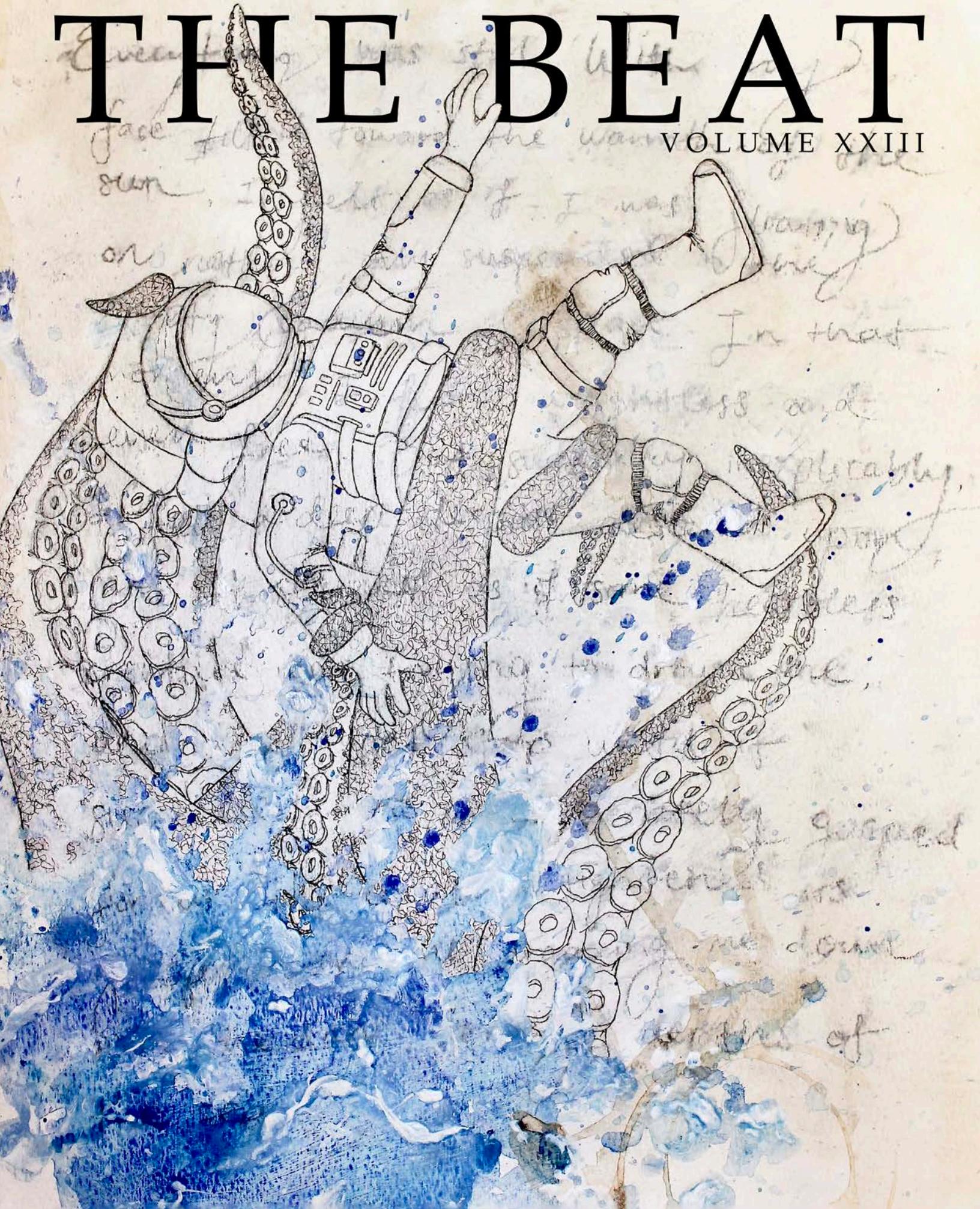


THE BEAT

VOLUME XXIII



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We are thrilled to present the 23rd annual edition of The BEAT, the David Geffen School of Medicine's journal of art and literature. The pieces selected for this year's publication are striking, ethereal, and poignant in turn, illuminating moments of great beauty and suffering. They showcase the broad range of artistic and literary talent in our UCLA Health community and reflect our commitment to humanism in medicine.

While The BEAT selects pieces for publication regardless of subject matter, in light of ongoing struggles for racial justice and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color in Los Angeles, our editorial team has chosen to acknowledge pieces that address the theme of "Health Equity and Social Justice." You will find these pieces marked with asterisks in the Table of Contents.

We sincerely hope you enjoy the 2021 edition of The BEAT.

Angela Pham, Kate Coursey, Maggie Tsang, Melodyanne Cheng
Editors In Chief of The BEAT

And The Beat goes on...

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VITAL SIGNS AWARDS

Special thanks to Mary Ann Triest and Aurora Reyes from the SAO for helping us continue the tradition of The BEAT.

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Nothing may be reproduced without written consent. All medical student submissions are eligible for Vital Signs Awards. Pieces for publication and the Vital Signs Awards were selected based on anonymous ratings by the selection committees.

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

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*pieces that address the theme of "Health Equity and Social Justice" as self-identified by the authors and artists

AN ANXIOUS MIND, THE VOICES AND ME

by MARIO EASON

I can't get out of my head
Trapped and stilled
A continuum of everything and nothing
An illusion of confusion
Just a fog of after thoughts
Parading in pairs drawing my peripherals
To the attention of the silence in meaning
There is no wisdom in this pit
Just angst and transparent emotion

No substance, just small talk
Echoes of recent translations
Of epiphanies that laid smugly
Beneath interpretations of can and can't say
Expressions of confusing revelations
Trapping in a space beyond here and now
With outstretched arms I can feel my way
Treading dark silence and higher vibrations
Echoes of truth and consequence
And the voices sounding this all so loudly

I can't get out of my head
The sticky briar patch of my brain
Stuck and splintered, fetal and cold
The anxiety of a mind fuck driving the twitch in my right hand,
the repetitive squeezing in my left
Alternating between words as I write
I'm trapped by my own means

An open space, dimly lit
One minute scarce and cold
The next a garden of prickled blooms
And all feeding off the manifestation
Of festered rejection I read into
While listening intently to the vicars of fate
Lies I make true but founded in what I already knew - *I told you*

Perhaps there is hope yet
Suspicion is a cousin of intuition
That gut feeling gnawing at your tethered ego
This the framework of the prison where I rot
I cover my eyes to hide the chaos of imagery;
Did I hear them right?

The voices that told me so

I told you so
I told you so
I told you so



I'm trapped in my head
Chewing at my own flesh
A mind fuck of anxious proportions
Sticky briars now cold and dank
Fetal on the floor of my head
Get out!

I can't get out of my head
This space, my retreat and solace
This haven for the kaleidoscope of everything I hear, know, believe and touch
This wasteland I wander mumbling conspiracies
I'm a desperate fool
Stumbling to become *this* me in my head
Bleeding poetically politics and prose
The justice of my abuse
The one and only conspiracy of truth
A continuum of everything and nothing
That's me in my head

SOLO HAPPY HOUR RECIPE: MOJITO

by MELODYANNE CHENG

Mint leaves, plucked in midst of
Summer haze, cloudless blue skies watch
Cool, crisp leaves brace the earth.

One lime, split into tart wedges,
spews seeds and zest, citrus aura
so strong bees buzz on by.

Glass tumbler, placed against
muddler – *skriit* – a closed bars' pestle –
Squeeze the mint, crush the lime.

Spooned sugar, to taste, more pulp,
Add ice to brim, and rum,
then – *fizz!* – seltzer on top.

Minty lime, sugary mint,
Garnish on top with quiet thoughts
Sip long, taste deep, alone.

RULES

by NATALIE CHERRY



GENERATIONS

by STEVE CRAMER

Grandpa

Grandpa
He screamed as he
Bulleted into the arms of the old man,
Who lifted the boy, holding him
Tight
So that he could not escape,
His tiny legs kicking at the air
Arrhythmically,
Two people twirling now, as a single dust devil,
Rising above the ground

As always
These visits from her father generated
Silence,
Mother closed up tight,
Made no jokes at dinner gave
Gave no updates
On sales last month,
Shared no stories from the church choir,
As she ignored
The glance from
Father when she drank
From his wine glass
Having emptied her own

After the boy went to sleep and
After everyone left,
Mother rolled up her sleeves and pressed her glasses firmly and
Then moved to the kitchen,
Scrubbing, endlessly

Grandma

Grandma
She squealed as the old woman
Lifted the girl onto her lap
And gently covered her with both arms,
Which never failed to generate a grin
As wide as a century is long,
Then they played the game where one pretended not
To know the other,
And as always
The older eventually assured the younger that she was who she appeared to be, after which
The girl fell limp on her lap as
They hugged and rocked
Slowly, gently, reassuringly

As they later sipped tea
Made of air, in empty cups,
The old woman rolled down her sleeves, and took off her glasses, and told the girl
You hug like your father did
When he was a boy,
And
You are very good at it, and you might even become famous one day as
The very best hugger in the entire world,
But she never once
Talked to the girl about
The hugs of her own youth

DECEMBER, INTERN

by R.Y.

They tell you to think of a song while you do it. A song at one hundred beats per minute to help you keep the pace, like Staying Alive by the Bee Gees, which is surprisingly and/or ironically easy to remember. Despite this, you find yourself going a little too fast; you're acting as her heart, after all, and you want to give it everything you have.

Staying alive, staying alive. Her husband is watching you from outside the room, even though two nurses and a nursing assistant have tried to usher him away several times. His eyes are frantic, pleading. When she lost consciousness he screamed her name then looked directly at you and said "do everything." Staying alive. Your glasses start fogging up and slip down your nose and you smash them up with your shoulder just as someone tells you to switch. A part of you feels inadequate for tiring out but the process is exhausting, and it's important to keep the compressions deep. You let yourself take a breather before you're up next, once you've realized how much you've sweat. She's so young. It's been half an hour and you're all waiting for the cardiothoracic surgeon to come and start her on ECMO. She's gray.

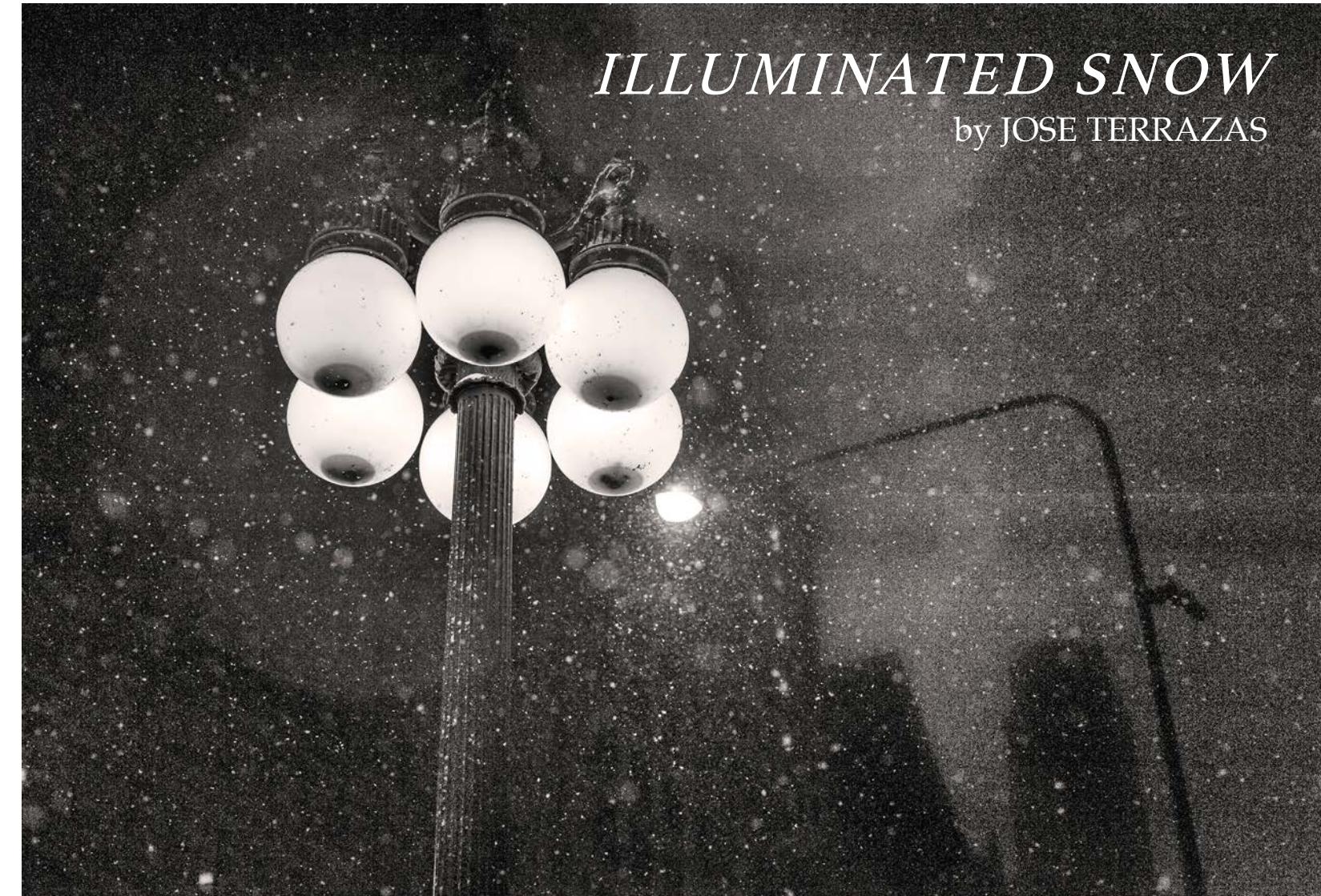


IT WAS ALL A DREAM

by IOANA POPESCU

ILLUMINATED SNOW

by JOSE TERRAZAS



By the time you're back up on the stool (you're too short to properly do chest compressions without it) one of the ECMO catheters is already jutting out of her groin, a thick cable of netted mesh smeared with dark blood. The surgeon is trying to shove the second catheter in the other side as you compress, and blood spurts out of the new incision with each beat. She's so young. Staying alive, staying alive.

"Too fast, Lynn."

-

You run into the husband later, as he paces in front of the elevators. You tell him his wife has gone to the surgical floor and that she still has a pulse. You know she won't come back.

He looks straight at you again. "I saw you in there. Thank you so much," he says.

You want to say, "I did nothing." Instead, you find yourself saying, "We did what we could."

She was so young.



THIRD YEAR

by KIARA OWENS

I meet you on the day you find out Death is coming from inside you.
But you knew that already
You could feel it.
You called your family together and told them to be strong and to love each other
when you're gone
You are the glue, and they meet my eyes with distrust asking, will I fail you like all
the hospitals you saw before?
I do.
But we try our best to get your pain resolved, and help you walk when the floor
swims in front of you.
You clasp my hand and thank me for all I have done anyway.
I leave before I know if you found a place
that would treat the cancer growing in your head,
but I will never forget you.

I meet you on a day when your sense has left you -
Fever and infection running so deep in your body that you can only recall your
own name,
the rest of your body crumbling away, one foot and finger at a time.
I'm the one that notices the cancer eating away at you
from the bubbling nodules on one of your stumps to the pale purple spots on the
roof of your mouth.
I'm there when your mind returns to you, or most of it,
And you hold my hand and ask me to come see you every day
Or maybe once a week when you're out of the hospital.
I don't.
But I'm there every morning until you leave and by the second to last day you
remember me.
And I'm there when you and your brother decide not to come back to the hospital
again,
And if your heart stops, to let it.
I will remember you forever

I meet you on the day you find out you're impossibly pregnant after getting your
tubes tied. And I'm there when you find out that it's killing you.

I meet you when you're in tears and in pain with your hand inflamed and infected
from washing your hands with bleach to protect yourself from this virus. We give
you antibiotics and reassurance, I wish I could have washed your worries away.

MOTHER DAUGHTER LOVE

by CONSUELA NANCE

I don't know if I left footprints in your heart, but you left some in mine.
If I did I hope they give you comfort before they fade.
The marks you leave in mine remain, imprinted by your strength in struggle, your
love, and by those that love you.
I will make sure the ones you left will mark the path for those to come.

I meet you when you find out you have less than a year to live -
That the disease that was killing you slowly has finally marked its last notes.
You are so angry:
Angry at the nurses poking you with needles, angry at the doctors plying you
with questions,
but mostly I think angry at yourself
Because it's too late to buy yourself more time
And you want so desperately to live.
You tell me of the hellish life you've led
Full of pain and betrayal from those who should have loved you, cared for you.
You tell me of the depths that you have lived through, when you thought you
were better off dead unable to move from your bed.
But now you don't want to leave this earth,
you have grandchildren that have just started their lives,
daughters that you haven't yet made up with.
Even unable to walk and attached to constant oxygen, gasping for breath around
a handful of words, you want to live.
You have more love to give.
You tell me you've wasted your life
And I tell you I see you, and the family you've made. The grandchildren you love
And the light you've spread to the people you drove on your bus for
developmentally disabled, making sure they had warm jackets and warm smiles
to return home with.
I tell you I don't think you've wasted your life
But you say nothing and a tear rolls down your cheek, and I leave shortly after.
I never see you again.
I hope you got to see your grandchildren, and I hope they told you it was worth it.

GROWING UP

by NATALIE CHERRY



LUMENATION

by SARAH PARK

FROM DUST

by SARAH HO

My mother's eyes are like stars in the sky
Defying the darkness like age-old guides

My mother's hair is black like the night
Dyed to disguise the worries and white

My mother's hands are wrinkled like sheets
Run through the washer too many times with bleach

My mother's accent is like cream
Remnants of a past she could afford to bring

My mother's spirit is strong like a tree
Standing tall when even the zephyr flees

My mother's laughs are like bubbles in a spring
Delightfully tickling everything

My mother's mind is sharp like a seed
From soil to sky, growing and free

My mother's goals are like a gravitational force
Nothing and no one can steer her off her course

My mother's heart is gentle like the earth
Nurturing and giving to build my worth

My mother's love is endless like the ocean
Sustaining lives with constant waves of motion

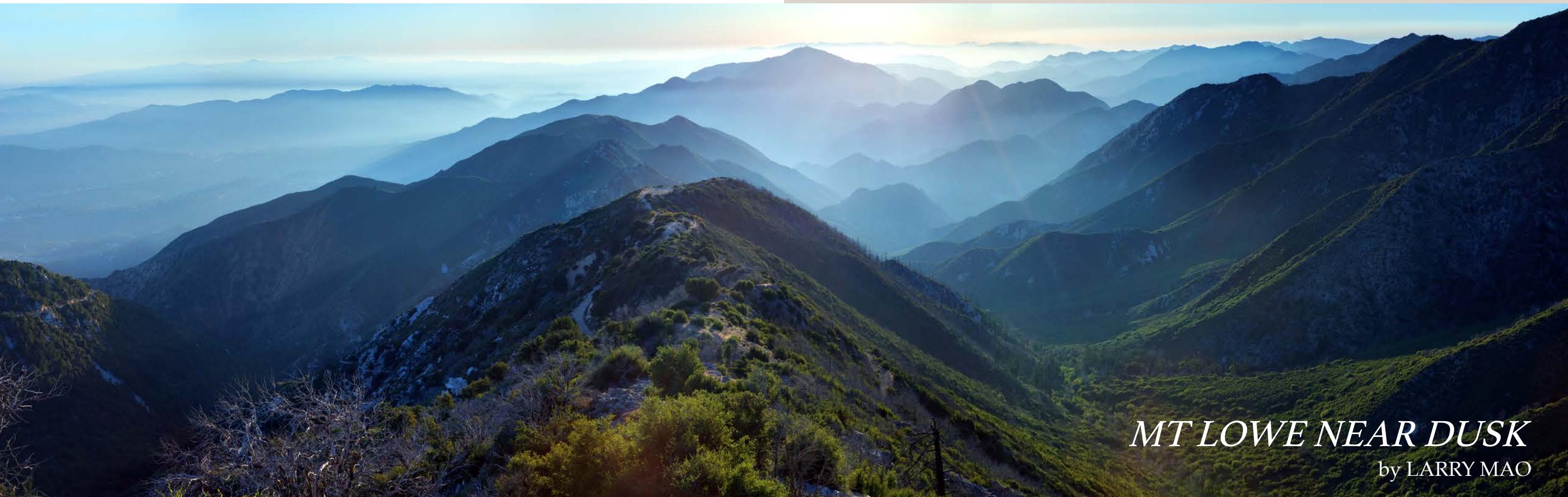
My mother's voice is sweet like a song
Lifting my spirit when everything is wrong

My mother's tummy is soft like a pillow
Cushioning my head as I ponder life's riddles

My mother's arms are safe like a cave
Protecting me when I no longer feel brave

My mother's life gives me reason to strive
She gave me everything so I could thrive

So when people say that from the dust we arise
I ask them how the dust could give me my mother's eyes?



MT LOWE NEAR DUSK
by LARRY MAO

UNKNOWN

by HATTIE HUSTON-PATERSON

I know everything about you, except who you are.

I'm squinting into the computer's glare, and I think I recognize you. I'm looking at pictures posted with an online obituary. Family photographs. I tilt my head to try to see you from a different angle. You would be about 40 years younger in these pictures, with a full head of hair and 30 pounds heavier.

I walk to your room. It's 3am but your eyes are open. Those green eyes. The jaw stark line. Through the tracheostomy, the feeding tube, the numerous lines keeping your blood pressure high enough and infections at bay, I see you.

"Is your mother named Ann?" I ask.

When I came on service in the ICU, you had already been here for 2 months. Like many of our most vulnerable patients, you were hurt badly and came in as an 'Unknown.' Two months later, you are still on advanced life-support. You haven't recovered enough to communicate with us. We don't know that your residence here is the most permanent of your adult life. We don't know that this is your final home.

I've made endless calls: to the local Red Cross, housing organizations, homeless advocacy groups, the Veterans Affairs hospital. No one really knows you. Some say you started coming to shelters recently, that you probably haven't been in the city for long. Some people think you have schizophrenia or bipolar disorder or a substance dependency.

One woman remembers the location you were found when you were injured, by your usual spot on the pavement, marked by a pile of blankets. She tells me you were scared, and didn't understand why you felt so bad. By the time you got to us, we couldn't tell you either. When you were hit, so much got disrupted inside your body.

I want to know who you are. I want to ask you what you care about. I want to hear your voice. I tinker with everything I can: the transfusions, antibiotics, chest tubes, lines, ventilator. I am by you all the time. Sometimes I think you hear me: your toes flicker when I ask you to move them, but only sometimes.

I turn to the internet, finding false leads, clues, snippets of information, phone numbers that lead nowhere. I keep trying.

Late one night, I find the online obituary. Based on the old pictures, I think it's for your dad. The next morning I call the church listed in the obituary. I talk to the pastor, say that I'm looking for a family member. The pastor sounds guarded, and can't tell me who the congregation members are. I tell him there is a man in critical condition and give him my phone number. I wait. I walk back to your room.

I watch your eyes, searching the room, gazing at the ceiling. I print out all of the family pictures from the obituary and paste them on your walls for you to see. I try to make your room a home. Sometimes flowers arrive for patients who have already left - I take them and put them by your bed.

Days later, my phone rings - it's your mom. Yes, she tells me, this man is my son. She is stunned. She flies immediately with your brother to see you. They have not seen you since you were a teenager - some 40 years ago. When she arrives, I worry that maybe I got it all wrong - maybe her son is another man who left home long ago.

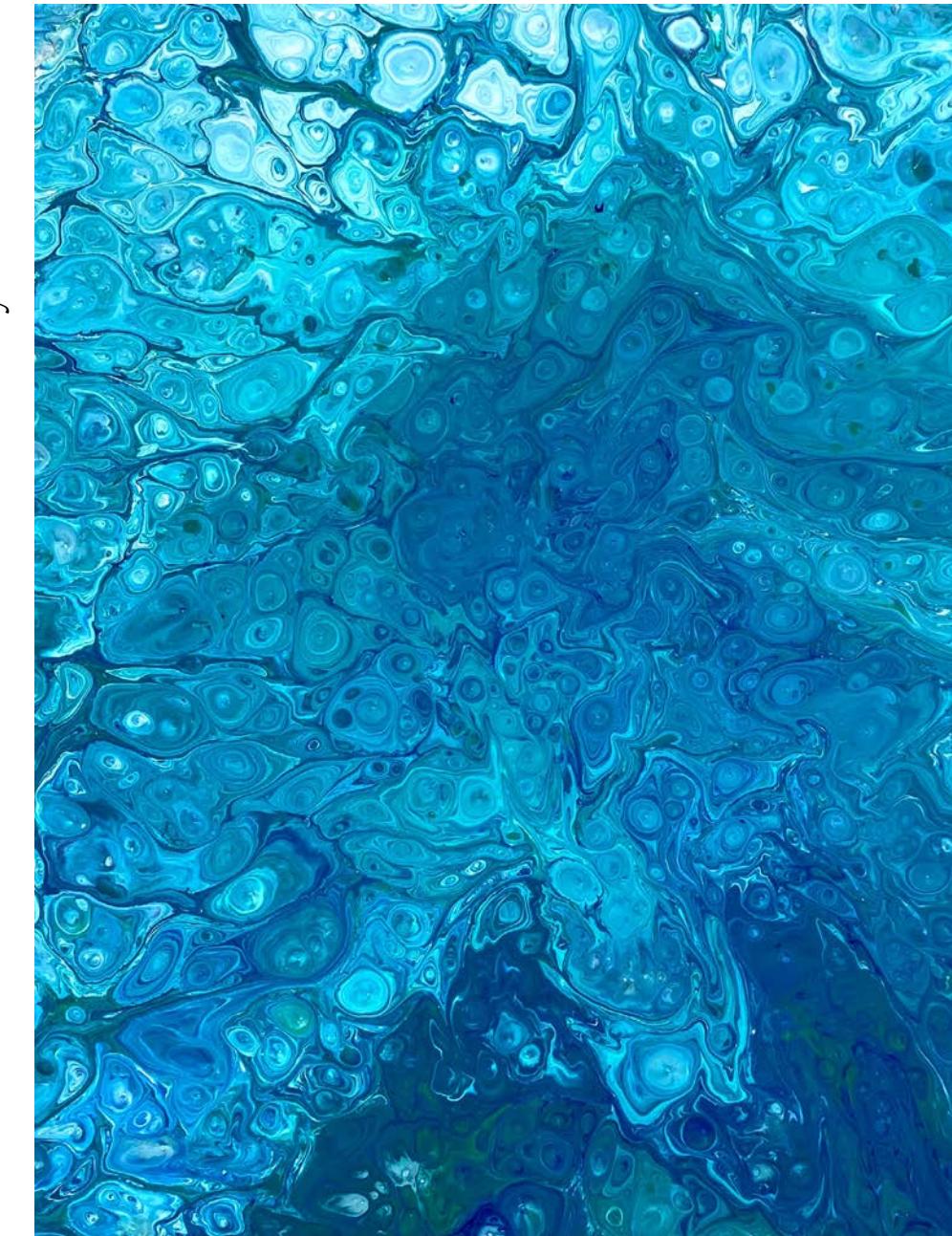
She walks through the door and I see those green eyes and I know you are related. She stays at your bedside for weeks. Siblings from your big family come and go. They tell me about you - your mischievous sense of humor, how handy you were, how much you loved your siblings. How you attended church every Sunday with your parents and sisters. How schizophrenia arrived and made things change, made you go away from home for a long, long time.

At some point after you hit puberty, you started hearing things that other people could not. You finished high school and joined the Navy for a short while. Later on, your unique beliefs and perceptions began to disrupt your life.

In your early 20's, you were discharged from the military because of schizophrenia. After that, you never again lived in a house, or an apartment or under a regular roof. But you called other places home - parks, bus stations, quiet sidewalks.

DISINTEGRATION

by TIFFANY FAN



Since you left home, your big family has worried about you endlessly, and hoped you were alive. Since your last phone call 20 years ago, they had come to accept that you were dead.

You are still really sick. Still hooked up to all of the machines, still silent. We talk together with your family about what you would want us to do. It is so hard to know because you've been gone for so long.

Everyone tries to connect the dots from the last time you were seen. They wonder where you've been and how you ended up here. There are things you cannot tell us. We will never know all of the places between Canada and Mexico that you've been, the forgotten corners of city life you've called home. We hope

that you were shown kindness in the intervening years. We worry that you were not.

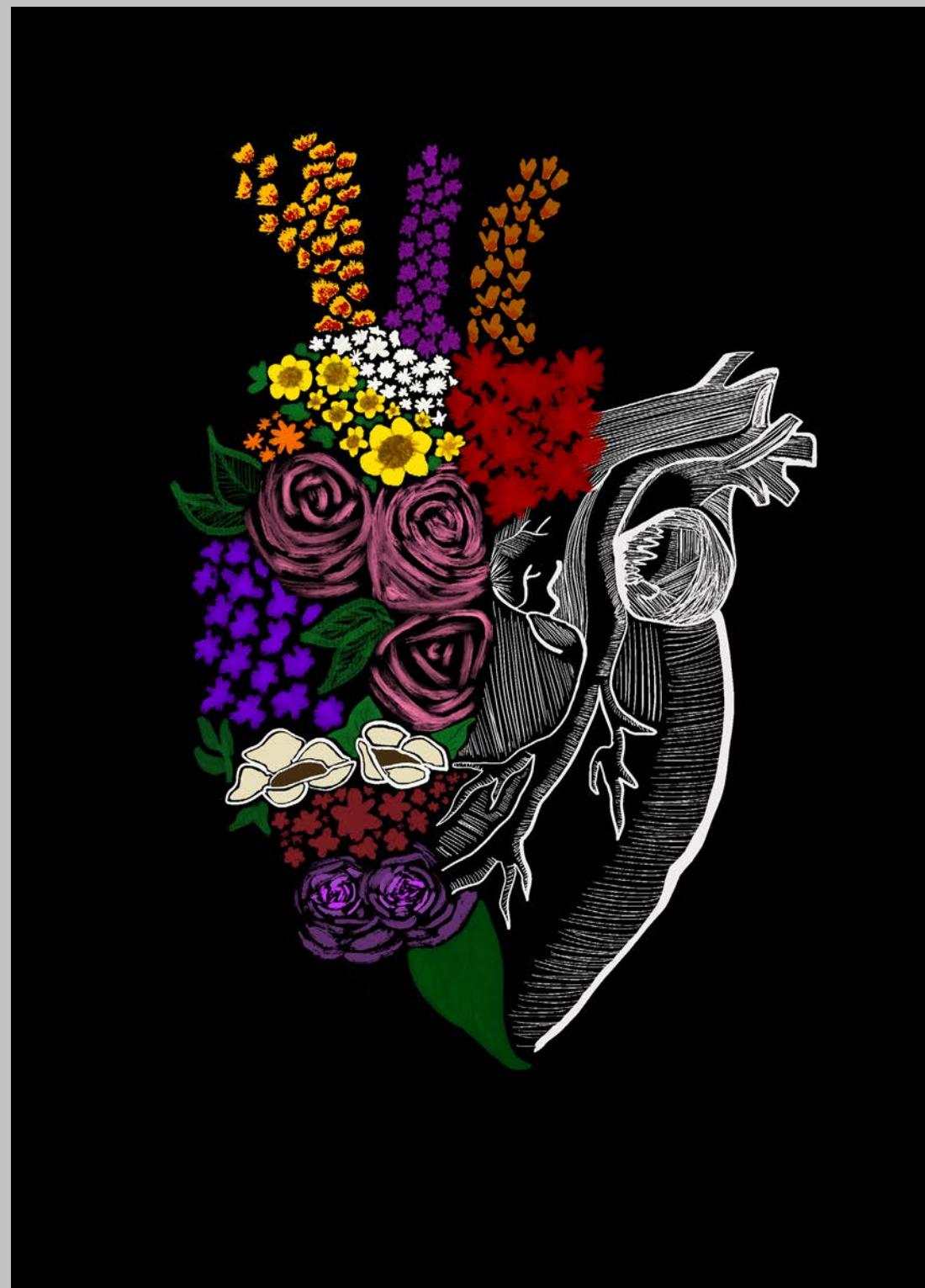
Things get worse. Infections rage on, complications occur. Your mom requests that a priest visit.

You give us your presence and your patience. Your family gives its strength. We give our space to you.

It is a beautiful summer's day. Light beams through the window onto you. I watch, from the door of the ICU, your green eyes glinting with the sun's glare, your mother and siblings surrounding you in your bed, and I know you are on your way home.

FACETIME

by PETER YOUNG



HEALING HEART
by SAHAR ASHRAFZADEH

I held an iPad for Miguel, his family sheltered at home.
He was suffocating, this man who at the worst of times
could only tell his loved ones, *Me siento bien*.
All around us was noise – this equipment of life
and death buzzing, humming, beeping,
a stubborn choir of mockingbirds.

I turned the camera on myself so they could see
the plastic shield, the gown, the precious N95.
Outside, a train pulled away from Marble Hill; the city was fleeing.
Sunlight gleamed down the Harlem River, catching the red oaks
just starting to get their leaves back. It was blinding.
It was the first day that felt like spring. Or I might
just be remembering it that way.

I saw a dozen family members on my screen, squeezed
into a small apartment somewhere in The Heights.
A man my age held a young girl in the air; it seemed important
that I see her. She was laughing. I was somewhere
I did not belong. Another man was solemn; he rose
to his feet and began to clap. Soon the whole room
was doing this. Someone whooped – for me! What gratitude,
like a prayer over my meager talent. I understood
they expected me to save him.

When he was young he would dance into the night
on Dyckman, before the neighborhood changed.
He turned sixty-six in the ICU. His family gathered
outside his window to release balloons into the sky. I watched
as they sailed over northern Manhattan into the Bronx. Later that night
his daughter called; she asked me to sing *Happy Birthday* to him.
And I did, do you believe it?

Tranquilo, I learned to say, *todo va estar bien*. I was lying
in a second language. There are few roads back
from where Miguel's body had gone, his lungs
full of something like cement. The rest fell
in sequence: kidneys, heart, brain. I let
someone else call his daughter.
A virus is such a tiny thing
to demand so much from us.

LETTERS TO MY DONOR

by GUNEET KAUR

Metal piercing white
lights, steel poking
prodding and encasing
thick plastic body
bags and
goodness—

the smell, oh who could ever
forget the smell

of formaldehyde in my scrubs my gloves my hair my socks

my hair
a strand of which
drifts
down
landing
on the body
laying below me.

& this plastic shield—
a wall
between us,

demarcating where life begins
just as it ends.

As if this body laying below me does not
contain galaxies
as if this body is not home to generations
of stories

as if this body
was not
once
an entire universe,

as if this body
was not once embraced so fiercely
so tightly
that the earth itself seemed to stand still.



MAMA
by GRETA TAMKUS

Hands.

Fingertips grazing cool porcelain skin

The hands, it's always the hands.

a mama's hands?
perhaps a lover's?

and how did she hold her kin in those very
hands?
clasped? interlaced?
firmly

or perhaps gently as if
to offer room

to breathe

and these hands,
hands that offered love
and
a body created
through love

perhaps one
that created a whole new life
of love,

or created a home and
filled that home with laughter,
maybe a dog?

And what did that laughter sound like?
soft giggles
maybe a chuckle
a thundering bellow

joyous echoes.

Can these lungs tell me anything about
the sound of your sweet laugh?

puzzle pieces
pulled out, spilling over the edges

Lungs.

Lungs spotted black

a once-upon-a-time smoker's lung?

Perhaps the remnants of an old romance —
the backseat of a 70's band van
and pink streaked hair.

Or maybe a habit from the long nights
and even longer days blurring
together in the pools of exhaustion
you carried on your back.

"those are the marks of a big city. she probably lived somewhere like LA"

Those spots of black, sparse
your urban scars

Timestamps tying the two of us together
this city any city
hustle and bustle
honking horns more highways than we can name
glistening city lights and skylines.

now
held under marble lights
skin stretched covered in a reeking stench

(the formaldehyde
who could ever forget the formaldehyde?)

And all along
my body was keeping score.

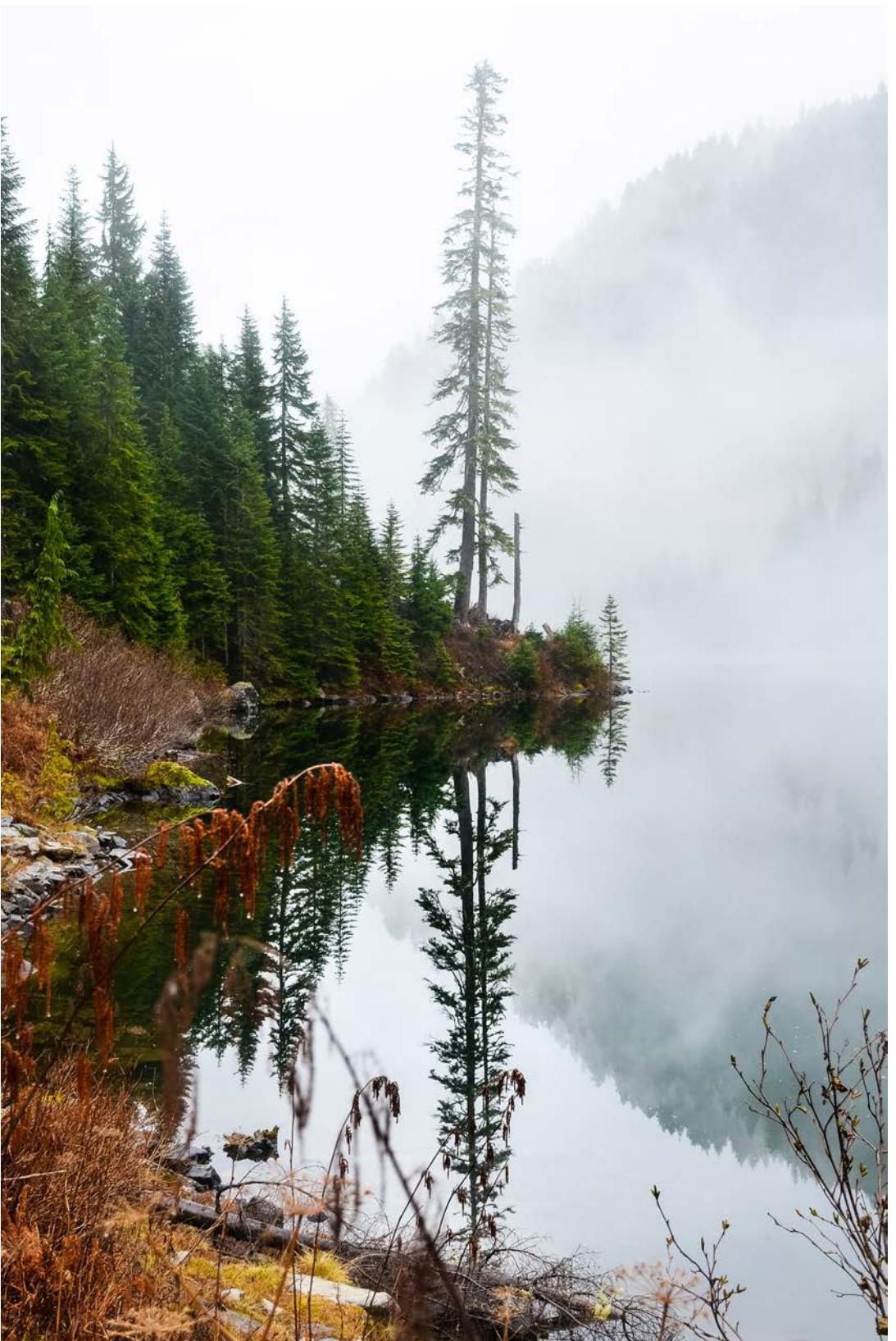
was I trying to play god?
espousing the forbidden
what I was seeing
smelling
touching

something unnatural
unlawful

about the body cavities sliced open
hearts out on tables
nerves poked
and a sternum sawed so clean

CLEARER IN REFLECTION

by FELICIA HSU



blurred vision and rooms spinning
staggered step onto a metal stool
(the kind my dentist sits on)

and still I held a lung in my hand

as if to hold somebody's lung
somebody's breath
is anything less than an entire world
placed in my palms

as if the words "I can't breathe" aren't seared into our souls

and as if to feel the bouldering weight in each
of the creases of my fingers
is anything less
than miraculous.

as if to breathe is anything less
than a

Revolution.

Perhaps if I grip hard enough
close my eyes and retrace each and every
curve and edge on these lobes
commit your entirety to my memory

perhaps if I dig hard enough
I may come across the lost
vibrations of your laughter

And in this space between us
my dear donor,
is it gravity or is it
a heavenly force?

our story now resides in my body
as my hands move through you.

perhaps you are now one of my ancestors

and this is the divine connection
that keeps both our bodies from floating
out the door.

THE BEES

by KATE COURSEY

The week after their father died, Abby received a call from her older sister, Hannah. Abby was out walking Pippin at the time. She answered reluctantly, tucking the phone against her ear so she could pull Pippin away from a cat loitering near a subway entrance.

"We have to go," Hannah said. "All three of us. Someone has to sort through his things."

Abby sighed. "I close at the restaurant tomorrow. And I have a performance on Thursday."

"Friday, then. I'll call Grace."

Hannah had hung up before Abby could object. She stood at the corner, feathers of steam drifting between her lips, the fallow sunlight of late autumn doing little to ease the cold that seeped into her fingers.

She'd always had poor circulation.

"Come on," she said to Pippin. "Might as well get this done with."

The sisters planned to meet on Friday afternoon at Eleanor's Café, an old establishment tucked into the hills of the Virginia countryside. Abby had picked a table at the very back, half-tucked behind the bar where hazy steam infused the air with espresso. The cappuccino nestled between her fingers had chilled. Nerves roiled her stomach, strung out taut as violin strings.

They'd come here once as children, right after their father got his paycheck. The three girls—Abby, Hannah, and Grace—had all ordered steaming slices of apple pie. Timothy, the youngest, wanted hot chocolate with whipped cream. He'd slurped it up so quickly he belched, a thin white moustache of cream pasted across his upper lip.

Hannah sat across from Abby now. Her hair was shorter than Abby remembered, cropped just above the shoulder, and she wore a crisp blue blazer that Abby thought strangely formal. Hannah's manicured nails clicking against her phone screen—click click. If Abby closed her eyes, she could imagine it to be the skitter of insect wings.

Abby didn't close her eyes. She knew where that would lead.

"She's late," Hannah remarked, without looking up from her phone.

"What did you expect?"

"There's a lot to take care of. The least she could do is turn up on schedule. Do they not have

Then, Hannah said, "The plot next to Timothy's."

Abby had expected as much, but it still knocked the breath out of her. Somehow, the thought of Tim buried alone with only their father for company chased away the last of her appetite.

I need to write him, she thought. Make sure he's okay.

Abby had started writing letters to Timothy shortly after he died. She'd filled dozens of old composition workbooks with hasty scribbles and long, meandering stories, all addressed to her little brother.

Dear Tim,

How's heaven? How's mom? Grace reckons you get to eat cookies for breakfast lunch and dinner, without ever getting stomach sick.

Dad didn't come back for a week this time. Hannah asked where he'd gone, and he wouldn't say, but he smelled bad.

We miss you.

And then, at the very bottom:

Can you tell me how to get rid of the bees?

"Well, no use waiting around," Hannah said, jolting Abby from her thoughts. "Let's get moving, I want to get some work done this evening after we've finished."

As the three women crossed the room, a ripple of attention shifted their way. Jeremiah's girls. The name, passing between café patrons as barely more than a whisper, nevertheless resonated in the air. Abby never spoke her father's name if she could help it. She disliked how it tasted of sour whiskey and left a film of oil on her tongue. The barista paused to watch them exit, rubbing a scruffy beard.

"He looks familiar," Abby said as they stepped outside. "The barista."

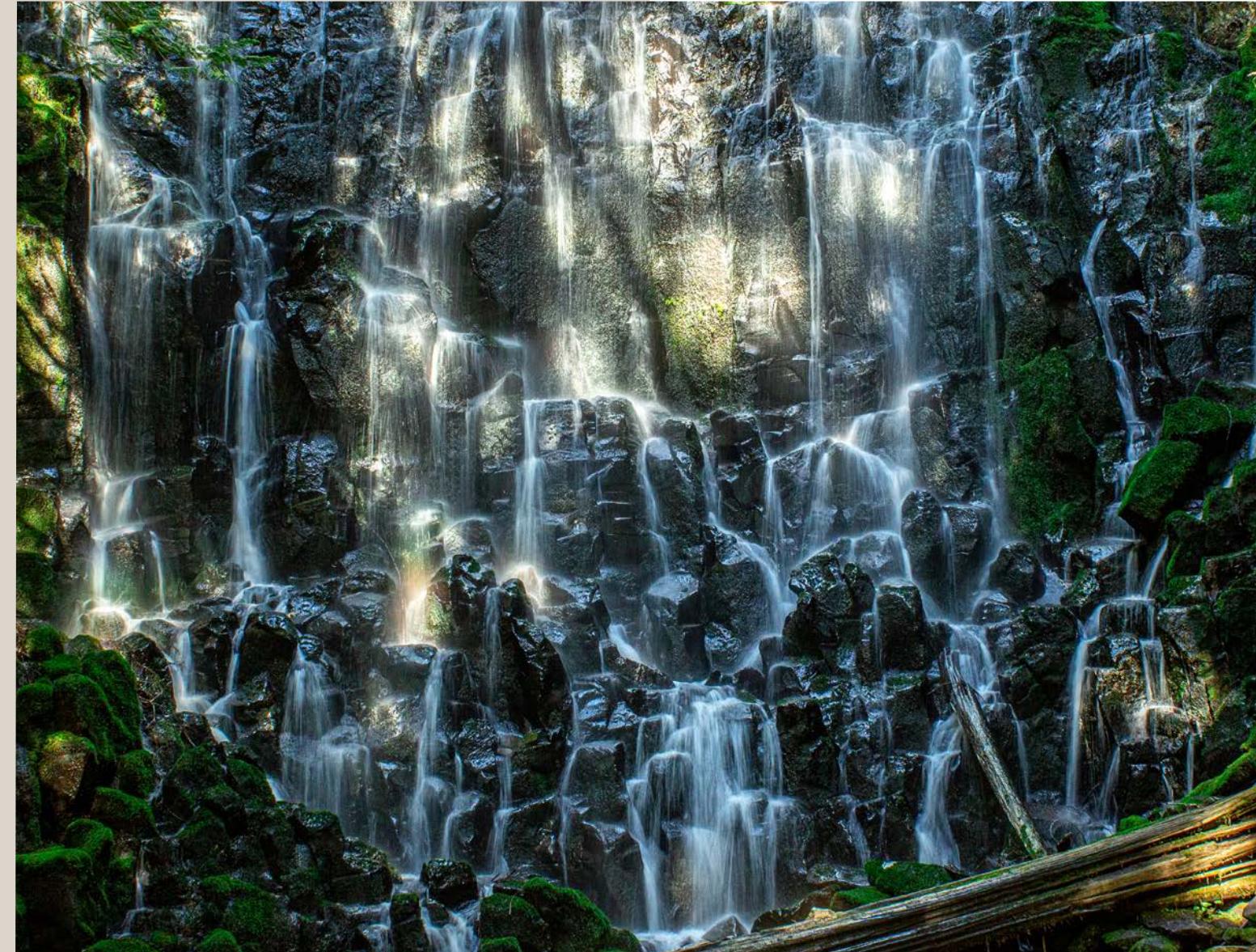
"Danny Osborn," Grace said promptly.

"Did he go to school with us?"

"Don't you remember?" Hannah cast a withering look over her shoulder. "He was what, Grace's fourth boyfriend?"

"Something like that," Grace said. "Didn't exactly keep track."

Outside, a brisk wind sent skeletal leaves skittering across the road, husks of pale green and



FALLS IN MT. HOOD

by NIMA GOLZY

watches in Durham?"

Abby gave a noncommittal jerk of her shoulders. "How's John?" she asked, by way of distracting Hannah.

Her sister waved an impatient hand. "Oh, you know. The firm keeps us both busy. He's been taking on a lot of overseas clients. Long hours."

"And you?"

"If anything I'm busier than he is. I've got a big case coming up in the next couple months. Lots to prepare."

"I see."

Silence. Hannah didn't ask about Abby's job at the restaurant or her band, but Abby hadn't really expected that. Apart from the obligatory birthday phone call, the orbit of her sisters' lives had spun far out and away from her own, rarely intersecting.

Grace arrived twenty minutes late, slipping out of a long, slim trench coat, and planted a kiss on each of her sisters' cheeks.

"Did you get me something?" she asked, hooking a chair with one ankle. "I'm starved."

Abby wordlessly passed her a croissant in a bag.

"Thanks." Grace's eyes glittered. "You always remember. So where's the old bastard gonna be buried?"

A pause. Abby swirled the dregs of her cappuccino.

blonde and bleached orange. Somehow it was still muggy despite the breeze, muggier even than her apartment in the summer...there was something about the Virginia woods that ripened the air until it clung, heavy with moisture, to Abby's skin. She wiped her brow as they crossed to Hannah's rental car. Against the pitted dirt roads, overgrown trees, and rusted barbed wire strung across the field opposite the café, the car seemed unnaturally sleek.

"Shotgun!" Grace called, as if they were teens again, piling into Hannah's old jeep to see a Friday night football game. Grace had been the wild one then. She'd worn crop tops and miniskirts that scandalized their father—on purpose, Abby thought—and never left the house without a practiced swipe of liquid eyeliner.

And suddenly, Abby remembered Danny Osborn. She remembered his pickup truck parked on the ridgeline, where they'd sometimes gather after games to take shots of lukewarm vodka and play night tag.

She remembered her father's headlights sweeping across the grass. Remembered lying next to a boy from school, someone whose name she didn't even remember. They were pleasantly drunk and just stargazing, but the next moment she heard a shout, and when she scrambled to her feet, Jeremiah Murphy was dragging Grace and Danny Osborn out of the bed of the pickup truck. Both were half naked. Grace was writhing in his grip, and Danny was yelling, but Jeremiah Murphy's fist cracked once, twice, three times across Danny's face, and he crumpled.

When Jeremiah's eyes sought Abby, frozen in the grass, she briefly imagined she could turn to smoke, drift away above the trees. The air hummed and snapped with the whine of unseen insects.

"Get in the fucking car," Jeremiah said.

None of the girls had spoken the whole ride home, not even Hannah.

"God help me," Jeremiah had shouted when they arrived, a strand of saliva dangling from his lips. "I asked for daughters, and this is what God gives me...a pack of wolves. A pack of fucking wolves."

He looked crazed. Abby thought she'd seen a painting once, maybe in art history class, with a red-eyed man tearing off his own skin. That's how her father looked. Bruises were blooming across Grace's arms and neck where her father had grabbed her.

Jeremiah spat on the ground. "You'll sleep in the barn tonight, all of you. I don't want your filth in this house, you hear?"

He'd locked them in among the piles of fetid, damp hay, with the clammy chill of winter beginning to infest the floorboards.

A fucking pack of wolves.

The truth was, Jeremiah Murphy had never wanted daughters. Abby wasn't sure he'd ever really wanted anyone, besides perhaps their mother, who had died shortly after Tim was born. Oh, Jeremiah liked the idea of daughters...three girls in pristine white dresses, hair braided, hands folded demurely in laps.

Instead he got Hannah, who talked back, and pierced her lips and eyebrows with safety pins. He got Grace, who took out a different boy each week and never seemed to tire of them. And he got Abby, who, under other circumstances, he might've liked best—she was quieter, and had a way of drifting beneath the surface of others' attention.

But Abby had been there the day Timothy died. She'd been the one running barefoot through the woods, mud sucking at her feet, tree branches slashing lines of blood across her face and shins. For that, Jeremiah could never forgive her. He could never forgive the daughter that survived when his only son did not.

So, faced with these creatures he couldn't control, Jeremiah Murphy sank into a feral aggression that cast a pall over this town and their childhood.

"Olivia would love the woods past Creek Road," Grace said as they drove. "Remember when we used to explore back there? I would've brought her, but I didn't want her missing too much school."

"Yes, because missing two days of second grade would be a catastrophe," Hannah said.

"Third grade."

"Is there a difference?"

"It's not just the academics. She's got gymnastics on Fridays, and they're getting close to competition season..."

Grace prattled on. Abby closed her eyes. She breathed in the sterile new-car smell. The buzzing was back, growing louder as they turned down familiar roads lined with off-kilter fences.

Dear Tim,

I met the rest of the band today for another audition. I can't even describe it...everything just clicked. Their lyrics are great. We could harmonize without even trying. I don't want to jinx it, but I think they're going to offer me the spot. They perform Thursday evenings, usually, so if I can shift my schedule at the restaurant, I should be able to make it work.

Oh! Did I tell you I'm adopting a dog? I knew you'd like that. I'll let you know once I pick a name.

*Love,
Abby*

Two months after her impromptu move to Brooklyn, Abby came home with a bouncing cocker spaniel. She named him Pippin. It had been Tim's favorite storybook character.

The car slid to a halt. Abby knew they were here – even with eyes closed, the turns leading to their childhood home were permanently etched into her mind.

"Lord, he really let things go to hell, didn't he?" said Grace. Musty air rushed into the car. Wood chips, damp grass, mulch...Abby thought she could drown in the heady scents of the woods. She opened her eyes. Grace was right; although the house was still starkly familiar, thick knots of ivy had crept over the walls in the nine years since she'd last been here, speckled with flakes of chipped paint.

As Abby stepped out of the car, the buzzing encroached upon her senses. An urge seized her. She could snatch Hannah's keys. Drive away from this place. She could book the next flight back to New York, where at least the soft drone of insects only found her in the deepest hours of the night, somewhere in the mire between sleep and wakefulness. If she walked far enough through Brooklyn, if she walked until her nose was raw from cold and her legs leaden, the insects couldn't find her at all.

Not here. Not in this place, so close to the woods.

"Right," Hannah said. "I've got boxes in the car for donations. We'll discuss anything we want to keep. Grace, you start in the bedroom. I'll take the living room. Abby, you can do the kitchen."

"The bedroom?" Grace's face twisted. "Can't I take the living room?"

"Fine, do the den, then."

The stairs creaked as sisters ascended to

the porch, where grass cropped up between half-rotten boards. Abby felt herself shrinking. This house had a way of doing that—making her small. Her footsteps were whispers in the hallway, the dust on the floor barely disturbed as she passed.

She began in the kitchen. Knives, a rusted can-opener, mismatched plates with chipped edges...all went into the donation box. Abby wanted nothing of Jeremiah's. Her father had cast each of his daughters out the day they graduated. He had never called her, save once, slurring drunken profanities on the other end of the line when she was out hiking with a friend.

Abby had hung up and stared at the phone for a long time. Jeremiah never called back. She hadn't minded his distance, nor even that of her sisters—she had pieced together a life separate from them and richened it, slowly, gradually, with friends, with singing, with her sunlit apartment and Pippin and long walks to look at spring flowers.

When Jeremiah died of liver failure, it hadn't surprised her. She supposed that was what a bottle of gin a day did to a person, over so many years. It hadn't saddened her, either, not really, but that evening she'd found herself walking farther than she'd ever walked before, away across the Queensboro Bridge to stand above the water and watch the reflections of Manhattan lights slowly swim into view. Like fireflies.

"Abby."

She turned. It was Grace in the doorway, long hair swept back into a loose bun.

"What is it?"

"Hannah's found something."

Wordlessly, she followed. Hannah stood in the living room holding a baseball mitt.

Abby let out a slow breath. "That's Tim's."

"It can't be," Grace said automatically. "You know he threw out all of Tim's things."

"It's Tim's. I remember."

And she did. Abby had only been eleven when Tim died, one year Tim's elder, and it cut deep how little she truly remembered of her brother. She remembered playing together by the old swimming hole, cannonballing off rocks, catching lizards in the mud. She remembered slipping notes under each other's doors each night, clues or maps for treasure hunts.

Tim had loved baseball. He used to plead with Abby to play catch, even though she was no good and always fumbled the ball.

HER NAME IS MORAINE

by CLAY DUNGFELDER



"What do we do with it?" Hannah said. "It was in Dad's room. In his closet."

"One of us should keep it," Grace said.

"But Dad kept it for a reason. Maybe... maybe we should bury it with him. I think it's what he would've wanted."

"I don't give a damn what he would've wanted. This belonged to Tim. I'll take it home if you don't want it. Dad doesn't deserve to have it."

"You shouldn't say..."

"Don't tell me what I shouldn't say!" Grace's eyes flared. "Did you ever once hear him mention Tim's name after he died? For Christ's sake, Hannah, he cleared everything out of Tim's room and sold it off before they even buried him!"

Their shouts escalated. Abby looked between them, her presence forgotten. The buzzing was in her skin now, in her bones, muscle wired

with electric energy.

Abby snatched the glove away from Hannah.

A shocked silence. Grace and Hannah turned to stare at their sister, mouths agape.

Abby did not pause. She ran.

Out the back door, down the steps, across the grass, into the woods. Wet foliage slithered across her skin, branches grasping and clawing. The air vibrated with a terrible hum. Out of the corner of her eye, Abby thought she saw small black spots darting through the trees.

She had never returned to the place Tim died, but even now, in the rapidly descending twilight, she knew the hulking shape of the hollowed-out oak tree, its branches thatched with tattered leaves that seemed to rustle even when the air was still. Abby slowed. Her heart beat in

her throat. The buzz built to a crescendo, and for a wild moment she was sure they would burst out of the trunk just as they had sixteen years ago.

Bees. Hundreds, thousands, an explosion ignited by a single misplaced foot. She and Tim had been walking home together, soaked from swimming in the river.

Abby didn't remember much. She supposed they must've run in opposite directions.

Tim had died quickly—that's what the doctor said. *Anaphylaxis. Hundreds of stings.* Abby had stared at the ceiling as the doctor dabbed paste on her own stings. Somewhere in the depths of the hospital, a machine whirred. *Like insects,* she thought.

The earth beneath the tree was damp and dappled with moss. Abby dug with her hands until her fingernails broke. She dug until the hole was deep enough to bury the glove, then placed it into the earth, scraping mud over the glove until only a mound remained.

She stopped. Her breath came in sharp, ragged gasps.

The buzzing was gone.

Abby stood. She was dizzy now, suddenly drunk off these woods, off the feathery brush of

grass around her ankles and the thrumming of hot blood to her scraped fingers. With each step back toward the house she half-expected the bees to emerge, half-expected to see a cloud of black rising over the trees.

Nothing.

When Abby broke out of the woods, the light on the back porch was on. It was fully dark now. Hannah and Grace sat on the porch—Hannah on the steps, Grace curled on an old wooden bench pushed up against the side of the house.

For the first time, or so it seemed to Abby, her sisters looked at her. She stood before them, drenched in sweat, the mud drying in caked layers over her arms.

A slight nod—first from Grace, then from Hannah. There was no need for words. They understood. In the flickering of the old porch light, her sisters' eyes flashed bright and golden. *A pack of wolves.* Abby floated up the steps and sat next to Grace on the bench, tucking her knees to her chest. Hot tears scalded her cheeks and she didn't even care.

The daughters of Jeremiah Murphy watched the night settle over the hills, together, immersed in quiet.

DEVIL'S BACKBONE - BRAVE'S GAME

by LARRY MAO





CLIMB ON

by DAVID LEE

STAR CHARTS FOR BROKEN HEARTS

by SAFIYA LAHLAF

I lay grounded, earthbound,
But I searched for you,
Casting my eyes skyward.

I knew you only in shimmering bits
And faraway pieces,
Forever out of reach.

Without a map to bridge the distance,
I charted a constellation,
Created the mythology to match.

Words sat heavy on my tongue—
Stones that I swallowed
Instead of throwing into orbit.

I made stargazing into a hopeless sport,
Convinced that one night,
The stars might gaze back.

I'd still give you the Earth;
I know I'm a fool to imagine
You'd give me the sky.

DROWNING

by ANGELA PHAM

Is it possible to be floating in calm water yet be drowning at the same time?

You feel the water pressure uncomfortably pressing you from all sides. Yet, it is the pressure of the vast ocean that keeps you afloat, for which you are eternally grateful because there is nothing worse than sinking into the dark depths below.

But that doesn't mean you aren't drawn to go there every single day.

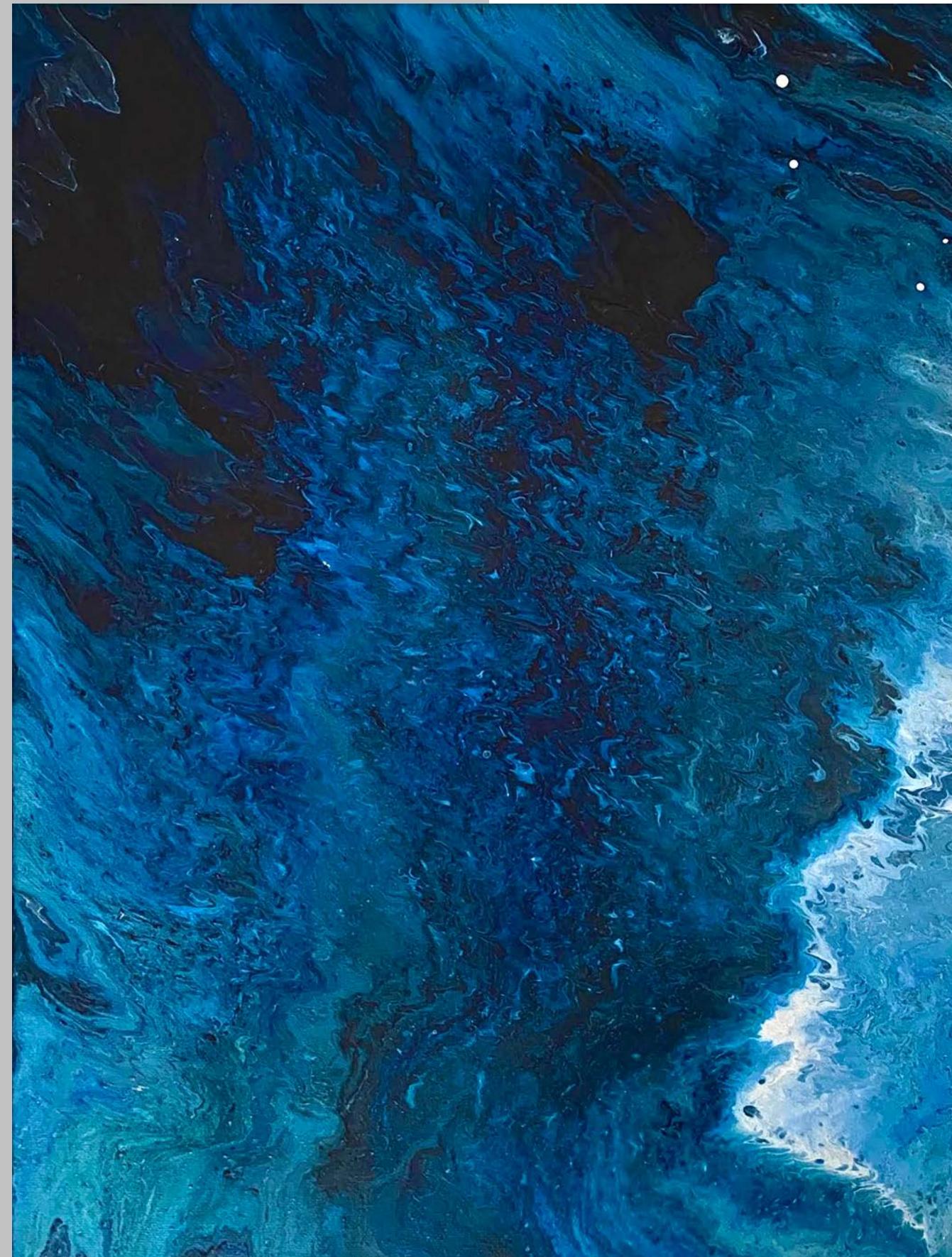
Everything seems to be going right. You're swimming smoothly with the current, the temperature isn't too cold, and the water appears to be calm and clear blue.

So why does it always appear so murky to you, obscuring your movements forward?

Sometimes, you do find yourself swimming higher and higher, until your fingers skim the interface between the water and the air above. You can see the rays of sunlight above piercing through the surface, refracting and scattering as it hits the water. You approach the surface slowly but surely, excited because you feel like you can finally exit into this warm, golden place, and leave the water behind. The warmth of the sun encapsulates you, and you welcome it, and feel it begin to energize you. You're so tired. All you want is to stop swimming. When you're close enough, you can see the blue sky, its image wavering back and forth at the surface of the water.

You're so close. You think you finally understand how to break the surface of the water. Maybe you even poke your head out, and you're struck by how much nicer it feels to immerse yourself in the warm and welcoming environment above the water, and even better, you can finally breathe. You start to imagine a future above the water and you feel your heart start to soar.

But then a wave comes crashing down and strikes you straight down into the depths of the ocean, into murky, turbulent waters, as they have time and time again. It doesn't matter how big the wave is, the effect is the same – your whole mind, body, and soul is attracted as if by a strong magnet into the deep abyss below. And every time, you are powerless, swept like a rag doll several levels deeper from where you started.



ZUMA BEACH

by TIFFANY FAN

You're tired of hearing the same thing over and over from others. People from above peer down at you, with faces of genuine concern that are blurred by the water's constant ebb and flow.

"Are you okay? You've been under there for awhile now. Can't you just get out for a moment and take some breaths of fresh air?"

But you can't. You've been treading water your entire life and you're just so incredibly exhausted. Little things that don't even inconvenience other people, like small waves or water currents, completely devastate and trap you under the surface, as if a giant fist is pushing forcefully down on your head. It wills you to remain under, and you do. It's not that you don't try to get out, it's that you have to try harder than most other people do, and it sucks all the energy out of you. Sometimes all you can do is take a break and try to remain adrift in the water, where you're at, and imagine what it's like to be above. Because otherwise, you're afraid your body will give out and you'll fall rapidly into the dark depths below.

But it's confusing to most people. After all, you're not actually thrashing about in the water. You might even appear to be swimming gracefully. Nobody is coming to save you, because you don't look like you need to be saved.

But the fact is that the sounds of screams and struggling are not audible to those above the surface. The water mutes you, and your presence in the water is immutable. You're slowly suffocating with every passing day, even though you still manage to breathe. Your body yearns to stop moving but you keep going. You continue to swim on and on, because what other choice do you have?

Sometimes people find themselves submerged in the water beside you. They sink, just like you do, because after all, we're all human, and humans sink in the water. The difference, however, is that they can and do get out eventually. You've never even left once.

So, is it possible to be floating in calm water, yet be drowning at the same time?

Because that's what anxiety feels like.

RUNNING

by LIZETH CARRILLO

I've been running ever since I can remember
Not actually running (I have bad knees)
But figuratively running.

Using any feeling, person, drink and drug
To feel numb

Anything beats the soul crushing weight of depression
But I can't run anymore.

I give up.

No matter how much I run, the memories win.
The sights, sounds and smells that take me back
Always win.

So I stopped running.
But stopping is a privilege that not everybody gets.

Stuck in cycles of
Bills
Bad relationships
My car broke down
"gotta feed the kids"

A racist unjust capitalist society
If you stop running, you're f*cked.
Running is what you do to survive.

Today I get to walk.
To stop and feel it all
But also stop and smell the flowers
And once I've healed,
I get to go back
And help others stop running, too.



A FISHERMAN'S RESTING STONE

by CLAY DUNGFELDER

A PIANO HOUSE

by SANNA TAM

He never dated her.

Yet, she was there. In this house on a hill. He leaned over the balcony, peering out to the woods. The wind swept across his cheeks and down the crest of the slope to the valley below. Her laughter was light and airy, suspended, caught in the trees.

No, he never dated her.

"Do you like it?" the realtor asked.

"Hm," he said. To keep them guessing. He could not let them on too soon that he knew this house already from a far away dream. That he may have it already in thought if not in physical ownership. Years ago, he watched her. She played the piano and beneath her elegant fingers that house grew. Each key was mortar and stone. The house took shape, brick and brick.

He turned, heading inside, and the realtor followed.

She was everywhere in this house for someone he barely knew. The balcony led to the kitchen, and he touched the counter. Granite, smooth, and cool. Perfect for cooking. He imagined her skin might have felt that way.

"It's a beautiful view for breakfast," the realtor said, gesturing to the large square windows. It lined against the wall, opposite of the balcony. "The sunlight hits just right."

It did. She came to life, backed by golden rays.

"Hm," he said and moved on. She didn't speak. He counted his heartbeat to the rhythm of the house, pulsing beneath his feet. There was an unnatural creak for a newly built place.

"Here, you must see this."

They showed him to the stairs, thin and iron wrought. The stairs spiraled upward. The delicate leaves contoured to the bars reached for a sunlight that would never be found on the second floor.

"It's a narrow way up," but he could see how she would dart up the steps. Quick and dainty.

He went up and up and up. The rail trembled under his hand, and he was on the second floor. The light was not as voluminous as in the kitchen.

"Second living room," the realtor stated.

"Plenty of space."

"Hm." It did not interest him.

He followed the left hall down to a study. It also did not hold his interest. In the first bedroom, he paused. The room was artfully made, meant to impress buyers. He hovered at the entry of the bathroom. The tub was standard porcelain white, massive and sunken in. A floral scent lingered, and he turned. That was an intimacy he could not afford.

"What else?" He asked.

French windows on the third floor, for the house was that many stories. There were no curtains to distract from their physique of glass and trim. It was the romantic in her. The handle gave way easily.

"Another great view," the realtor proclaimed.

He never dated her, but the house was hers. He did not need to see the rest of the house.

"I'll take it," he said, the words far too simple and easy.

And perhaps it was.

It took him a week to settle in. He ordered a piano. A Steinway. It was the only name he knew for someone who did not play an instrument. He installed the beauty on the third floor because there was quite stupidly a third living room. It was a lot of space.

He pressed a key, the sound sharp and even. It echoed in the lonely room.

"I hope you are happy," he said out loud.

"I am," she answered back. It was the first time he had heard her voice in a long while. She smiled at him, perched on that piano bench.

He nodded and laid down on the chaise, tired and weary.

"Play for me," he said. "You said you'll always play for me."

She played.

The notes wafted to him, gentle and soft. He closed his eyes and felt the house shuddered. Each note shaped a wall or a step, binding melody to structure. The house lived, brick by brick.

If only he had dated her.

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS (THE FROING EXPERIENCE)

by CONSUELA NANCE



THE EARLIEST ANCESTOR

by SHIV NADKARNI

Sometimes I think about how the first song sounded
was it a big bang like they say
or was it a stunning silence

Surely it was sung in Etta's voice
and felt like coming home
a sunday kind of love
before there were sundays
before there were 'days'

Before there were words to explain
words put to melody
cacophony coexisting with symphony
a held pitch allowed a subtle vibrato

It must have sounded just like the first sunset looked
melody and hue, revelling in one another's beauty
before they had visitors

I believe that living beings developed senses
for the same reason that I kneel
to the ground to touch my grandmother's feet

Out of deference for our ancestors
as an homage to beauty
like we will never know.

THE LAKE

by SUMAN DUTTA



THE BUSINESS OF SAVING LIVES

by ASHLEY HUYNH

There is a stranger in my home. She comes every two or three days, when the sun is faintly painted in the sky, passed out on the sunken couch my father bought, in the room that my brother and I usually study in. I call her my mother, but all my life I haven't really known her. I've dug out faint traces here and there: artifacts of Gray's Anatomy episodes left on (she likes medical shows), relics of multiple blue scrubs hung up from the wash (she works as a ICU nurse), remains of Chinese takeout stuffed into the trash (she likes dim sum). But the complete picture of who my mother is something I haven't fully excavated yet. By the time I go to school and return home, the stranger is gone, off to another shift. The clockwork business of saving lives.

1. She is opinionated.

When I was younger, I used to be afraid of that room, that couch, that stranger who was always in my home. I'd sneak into the room if she was asleep. Most of the time, she would be stuck in a spell, untouched and untouchable, a mysterious being locked in hibernation. But sometimes, when I'd creep in and the dark wood floor would creak, she'd rouse, rubbing her eyes, groaning and stretching furiously to straighten out her joints like an iron. *Hello*s would instead be replaced with a roar of comments about the inappropriate length of my clothing or the sugary food I was eating that made all this acne sprinkle all over my face.

Sometimes, she'd mention her colleague's son or daughter here and there, who had just got accepted to so and so school, who should have pursued a career in medicine instead of nursing, who had just gotten married to some dentist and moved to the Bay. I couldn't help but feel angry at each statement uttered. What right did she have to treat me this way, when she hardly knew me? Was she only a mother when she wanted to? For some time, whenever she was home, I avoided the room that made me feel so small. I shelved my questions and concerns to Google searches and friends outside of my home. It was hard to be honest, when every sentence became another talking point in debate.

2. She is a workaholic.

When she was bedridden, teeth gauzed up with cotton balls after wisdom teeth removal, she

still penciled in shift charts and rotations. Even with fever, she would still talk about the understaffing of her department, or the inaccuracy of procedures that she saw on television. (*That's not how you do an intubation at all!* she would retort.) During times that she ate dinner with my family, there was plenty of conversation of the cultural incompetency of certain charge nurses in her department passed around with plates of oong choy and pan fried noodles.

Work was the main course: it had priority over everything -- ballet recitals on grand stages, graduations full of parents, birthday parties where I just wanted my entire family. My father stood in the role for my mother, reading books and using the internet to help me when I first had my period and didn't know how to properly put on a pad. Yes, she was the breadwinner. Yes, she was the most powerful woman that I knew, climbing her way up from the slums of Jakarta, living in a room with four siblings in America, graduating high school early, and fighting through the tangle of rotations in nursing school to get where she is now. All that. I was proud of her: she was saving lives every minute. But what I really wanted was a mother who could show me how to use a curler, to do a Dutch braid, to use eyeliner properly like the girls at school did.

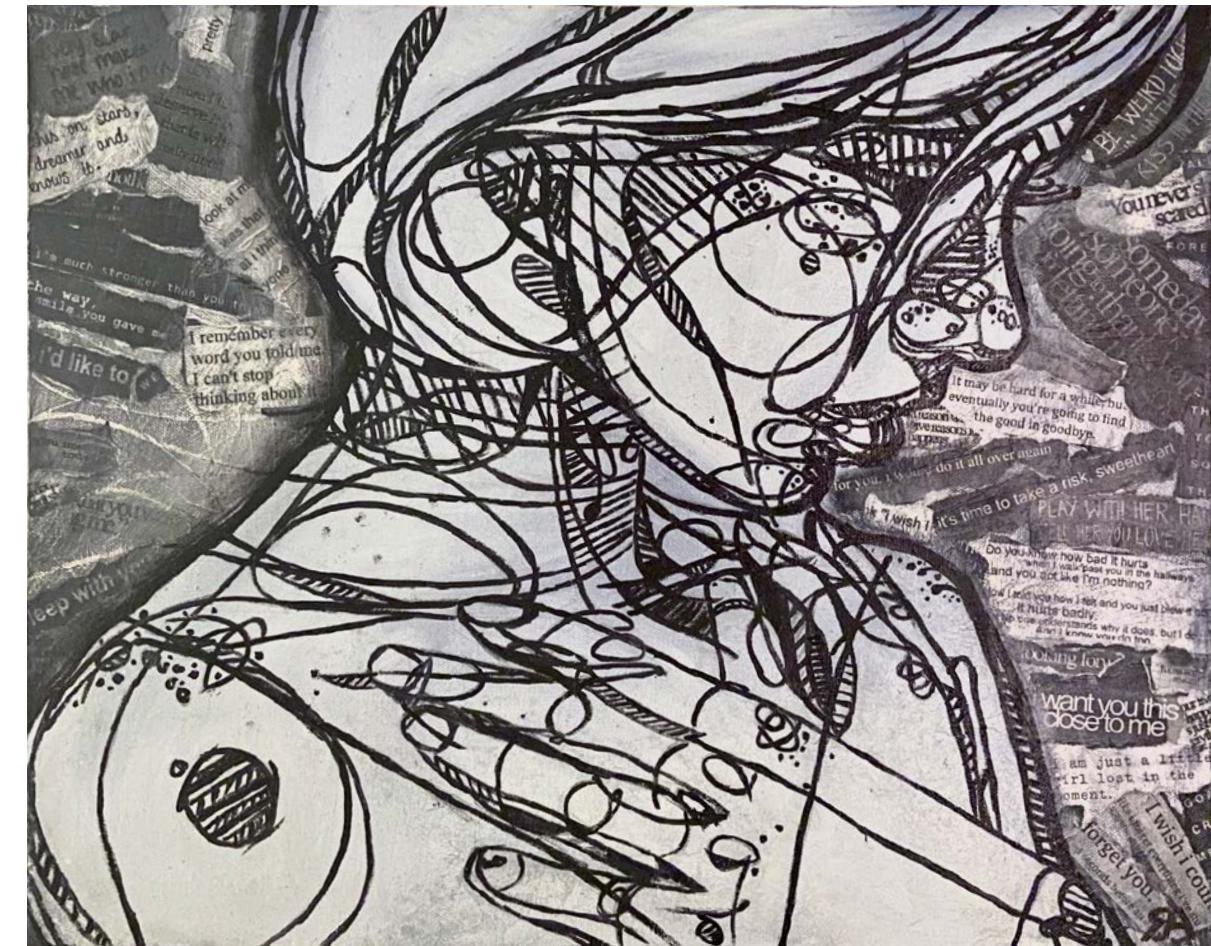
Why was it so important over everything else?

3. She has a mark on her face.

We didn't know where it came from, but once it arrived, we didn't speak about it. It was shaped a little like Texas, a red swollen planet that had formed on my mother's face. It bloomed across her left cheek like wildflowers.

There were creams, pill medications, diets. But among MRI scans, skin swatches, many visits in plastic chairs and sterilized rooms, the answer was encased in fog. The blot morphed like wet clay, sometimes shrinking, other times swelling, but still stubbornly remaining. It was a red stain that we couldn't bleach out.

As an ICU charge nurse, my mother was not content with letting it stay idle. After all, she was a seasoned veteran of battling against all odds, navigating through the labyrinth of hospital bureaucracy, bullying nurses, and kingdoms of cantankerous patients every shift, since she had got



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

by STEPHANIE STEPHANIE

out of nursing school. Heaving patients twice her size into gurneys, making numerous rounds until the sun swallowed the sky, and icing ballooning blisters on her feet every night from shifts made any problem look like a cakewalk. There was nothing that fazed her, not even the unsolvable Rubik cube on mysteries on her face.

4. She is determined.

If American medicine wasn't working, then she would try the traditional route. After shifts, she would return with smells of incense, dried fish, and acrid herbal medicine. I would come home to find her listening to a podcast about reading Ventricular Tachycardias on EKGs, covered in gel masks, potions of all shapes and sizes spread around her, like an altar of some sorts, in prayer of getting rid of the blemish.

And then it got bigger. And then came the hives. Itchy, scratching, swelling. Bright bulbs growing on her neck.

My mother is opinionated about a lot of

things. They sprout out of her like weeds -- length of skirts, the color of the car parked next to us, my rumpled bed sheets, colleagues of hers that I should talk to, career paths that my own friends should go into. But for once in her life, she was silent. I could see the worry in the melanoma pamphlets that she had taken from her work. None of us wanted to say cancer.

5. She doesn't know.

For once, she had taken a week off. Put the business of saving lives on hold. Let herself breathe and relax for a bit. Seeing her on the couch, not dressed in bright blue scrubs or wearing Dankso shoes, watching a movie (*When Harry Met Sally*) that was not Gray's Anatomy or House or Code Black, was a strange sight to see. But a week's worth of rest caused the hives to go away. And the mark shrank, like cotton during its first wash.

Many visits later, we found out it was a blistering rosacea, worsened by my mother's inability to unplug herself from work. Even

though she could recite from memory how to do a bladder ultrasonography, she couldn't understand that the constant juggling, the constant social climb up that she had lived her whole life doing was impacting her health. As a first generation immigrant, stress was another weight she had to shoulder. It was nothing compared to my mother's worries of being able to afford rent, finding a ride to school when the bus broke down, helping her parents navigate through the maze of tax and financial aid forms. There were bigger boulders to lift. And she had lived the majority of her life carrying these burdens; the weight was so natural to her that she didn't notice it.

It wasn't until I got into my research lab that I learned that though stress is a major factor in many hospital visits, it was rarely assessed for primary care physicians or staff. My mother was a prime example of it. Even as a health professional, she did not know what was happening to her body. Stress, like many of her coworkers, kept her on her toes; it kept her vigilant on the floor, when there were so many pitfalls of nursing shortages, noncompliant patients, and anxious family members about. But being in a constant state of stress wore at her body. For her, it was hives. For others: piercing migraines, fatiguing joints, high cholesterol levels, increased expression of genes and gut microbiomes involved in inflammation and infection.

Thinking about what happened to my mother, I can't help but keep on thinking what if it was something else? What if it wasn't just a bump? What about mothers, who barely spoke English, who understood nothing but work, who weren't as lucky? At what point, can I help and tell them that they are enough?

6. She is... working on it.

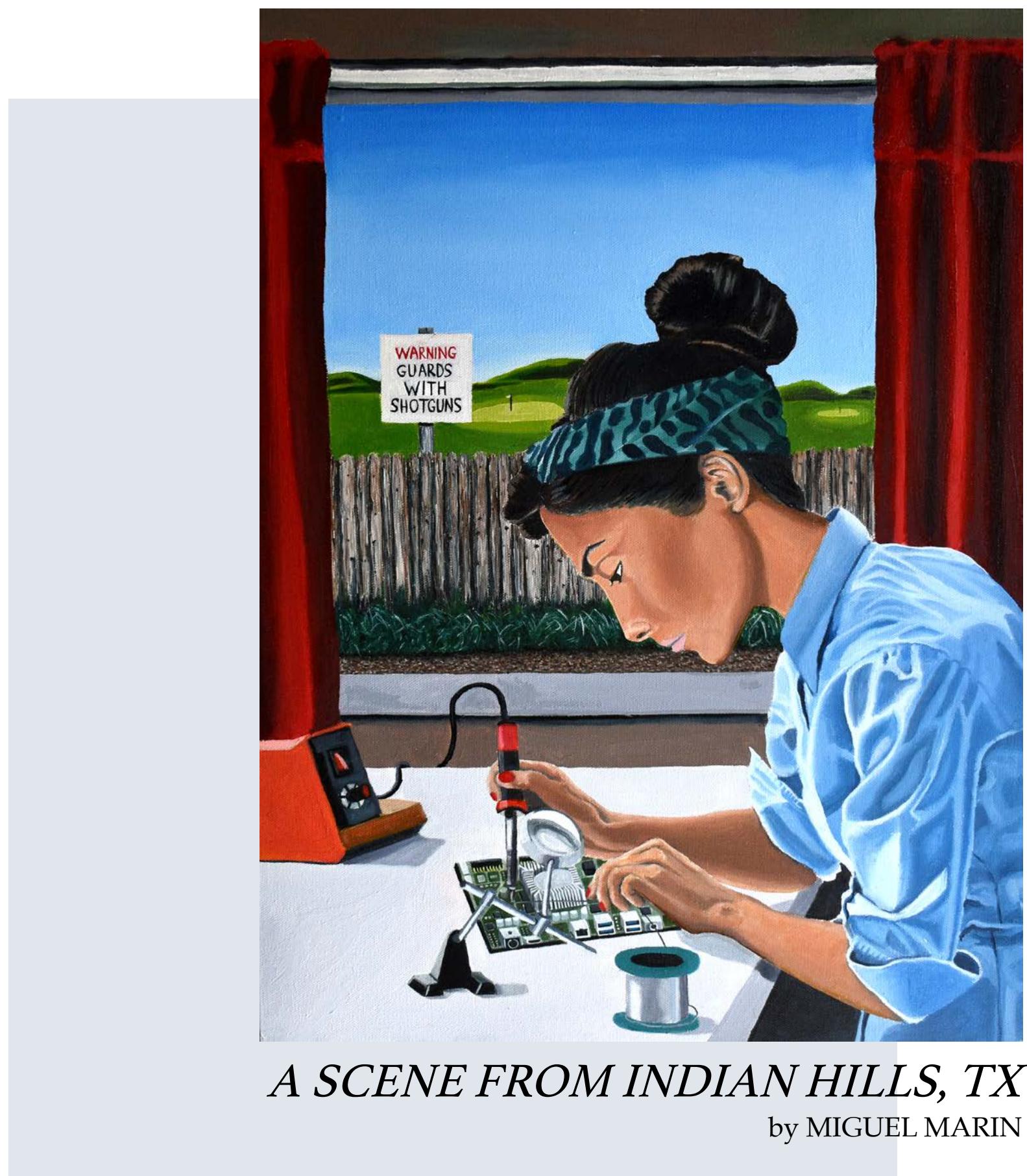
My mother is in my home. It is midday and she is passed out, sinking into the ratty couch my father bought, in the room that my brother and I study in. Her blue scrubs and her gray socks are folded by the coffee table, Dansko shoes set aside near it, in preparation for tonight's shift. My brother and I put compression pads in her shoes, to stop the blisters, and my dad cooked steamed vegetables, so she would stop scarfing down takeout. To be honest, no matter what we say, we can't stop her from working, and the rosacea still flares up here and there.

But she's been more present in our lives ever more than when she had been growing up. Sometimes she chooses to watch *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* over the medical dramas she has queued up on the DVR. I still don't understand her as much, nor do I feel as close as I should be. But I know that she likes sriracha sauce on her eggs and I've come to appreciate her a lot more than I did back then. Her shrieks of her alarm blares and she rises, eyes blinking furiously, yawning in a wide O, and cracking her joints to get ready for the day. She slides on her uniform, puts on her shoes, and leaves for her next shift.

I look at my laptop and the health psychology research that I've been doing, wondering if that will be me one day. Will I be in the business of saving lives too?

I imagine myself in my white coat, diagnosing patients and educating them on the holistic character of health. Maybe I'll tell them about the hives. Or the altered gut microbes I learned about in my undergraduate year.

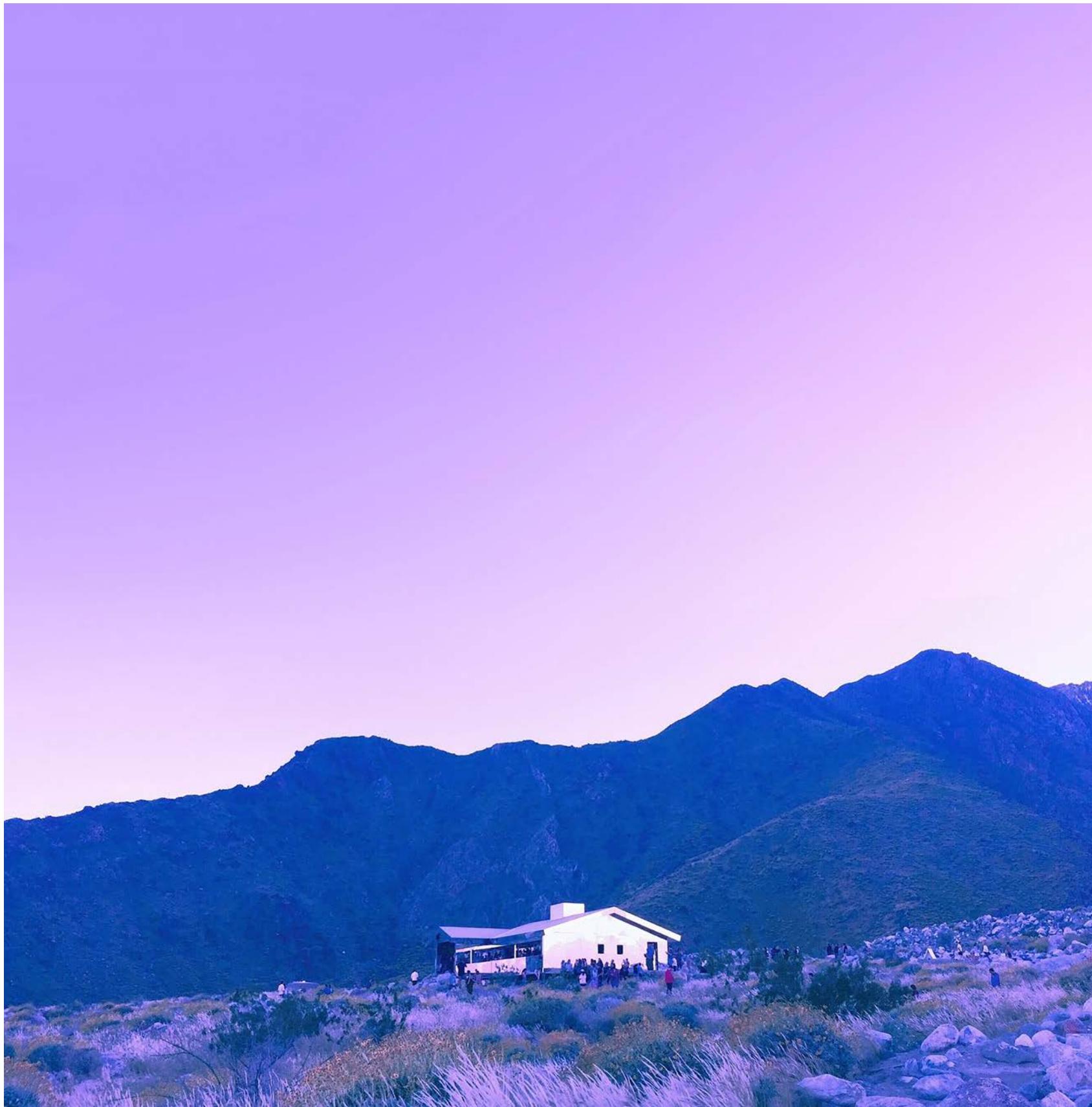
Maybe her and others just like her will know that they are enough.



A SCENE FROM INDIAN HILLS, TX
by MIGUEL MARIN

PURPLE PRAIRIE

by CAROLINA MENDIGUREN



JENGA TOWER

by LAUREN TAICLET

She seemed to be arranged as a
set of staggered Jenga blocks,
waving delicately above the
hard ground.

We did our very best to help.
Each visit, she handed over
her time,
energy, and
endless gratitude.

In return, we stacked on
examinations,
pills,
and infusions.

Each fix created some good
and some bad, these
new imbalances causing
her to teeter precariously
in search of stability
and certainty.

We wondered what was left to try.

But when I look back,
I see that she had entered our
office as a whole being, her
blocks all together, though rather
askew. As we raised her up,
she became more and more

hollow,
her body the pieces of our
medical game.

With good intent, we took her
apart,
reconstructing her in new
and clever ways. We did
all we could.

We did all we knew how.
But she was not fixed.

She looked about to
collapse.

UNKNOWN WORLD

by CALVIN YAO

A strange, unknown is where they were headed.
A scarred yet brave man fleeing from a home set aflame,
A bright-eyed woman looking for a chance to start anew.
They could only be hopeful as hope is all they had.
For this new world, opportunity was supposedly within reach.

Unbeknownst to our travelers, their paths were filled with danger.
Lurking, hateful demons were quick to seep out of hiding to offer gifts.
Gifts to ward unsuspecting travelers from settling in *their* home.
For the first arrival, he was offered a boat for his search of prosperity;
However, he soon found himself abandoned in a lonely sea.
The next entrant was presented water after her long journey;
Though, each sip caused her to drown further in her own self-doubt.
The demons thrived in the misery they had caused.

But in their deepest moments of despair, our travelers discovered their true gifts.
He noticed a pair of shining eyes sinking into the vast darkness,
She spotted a helping hand to keep her afloat.
She became his found treasure and he became her fortune.
Together, they were able to shed light as they explored a new world.
A light so illuminating, their demons were forced to hide once again.

These travelers were not the first to shine light into the unknown.
And they will not be the last.

To those who head into an unknown world for opportunity, we welcome you.
To those who persevere in the face of overwhelming hate, we applaud you.
To those who shed light on new paths for us to choose, we thank you.
To my parents, I thank you.



CAUGHT IN A WEB, CHASING THE AMERICAN DREAM

by MICHELLE GUAN

TIME TRAVEL MEDICINE RESIDENCY APPLICATION

by JOSEPH BELL

Thank you for your interest in a career in Time Travel Medicine! Time Travel Medicine (TTM) is a fast-growing sub-specialty that combines the traditional goals of preventative medicine with newer highly invasive procedures directed toward preventing causal influences that diminish health, reducing somatic entropy, and delaying death in the patient's inertial reference frame.

Originally limited to cryogenic techniques for delaying critical illness, TTM physicians are now widely respected for their ability to definitively treat complications of disease arising in or from any era. All of our residents receive training in the core areas of temporal medicine that allow them to manage medical, surgical, and quantum mechanical problems in the outpatient, hospital, or off-world settings. Moreover, in collaboration with pathologists they can now virtually eliminate prognostic uncertainty by informing patients of the exact cause and time of their eventual demise. Many TTM doctors report they appreciate how this broad focus gives them the opportunity to follow all of their patients, as well as patients' ancestors and descendants, longitudinally from birth to death.

While TTM doctors are fully capable of clinical management of nearly any human, or trans-human, patient, TTM also offers exciting opportunities for further specialization. Our infectious disease experts have led the way in diagnosis and treatment of *in silico* viruses that often complicate the care of patients after digital sub-simulation or virtualization procedures. Even more traditional bacterial and nano-robotic infections are often best managed by TTM doctors, particularly when they occur in settings in which they have not yet been encountered by our colleagues in Internal Medicine.

Some TTM doctors specialize in the treatment of rare diseases like the effects of hard gamma radiation, trauma from high-intensity gravitational waves, or Higgs Collision Syndrome. These conditions, whether due to an interstellar exposure or a side-effect from one of our treatments, pose some

of the most challenging problems in clinical medicine because they affect the wellbeing of whole families, and the stability of any nearby matter. Our hospital is recognized as a Center of Excellence for the treatment of Macroscopic Superposition Syndrome (MSS, formerly known as Heisenberg Syndrome) and is currently ranked #1 and #2 (along with Stanford). Our trainees often report patients with MSS to be some of the most difficult to interact with, but also the most rewarding.

Patients with temporal illness often experience unique psychosocial stressors that can complicate their treatment. In our program, all residents rotate in the Department of Psychiatry for six months on the Acute Meta-Psychiatry Service (AMPS). On the AMPS, students learn basic techniques for negotiating with past- and future-selves, as well as for managing complicated reactions to recurrence, extinction, computational confinement, and immortality. An advanced fellowship in Time Travel Fertility, Genetics, and Paradox Avoidance is also available for practitioners who wish to undertake further training to better counsel couples and families with complicated timelines.

In addition to the core clinical experiences, our training program includes two fully funded and protected years for basic or clinical research, or other advanced scholarship. Many of our trainees use this period to focus on advocacy, working for the care and wellbeing of refugees from other epochs or planetary systems, or confronting issues like dimensionality reduction and timeline collapse that will affect us all. Residents also sit for the specialty Boards exam, which generally may be taken only once, during this time. Throughout this period, residents continue to participate in a weekly outpatient Continuity Clinic, where they hone their skills in longitudinal care of patients who have experienced abrupt jumps.

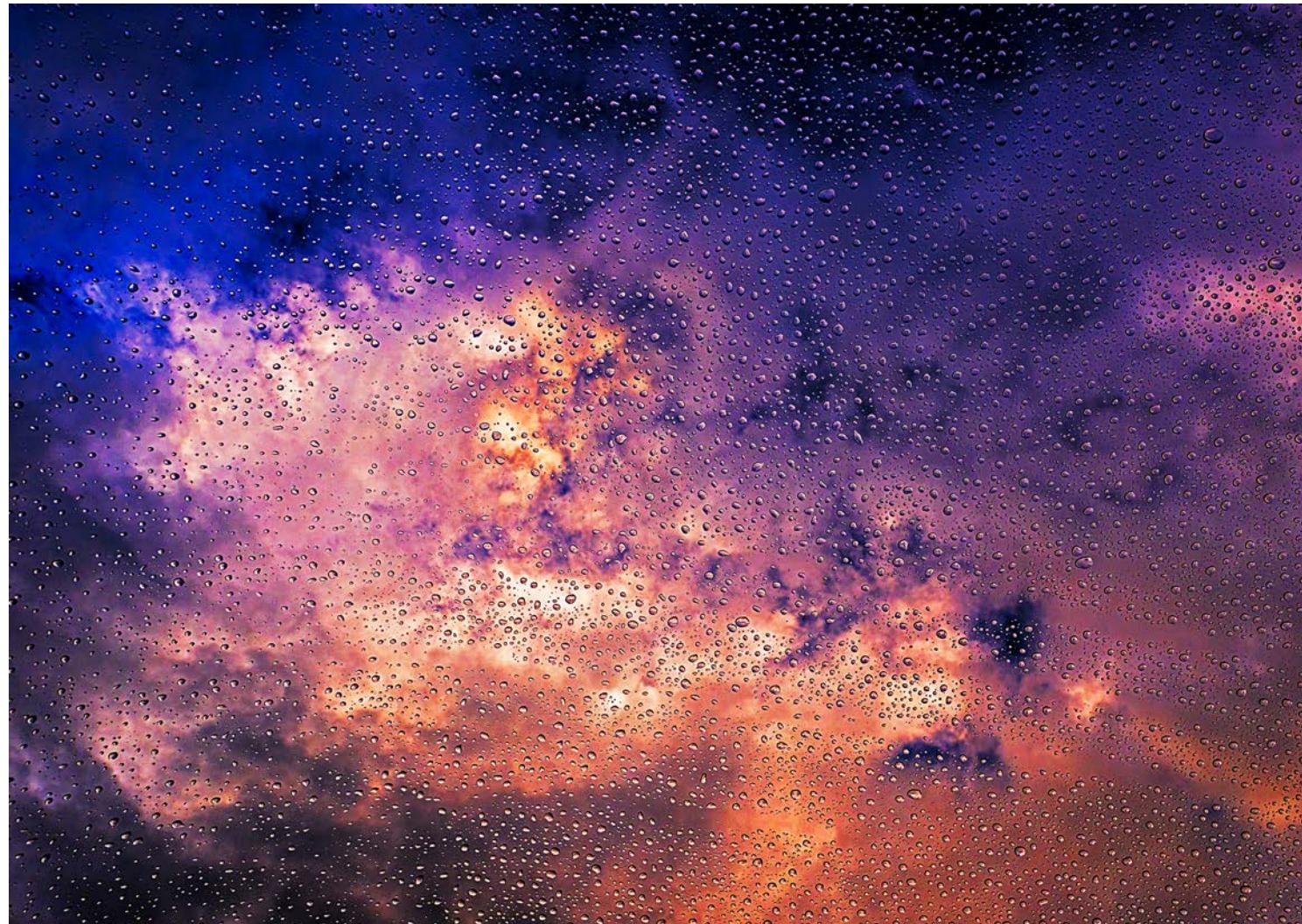
Commitment to a career in Time Travel Medicine is hard work. Although our residents are in technical compliance with ACGME work-hour

restrictions, recorded hours are not adjusted for time dilation or recursion. Junior residents take call every 4th night, except when stationed on planets with helio-synchronous orbits, or while at the V.A. Please note that per program policy, if self-doubles are spawned by inadvertent looping, hours worked by doubles are not counted toward the ACGME cap. It is incumbent upon residents to maintain adequate separation from doubles and dispose of them promptly. Similarly, medical students must be wiped and restored to factory settings at the end of each shift. Most trainees report that their schedules are flexible enough to allow ample time for personal growth and independent study. With careful radiation shielding, many of our residents have started families during their training.

Our residency training program in Time Travel Medicine is highly selective. Successful applicants will have submitted: college and medical school transcripts, USMLE scores for Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 from the years 2005, 2027, and 1974, respectively, documentation of immunity to smallpox and plague, three (3) letters of recommendation, and a certificate documenting successful completion of our residency program in good standing. As your application will not be complete by our deadline, we regret to inform you that we were not able to evaluate you as a candidate. Each year there are many more qualified applicants than we will have had time to interview. We thank you for your interest in our program, and wish you the best in your future endeavors.

RAINDROPS

by DORWIN BIRT



APOPLECTIC

by MARIO EASON

For years we fought, died and sacrificed
Telling tales as old as time
To deaf ears and unbelieving predators
Young minds so far removed until that day
Their nigger check finds them

Master is tired of hearing the stories
We are tired of telling them
But, this is our history, not just the shortest month

Denied opportunity to thrive in native homes
Taken from the pomp and circumstance of civilization
Forced to forget and become what we are told
We are Americans

We are true Americans
Behind Natives of this land
Land that you govern like a birthright
Land that we plowed and sowed
Land in which we buried babies with hope they will spring eternal
Land of Jim Crow crowded with strange fruit bearing trees
Land of freedom and strife
Land for which our brothers died
Land we cannot own or sell
Relegated to ghettos and tenements
Punished for believing we could dream
And no one will let us forget
Who they think we are
Simple, stupid, worthless

And with tanned faces, manicured hands
You point and blame us for your disgust
You point back to where we came from
We come from America
These United States we built
On the bones of our slaughtered
With the blood spilled in your ignorance
Sealed with the sweat poured to cement your wealth

And when promised, and we were promised
You point, point, to excuses why, why
Why you cannot keep a promise
And justify your betrayal through your Christ
A copy of a savior made up from a potluck of bits
That personify injustice and disregard
Supporting prejudice and fear mongering

You say it's Christianity, the path to salvation
Believing you are divinely favored to live off the riches we made possible
Deserving the wrath of fire and brimstone
Commerce and construction, the work and consequence of immigrants
Prosperity is the profit of slavery and racial profiling
The American Dream is a side effect of oppression and theft

The real niggers of America are pale faced and point fingers
The real niggers of America lack originality and imagination
Even their struggles are cheaply manufactured of the oppressed
Real niggers are ignorant to the light of God and Black Jesus
These real niggers ape the swagger, voice and expression of those they love to hate
These niggers will never be real Niggas!



ONE NATION, DIVIDED

by MICHELLE GUAN

DOG TAGS

by ANDREW MACQUARIE



BEFORE THE BURN

by A. LENORE ACKERMAN

I've started wearing my dog tags to work.

Not because this is a war, or because my co-residents and I are "in the trenches" or "on the frontline," or because it will be easier for them to identify me if I pass out in my PPE — though all of those are true.

I wear my dog tags because they remind me of my role. This problem is bigger than me. This solution, when it comes, will be much bigger than me. I'm a small cog in a colossal machine — the same way I was when I deployed. Even the biggest machines are only as effective as their smallest parts.

My dog tags remind me to pace myself. In the military, we would often say: slow is smooth, smooth is fast. These days, things inside the hospital change quickly. It's easy to look at the numbers and listen to the lungs and convince yourself that a corner has been turned, only to find a few hours later that the only thing turning is your stomach as another patient is wheeled off to the ICU. The same way we were patient and methodical and steadfast back then, that's exactly how we have to be now.

More than any other reason, though, I wear my dog tags so I remember to persist. It's a familiar feeling, standing in protective equipment, sweat dripping down my back, the embossed stainless steel of those dog tags stuck to my clammy chest. The sweat is different, that suffocating feeling that comes with working long hours in PPE not even in the same ballpark as burlap cammies in 125 degree heat. But that feeling of being trapped is the same.

Even on the worst days, my dog tags remind me that this will end. I was wearing them when I boarded the plane that took me away from the desert. I was wearing them when we landed in Germany and I saw grass and trees and beer for the first time in seven months. You can be damn sure I'll be wearing them the day we discharge our final COVID patient and start putting things back together.

IT IS MONDAY.

by KATE GIESCHEN

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

Tomorrow is Tuesday and we all know what that means. I wish Tuesday didn't matter so much.

We start the year on a Wednesday. Hopeful and bright-eyed, we promise this year will be different. Shootings, a climate crisis, a million bad things happened in 2019. Grumpy Cat died. A few days into January, a plane has been downed, kangaroos are on fire, earthquakes and avalanches and floods and volcanoes have already ravaged communities. We still have hope.

We see the news and something happening in China. It is 6,680 miles away from my apartment in Los Angeles but it feels like 1,000,000. We say that everyone needs to get their flu shot if they want to claim to care about public health, that this is overblown. We are right on the first point. We don't know what we are talking about on the second.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

On Monday, our boss emails us that work will proceed as normal. On Tuesday, the Chancellor cancels classes. On Wednesday, we get together and grieve the loss of a month of our senior year. On Thursday, our bible study adds hand sanitizer to the snack table. On Friday, the whole town shows up to the local bar for some reason we can't explain. On Saturday, my first roommate moves out. She leaves my birthday card hidden in her desk in our creaky apartment in hopes that she will be back to give it to me in a few weeks. We won't see each other for another three months.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

My friends move home. We cry, we promise it isn't the end. They are protecting me, they are protecting my patients, I am protecting them. What a unique world it is where the best way to love someone is to RSVP "no" to their birthday party. I wish we agreed on this. The weight of disappointing others is overshadowed by the weight of what

my actions could mean for their bodies, their lives. But it doesn't make that smaller weight disappear.

I carry a cardboard sign, my first ever, to a protest outside the hospital. I see a tiny girl holding her mother's hand. They wear matching white coats and carry matching signs. I pray that this little girl will not hold her own daughter by the hand at an event like this thirty years from now. I wonder how many generations have uttered that same prayer. The National Guard shows up the next day. I am sent home from work early. No one stops me in my car. No one inspects my \$20 bill. I can still breathe. Who decided that I get to be this lucky?

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

I spend the morning with a kindergartner who doesn't know she is dying. I drive home, order pizza, and sob in the shower. It is Monday. Breathe in. Breathe out. Show up on Tuesday. Smile, say good morning. My breath is stuck in my throat. Everyone around me is still breathing, still smiling despite this living in-between. In between PET scans. In between shifts. In between appointments. I force myself to do the same.

I am interviewed on what it is like to graduate into a pandemic. A few months later, a black-and-white photograph of my face is spread across every media platform of my university. Facebook, Twitter, a printed magazine. The headline declares that I am not daunted at the prospect of entering the medical field during a global health crisis. Do I break my silence and tell them that I held my breath while I cradled a tiny baby in my scrubs for fear that the puffs of air from my cheeks might hold a disease? I am not brave. I am afraid. People I do not know comment that I am strong, strangers share the article. One of them declares: "Go get em Tiger. Sleepy Joe can go back to sleep". I wonder why he thinks a brave, masked man with a stutter and a dead wife and child has anything to do with my college graduation being cancelled.

Before she dies, the woman next-door comes and gives me a copy of this magazine. She tells me she is proud of me, that cancer nurses are the best in the world. I don't know if I should tell her that this flesh and blood me is far less brave than the paper and ink version she clutches in her fist.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

I move home. Graduation is a YouTube video that my family talks through and my dogs bark through. I see a pixelated version of myself delivering words that I wrote back in February for our class commencement. I think about what that girl worried about back then, before we knew the phrase "social distancing", when clinical shifts were marked by discarded masks every time we walked out of a patient's room instead of the same one holding in my morning breath for thirteen hours, rubbing acne into my chin. Now I wear a mask around my family as we clean the remnants of my grandmother's life out of her house. I don't hug my aunts and uncles at her funeral. There are only nine of us allowed, plus the minister. We do not shake hands.

I breathe in. I breathe out. I adopt two tabby kittens and buy them a stroller. Cars honk as they pass, their drivers smiling and chuckling. I giggle, giddy at the novelty of something so silly existing in the midst of what feels like the apocalypse. My sister and I laugh hysterically at TikTok videos we send to each other on the internet. One morning, I laugh so hard that I start crying. Suddenly I am sobbing and I don't know why. I can't stop.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

I begin to volunteer at the Food Bank, at Meals on Wheels, on a presidential campaign. Something comforts me about this, bringing the abstract angst down to something tactile, something grounding. I can't feed the 21 million people who are unemployed, but I can put bread into a bag. I come back, week after week, a ritual. I begin to see familiar faces in the Friday morning darkness at the fairgrounds. It occurs to me that I didn't know I could meet new people during this time. I see a fellow volunteer readjust his mask during a quiet moment and it strikes me that I have spoken with him for months and never knew he had a mustache.

A friend tells me on our weekly phone call that she has to remember that life isn't paused. I know what she means. I didn't realize that things could be new, we could start something in the middle of what feels like an enormous "STOP". When two weeks stretch into eight months, we realize that this isn't a blip. This is Monday.

TAKE A BREATH

by DAVID LEE



NEVER CONQUERED BUT HERE - I

by MIGUEL MARIN

We all breathe in.

We all breathe out.

My sister finally loses it and confronts a woman in Costco who is not wearing a mask. The woman looks her dead in the eye and says "I can't breathe." She proceeds to chatter to her friend and walks away, shooting dirty looks over her shoulder.

Does she know what those words mean? They sound familiar. A Black man said them on the news in May. I wonder if she knows this.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

I have a panic attack in the car on the way to drop off a meal for a friend who just got home from the hospital, terrified that I will accidentally kill him with this virus that doesn't care about my good intentions. I hate not being able to trust my own body anymore. I come home and check Instagram and see that twenty of my friends have gathered for a house party. I see post after post captioned with an iteration of "quarantining!". Something doesn't click in my mind. I scroll through Instagram stories filled with statistics about this unthinking, unfeeling virus. I scroll through photos of groups of people hugging. I don't see masks. One of my senior citizens peers through blurred, cloudy cataracts as I drop off her still-warm lunch. She is wearing gloves, an N95 mask, a face shield, and a look of terror. I wish I could hug her. I consider deleting Instagram.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

My neighborhood starts a puzzle exchange. None of them have all the pieces, but we don't care. Something about knowing that a person set this puzzle on a bench for us to share fills the gaps in the picture. A woman down the street is a talented seamstress and she sews cloth masks in every color and distributes them to anyone who needs them. A gentleman at the food bank tells me that a local man gave a quarter of a million of his own dollars to the hospital. Someone writes notes of encouragement and ties them to the bushes on the bike path. People start smiling with their eyes, the crinkles brightening the sliver of face visible above

their mask. I hope they know I am smiling back.

A friend teaches middle school science to tiny faceless boxes on Zoom. I think she is brave. She shows up every day. An old man takes my temperature when I go to volunteer. I think he is brave. He shows up every day. I see firefighters strategizing about how to protect communities, animals, plants. I think they are brave. They show up every day. All around me, I see people waking up and driving to work, dousing themselves in hand sanitizer and lending a hand. I begin to understand what people mean when they talk about the human spirit. I see resilience and adaptability. I begin to think that we might make it.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

It is Monday.

A man in a blue suit tweets from his hospital room that we should not be afraid of this virus. I feel like I am losing my mind. I read articles about family members saying goodbye to their loved ones over Zoom, over phone calls, through the borrowed voices of healthcare professionals, through barriers of rubber gloves and gowns. I see photos of people with tubes down their throats, prone and wired and exposed. I imagine this man in the blue suit speaking to them. I imagine him telling them not to be afraid.

They are not breathing in. A machine is.

They are not breathing out. A machine is.

I am angry, I am joyful, I am terrified, I am enraged. I feel the tension between joy and grief so palpably I feel like I could cut it with a butter knife. I am engaged beyond what I have ever experienced. I watch stupid comedies and listen to podcasts about virology. I stop making plans further than a week away. I learn the difference between information and certainty. I take more walks. I send texts to voters and a homeless man texts me back not to worry, that he has cast his ballot. I hear on NPR that a community has knitted sweaters for a tiny hairless opossum in Texas. I make a list of everything that has kept me going these last eight months. I start with five items, and before I know it, I have filled up a whole page. I marvel at the way that we can hold all of this at once.

I think of how, if asked eight months ago if we



would be able to handle a pandemic, we would have laughed. I wonder if this is a small mercy, this daily uncertainty. It reminds me of God sending manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, enough for one day. I think a lot about dependence. I think a lot about my own smallness. I think about every choice I have had to make in the last eight months. I feel a twinge of gratitude that I was only asked to make a few each day, that I didn't need the strength to make all of them at once. Small mercies.

I breathe in.

I breathe out.

It is Monday.

I walk into a voting booth and carefully fill in little boxes with a black marker. I push my paper through a slit and wonder if it matters. For the first

time, I think it does.

Tomorrow is Tuesday.

I know that Wednesday will not hold every answer. I know that a Jewish radical who was killed 2,000 years ago has more control than an American man in a funny-shaped office ever will. I know that Thursday will come. And Friday. I know that we will see Saturday, and Sunday, another Monday, and, inexplicably, another Tuesday. I know that more viruses will hop from animals to people, that there will be more important Tuesdays, that we will still be fighting for racial justice, that men in blue suits will still exist, and that families will still need bread.

And yet, somehow, I think we're going to make it.

BIOGRAPHIES

LITERATURE

Andrew MacQuarrie is a writer, a veteran, and a Family Medicine Resident. He has previously published in The Montreal Review, The Write Launch, Pennsylvania English, and On The Premises.

Angela Pham grew up in Virginia, and attended University of Virginia. She is currently a second-year medical student at DGSOM. In her free time, she enjoys exploring the food scene in LA, cooking and baking, attempting to recreate Bob Ross paintings, and most of all, writing.

Ashley Huynh is a senior at UCLA studying Psychobiology and minoring in Professional Writing. When she is not doing clinical research, teaching undergraduate life science, or doing HIV counseling, she loves to write personal essays and creative fiction. She plans to apply to medical school, in hopes of becoming a physician. Check out her work here: <https://ashleyhuynh.myportfolio.com/>.

Calvin Yao is currently a medical student and an aspiring physician. He is an immigrant and a proud son of immigrants, for whom his piece is dedicated to. In his free time, Calvin enjoys watching basketball, eating corn cheese with lactaid, checking Venmo, and hanging out with friends.

Guneet Kaur(she/her) is a Bay Area born & raised, Punjab-rooted, and Los Angeles based poet and medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. She recently graduated with her Masters in Narrative Medicine from Columbia where she explored the liberatory powers of storytelling in healing work and worked on her craft of writing poetry. In the words of Octavia E. Butler, Guneet is “positively obsessed” with lifting weights, hiking off trails, fresh mint chutney, lying in the sun, creating art in community, Jamila Woods, and plants!

Hattie Huston-Paterson is a general surgery resident who intends to pursue her calling as a trauma surgeon, incorporating the principles of health justice and human dignity into her daily labor.

Joseph Bell is a neurosurgery resident with extensive experience in forward time travel.

Kate Gieschen is a recent graduate of the UCLA School of Nursing. She will be beginning her career as a pediatric oncology nurse in January. She wrote this piece on November 2nd, 2020.

Kate Coursey grew up writing stories for children and young adults. In the future, she hopes to publish novels and gain more experience writing short stories.

Kiara Owens - Currently surviving third year medical student with dreams of one day knowing what kind of doctor she wants to be. California native, undergrad at UC Berkeley, who loves taking off into nature to recharge from hospital life.

Lauren Taiclet is a first-year medical student at DGSOM. After spending most of her life on the East Coast, she is excited to be attending medical school in LA. She recently completed her Master's degree in Narrative Medicine at Columbia University and is interested in medical humanities, communication, and bioethics.

Lizeth Carrillo - I am a first generation Mexican-American daughter of a single immigrant mother. Growing up in the urban setting of San Pedro, CA, my motivations for medicine comes from my desire to return to my community and provide care for marginalized individuals. In my free time, I enjoy dancing, gardening, roller skating and going on walks.

Mario Eason - Living in a bubble packed with a few of my favorite things: my best friend, my creative id, a white rabbit, ghosts of love, my hopes and dreams.

Melodyanne Cheng - I am a 2nd year medical student at David Geffen School of Medicine with an interest in community health.

Peter Young is a Fellow in the Extensivist Program at UCLA. He trained at Columbia where he was a senior resident during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is interested in Narrative Medicine and the Medical Humanities and writes poetry and short fiction.

Safiya Lahlaif grew up in Massachusetts and earned her bachelor's degree from Northeastern University. She is currently a fourth-year medical student at DGSOM.

Sanna Tam - Someone who doesn't understand the point of mini-bios and hate describing about themselves, but I am a nurse and a writer. These two things intersect sometimes.

Sarah Ho is a 2nd year MECN student in the UCLA School of Nursing. With a background in acting, music, and journalism, she hopes to incorporate the arts into her work as a nurse.

Shiv Nadkarni is a medical student and creative from New Jersey who expresses himself through song, dance, and written word. In much of his creative and academic work, he is interested in exploring issues of identity, gender, race and diaspora. You can find out more about him and his work at www.shiv-nadkarni.com

Steve Cramer - Neurology by day, poetry and music by night.

VISUAL ART

A. Lenore Ackerman is an assistant professor in the Department of Urology specializing in pelvic floor disorders and incontinence. She enjoys spending her free time enjoying the amazing natural beauty of California.

Carolina Mendiguren - I'm originally from Queens, NY, and I love seeing the world as a pastel dreamscape.

Clay Dungfelder is from Sierra Madre, California. He loves animals, nature, and has a positive outlook on life.

Consuela Nance - A restless creative that leads with my heart, who this year has become more ambitious yet sensitive, more rebellious yet vulnerable but still brave enough to dream!

David Lee - I try to capture the power and peace that nature brings to human beings.

Dorwin Birt has been at UCLA almost since time began (1981). He is a computing support coordinator in the UCLA Intellectual Development and Disabilities Research Center. His hobbies include travel and photography.

Felicia Hsu - I am a PGY-1 resident in Internal Medicine at UCLA who still enjoys thinking like an engineer. I studied Bioengineering at MIT and completed my MD at Harvard Medical School before returning home to LA. I have a passion for storytelling through writing and photography, whether it's publishing a short fictional novel during my gap year, hiding puzzles within my poetry for readers to solve, or finding the next outdoor adventure to photograph.

Greta Tamkus is a second-year medical student at UCLA.

Ioana Popescu is a clinician and health services researcher with the Department of Medicine. She uses photography as a way to understand and connect with the world.

Jose Terrazas - I've been a life-long appreciator of the photographic arts, but only in the last 15 years have I really pursued a deeper understanding of the medium. I've found that photography, because my drawing and painting skills are lacking, provides me with the means to express myself artistically.

Larry Mao - I'm a nature lover and landscape photography fan, especially of mountain and backcountry scenery.

Maggie Tsang is a second-year medical student at UCLA. She enjoys hiking with her dog, drinking overly-sweetened iced coffee, and tending to her ever-growing collection of plants.

Michelle Guan - Having trekked across 12 different countries and counting, Michelle is an avid explorer and enjoys using photography to capture the beauty, cuisines, and cultures found all over the world. Michelle Guan graduated from UCLA in 2018 and is currently a medical student at the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine (go Bruins!).

Miguel Marin is a post-doctoral scholar in the Department of Neurology. His primary research interests include the mechanisms that govern neural and glial regeneration in the central nervous system; however, he finds the entirety of neuroscience a never-ending source of fascination. When he is not in the lab, you can find him in front of his easel painting or studying the works and techniques of other painters.

Natalie Cherry - I am a neuroscientist and watercolour artist from South Africa, residing in Los Angeles. I am passionate about using art to build a dynamic community that celebrates its members and promotes inclusivity. Some of my work has fundraised for immigration rights in California, as well as trans healthcare and shelter for LGBTQIA* individuals in South Africa. Ultimately, I paint to express and I enjoy working with others in the process!

Neil Parker - Avid landscape and portrait photographer. Has been part of the BEAT since its inception.

Nima Golzy completed medical school and Internal Medicine residency training at DGSOM at UCLA. He joined the faculty as a Hospitalist in 2019 primarily teaching students and training residents at UCLA Medical Center in Santa Monica. He likes to road trip throughout the US and is making progress on his journey to visit all the National Parks.

Sahar Ashrafzadeh is a second-year medical student at UCLA. She loves taking naps, cooking new recipes, and creating art.

Sarah Park - Gastroenterology Fellow at UCLA Health. I find that the beauty of nature is reflected in the beauty of viscera - my practice is an attempt to capture that beauty.

Stephanie Stephanie - Growing up in a third world country, I have lived in four countries and speak 5 languages. I see my canvas as an expression of love, life and passion. And medicine is truly the hardest art I could master.

Suman Dutta - Researcher || Photography Enthusiast || Electronics Hobbyist

Tiffany Fan - I am a medical student and LA native interested in pursuing emergency medicine; however my career plans were put on hold this year as I needed to get an urgent surgery. I rediscovered painting and writing as an escape from pain during my illness and recovery, and hope my own experiences as a patient will shape my ability to provide empathetic care to vulnerable patients in the future.

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