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

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

And the beat goes on...

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

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

I was probably five or six at that time.

I had asthma attacks since I was two, especially during the transition from Summer to Autumn when the temperature difference between day and night was too much for my young self. I remember sitting up in the middle of the night when the attacks came and telling my parents that my airway was very ‘stiff’. My parents would give me my inhaler, sit by me and wait, hoping the medicine would work. Sometimes, I would make it through, but a lot of times, they would bring me to the emergency room in the middle of the night.

Once, I was sent to the children’s ward. I cannot remember whether it was the first night of my stay in the hospital, but I distinctly remember I did not feel sick that night. The ward was dark with the only light coming from the nurse station at the far end of the ward. I was awake, but knew that I should not leave the bed or the nurses would not be happy. I sat up and stared outside the window as I was placed on a bed next to the window during that stay. At that moment, a nurse came and asked whether I was feeling unwell. I told her I was fine, but couldn’t sleep. Then, I asked her where my parents were.

“They’re sleeping in the next room. You’ll see them next morning.” She said kindly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Path of the Golden Rose | Mary Rose Deraco

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Grease and Apricots | Eviola Nakhla

He parts the soil with oil-stained hands.
“Bring me the shovel,” he says. His voice reaches me
Through thick, green olive leaves,
Tired, yet soft as cotton.
I kneel beside him, always his little girl,
Worn jeans denting the mound of warm earth.
Sun filters through the branches overhead.
Deep wrinkles engrave his eyes,
Muted, dark blue circles hover under
Fourteen years working the graveyard shift.

But here, the stains come from soil,
Soft, smelling of dead leaves and earthworms.
There is no grease.
Here, darkness is cheating the sun under a canopy of leaves,
Not the strain to see steel-colored trains in the moonlight.
Here, our soft laughter is carried on the wind of the tree.
There are no bright vests, neon and distorted in the pale light.
The brightness is white buds streaked with pink
And the sticky-sweetness of tart apricots
When our tree blooms in the spring.
Bead in The Nose | Lisa Stern

Disclosure: This is one of the most practical things that I never learned in medical school.

If you are a parent, you can probably imagine this scenario: your amazing baby is especially perfect at 9 months of age. She is full of joy and good cheer—laughing, squalling, pleased with her new-found motor skills like crawling and feeding herself. The pincer grasp that differentiates primates from other mammals is on full display. Our opposable thumbs permit dexterity that other species dream of. Starting at 9 to 12 months your baby is picking up small objects: food, paper, trash, lint, etc. Said items usually end up in the mouth, the easiest and most accessible opening. But, as soon as your baby has a pincer grasp, the possibility of something ending up inside that adorable little nose becomes a reality. In truth, babies don’t have the cognitive ability to comprehend its ramifications. So imagine… your young child gets her tiny hands on something beautiful like colorful beads and she gingerly picks one up with her pincer grasp. Now what? “Hmmmm, she thinks, what should I do with this bead? Maybe I’ll put it in my nose!! It will fit perfectly. Wouldn’t that hurt? Not sure, let me find out.” In general, kids do things just because they can. They are impulsive and don’t have the problem solving skills and experience to set off that internal alarm that says ’Bad idea’. They can’t imagine repercussions. But now………As soon as your baby has a pincer grasp, the possibility of something ending up inside that adorable little nose becomes a reality. In truth, babies don’t have the dexterity to put something up there except for pureed sweet potatoes so there isn’t too much to worry about. The problem starts when they are toddlers, especially nose-picking toddlers. Anything small is fair game: foods like peas; small toys—especially beads, Common household item that can be balled up between the fingers i.e. tissues are also favorite items.

Once something is up the nose there are two distinct scenarios. First, you, the parent actually witnessed said item being inserted into the nostril. Second, there has been a covert operation and said item was placed in the nose without being seen. This second option has two outcomes: A) the child comes to you and says that she but something in her nose or B) No confession is forthcoming.

So let’s break it down. If you saw something placed up the nose you are way ahead of the game. You actually know what was inserted and when. The item should be removed in a timely manner but it is NOT a life threatening emergency so don’t panic. Foreign bodies exist in 2 main groupings: those that hold their shape meaning they are solid and things that are more amorphous and will mold to the shape of the orifice.

As a pediatrician and mother I take pride in a range of wacky home remedies that all pediatricians and parents should have at their disposal. This one I actually read about in a throw-away journal and was struck by its simplicity and usefulness. Filed it away and sat in wait for my first practice run. I will always remember my first time (don’t we all!). I was excited when I entered the exam room and was faced with a bead in the nose of an adorable three year old girl. I explained the options to the mother and she immediately responded that this technique seemed like the least invasive, least traumatic procedure. She was giggling a little as she ‘kissed’ her surprised daughter’s mouth and the bead came flying out on the second puff. I was hooked. This home treatment to remove foreign bodies from the nostrils is easy, safe and something only a parent(or grandparent) would want to do. Depending on the type of foreign body it has a fairly high success rate. Either way, try this first before seeing your doctor or ENT. Imagine there was something in your nose; how would you get it out? You’d blow your nose, of course. Now tell that to a 3 year old.

Following is the DIY solution:

Step 1- Occlude the clear (unobstructed) nostril with your finger.
Step 2. Tell the child to open her mouth. Say you are going to “kiss” her.
Step 3. Take an inhalation and put your mouth completely over your child’s mouth making a tight seal.
Step 4. Blow. Hopefully the foreign body will be blown out of the nostril and often across the room. You can repeat steps 1-4 a few times if necessary.

If something in sticky and occludes the canal, blowing can push it closer to the opening of the nostril so you can try to remove it with your fingers. If the above procedure does not work, YOU MUST see a doctor (a pediatrician or ENT will have the most experience). I don’t recommend inserting a tweezer into the nares as you will most likely cause trauma, scare the child and make it more difficult for a professional to deal with the problem later.

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

Since that first time, I have shared the wisdom and take pride in having instructed many parents including one who called while he was in a packed emergency room during flu season. The father put the phone down on a chair and I talked him through the maneuver. The bead came out easily and the father happily walked out of that germ-laden waiting room. Mission accomplished.
I've seen an angel and now I wake up to cry. It will bleed, because tears are not enough. It will scar, because screaming is not enough. It hurts to dream away, it dies to live by. Heart is not in pace. Silence is the lullaby. Sinking in our fate. Dreaming beyond my destiny. To live is not a crime. I don't wanna see it again. I don't wanna say goodbye. I should have known, I should have seen it. Pain has no meaning. Regret and time don't get along. Darkness and sadness don't go by. I have spent my days hiding from light. Haunting dark corners of my apartment at night. Feeling wrong at every breath. Numb to everyone's sight. I fade away on my own. As life passes me by. Little by little I get along. Gently. Simply. Definitely in time. Blessed by an angel. I breathe. I cry. I am alive. 

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Chasing the sun today is only a means to. Get somewhere else so I can stand under the blue. Bleeding the dye, no longer painting by numerical strategies. Leaping over the cracks of the earth and I'm starting anew. Life—Wife—Knife—carving who I will be. Strife—Plight—I'm—no longer afraid to be the girl. Who steps up to the plate even though the menu doesn't always include: The meaning of life and the ways of the world.
Mbingo Baptist Hospital is located in the Northwest Province of Cameroon. This humble rural hospital sits nestled deep in a valley surrounded by green mountains marked with jagged stones and granite walls. Multiple waterfalls spill from the cliffs above to the valley floor below in breath-taking splendor. Like clockwork, downpours that fill and flood surrounding tributaries temporarily interrupt spring afternoon. The hum of building static electrical energy can be felt from shining clouds as they seek out the nearest ground. Innumerable lightning strikes and deafening thunder covers the horizon. An hour passes and as quickly as it starts, this nature driven frenzy comes to a mind numbing halt. The setting sun shines through rapidly dispersing mist and a choir of insects and birds begin their nightly serenade. The hum of building static electrical energy can be felt from shining clouds as they seek out the nearest ground. Innumerable lightning strikes and deafening thunder covers the horizon. An hour passes and as quickly as it starts, this nature driven frenzy comes to a mind numbing halt. The setting sun shines through rapidly dispersing mist and a choir of insects and birds begin their nightly serenade.

After finishing a strenuous day of scheduled operations, a warm night with near suffocating humidity was set

during the surgery; an ominous thought. The unconscious woman was brought in, moved to the table, anesthetized and prepped for surgery. Standing across the table from Mbingo’s chief surgery resident, we began the exploratory surgery. A midline vertical incision revealed an abdomen swelling with dense, clotted blood. Given the degree of blood loss we suspected blunt abdominal injury with consequent damage to a major organ. However, a meticulous and rapid examination of the liver, spleen, major vessels, and kidney beds was normal. We paused to adjust our retractors, aimed the light towards the pelvis and the source was soon illuminated.

An irregular 13 cm density was easily palpated as it bulged through a severe distended fallopian tube, a tube that under normal circumstances should be pencil thin. Adjacent to the swelling was a disorganized bundle of delicate, friable, and irregular tissue spilling blood at a worrying rate. A quick and very telling physical examination revealed an abdominal mass almost undetectable and her pulse weak. With a fading voice, she consumed her last thread of energy to describe her pain. A quick and very telling physical examination revealed an abdominal mass almost undetectable and her pulse weak. With a fading voice, she consumed her last thread of energy to describe her pain.

The searing pain of my brief intense abdominal pain. A quick and very telling physical examination revealed an abdominal mass almost undetectable and her pulse weak. With a fading voice, she consumed her last thread of energy to describe her pain. A quick and very telling physical examination revealed an abdominal mass almost undetectable and her pulse weak. With a fading voice, she consumed her last thread of energy to describe her pain.
bulb should be cherished and used with the focused goal of cure or benefit in those who need it most. A physical exam in Cameroon should be no less telling or essential than an exam that precedes a whole body CT scan in the United States. Moments spent perfecting one’s skill, both clinical and surgical, carry equal value no matter where on earth those moments occur. As my training continues and my experience accrues, each time I adjust a light to improve my field of view at the operating table, I give thanks for those lessons learned while operating in the dark.

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

“What you study, Nooah?”

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

“I’m studying Philosophy.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lila’s mother exuded calm warmth, and although I knew she wouldn’t accept me right away, especially because I was not raised in their Egyptian culture and did not practice their Orthodox Christianity, her white cheeks flushed fiercely when I had entered the apartment carrying a box of Godiva chocolates for her. She had welcomed me with the softest voice, the sound of wind running through trees. Her large eyes appeared small behind her thick glasses and her face changed from ivory to red throughout the course
“Paint, go out with friends, whatever really.”

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

Before I knew what I had agreed to, we were both hunched over the table, perspiring water glasses magnifying our fingers and mariachi music blaring around us. Our friends circled around for the show, and Lila was giving me the fiercest of gazes. The birthday girl counted down and the arm wrestling began. We were a good match. I started out easy on her, I wasn’t the type of guy to shut down a friend, but she had this way of holding my gaze when she spoke that made me think she had won or lost.

She didn’t particularly stand out that night: ordinary black dress, dark wavy hair, maybe a little eyeliner, but she had taken my bishop with his. I quickly trapped his bishop’s movement of pawns and finally, the first piece was won; he caved in around his mouth. His graying, curly hair flew up at wisps at the edges of his comb-over and his eyes, the color of the Turkish coffee he drank, and found a tired old man. The deep creases that lined his eyes extended down his face, caving in around his mouth. His graying, curly hair flew up at wisps at the edges of his comb-over and his gold-rimmed glasses shone ominously in the dim lighting.

We sat quietly for a moment observing one another like territorial pit bulls before he spoke.

“Do you like to play chess?”

“Sure,” I said, as enthusiastic as I could manage, nodding curtly.

He pushed himself from the table and caused it to ripple our reflection out. I was pleased to see she had not removed any of my paintings, which lined the mantel above her fireplace, for her parents’ visit. As her father set up the chess pieces, I observed an experimental Impressionist portrait I had made of her when we first started dating at the end of freshman year. Back then, Lila and I shared a table with a layer of rose perfume, and I, of turpentine with oil paint-stained hands. She was studying Biochemistry and dreamed of attending medical school, while I immersed myself in the Classics and was never without my artwork. We complimented each other well; I won her over with poems and challenged her with philosophy, and she intrigued me with her mathematical logic and passion for health.

That day she would not hold still for me. She kept shaking with laughter as I tried to paint her. We had biked over to the park on the Eastern side of Charles River. Fall blue jays flew in my vision and I breathed the scent of oak, sharp and woody, as I unloaded my canvas.

“Keep your smile, but hold still.”

“What do you mean hold still? I have to breathe, don’t I?” she said, throwing her head back and laughing.

The sunlight caught her round cheeks, and a fat fly landed on her forehead. I couldn’t help but laugh myself. I busied myself outlining a pair of white geese that were ruffling their majestic feathers in our direction. I held the brush lightly and stroked, dipped back into the acrylic, mixed some gray in, stroked, mixed again, stroked, blended, angled, and the pattern continued until two pairs of glassy black eyes stared at me from my work. I thought I could hear the geese honk right out of the canvas. I went back to rendering Lila’s face and although this was our third date, she had not allowed me to kiss her yet, which didn’t bother me since I knew her beliefs were what made her so different from every other girl I had met. I stroked her hair as a round mud-green fish’s gulping mouth suddenly broke the surface of the water and rippled our reflection out.

I sat opposite her father behind my white pieces and moved a pawn. Lila and her mother had returned and set down tea and her mother’s freshly made Baklava in front of us; this was going to be a family event. I intoned slowly; my mind teetered between my sometimes bloodshot eyes and steady pulse. He moved his knight. There was some more movement of pawns and finally, the first piece was won; he had taken my bishop with his. I quickly trapped his bishop’s escape, but his imposing queen guided him back to safety. I looked up at Lila.

“Going easy on her, I wasn’t the type of guy to shut down a friend.”

“Arm wrestling began. We were a good match. I started out easy on her, I wasn’t the type of guy to shut down a friend.”

Friends circled around for the show, and Lila was giving me the fiercest of gazes. The birthday girl counted down and the arm wrestling began. We were a good match. I started out easy on her, I wasn’t the type of guy to shut down a friend. My father leaving when I was your homework. Only when graduating high school did I see her triumphant happiness, as if my father leaving when I was 14 I was not sure if she was just shy from being late or just didn’t want to introduce herself, but she did. She didn’t particularly stand out that night: ordinary black dress, dark wavy hair, maybe a little eyeliner, but she had this way of holding my gaze when she spoke that made me think she had won or lost.

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

I started of my art career with painting. The smell of mint wafted over and mixed with the odors of stuffed chicken and lamb kabob we had devoured. I wasn’t much of a tea drinker, but I knew not to ask for a list of do’s and don’ts for her parents’ visit, and had pleaded with dove eyes. Don’t cuss. No substances of any kind. No physical contact. Avoid Politics. Avoid Religion. Compliment Dad’s suit. Smile at Mom. Although some seemed ridiculous, I could not help thinking about how she had run to me the night before to give me the list. Waves of thick, dark brown hair framed her warm face, a curl catching at the nape of her neck. She wore a soft smile and her emerald eyes, round like silver moons, twinkled in the light of the street lamp outside her apartment.

Her father ate his black dress, dark wavy hair, maybe a little eyeliner, but she had this way of holding my gaze when she spoke that made me think she had won or lost.

I had started bring her arm slowly down to the table. She threw down her napkin when she lost and started laughing so loudly that I wasn’t sure if she thought she had won or lost.

“I went easy on you,” she said.

“Sure. I saw you sweating. Besides, what kind of guy would I be if I lost to you?”

“A noble one.”

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

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

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“She was giving it her all. I had to increase my effort when my arm started going down, and we were locked in with our arms vertical for a few minutes. I actually started sweating a lot at this point.”

“Before I knew what I had agreed to, we were both hunched over the table, perspiring water glasses magnifying our fingers and mariachi music blaring around us. Our friends circled around for the show, and Lila was giving me the fiercest of gazes. The birthday girl counted down and the arm wrestling began. We were a good match. I started out easy on her, I wasn’t the type of guy to shut down a friend.”

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

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“Baba is quite the chess player; I’ve only beaten him twice,” she said, winking at me, far from her parents’ gaze.

“I suppose I’m a bit rusty,” I said, playing along lightly. “It takes an angel’s mind to be sharp at this game,” her father said, gruffly.

I ignored the comment and proceeded to trap his rook with my other bishop. He took that bishop with a knight.

“How did I not see that? I was beginning to lose my nerve. My foot tapped the carpet in an aggressive drumbeat. I had a strong desire to win, maybe because Lila was watching me, and so I took some risks. Our queens now sat side by side as I checked his king. I deduced that he wouldn’t give up his most powerful piece, but he sacrificed his queen in a flurry and proceeded to checkmate me with a pawn, rook, and two knights five moves later. I sat there; defeat and rage coursing through me like poison, blurring my vision.

“Aha! So Philosophy doesn’t help out with chess after all. Just what I thought,” he said, smiling proudly, looking to his wife for praise.

“Good game both of you,” Lila’s mother said, smiling nervously.

By this point, no calming words reached me. My face grew steadily warmer from neck to cheeks to ears until I was burning, the fire within finally rising too high to suppress.

“What do you mean philosophy doesn’t help? Do you have a problem with my career choice?” I asked.

The heat in my voice caused an abrupt stillness in the room, the sweet smell of the pastries no longer present. Everything else happened in chaotic fast-forward, the thin conversation folding out like rows of stacked dominos.

“You raise your voice at me, boy! My daughter is going to be great doctor. Doctor! And you! A teacher!! That’s not men’s work,” he said, flicks of saliva shooting out with his words.

“Baba, why would you say something like that? Calm down!”

“A PhD is the highest form of education. Don’t you understand that?” I yelled back.

“You might as well work at Jack-in-the-Box. And what about church? How will you raise a family if you are not Orthodox? Is my daughter supposed to suffer because you do not share our beliefs? My daughter; my only daughter…”

“Baba, please, stop. Noah loves our beliefs,” Lila said.

Lila’s mother was screaming for him to stop in Arabic, on the verge of crying. He was losing steam now, the weariness settling all over his face, but I was just getting started.

“Do all Christians judge men on their career choices, there’s no wonder there are so many atheists and agnostics in the world. Your religion is pathetic.”

And with that, I stormed out of the living room back in the kitchen, my fists closing and opening as I paced by the beige walls closed in around me and my collar became too hot. My temple throbbed.

“She’s not finished,” I said.

“Lila I love you, you know I always will.”

“I’m sorry, Noah. I love you so much, but let’s just take a break…” She hiccuped.

“Every instinct in my body screamed at me to grab her, hold her close, make her stay with me. I could not picture life without her. I had pursued her for five months before she agreed to a single date with me over two years ago. I was planning on proposing to her that spring, goddamn it! The beige walls closed in around me and my collar became too hot. My temple throbbed.

“Please,” I said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ICU | Eric Chang

Mind and Heart | Rose Shan

Impermanence | Satiro De Oliveira

On Occasion | Issa Lutfi
His Legacy | Jennifer Ritch

There you go again
With your pride and her prejudice
Walking away
Not touching the ground

She makes sure of that
And everything else
And everyone else

There you go again
With the lightest of loads
And your feet
Never touch the ground
And she makes sure of that

The shadow you cast is large
Or so I’ve been told

Flowers and other living things die in the darkness
And you make sure of that

American Idols | Mario Eason

Chained together, we marched
...as free men
...as slaves
...as prisoners, we marched

Lynched for sport
Whipped to submit
Raped then jailed for pleasure
Cultured faith and broken trust
Martyrs for Christ’s promises

Minds enlightened
Voices uplifted
Praise the Almighty
Forgive!

Race is a figment of my imagination
Imagination mirrors reality
Life made easy by broken backs
Fathers and Mothers who weren’t just black
Their eyes staring me down, an inquisition
Where is your contribution?
What have you done for us?
Where is your Daddy?
What are you anyway?

Millennial blacks
Made in His own way
Hues of the past
Shades of the present
Color is circumstantial
Race becomes circumstantial

First we were Niggers, then Negros
We were Colored; we are Black
We’ve become African Americans
Brotha’s, Niggah’s reclaimed

Still without identity
Invested in fabricated celebrations
Adopting hand-me-down hopes and dreams
We are human nature evolved
We are here, we are hope; we are precipice
This pigment revolution is real
Blacks, Africans and Niggahs alike
Up in arms, afraid of the other
Civil disobedience over ordained racism

And now…
It’s just enough to catch your breath
We cannot hide the bruises and bodies
Any one of us is next,
A parody to law enforcement
The chosen profile

Slaves once more; imprisoned still
Just Niggah’s reclaimed for slaughter
Cowboy’s cattle, branded and corralled
American idols; targets for sport
new york | Jacqueline Ngo

heat presses down like a wet towel,
the city holds its cargo of dead rats,
dreamers, Laundromats.
beneath the hungry streets, the rats boil.
deep in the sewers opened like veins,
something in the city runs swift.

on Broadway in the blank room
with the blank walls i awake,
steamed in my bed like a bun,
the walls drip with wisps of a dream:
babies crawling in shallow water,
cockroaches big as loaves of bread.

the streets call for blood inside,
the walls sweat, something boils.
heat rises, the city hums a tune,
savage and profound.

The Warrior | Jeffrey Hsu

I am the messenger,
Warning him of the army afoot,
steadily inching its way toward him.

Quickly, he raises his shield of
Courage, proclaiming his will to
Fight.

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

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

Sage | Paula Stoessel

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

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

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

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

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

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

Buddha Head, entwined in roots | Suman Dutta
To Be Human | Matthew Hill

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

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

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

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

The next thing I heard was the light tapping on my forehead. I took a deep breath and stretched before opening my eyes to a new day. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon. I took a deep breath and stretched before opening the door to the dogs I loved so much. We hopped into Veronica’s old gray Tahoe before screeching out of the driveway haphazardly.

The drive was a nightmare with her at the wheel. She’d never driven up in the mountains, and the way that girl took turns going fifty was astonishing. I couldn’t help, but laugh and scream while being in her presence.

The drive that should have taken an hour, managed to happen in the light tones of a piano. V kept pushing me to try a little polish, but I was only too eager to keep my thoughts elsewhere. I was barely peeking over the hills, and I knew that it had to be time to get up.

“Well good morning, bride to be!” A voice boomed with enthusiasm.

I picked myself up off of the couch, pushing the hounds aside. “Stop calling me a bride, V. I don’t like it.”

“Don’t get your panties in a twist, it’s just fun to say, Mr. Lenaghan,” V chuckled to herself.

“Oh, stop. So, remind me why we have to be up so early?” I asked on my way to the bathroom.

“Ugh, I’ve told you a million times. You really should skin.”

“Okay, okay. So, why are we even here? Can one of you find Macy and start getting the ball rolling?” I hissed as they walked away.

I shrugged, knowing somebody would handle that. I was just starting to get nervous and wanted to focus on something else for the time being. I took another deep breath and unzipped the bag that held my tux. Everything looked in order, so I suited up and stepped out to look in the mirror.

I frowned, thinking I looked chunky in some areas. I felt as though I could see my acne through the make-up, and I looked terrible for my wedding day. I took another deep breath and closed my eyes, trying to release all of the pent up energy.

Suddenly, I felt a warm hand grab mine. “You look very handsome, Maxwell.”

I smiled and looked over at to see my mother standing with a big smile. She wore dark brown glasses with a beauti-
ful sparkling black dress. She looked absolutely fantastic, and I couldn’t help, but smile even bigger.

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

“Oh Max, you’re too nice. I still need to shed a few more, but I think I’m headed in the right direction. Now enough about me, how are you holding up?” She grinned, giving me the ‘mom’ look.

“I don’t feel like I look good enough. I mean, ew, I look fat, and the stress from the planning made me break out. I couldn’t help, but smile even greater knowing that this would be the best day of my life so far. Across the aisle I walked down, I saw Darren being escorted by his mother. He looked amazingly handsome in his tuxedo, complete with coattails like I had specifically instilled he not do. I started to laugh and cry at the same time, realizing I knew he would do this and I was just fine with it.

I took a deep breath as both of our mother’s hands draped our hands to each other in front of the judge who presided over the marriage. That judge happened to be my future father-in-law, who grinned a big goofy grin as we faced him, ready for the vows to commence.

Behind him was a massive blue ocean tank, where neon colored fish darted through the waters. The lights were dimmed, and a spotlight slowly lit the area around Darren and I. The hairless man before us, standing in complete judgement. The haired man before us, standing in complete judgement of my life. My breathing became short and shallow, and I felt panic rising within me.

“I’m scared,” I whispered to her, gripping her arm tightly.

“You’ll be fine. Just count your steps and focus on the man you’re about to marry,” She patted my hand.

“I followed her advice and counted my steps until we stepped through the door. To my right, I saw a sea of familiar faces, each smiling with great joy. I couldn’t help, but smile even greater knowing that this would be the best day of my life so far. Across the aisle I walked down, I saw Darren being escorted by his mother. He looked amazingly handsome in his tuxedo, complete with coattails like I had specifically instructed he not do. I started to laugh and cry at the same time, realizing I knew he would do this and I was just fine with it.

I held Darren’s hand tightly, hoping this feeling of elation would never end. Our wedding party was escorted into the further into the aquarium with the photographers in the lead. Each of us had different poses in front of numerous tanks, until all of the professional shots were complete. We thanked everyone and informed them they were to walk back, while Darren and I stood before the altar and watched them play.

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

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

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

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

“Yes, let’s go, Mr. Lenaghan.”

We returned to the venue where the room had been rearranged with seating for everyone and the dance floor had been installed. As we approached, the room applaudeded. We waved them off until someone in the crowd demanded a speech. Being that Darren was terrible at speeches unless there were directly pulled from his rear end, I opted to take a microphone and address the people.

“Howl everyone, and thank you for coming to our big day. We’d like to thank every single person here for your support and your love for us with every single day. I would also like to send a shout out to everyone who fought hard to make this marriage even possible in these days. Now, without further ado, we are going to have our first dance,” I smiled before handing it back to the wedding coordinator.

I lead my husband out onto the dance floor, and we set ourselves up exactly as we were taught. A Panic! At the Disco song came bursting through speakers and we danced for what felt like ages. Every move was choreographed, but the movement was phenomenal. I was so proud of us as we bustled the best moves we could manage, ending the song with boisterous laughter and applause.

The rest of the night was a blur, between heartfelt speeches from family and drinks galore, the night passed without any hiccups. We did absolutely no clean-up once the reception was completely over; as our family banded together and brought work that matters as stating that we were driven back to our apartment and immediately went to sleep in our drunken stupor.

In the morning, the sun shone brightly and work both of us. We cuddled for a moment, until realizing that we desperately needed to take our marriage license in to file it with the state. Both of us rushed quickly to get ready and collect our things before heading towards the front door. My phone buzzed wildly in my pocket, strangely while Darren’s did the same simultaneously. We both paused and looked at each other, deciding to take the call in case it was an emergency. My call went to voicemail before I managed to catch it, but Darren managed to catch his mom.

“Hello?” He answered, stepping into the other room. Before I had the chance to call my sister, who had called me, a text brought my phone to life. I opened it: Turn on the T.V. and watch the news ASAP

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

Breaking News: Obergefell v Hodges has been overturned today by the Supreme Court 5-4. Marriage between same gendered individuals is now illegal in the United States. I dropped my phone and stared at the screen in absolute disbelief. I took a deep breath and sat down on the couch, horrified at the words I was seeing. The unacceptable line of defense for gay marriage was just broken through and my rights struck down to the ground.

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

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

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

He trailed off and sat next to me on the couch, tears running down his face. I was completely silent, knowing that the happiest day of my life had just been completely voided out by the government. I took my husband—no, my boyfriend, my life partner, my anything, but husband’s hand. Our tearless, empty hands were held together tightly. A tear ran down my face, and we both looked at the bleak future, hoping that there would be light at the end of the tunnel.

* * * * * * *
Breathe | Rose Shan

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

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

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

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

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

A Thrill that Kills | Stevie Shield

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

Smoke swirls inside these lungs to leave her mark
Pain cries to cancer; ‘stop!’ but death is dark
Sometimes, when I hear music in the trees
And sweet distant barks,
I am taken back to that place again

Panama City in your old apartment;
Ants scavenging in the kitchen.
A jet plane takes people somewhere,
I can hear your voice in its engines.

The dirt under your fingernails tells a story
And this grimy city eats breakfast.

We walk to the market
And I pretend it’s the thousandth time.
This place belongs in my history.

I buy you flowers from the old woman
And steal samples from the fruit stand.

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

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

Trevor Mooney

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

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

"I haven't been bravely for quite some time, now."

"Prime candidate for erectile dysfunction. "Can you tell me exactly what is going on?" I asked. "Are you having trouble initiating or sustaining an erection?"

Mr. McNally let loose a booming laugh. "Ha! I din' hop where I was at first."

"Right, yer first wish!" exclaimed McNally. "Well, doc, I'm getting up four, fived times a night to go to the bathroom, and that's when I'm not even pissed!"

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said, happy to have finally elicited McNally's chief concern. "And are you in pain...

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

"Negatory, doc. I think me years of merriment have purged me of any sort of gag reflex, anyhow." His eyes had fixed on the floor. "'tis why me and O'Malley had a...

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

"Yer don't have to worry about me harming me'self. As for others...well, no guarantees — I owe a knuckle or two to my dear friend O'Malley," he said while gently tapping the bridge of his bulbous nose.

"It is me willy. I'm getting up four, fived times a night to go to the bathroom, and that's when I'm not even pissed!"

I was taken aback by his sudden display of contrition. In other words, he was a prime candidate for erectile dysfunction. "Can you tell me exactly what is going on?" I asked. "Are you having trouble initiating or sustaining an erection?"

McNally once again boomed with laughter, a reaction becoming far too frequent for a single encounter, in my opinion. "HAHAHA, lord almighty, if I couldn't get a hard on, I wouldn't go to you, now would I? No sir, I don't need a medical-thingy license to figure out my cure: Pot o' Gold be my remedy!" Pot o' Gold is a popular gentleman's establishment in the fringes of Belfast, frequented too often by men like McNally — men who spoke fluently in religious allegory yet held no compunction about violating conjugal vows. Come to think of it, Pot o' Gold is likely where he met his “dear friend” O’Malley.

"Take a gander at my willy, why don't ya," Mr. McNally said, fixing his large organ with a judicious eye. 

"Of course. Everything you say here is confidential, unless I have reason to believe you are a risk to yourself or others."

"What brings you in today, Mr. McNally?"

"Right," I responded, choosing not to betray the fact that I hadn't faintest idea of what just came out of Mr. McNally's mouth. I paused, knowing already that this wasn't going to be a routine visit. Not even close. Mr. McNally's breadth reeked of feisted cabbage and Guinness stout, a mix that doesn't please the nares even before it sublimes back up the offender's gutlet. His nose was a ruddy, synephyomatous blos, deviating violently to the left, no doubt the handiwork of a well-placed left hook. All in all, McNally was no taller than five feet, with a stocky build and piercing blue eyes canopied by a pair of bushy brown eyebrows so thick they seemed to merge seamlessly with a raging tangle of brown hair matted across the top of his rather large head. I'd imagine that Mr. McNally didn't look too much different as an infant, minus the ruddiness and wild hair. And, of course, his very large penis, I noted briefly as my eyes scanned downward.

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

"Well, as I mentioned, it is me willy. I'm getting up four, fived times a night to go to the bathroom, and that's when I'm not even pissed!"

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

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

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

"Negatory, doc. I think me years of merriment have purged me of any sort of gag reflex, anyhow." His eyes had recouped their normal twinkle.
I couldn’t help but smile at this one. “One of the many health benefits of Guinness,” I rejoined. My medical educators always told me it was a sin to normalize alcoholism, but I had just enough clinical intuition at this point in my career to know that McNally had no designs on slowing down. He was in the “pre-contemplative” phase of cessation, in our profession’s needlessly imperious parlance.

McNally boomed again, but for the first time today, not at me. “I’ll drink to that, doc!”

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

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

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

Wiping tears of laughter from my eyes, onto which the image of his bare-assed dancing would be forever etched, I replied. “Well, anatomically speaking, your prostate gland is enlarged is by performing a digital rectal exam.”

“I know yer mighty busy here, doc.” His eyes flashed but didn’t say anything, setting a completely new precedent. In my experience, it was best to complete the rectal exam quickly and efficiently, and address the patient after it was all done. I moved my finger to palpate the prostate gland. The prostate is normally the size of a walnut, but McNally’s was more in the ballpark of a plum. Large, but not severely so. Plus, it felt firm and healthy, no abnormal masses or signs of “bogginess.” Infection was unlikely in the first place, given his history. Finally, I palpated both halves of the rectal wall, and found nothing of concern.

I pulled my finger out, discarded my gloves, and addressed Mr. McNally. “You can go ahead and lie down normally, or however you prefer.” McNally turned and faced me, his perhaps a hue ruddier than normal (truly a feat unto itself), and his pride clearly wounded. “It seems to be as I expected,” I continued, trying to ease his discomfort by effecting a professional cool. “An enlarged prostate. Nothing to worry too much about, many perfectly healthy men have this condition. Just to be safe, I’m going to order one or two blood tests as well.”

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

“Why yes, in fact, I’ll be prescribing you Terazosin, which will relax your bladder a bit and help you urinate more fully. Just be warned that it can make you a little dizzy at first, so we will be starting you out at a low dose.”

“And this Tera-thingy, it won’t disappoint me dear wife, if you catch me drift?”

“No, it shouldn’t. But it’s good that you asked, because there are stronger drugs out there—the so-called ‘5-alpha reductase inhibitors’ that function in a similar fashion. But seeing as your condition is moderate, I don’t see the need to do anything that would encourage you to seek a cure at ye olde Pot o’ Gold.”

McNally’s smile returned. “Thanks doc, I appreciate it. And me wife will as well!”

I chuckled. “No problem, it’s my job. I’ll go ahead and get those labs ordered, and I’ll phone in a prescription to the pharmacy. Come back in two weeks for follow up, and we’ll see how things are going then.”

“Will do, doc.” McNally whistled, his teeth clamped around his long pipe as he stepped nimbly into his red, rain-soaked britches. He made his way to the door and turned the knob. Before opening it, he turned on the spot.

“I know yer mighty busy here, doc.” His eyes flashed with cerulean mischief. “But things being confidential between you and me, I’d say you’ve earned yourself a visit to ye old Pot o’ Gold. While ye there, do me a favor and set that gobshite O’Malley straight with one of yer rectal manuevers.”

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

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

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

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

Inside the room, the rainbows continued to dance. Al-most tauntingly, I thought—not unlike the patient that had just vacated the exam table.

“Three wishes,” I said to myself, shaking my head in disbelief. “I’ll be damned!”
Maggie Haddoc is sixteen now, at the last juncture of her secondary school education. As wild as her fiery red locks she’s tried to enjoy every minute of her teenage years pushing past the innocence of her adolescence. This brings us to the present moment where she’s at match point to win an impromptu tennis match against one of the senior varsity girls. Maggie’s always enjoyed playing tennis but never joined the team. She couldn’t stand the idea of a blustering coach dictating her schedule. Due to her rather hasty entry into the tennis game, after a few statements by Maggie impugning the skill of the school’s tennis players, Maggie hadn’t taken the time to properly tie her shoe laces. This seemingly innocuous action would have tremendous consequences.

Meanwhile, Olive wanders down to the waiting area, seeking to find something to cheer up her daughter as well as assuage her own anxieties. Olive never quite understood her daughter. The two could not be more different; one had always been an anxious girl, delighting in the attention of others; in contrast, the other an irrevocable, self-empowered young woman. Olive buys a pair of earrings she adores from the hospital lobby store. At their center piece is an interlocking pattern that unbeknownst to Olive was reproduced from Greek jewelry popularized during the Miocene (circa 3600 B.C.E.) by a procedure which at this moment in history was the standard of care.

After the surgery, Maggie is admitted to her room. Shortly after arriving at the ER, Maggie’s mother, Olive, arrived to find her daughter in a gurney immobilized from pain and awaiting the decisions revolving around the removal of her spleen; a procedure which at this moment in history was the standard of care. After the surgery, Maggie is admitted to her room. Shortly after arriving at the ER, Maggie’s mother, Olive, arrived to find her daughter in a gurney immobilized from pain and awaiting the decisions revolving around the removal of her spleen; a procedure which at this moment in history was the standard of care.

Her intense and determined personality made completion of her long training an ease. Nevertheless, it greatly changed her. More than a decade from the date of her splenectomy, Maggie was about to follow up on the final patient she would examine before graduation. With a 2nd year resident and a medical student in tow, she steps in the room of a middle-aged Hispanic woman whose face made clear her present anxiety. Because of her rudimentary English, her entire conversation was translated through her teenage daughter. After experiencing months of generalized fatigue, weight loss, and persistent chronic dry coughs, occasionally productive of bloody phlegm, she had decided to finally come in to the hospital. Per the hospital protocol, she had received a chest X-ray that although difficult to fully interpret suggested that she needed further work-up to characterize the centrally located unilateral lung mass visualized on imaging.

After a brief introduction, the patient asked the question that had clearly been on her mind for months: is this cancer? At this moment Dr. Haddoc, who had been standing, walked over to her bed and sat slowly next to her. She put one arm around her and the other on her leg. She had learned the perfect spot to place her gentle hands—on her patients’ knee. In a soft, barely audible tone she told her that the mass could be cancer. That vicious word, “cancer” carried with it such weight that it evacuated the vessels on her temples leaving behind only the pallor of fear. Without any further description she allowed the room to be silent, giving the woman and her daughter a moment to digest the news. After a moment she invited her head to Maggie with her eyes beginning to sparkle and she looked directly into Maggie’s eyes in what seemed like an interminable moment of silence.
I can understand
That being bound
By gravity
Can be hard on a man
Who has traveled through time
Crossed spatial dimensions
Experienced exalted states
Of painlessness and joy
But you must know
That it is all within us
You still live in my center
And I dance in yours.
I believe that all will unfold
When the dragon unleashes fire
And two moons
Laugh in the summer sky.
Forty years ago Gerald murdered a woman. It was 1963 in Lukton, New York and she was a Negro shuffling along the Interstate. When the driver, one of Gerald’s friends, slowed up next to her Gerald fired his gun and the bullet dunged against a stop sign—he was sure it did—but the woman dropped to the ground and that was that. Gerald spent three years in the penitentiary, and from the moment the judge landed the gavel people have been dogging him, saying the ruling wasn’t fair; that it was murder all over again for the ten children she’d left behind. But all Gerald did was shoot a stop sign.

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

Gerald was where he was every day from the hour after he awoke to the hour before he dropped off to sleep: The Steel Lantern, a bar that was as old as the town itself and restaurant whose owners didn’t understand the stubbornness of a populace skeptical of progress. Gerald sat at the center of the sticky varnished bar on a stool that his body alone had done the work of desiccating into cracked plastic. He drank steadily from the ceramic mug that was his and that the owner—Frank, a good man—kept in the cabinet with the snifters and shot glasses of other town legends. It was winter but it could have been any season, not that the weather mattered to him. The melodrama of it made Gerald smile.

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

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

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

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

“He’s not dead, Frank.” Jim, a high school teacher at the end of the bar, chimed in. He started coming regularly about a year ago. Each time he looked more bedraggled and afraid, and he was thinning out like he wasn’t getting home-cooked meals anymore. People understood he was making his bed here for when he’d have to lay in it for good. “I never said he was dead, Jim.”

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

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

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

“Amen to that, brother,” said Frank.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Let ’em,” said Gerald, downing the rest of his drink.

“I warned ya,” said Tom.

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

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

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

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

“Yeah, it’s all right. Anybody would do the same.”

“Wrong, Tom,” said Frank, shoving him down against the wall.

“Whoa there, brother.” Big Bill patted him heartily on the back. “Someone get this man a coffee!” He laughed. “Put on the floor covered with clothes, beer cans, cigarette butts, and porno magazines. The place smelled worse than a rotten corpse.

“Don’t you know what you’re doing?” said the white man, extending his arm between them.

“They were calling after him, but Gerald didn’t look back. They voices neared, growing louder and angrier. A hard hand grabbed Gerald’s shoulder and spun him around.

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

“Yeah, it’s me. Here. Take this.” He pulled Gerald away from under his shoulders and leaned him against the wall.

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

“Yeah, it’s me. Here. Take this.” Frank propped him up from under his shoulders and leaned him against the wall.

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

“She had kids, Frank.”

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

“Here. Now get up. Take my hand.” Frank pushed up to the other end of the street were two figures loping along like lone survivors of the apocalypse. One was a white man carrying a duffel bag and the other a black man the size of a lineworker. Gerald instantly recognized them as his executioners. The white man pointed towards Gerald and the black man nodded. When they sped towards him Gerald tried to hurry away, but the cold had turned his feet into stumps and he could do barely more than limp. They were calling after him, but Gerald didn’t look back. He had been afraid. And he was too old now to do anything about it.

Gerald started towards his room a few blocks away, but coming from the other end of the street were two figures loping along like lone survivors of the apocalypse. One was a white man carrying a duffel bag and the other a black man the size of a lineworker. Gerald instantly recognized them as his executioners. The white man pointed towards Gerald and the black man nodded. When they sped towards him Gerald tried to hurry away, but the cold had turned his feet into stumps and he could do barely more than limp. They were calling after him, but Gerald didn’t look back. He had been afraid. And he was too old now to do anything about it.

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It’s only the fifth day and already some of the men are losing it. The donkeys smell like shit and so do the men. Half of us hallucinate infinity: shimmering water, palm trees, ice cream trucks, pin-up girls. Cacti as stiff cold gods, donkeys as smooth-backed lovers. I stopped listening to them hours ago.

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

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

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

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

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

We go and go and don’t stop.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It has been argued that if medicine were to engage in human enhancement, it would move beyond its traditional mission, which is curative and preventive. Erwin Chargaff, Professor of Biological Chemistry at Columbia, noted “We manipulate nature as if we were stuffing an Alaskan goose. We create new forms of energy; we make new elements; we kill crops; we wash brains. I can hear them in the dark sharpening their lasers.” A warning of a future of Huxleyan manipulation lies decades behind us. We have long been sharpening our tools.

The same doctor who can keep us from disease would also be clever at producing it by stealth. - Plato (The Republic)

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

Instead of a black and white guide to choosing what is good for the population, public health efforts usually give us shades of grey. This is the nature of making a decision that affects entire populations with multitudes of varying people. But a well-known public health campaign serves as an example of our duty to humankind to overcome the limitations set before us. Without the proper level of iodine, many children were adversely affected during pregnancy in utero. Before mass iodization of salt it was estimated that there would be eventual loss of a totalized billion IQ points in the population. We have a moral obligation to one another, to give the next generation the best chance that it can have.

The cost of ionizing salt is small when compared to the possibilities set before us. Without the proper level of iodine, many children were adversely affected during pregnancy in utero. Before mass iodization of salt it was estimated that there would be eventual loss of a totalized billion IQ points in the population. We have a moral obligation to one another, to give the next generation the best chance that it can have.

Our duty to humankind to overcome the limitations set before us. Without the proper level of iodine, many children were adversely affected during pregnancy in utero. Before mass iodization of salt it was estimated that there would be eventual loss of a totalized billion IQ points in the population. We have a moral obligation to one another, to give the next generation the best chance that it can have.

Thus, I would argue that this is already a Brave New World. What will separate our future from a Huxleyan one is our moral decisions moving forward. Boundaries must be set and respected. No choice should be imposed upon anyone, in either way. But just as we have a moral obligation to ensure that each child gets as much nutrition and care as necessary to develop into their best versions, we are so obligated to entertain and explore the possibilities of future enhancements in the realm of genetic modification.

The fear is not that science will advance, for science is always doing so, but that there will be advancement of science over that of humanity. And it is our humanity that we must protect at all costs.

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Draped and Scrubbed | Eitan Novogrodsky

Dr. Elena Stark is director of everything we do in histology and anatomy. Though she is short in stature, she has a sharp tongue and a sharper wit. Her accent makes her command of medical knowledge all the more intimidating.

Yesterday she led a small hoard of scrub-clad, first-year medical students into day one of anatomy. I don’t know how anatomy is done elsewhere, but here at UCLA it is sober and purposeful. And Dr. Stark insists that we maintain this decorum as we shuffle through the rows of gracious donors to begin our first order of business: examining the skin and taking samples for lab analysis.

As I look around the room - I notice the great wave of equalization that overtakes the space. Everyone here - alive and departed - has shed their distinctive clothing in exchange for scrubs or drapes. Donors and students greet one another with a single, common purpose: to humbly and diligently learn as much as possible about the miracle of life and the inevitable processes of illness and death.

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

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

Perhaps he too felt the weight of our common human struggles as he checked his clothes at the door.
It's funny how much more it stings to speak about current troubles than about those of the past. A simple yes, I had brain surgery and it's all done, glides off the tongue so much easier, so much smoother from hours of rehearsal than: it's back and it's tripled in size.

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

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

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

I remember fragments: My sister visiting, only to leave the ICU Minutes later, distraught at what remnants Of her big brother lay in front of her. She's too sensitive I choked out to the nurse. I could hear my mother, her heart crooning an erratic lullaby, haggard from lack of sleep hands trembling as she gingerly fed me ice chips. Please, go home mommy. Please, get some rest. I'll be ok.

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

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

What if I don't want to do it again? What if I don't want to be brave again? What if I don't want to understand the mechanism Of this new experimental drug with a sample size so incredibly fucking small That I can count it all on one finger.' What if, just maybe, I can't go through it all again? I just want to me again. Normal. Without the pain. Without the fear. The loneliness. The tumors. Please doc I just want to be me again.
A thin string of Christmas lights hangs above the bed
Creating a dull halo of light that encircles them
Love is never spoken, but it hangs in the room, thick as heat
He envelops her with his arms, pulling her close
She moves her legs in between his and lets his body surround her
He nuzzles his face into the back of her neck
The warm breath dances there, heating her skin

She can feel this time is fleeting,
Like the quiet, wet kisses he now places on her lips
With each draw of breath, he takes another part of her soul
She can feel her essence ebbing out with the ocean’s pull
Yet she gives to him freely, runs her tongue on his bottom lip
She tells him how her parents are getting older, of her fear
He talks of his career, the many paths he could take
She wonders if one of those paths includes her

Is this real, like the leaves turning red and falling every autumn?
Will he be there to kiss her hand, as he is doing now
As inevitably as the snow kisses the earth every winter?
He claims to be incapable of love, to be the one who burns
Yet all she sees is the layer of ash surrounding his own heart
Residue from the fire that was lit by another
Proof that someone else had claimed his heart before her,
Still holding a dark possession of it even now, after all this time

How can he not feel her pulse quicken as he bites her ear?
The stillness and the chaos that his presence around her creates?
She lets out a soft sigh, grabbing his face in her hands
Memorizing his features as if seeing him for the last time
The three freckles under his jaw, the stubble on his cheek
The feel of his hair in her hands, the ink on his chest
The rumble of his voice, the warm roundness of his shoulder
As she lays her head upon it, humming the song of her heart
Hoping he sings along with her, but knowing that he won’t.
Biographies

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

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

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

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

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

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

Satiro De Oliveira, Assistant Professor in Residence - I have been a member of the Department of Pediatrics for six years, in the Division of Hematology/Oncology. My artistic expressions are inspired by the challenges I see every day.

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

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

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

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

Nelli Ghazaryan, BI Programmer Analyst - Nelli is a Business Intelligence Programmer and Analyst working at UCLA. She loves photography, nature and food.
Priscilla Lee, Nurse Practitioner

UCLA a few years ago and rediscovered the joy of writing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Martin Mwangi, MS3 - I am a 3rd year medical student interested in literature with a particular interest in medical narrative submitting a work in collaboration with Diboro Kanabolo (Pritzker School of Medicine M2S).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jennifer Ritch, Assistant to The Chief of General Surgery - Jennifer Ritch is growing tired, but she can see the finish line, and beyond it, another starting line. And that is usually enough to get her up in the morning. She pretends well most of the time. She’ll keep getting better at pretending, until someday, everyone will believe, and then she will be able to rest. But for the time being, she’ll get up, do things, and eat and walk and talk and think and hopefully no one will see that in the background, the space just behind her eyes, she is counting, and humming, and not paying attention at all.

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

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

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

Lisa Stern, MD, Medical Staff - Lisa Stern, former peds Heme-Onco fellow at UCLA, practices general pediatrics in Santa Monica where she teaches her young patients to embrace common-sense treatments of childhood ailments.

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

Victoria Sun, MS2 - Victoria is an MSTP student in her 2nd year of medical school. She loves learning and sharing stories through art.
Andy Trang, Researcher - Andy Trang is a researcher in the Department of Neurosurgery at UCLA. He is passionate about studying many elements and styles of art including portraiture, architecture, technical illustrations, and abstract surrealism. His pieces are 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.

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

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

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

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

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