaked open. Light flooded in from the hallway to reveal my mother's haggard face.

With my grandma's back turned, I picked up my napkin and spat moist cookie crumbs into it.

"Joslyn, you look tired."

"I know," my mother said as she plopped into the chair next to me. "But these extra shifts . . . We need the money."

My mother reached over to smooth down my hair. Turning to my grandma, she asked, "How was dinner?"

"Pretty typical. He had problems with the bigger chunks in his soup. We're working on dessert now."

"But I'm full," I protested. "Honest."

"I'll bet," my mother said dryly as she made her way to the kitchen.

"I heard things didn't go too well at school."

"You don't know the half of it," my mother said, reaching into the freezer for a quart of vanilla ice cream. Before I could say anything, she was sitting next to me, forcing spoonfuls into my mouth.

"The psychologist there thinks he needs to see a professional shrink. Can you imagine, having to lie on some couch, being stared at like some . . . oops!"

The seeping wetness on my leg hinted at the spilled ice cream.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. Here, give me your napkin."

I tried sneaking the napkin into one of my pant pockets. I shrugged my shoulders and started to rise.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"The bathroom."

Before I could escape, my mother reached into my pocket and snatched the napkin. Spit mixed with uneaten cookie crumbs oozed from between her clenched fingers.

"I thought I told you never to do that again!"

"I'm s-sorry," I stammered. "It just gets so scary, and I don't want to make you mad, and . . ."

"Over my knee, now!"

As she raised her hand, I glimpsed my mother's reflection in the nearby window. Purple mascara was careening over her cheeks, descending into every imperfect crevice.

My mother must have seen her reflection too. She tried desperately to wipe the tears from her eyes. However, she only made the purple mess worse. Mascara now covered both of her hands.

"Joslyn," my grandma muttered, "you look like a mess."

By now, the mix of tears and mascara had soaked the edges of her white sleeves, revealing the scars underneath. My mother reached for a nearby box of tissues. Unable to grasp it with her frantic, trembling hands, the table became covered with bright purple fingerprints.

I leaned over to grab a tissue and wipe my mother's cheeks. She tried to push my hands away, only succeeding in staining my wrists as well.

"My God," my mom whispered as she looked at my arm and back down at her own. "What have I done?"

"Please don't cry," I begged. "I promise I won't do that again."

Taking me in her arms, my mom brought me to her breast. "It's not about that. I . . . I'm just so sorry."

My mom leaned in to kiss my forehead. By now, her crying had washed away the last of the mascara. As her clean tears landed on my lips, I hungrily licked them. •



*Catacombs by Stephanie Chu*



Lightness and Being by *Marc-Antony Lecky*

# Good Morning Mrs. D

by *Evan Vellios*

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It was on the first week of my third year of medical school, during my internal medicine rotation, that I met Mrs. D, a strong but slender middle-aged African American (AA) woman, who was recently hospitalized for new onset congestive heart failure (CHF). As I walked into her room at 6:30AM, the hallways bustling with other medical students and physicians making their morning rounds, I couldn't help but notice the wet and laborious sounds of her breathing as she lay propped up on numerous pillows asleep in her bed. Examining Mrs. D from across the room I nervously began to think of medical jargon to describe her condition... "The patient is a tachypneic African American female in moderate respiratory distress with a SaO<sub>2</sub> of 88% on 2L nasal canula...vital signs are otherwise stable...patient is lying supine in bed with what appears to be four pillow orthopnea." My robotic initial assessment complete, I decided to move closer. Rather timidly, I approached the bedside making sure not to disturb the numerous IV pumps, poles, and tray tables surrounding her. Less than a foot from Mrs. D's right side, I paused hoping that by some act of God she would wake up at that very moment so I could avoid disturbing this poor woman from her much needed slumber. However, no such miracle occurred. Instead, I gently placed my hand on the point of her shoulder and quietly said, "Good morning Mrs. D." Mrs. D's eyelids fluttered for a moment before slowly pulling back leaving two bright blue eyes staring directly at me. After a few moments of silence Mrs. D softly said, "Good morning doctor," pausing to catch her breath "... my oh my ... you doctors keep on getting younger ... and ... younger." Now me being a third-year medical student, I'd be lying if I didn't admit to feeling immense pride in hearing a patient refer to me as "doctor." My nerves a little more at ease, I introduced myself to Mrs. D and continued on with our encounter.

After speaking with Mrs. D for what seemed like hours, I learned a ton about her life, family, and health issues. I learned that she worked as a bank teller, that she had two children and seven grandchildren, and that she was diagnosed with mixed connective tissue disease when she was in her thirties. I learned that this woman who could barely breathe lying in bed, dressed up as Tina Turner at a costume party and sang for two hours only six months earlier. Reciting the mnemonic OLD CART over and over again in my head, I proceeded to gather all the pertinent information about Mrs. D's condition. I then moved on to the physical exam where I began to look for every sign and perform every maneuver I could possibly think of. At one point after I had just finished percussing the span of her liver, Mrs. D calmly said, "honey, you sure are thorough, at least now I know I'm getting my money's worth." A little embarrassed, I smiled and said, "I am a little new at this so I figured I'd perform a complete exam." Mrs. D looked up at me for a moment and then quietly said, "it's ok honey, you do whatever you need to do, I trust you". Hearing those three words...I...trust...you...really touched me. Mrs. D was the first patient to ever tell me that, she was the first patient to ever openly give me that privilege. It probably took me thirty minutes to perform that first physical exam and not once did Mrs. D complain. Even though she was in extreme discomfort and she obviously knew I had practically no clinical experience she allowed me to continue to examine her. Mrs. D gave me the opportunity to take part in her care and to learn from her.

Over the next week I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. D's mother, aunt, daughters, and husband. Every morning I would walk into Mrs. D's room and be greeted by her and one of her many relatives. "Good morning doctor Evan," they would say, "Good morning Mrs. D, Good morning [family member]" I would reply back

with a big grin on my face. As time went by and days turned into weeks Mrs. D slowly got a little better until finally it was time for her to go home. The day of Mrs. D's discharge was a day I will never forget. I had discharged a couple of patients in the past but this one felt so much different. I was so happy to see Mrs. D stronger. I felt like she was almost a part of who I was as a doctor-in-training. I had learned so much from her both with regards to medicine and life that I felt so incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in her care. Mrs. D was one of my first real patients in a hospital environment and being able to see her laugh, sing and walk out of her hospital room under her own power was beautiful.

One day while taking a break from studying, I decided to type Mrs. D's name into Google to see if I could find out how she was doing. The first thing that came up was an obituary...Mrs. D had passed away one month after being discharged from the hospital. My heart sank. I felt completely crushed and I cried. It was at that moment that I decided to write this reflection. To say thank you to Mrs. D for giving me the greatest gift a young doctor-in-training could ever ask for...faith. Mrs. D had faith in me at a time in my short career when I didn't even have complete faith in myself. She trusted me with the most precious thing in the world, her life. Mrs. D is someone that I will remember for the rest of my life. She will be with me every time I check JVP or listen to a patient's lungs and she will forever have a place in my heart. Rest in peace Mrs. D, you will be missed but never forgotten. •

Morning in Yosemite *by Zhuang-Ting Fang*



Through the Looking Glass *by Shauna Higgins*



# A Day In The Life of the Guy in Bed

by Alan Kaplan

**Phlebotomy.** 4am. Check the ID band, confirm the name. No I didn't take someone else's ID band, it's me. Did you wash your hands before you came in? I heard someone in the room next door has diarrhea. Left antecubital fossa. Just a pinch. Wiggle the needle, wiggle. No flash. How about the right antecubital fossa. The exsanguination begins. Drifting back to sleep.

**Medical Student.** 4:45am. I know, I know, you're the medical student. Yes my dear, you can listen to my lungs. No, I don't have any chest pain or shortness of breath. Sure, you can do a neurologic exam... even though the surgery was on my bladder. Why even try to go back to sleep when...

**Intern.** 5:15am. Papers shuffle. The list! Don't drop the beloved list! Yes, I walked yesterday... three times. No, no gas yet. Check the drain. Check the catheter. Pull a little harder on my belly, why don't you. Yes that hurts... I just had surgery. Squeeze the calves, no tenderness. No blood clot, I suppose.

**Rounds.** 6:10am. Here we go. Chief resident shuffles in, he looks like he's in high school. Followed by a few mid-level residents. They look tired; time to wash that white coat pal. Then the intern and nurse practitioner, lists in hand. Followed of course, by the trusty medical student. Hey, the intern is making her check boxes; that's cute. Nurse practitioner takes off the dressing... much more gentle than the resident. Wound looks good. The medical student has tape; and scissors. Yes, I know: walking, walking, and more walking. Still waiting on the blood work? Seems like it was drawn hours ago. So not even liquids huh?

**Shift change.** 7am. Beep. Beep. Infusion complete. Can somebody turn this thing off?

**Medicines.** 8am. I like this nurse, he smiles a lot. Blood pressure pill, gout pill, with just a sip of water; still NPO. Check the ID band. On a scale of one to ten? Pain

shot. Potassium is low again. Replace it. Burns like crazy. Sizzling my vein from the inside. Heaven forbid my potassium should be low. I think I'll go for a walk.

## **Multidisciplinary Rounds.**

10am. Oh what a treat. All the disciplines working together to make me better. Always talking about dispo. What is dispo anyway? Why hasn't my catheter come out yet? The urologist told me nobody is supposed to touch that catheter. Is it going to give me an infection? No way anybody can get an infection around here what with all that alcohol they're rubbing on their hands all day long. On a scale of one to ten? Pain shot.

**Going for a walk.** IV pole. Pain. Gown keeps coming undone in the back. I suppose that's not that big of a deal when I think about the bag of urine hanging on the pole. They say the pain will get better the more I walk... yeah right. We're hanging out at a cool 9 out of 10.

**Afternoon lull.** Drifting off. Beep. Beep. Line occluded. Gosh that's loud. Why do I need to hear the alarm signaling the occluded line? Drifting in and out. Law and Order is on again. Is this CSI or SVU? I saw this one yesterday.

**Survey.** 3pm. Yes, I can identify my doctors... they all gave me their baseball cards. Yes they washed their hands. I would say half way in between "satisfied" and "very satisfied." No, I'm pretty darn satisfied.

**Afternoon rounds.** 6pm. Don't these people ever go home? Attending walks in. Followed by Fellow. Then the Chief resident. Intern in tow. All with their baseball cards. The Fellow batted .382 last season. Wound looks good. Walking, no gas yet. It'll come. No, the pathology takes a week. It sure would be nice to know, though. Attending said he got it all... what he could see, anyway. Still no gas. No soup for you.

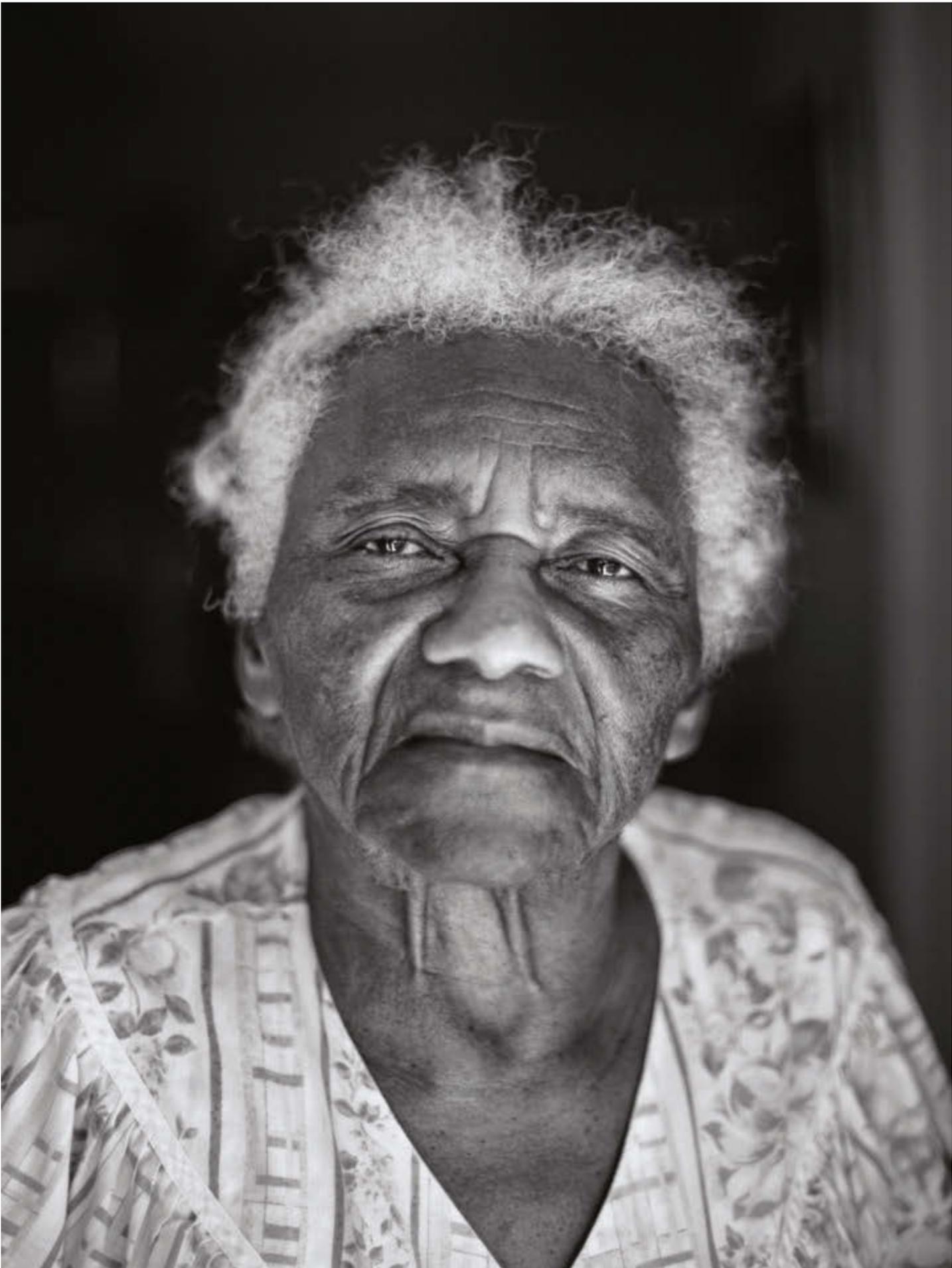
**Visitors.** 6:30pm. Honey you just missed the team. Long day at work? Yeah,

I'm doing ok. The kids have violin and soccer, respectively. Can't miss their extra-curriculars. We get interrupted; more medicines. Check the ID band. Let's go for a walk. She brought me a robe we lifted from the Four Seasons.

**Shift change.** 7pm. On a scale of one to ten? I'm down to a four now. Maybe the walking did help.

**Sleep.** 10pm. Wife left. Maybe I should start that book my daughter gave me on the healing powers of meditation. Or not. I'm going to try to get some rest. I'm doing ok, thanks for asking. Can you close the door on your way out? Ahh, finally some peace and quiet.... Beep. Beep. Infusion complete. •





From the series: *Grandma Has Alzheimer's* by *Marc-Antony Lecky*

# Absences

by Emiley Chang

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## Part I

“Can you water the lawn?” He was stuffing carrots, celery, and apples into the juicer, hands dripping. “We should leave for the airport in 15 minutes.”

Sliding the glass door closed behind me, I gazed at the veritable army of rosebushes, slender green limbs of bloody thorns chopped short for winter. In the center, the dwarf nectarine tree basked quietly in the late morning sunshine. It was still alive, brick red buds sheltering the promise of ivory blossoms. But the branches remained bare and stark.

Water droplets fanned, glittering like tears through a smile. The thirsty lawn drank eagerly.

## Part II

“I’m leaving now,” the man announced cheerfully. He was hugged by his son first. I did not have a name for him yet, so I simply asked, “Can I hug you too?” “Of course.” His son hesitated, then hugged him again. Finally, the man turned to leave after presenting his boarding pass. His son stopped him. “Dad—” And then he hugged him once more, right arm over his left shoulder, ear tucked against ear. Time stopped in that moment and became very blurred and indistinct. For an instant, a look of solemnity rested upon his normally genial countenance. After a long silence, his son relaxed, and his hands fell to his sides. The man slipped through the forest of fabric fences and crossed the glass walls.

“Do you mind,” his son asked me at last, “waiting until he is gone?”

We watched the shadows beyond the glass walls, like flickering firelight. At one point, his son thought he had lost sight of him; his voice constricted briefly until I pointed him out at the far right line.

We waited, until at last his son said, “He’s waving.” I waved back slowly. He turned and faded away.

## Part III

“Where is the nectarine tree?”

“We put it in the garage because it was cold outside. And then it started dropping leaves so we put it in the living room so it could get sunlight.”

With incredulity I sputtered, “You can’t be serious. It’s a *tree*. Trees live outside.”

“We’ve never planted anything in our yard before.”

“Are you really Chinese? Not even vegetables?”

“We just cook them.”

It had indeed started shedding leaves, miserable yellow. “It’s probably dropping leaves because it’s fall,” I reassured him. “But you should plant it as soon as possible. It will need full sun.”

He called me the next week.

“We planted it in the backyard. You should come see it.” •

# Rule Number One

by Bryan Carrigan

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There was blood everywhere. The guy was a mess. Brody tore open a pack of gauze and applied direct pressure to the wound. The guy's name was Jerome Parks. The way Brody heard it, he'd accused his wife of stepping out on him, she stabbed him in the neck with a Philips head screwdriver. "We're losing him," Brody said. He had to raise his voice and yell in order to be heard over the siren.

"No, we're not." Simmons dropped the hammer; the ambulance ran the light and screamed through the intersection. "My truck, my rules, and rule number one says nobody dies in my truck, you hear me? Now quit being such a skirt and save this guy's life already."

The heart monitor chirped a warning—Jerome Parks thrashed once and flat-lined. Brody went to work with the paddles. He pushed two hundred milliliters of epinephrine and started administering cardio pulmonary resuscitation. It was no use. The Phillips head had nicked his carotid artery. Parks had lost too much blood.

"You might as well kill the siren," Brody said.

"Shit," Simmons answered. The sirens fell silent and the ambulance fell in with the normal flow of traffic.

It was a little after one in the morning. The only drivers out on the road were drunks. Future clients. Potential organ donors. Parks was good for two kidneys, a lung—two if they were lucky—two corneas, and potentially a liver, assuming he hadn't self-medicated his way through seventeen years of a loveless marriage.

Jerome Parks sat up and looked around. "Holy Hell, what just happened?"

Brody kicked back in a panic and banged his head against the O2 tank.

"Mr. Parks . . .?"

Parks peeled the gauze away from his neck wound. The artery had stopped spurt-ing blood each time his heart beat; Brody considered that progress. Parks looked at

the bloody gauze and said, "Huh."

"Huh? That's it? That's all you've got to say?"

"I'm dead, aren't I?"

Brody nodded. "You'd lost too much blood. I'm sorry. There was nothing we could do."

"See, here's the thing, I don't feel dead." Parks settled back on the gurney. "Not that I know what dead feels like. What I mean is, aside from a slight crick, I don't feel much different. So maybe you've got this figured all wrong. Maybe I'm not dead after all. Maybe it's just your machine here," he nodded towards the heart monitor that was still registering a flat line, "maybe it's your machine here that stopped working, not my heart."

"Sure," Brody said. He had no idea what he was supposed to do. Jerome Parks's heart had stopped. It was no longer pumping blood through his circulatory system. His lungs were no longer breathing in oxygen. The neurons in his brain should have stopped bouncing between synapses.

"Are you hungry?" Parks asked. "I could eat."

"Your wife stabbed you through the neck with a screwdriver," Brody said.

"She always did have a temper." Parks grabbed his arm suddenly and violently; Brody tried to pull away from him but in the cramped compartment there was nowhere to go. Instead, he thought of every zombie movie he'd ever seen and he realized they all started the same way: with a dead guy feeling peckish. "Listen," Parks said, "this is important. Tell her—"

The ambulance's brakes shrieked and Brody was thrown face first into the oxygen tank. The impact broke his nose.

Simmons opened the rear doors and helped two interns pull the gurney out.

"What have we got?"

"Male, mid-forties, arterial stab wound and massive blood loss," Simmons answered.

The interns wheeled Jerome Parks inside.

"He was dead," Brody said.

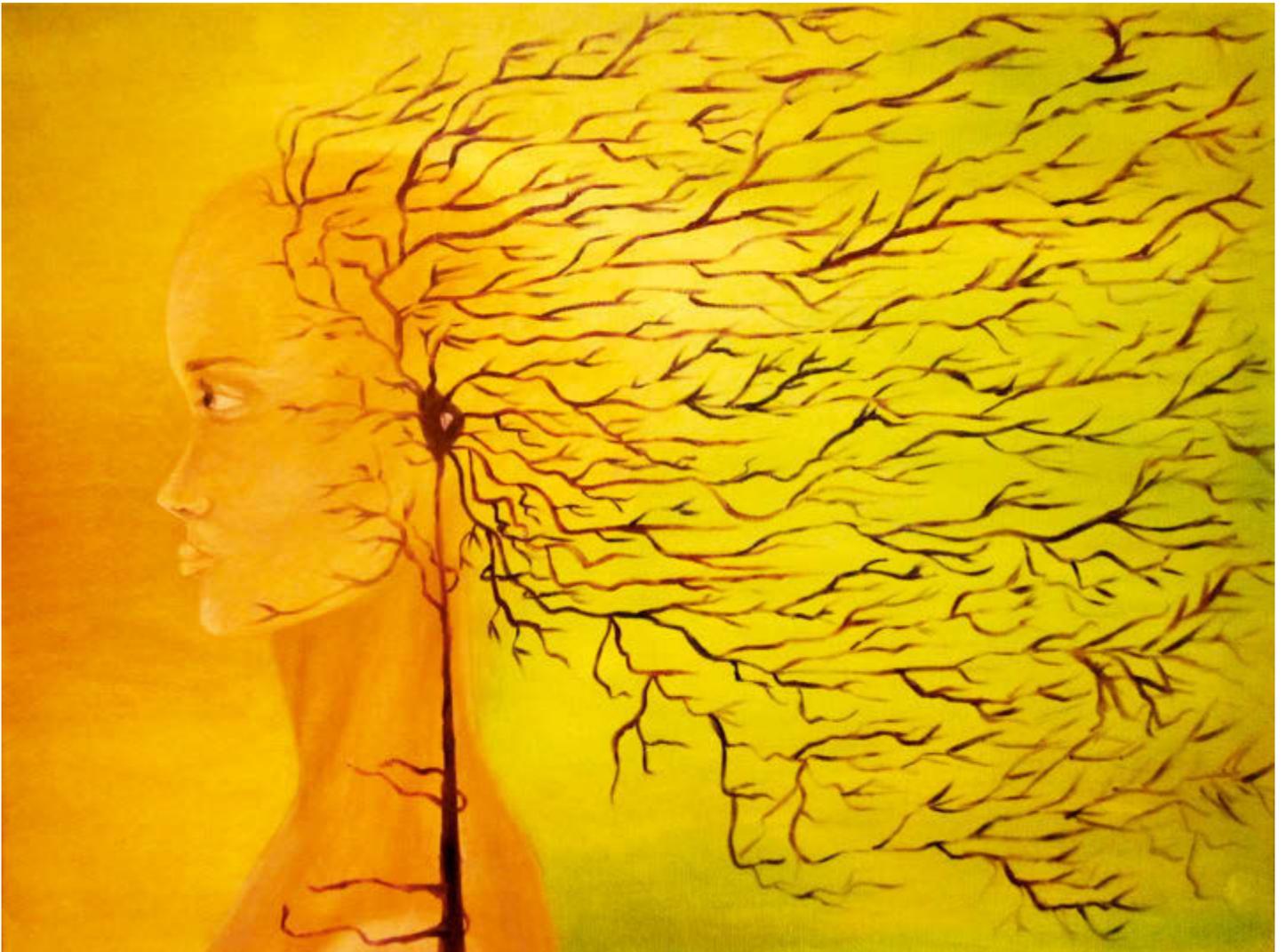
"Yeah," Simmons said, "that happens. Doesn't mean we stop." He crushed a chemical ice pack and passed it to Brody.

"He said something to me," Brody held the ice pack to his nose. The endothermic reaction kicked in and the pack began to cool.

"They do that sometimes," Simmons lit a cigarette. "Supposedly, the brain knows when it's dying; it floods the body with endorphins. One neurologist I talked to said it's the mad rush of mad rushes. Total speed-ball. Keeps the body from knowing what's really going on. I've heard guys say some wild and crazy shit just as they're checking out. The trick is not to listen, not let it get to you, and if anybody asks—the wife, whomever—just say his last thoughts were of you. Because, fuck it, it's not like this guy Parks is going to care."

Simmons flipped his cigarette into the gutter and went to move the rig so that the next ambulance could pull up to the doors.

"He actually spoke to me," Brody said. He realized how crazy it sounded and decided he'd say nothing. If Parks's wife asked, he'd tell her that her husband never regained consciousness. Because fuck her, she'd stabbed him in the neck. •



*Dendrites by Sarah Muradian*

# Rudy

by Ellen Kane

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Everyone knew Rudy, everyone in law enforcement that is. They knew him at the Minneapolis police dept, Hennepin County jail, but Stillwater Prison was where he lived mostly, otherwise he was homeless.

He was a happy-go-lucky, slap-you-on-the-back, drug induced mentally ill, type of a guy.

Tall and gangly thin, always disheveled looking. Sauntered about like “Goofy” the Disney character. He barely had a working tooth in his head, but that didn’t stop him from his constant grinning. Hanging in the Health Services was a poster; “This is your brain on drugs,” two scrambled eggs in a frying pan and that was Rudy’s brains all right. But despite the shape of his brains, everyone liked him.

In prison, Rudy was required to come to the Health Services twice a day. He took a handful of different psych medications to keep him in the here-and-now. And some pills were for the side effects created by the here-and-now pills. He was required to open his mouth after swallowing to show the nurses that he indeed had swallowed all the pills. One spring day Rudy was particularly happy upon entering the Health Service building and I noticed he greeted the guard like they were a couple of kindred spirits. As he proceeded to the pill window where I was holding his pills and water cup, he leaned further towards me than usual and instinct told me that he was going to try and kiss me.

With a forearm block I stopped the attempted kiss and probably stunned Rudy back into reality as he next found himself in the segregation unit written up for inappropriate behavior towards a nurse, thirty day sentence. Not a good place to be; segregation is the jail in the prison. No TV, no radio, no exercise, no fun and there was Rudy, yuckin’ it up with his homies.

Each day the nurses would make several trips to the segregation unit to dispense pills or some kind of treatment. This cell hall was set with four tiers all enmeshed with wire fencing to deter any jumpers. It held 100 inmates; 25 on each tier and the nurse along with a guard would walk the tiers cell by cell, bar by bar and find the inmate/patient in need of whatever.

And so it began. Every time I was assigned to “seg” rounds I would cut through the side door and once inside, the guard in the “sally port” would buzz me into the segregation unit itself. The heavy steel door would start sliding open as the guard pushed the buzzer, and it would make a horrible metal on metal clanking clanging noise similar to a slow moving train. This door opening

procedure would often wake the 100 inmates who mostly slept the day away. As the door would slide open, a roar of 100 male voices would start the chant, “Rudy your girlfriend is here.” It always reminded me of what the Beatles probably heard as they stepped on stage. In the cement, iron cell hall, the yelling reverberated off the brick walls and if I didn’t know better I might have thought I was stepping into a riot. Upon finding Rudy on the third tier, he would be standing at the bars with his arms hanging through them ready to shake with anyone walking by. The same old goofy Rudy grinning with his Billy Bob teeth, so proud to have a girlfriend.

That was in 1996. In 2000 the Minneapolis Tribune reported one morning that a homeless man died in an elevator shaft trying to save a woman who was being brutally attacked. The homeless man’s father said, “It doesn’t surprise me one bit that Rudy died trying to help someone, he was a good boy.” •



Look What I Found! *by Philip Bulterys*

# Biographies

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## **Bruce Hirayama - “Clearing Storm,” “Kelp”**

Bruce is an associate researcher studying the biophysics and physiology of ion-dependent cotransport proteins in the Department of Physiology. Photography, particularly black and white landscape, has been a creative outlet of his ever since his parents gifted him a box camera when he was a kid. He believes that his photography has helped him in science as it has taught him to pay attention to detail, to see what is there for what it is, consider it carefully from all angles, and interpret the image/data in a creative way.

## **Nicholas Iafe - “A Simple Thought”**

Nicholas is a first-year medical student who recently began trying his hand at drawing. He particularly enjoys studying the inherent intersection between healing, science, and art.

## **Adrian Garcia - “Somewhere in the Middle of Nowhere,” “All of the Lights,” “Anna’s Hummingbird”**

Adrian Garcia is a first-year medical student. He has enjoyed photography since age five, focusing on colorful landscapes and wildlife. He also enjoys salsa dancing and playing the flute.

## **Sauna Higgins - “Winged Embrace,” “Through the Looking Glass”**

Sauna Higgins is a second-year medical student. Intrigued by the preservation of singular moments, she has always had a camera in hand. Although digital is her mainstay, she was exposed to film photography in junior high and reconnected with the darkroom via photography classes at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) while attending Brown University. In addition to photography, she has homed in on a visceral appreciation and respect for a variety of art forms in recent years as well.

## **Ziyad Khesbak - “Lips,” “Out, Out”**

Ziyad Khesbak is a third-year medical student who is, despite his best efforts, perennially distracted. His poem was written with reflection on sweet memories at a time when such things were sparse.

## **Stephanie Chu - “Dandelion,” “Catacombs”**

Stephanie Chu is a fourth-year medical student who enjoys photography, travel, and music. “Catacombs” was taken during a walk through the underground Catacombs of Paris.

## **Jennifer Ritch - “Memory”**

Jennifer Ritch is a nurse who until recently was working in the Neurosurgical Operating Room at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. She began writing micro-fiction in the snippets of time she found between cases, quickly discovering that it helped her to process some of the things she saw and experienced as a nurse. Jennifer recently left clinical nursing and is now working in an administrative capacity as the assistant to Dr. Joe Hines, the Chief of the Division of General Surgery.

## **Tyler Kern - “Zebras,” “Bonobo”**

Tyler Kern is a second-year medical student who enjoys nature and wildlife photography. In an ideal world, he would enter a medical field that encourages him to go on photography expeditions.

## **Lew Andrada - “Mother”**

Lew Andrada works as a research associate for UCLA Medical Imaging and Informatics within the Department of Radiology. He has always enjoyed writing; he graduated with an English Minor at UCLA in 2006 and completed the Writers’ Program at the UCLA Extension in 2012. When he’s not writing speculative fiction, Lew can be found traveling around the US or abroad, sampling some good eats in Westwood, caring for his carnivorous plants, or saving the world (and sometimes the galaxy) on his PS3.

## **Claudio Scafoglio, MD, PhD - “Gallo!” “The Flight of Quetzalcoatl”**

Born and raised in Italy, where he studied Medicine and completed a PhD program in Oncology, Claudio Scafoglio moved to the United States in 2005 to work at UCSD on DNA damage response. He moved to Los Angeles in 2012 to study cancer metabolism. He has written poetry since he learned how to write.

## **Debbie Martins - “Bright Early Night,” “Innocence Reflected,” “Reflection on Death”**

Debbie is a first-year medical student who loves to explore her creativity through photography, creative writing, and art. Traveling around the world serves as an inspiration, from sketching in the dunes of the Sahara desert to capturing beautiful moments in Brazil.

## **Jeremy Blumberg, MD - “Last Thanksgiving”**

Jeremy Blumberg is currently a fellow in Kidney Transplantation with the Department of Urology at UCLA; he will be joining the UCLA Urology faculty in July. Dr. Blumberg has a strong interest in using poetry, prose, art and music to improve the quality of life of patients and physicians.

## **Sarah Park - “Hope”**

Sarah Park is a second-year medical student who began studio art as a hobby from a young age. She rediscovered painting in medical school, and hopes to convey emotions inspired by experiences in medicine through her paintings.

## **Dustin Harris - “T Wave”**

Dustin is a first-year medical student. Don’t trust him, he is not a doctor.

## **Maria-Kassandra Coronel - “Shifting Trains”**

Maria-Kassandra Coronel is a third-year pre-med undergraduate at UCLA, majoring in Psychobiology who works for the UCLA School of Medicine in General Internal Medicine as a Research Assistant. Born in New Jersey and raised various places around the world, including the Philippines, she possesses a global perspective. Along with her love of places, comes her love of literary works. Coronel is particularly fond of the villanelle form, as seen in the structure of her poem “Shifting Trains,” and she appreciates the enduring expression of art from the UCLA health sciences community.

## **Neil Parker, MD - “Enchanted Forest”**

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.

**Matthew Hoffman – “Accessories”**

Matthew Hoffman is a platelet coordinator for the UCLA Blood & Platelet Center. He was a slow learner when it came to reading. At one time he thought Element O (L-M-N-O) was a magic substance that linked the beginning and the end of the alphabet. After an epiphany in his second grade remedial reading class whereby all those inky squiggles on the page suddenly made glorious sense, Matthew realized that not only could he read, but he could and would write. He continues to do so.

**Aaron Jen – “Kind of Blue”**

Aaron is a second-year medical student at UCLA. He has been interested in photography for six years and is fascinated by the ability of the captured image to resonate with the emotions and memories of the viewer.

**Clayton Vetter – “The More You Know About the Author,” “A Good Idea at The Time”**

Clayton Vetter is Training Specialist at BRITE where he supports the ongoing design, development and facilitation of training classes. Clayton also enjoys television writing and served as a researcher and consultant for three seasons of HBO’s BIG LOVE.

**Zach Burke – “Lion”**

Zach Burke is a second-year medical student at UCLA. He enjoys photography, particularly while traveling.

**Andy Trang & Isaac Yang, MD – “Half-Hearted,” “Human Hands”**

Andy Trang is a researcher in the Department of Neurosurgery at UCLA, and Dr. Isaac Yang is an attending neurosurgeon. Andy is passionate about studying many elements and styles of art including portraiture, architecture, technical illustrations, and abstract surrealism. His pieces are predominately 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.

**Cesar Arellano - “High”**

Cesar Arellano is a research associate



*Let Go by Gwendolyn Derk*

in the Department of Radiology. The photograph "High" was taken in Venice, CA.

#### **Sarah Nunn – "Nica"**

Sarah Nunn has worked as a Clinical Nurse II at Santa Monica UCLA Medical Center and Orthopaedic Hospital on the Orthopaedic and Spine Unit since 2008 and is also co-founder and Director of Nicaragua Programs for Teach for Health International. "Nica" was completed during a 10-month stint in Nicaragua with Teach for Health in 2012. Drawing this way helps Sarah problem-solve by letting her thoughts and emotions wander and organize themselves as they will on the page.

#### **Mayra Jimenez – "Delicate Heart"**

Mayra Jimenez AKA LosCojocos, is a female astute artist and ER clerk at UCLA. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she adds her own twist to contemporary art. She continues to dedicate all her work and inspiration to her husband and their love.

#### **Victor Sigalov, MD – "Baby It's Cold Outside"**

Dr. Sigalov works in the Department of Radiology. In addition to photography, he likes traveling, teaching, and reading.

#### **Allen Kwong – "Surreal Rocks"**

Allen captured this seascape while in Easter Island. The lighting near sunset rendered the rocks with a very colorful appearance.

#### **Bryan Carrigan – "Continuity Error," "Rule Number One"**

(Prefers to leave bio blank)

#### **Florence On – "Door 23"**

Florence is a first-year medical student who spent most of her childhood afternoons dreaming of traveling the world. Beyond the vast hills of dry chaparral, through the purple mountains bordering the faraway sea, she saw jungles teeming with tigers, lizards, and golden macaws, cities filled with sophisticated cosmopolitan travelers, and everything in between.

#### **Brian D. Moseley, MD – "Hunger"**

Brian Moseley is a first-year Epilepsy/Clinical Neurophysiology fellow at UCLA. His research interests include

epileptogenicity and how autonomic changes that occur during seizures relate to sudden unexplained death in epilepsy (SUDEP). He has previously published articles in *Neurology*, *Epilepsia*, *Epilepsy Research*, *Epilepsy & Behavior*, the *Journal of Neurology*, *Neurosurgery*, and *Psychiatry*, and the *Journal of Child Neurology*.

#### **Marc-Anthony Lecky – "Lightness and Being," "From the Series: Grandma Has Alzheimer's"**

Marc-Anthony's aim, with his photography, is to understand himself outside the context of himself. His images are a glimpse of his unconscious self looking at the world. The subjects he chooses to photograph inspire him to search for simple truths that are a reflection of himself and the world in which he lives.

#### **Evan Vellios – "Good Morning Mrs. D"**

Evan Vellios is a third-year medical student at UCLA interested in pursuing a career in surgery. He wrote this reflection in memory of a patient that he had during the first half of his third year of medical school. He hopes his piece inspires other medical students to cherish the relationships that they have with their patients as much as he did with Mrs. D. He believes that being a physician is a privilege and something that should never be taken for granted.

#### **Zhuang-Ting Fang, MD – "Morning in Yosemite"**

Dr. Fang is a MD and associate clinical professor in the Department of Anesthesiology at UCLA.

#### **Alan Kaplan, MD – "A Day in The Life of The Guy In Bed"**

Dr. Kaplan is a third-year resident in the Department of Urology. With a strong interest in history and literature, he views writing as the perfect outlet to convey the exhilarating sights and sounds of life as a physician. His work has been published in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Salon.com*.

#### **Emiley Chang, MD – "Absences"**

Emiley is a geriatrics fellow transplanted from Northern California. "Absences" was written in January 2012. A friend of Emiley's has lost many family members over the years, including his mother, several aunts, and

his uncle. His father relocated back to Asia due to his wife's health condition. As a consequence, this friend's reaction to his father's departure was extremely poignant; Emiley reflected upon it during the entire drive home.

#### **Sarah Muradian – "Dendrites"**

Sarah is a third-year medical student who has recently started oil painting. She hopes to have more time to improve once she finishes her surgery rotation.

#### **Ellen Kane – "Rudy"**

Ellen Kane wrote her essay while working as a correctional nurse in a maximum security prison in Minnesota. While "serving time" she met many, many characters one of the most memorable of which was "Rudy." Ellen left correctional nursing after 10 years in 1996 and has been a research nurse first in HIV and currently with the Center for Inflammatory Bowel Diseases here at UCLA.

#### **Philip Bulterys – "Look What I Found!"**

Philip Bulterys is a third-year MD/PhD student interested in global health and emerging pathogens. He grew up in Rwanda and went to high school in Zambia. Photography has been a way for him to tell stories and appreciate the immensity of nature.

#### **Gwendolyn Derk – "Let Go"**

Gwendolyn Derk has been doing research in congenital heart disease at UCLA for the past two years. She received her B.S. in Physiological Science from UCLA in 2011 and plans to attend an MD/PhD program in the future. Gwendolyn also currently works as a preservationist on UCLA's Cardiothoracic Transplant Team and previously worked as an emergency medical technician at UCLA's Emergency Medical Services.

#### **Uyen Dinh Chu – "Kids, Don't Play With Fire!"**

Uyen Dinh Chu is an avid documentary photographer of all things quirky and raw. You can often find her silently sleuthing behind her camera while contemplating her next move.

