wild onions
The title of our journal has raised a good deal of speculation. The wild onion is a common garden-variety weed, a hardy plant that grows almost anywhere and tends to spring up in unexpected places throughout the woods and fields and roadways in this part of the country. It blossoms into an unusual purple flower and its underground bulb, if tasted, yields a pungent, spicy flavor. The wild onion is a symbol of the commonplace yet surprising beauty that is living and growing around us all the time, the spice that though uncultivated, unexpectedly thrives and – if we only take time to notice – enhances life.

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Morning Chores  
© Clay Cooper, MSII

Back cover:  
Door of No Return (Gorée Island)  
© Kristin Berger

Inside back cover:  
Couple in the Night  
© Mike Nakhala

Selection Day Photographs  
Courtesy of Mike Nakhala:  
Inside front cover, pages 4 and 5

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Submissions are due by January 15 of each calendar year and can be sent via email to: wildonions@hmc.psu.edu.

Visit our website to download a copy of Wild Onions at http://www2.med.psu.edu/humanities/wild-onions-2015.

Wild Onions is an annual publication funded by The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine at Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine. It is a journal of poetry, prose, photography, and visual art created by members of the entire Hershey Medical Center community.

Faculty and staff – both clinical and non-clinical – patients, families, volunteers, and medical, graduate, physician assistant, and nursing students are invited to submit original (not previously published) literary or artistic work on all topics. A theme is selected by student Senior Editors to inspire additional submissions each year. The annual theme and our electronic submission form may be found at http://www2.med.psu.edu/humanities/wild-onions-2015. You may also submit directly to the Department of Humanities by email via wildonions@hmc.psu.edu. For an unbiased selection process, we ask that the creator’s name not be present on the piece. For submissions via email, we ask that you list identifying information separately from the piece (name, relationship to Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, mailing address, email address, telephone number, medium of visual art if submitting images electronically). You may also mail in submissions to the address listed below. If you wish to have your entry returned, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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Activities of The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine include:

- The Kienle Service Grant, co-sponsored with the International Health Interest Group, for medical students engaged in volunteer work with underserved patients.
- The Doctors Kienle Lectureship, which brings national leaders in humane medicine to Hershey Medical Center.
- The Experience of Care Project, which teaches medical students through participant-observation studies.
- The Doctors Kienle Prizes in literature, art, and photography featured in Wild Onions.
- The Doctors Kienle Collection of materials concerning humanistic medical practice (located in the Harrell Library).
- The Medical Student Humanitarian Award, co-sponsored with The Association of Faculty and Friends.
- The Mary Louise Wimer Jones Humanitarian Award, given annually to an outstanding resident.
- The Nurse’s Humanitarian Award, in honor of Lawrence F. Kienle, M.D., Humanism in Medicine Awards, co-sponsored with The Arnold P. Gold Foundation, for a graduating medical student and for a faculty member.
- The Kienle Cultural Series, a series of presentations in the arts and humanities.
- Futuri Portraits, a photography exhibit by Joseph Gascho, M.D.

Visit our website to download a copy of Wild Onions at http://www2.med.psu.edu/humanities/wild-onions-2015.
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am honored and excited to be the guest editor for the 2014-2015 edition of Wild Onions! I have had the chance to meet with many of the medical student editors to discuss their ideas for this year’s publication, and based upon our conversations and reviewing the submissions for this edition, I am happy to announce that this year’s Wild Onions is yet another wonderful success! The chosen theme for this year is “Unexpected Echoes,” but what exactly does that mean? In acoustics lingo, an echo is defined as a reflection of sound arriving after the sound was created. Common examples include the echo produced after dropping a pebble into the bottom of a well, or yelling out to a distant building or mountain. Echoes are often experienced and interpreted by someone other than their creator at a distance in time and space. The spatial disconnect between sound source and receiver may lead to distortion over time. In essence, what we hear may not be what we expected.

While reflecting upon the theme of “Unexpected Echoes” I could not help but think about the classic children’s book *Horton Hears a Who*. In the book, Horton, an elephant, hears a faint yelp from a speck of dust—an echo. Horton surmises that a person lives on the speck and places it on a clover, vowing to protect it. He cannot see the creator of the echoed sound but later discovers that the speck is actually a tiny planet, home to a community called Whoville, where the microscopic creatures called Whos live. The Mayor of Whoville asks Horton to protect them from harm, which Horton happily agrees to, proclaiming throughout the book that “a person’s a person, no matter how small.” For his belief in something that others could not see or hear, Horton is ridiculed and harassed by the other animals in the jungle. It isn’t until some other animals hear a sound from the speck for themselves that they acknowledge the existence of the Whos and vow to help Horton protect the tiny community.

Published in 1954 by Random House, the story was written and illustrated by American writer, poet and cartoonist, Theodor Geisel. As with many Dr. Seuss books, *Horton Hears a Who* presents a strong moral message—in this case the importance of equality. Geisel is said to have written the book as a political allegory as result of a visit to Japan. Previously, he had harbored anti-Japan sentiments before and during World War II but after the war, changed his views dramatically. Since then countless parents, including my own, have read the book to their children and grandchildren, and a myriad of philosophical discussions have been launched to interpret the meanings—and consider the implications—of Geisel’s story. Regardless of Geisel’s true intent, *Horton Hears a Who* has resulted in unexpected echoes. Such creative gestures stretch our imagination and resonate within you more unexpected echoes!

Sincerely,
John Potochny

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**Welcome**

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**Cheyvon Alderson, MSIV**

Cheyvon hails from the West Coast where she majored in studio art as an undergraduate and earned her Master of Public Health degree at San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health. In her public health work, she focused on Women’s Health and wrote her thesis on the health-care response to domestic violence. Medicine found Cheyvon after a personal life transformation that carried her across the finish line of her first marathon and inspired her to become a personal trainer. Working as a trainer made her fall in love with the building of a relationship with a person based on health metamorphosis and she chose to come to Hershey for medical school because of the patient-centered care and teaching and the humanities curriculum. She believes in a strong commitment to humanities is vital to help both professionals and patients remember that people and the intricacies of their lives are at the center of caring for their health. She is very excited to be pursuing a career in family medicine, and also looking forward to crossing the finish line of her third marathon this Spring!

---

**Hannah Wakefield, MSIV**

Hannah is a bit of a rolling stone. Born in Florida, she grew up in Georgia, California, and Oregon, then attended Coe College in Iowa for undergrad, where she double-major in biology and English. She served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in The Gambia, West Africa for two years, teaching math and science and volunteering at child health clinics, then returned to the states to attend graduate school at Georgia State University, earning her Master in Public Health degree in Epidemiology. Her focus in graduate school was in infectious disease epidemiology, nutrition, and global health. She worked for the Tennessee State Health Department for a year and then, finally, came to medical school. She loves Penn State, especially Wild Onions, which she has had the pleasure to be a part of all four years of school. Before she heads off to the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC for her pediatrics residency training, she is taking time to listen to the echoes of her life that led her to medicine and smiling at the memories.

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**Senior Co-Editors**

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**Sneha Ghosh, MSIV**

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**Chevon Alderson, MSIV**

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**Hannah Wakefield, MSIV**

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**Student Editors**

**Art & Photo Editors:**

Back: Alex Rossi, Kristin Berger, Allison Weinstock, Stephan Leung, Tony Lin

Front: Jessica Frey, Holly Boyle, Katherine Sittig

Not Pictured: Chevon Alderson, Sudhanshu Bhatnagar, Sara Carlini, Christine Clark, Sharon Jia, Neil Manering, Jeff Olson, Risha Sinha, Hannah Wakefield

**Literature Editors:**

Back: Kristin Berger, Allison Weinstock

Front: Jessica Frey, Holly Boyle, Katherine Sittig

Not Pictured: Chevon Alderson, Sudhanshu Bhatnagar, Christine Clark, Anne Huyler, Sharon Jia, Adeline Melvin, Jeff Olson, Nika Vizcarr, Hannah Wakefield

**Other Contributing Editors:** Not pictured

Class of 2015: Darren Hill

Class of 2016: Lisa Passmore Beyers

Class of 2017: Colin DeLong, Elise Mercier

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**Art**

**Susan Mackay**

Susan Mackay was born in South Africa and lived in Johannesburg until she moved to Hershey, PA in 1989. She currently lives in Hershey with her husband, Donald. Susan began her professional career working in strategic planning and advertising. After spending years working as an executive at J. Walter Thompson and the Saatchi Group, she founded her own marketing consulting company while raising three boys: Duncan, Andrew, and Calum.

She discovered a passion for art and figurative drawing after moving to the United States.

“In drawing for me, the allure has always been the human figure. It is a continual battle to represent that force of life which flows through us. That is the true beauty. Transcending form and color of face and limb - I search for that which gives us life, and exudes from us in its joyful, passionate, and tragic forms.”

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**Photography**

**Wendy Palmer**

A resident of the Harrisburg area for the past 25 years, professional photographer Wendy Palmer is a native of Cape Town, South Africa. Here she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physiotherapy, and a Medical Honors degree in sport science from the University of Cape Town. In the United States, after the birth of their second son, Wendy completed an Associate Degree in photography at the Harrisburg Area Community College while continuing to work as a physical therapist. Today she continues to enhance her photography skills and vision through workshops with Visionary Wild and Maine Media.

Her work was included in an exhibition for regional photographers at the Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg, and she also participated in the 31st Annual Art of the State exhibition at the State Museum, Harrisburg. As a student, her work was accepted by Photographer’s Forum for publication in the Best of College Photography Annual for the years 1993, 1994, 1996 and 1997.

Every facet of photography holds a fascination worth exploring. Life is a journey and so is her freelance photography, which continually evolves.
A Mother’s Journey
© Christina Li  MSI

For months, I roamed the desert plains among the mammoth camels. Side by side, we strode along the winding dunes, my swollen feet in balance with their padded hooves. Our backs were starkly painted portraits in the harsh Saharan sky, as I gathered each grain of sand from the desolate paths—each seed carefully stored away with guidance from the stoic beasts beside me. Bitter winds stripped my skin raw and left my fingers torn—my throat eroded by the acid of another morning, leaving in its wake the faintest taste of life ahead. For days, I fought against the grain, with blistered lips, with growing weight—the camels treading still, their footsteps pushing past the pain. For you—my child—are sweeter than a drop of rain.

Gibbons For Us
© Daniel Shapiro, Ph.D.

APGARs
© Hannah Wakefield  MSIV


APGARs
© Hannah Wakefield  MSIV

Happy Birthday (Reprint from 2014)
© Jessica Frey  MSIII

I string up balloons like paper lamps Wrapped around the lattice work of a terrace And they glow like jack-o’ lanterns With their wide grins on their wide faces And I wait for them all to pop And rain down glitter I try to catch the glitter on my tongue Like snowflakes And it all stays stuck there Blue and purple sparkles latching on like beetles With their skinny bodies and their prickly legs And their big, big eyes I pull each insect off, Their bodies swollen from my blood, And I smash each one On canvas Look at all those Rorschach inkblots So red and so beautiful Like ribbons and licorice and ink suspended in water Revealing all those wishes I recite over candles on top of cakes Words that my own tongue Doesn’t know how to say

Breathing
© Jessica Frey  MSIII

Sometimes, I think we breathe loudly just so that others know we’re here. And the beats between the breaths are a kind of Morse code. You take a sliver of my breath and wind it on a new spool and you sew all those dots and dashes onto my tongue. I rub the stitches against the ridges of my mouth, hoping for a melody to come out, for those dots and dashes and spaces in between my breaths to somehow form the words I don’t know how to say. Play them like a marimba. That cough or that sneeze—It’s just our way of saying hello: Here I am. Notice me.

Boy at Rest
© Corinne Gibilterra  PIMCU/PICU
Grown-up Shoes and the Practice of Family
© Keane McCullum   MSI
The shoes are too big
My feet slip out of them
And Father’s tie drags on the floor
I am not accustomed to buttons on a shirt
A shirt that could fit both of my brothers and me
It takes me over the waves of the years ahead where I am
A man, without the stature, my voice squeaks, trying to reach the
Pitch of the deep pipes as one tries to mimic the wind.
I don his stethoscope, black bag in my hand, in the same way
He comes through the door, kisses my mom. Brings us candy
sometimes
But not too often, says it rots our teeth.
I see the way that others respect him, trust him
I want to be him, to fit his shoes and his tie, to carry myself with
the same drive
Purpose, meaning which allows him to leave us every morning
but brings him back every night
He teaches me sacrifice, balance, strength.
He teaches my feet to grow and to walk forward.

Bumper Cars
© Jessica Frey   MSIII
my words bump into each other
like bumper cars
and I can taste the
whiplash in the back of my throat
all I can do is hope
that they coat my throat like cotton candy
and I can learn how to spin them into sugar
so that someone else can taste them
lick them from their lips
those sugary wisps
and maybe then my words
will light up like the lights on a ferris wheel
spin round and round
in a pattern that you can understand

Along the Wall
© Adeline Melvin   MSII

Lucy
© Tanner Gregory   MSII

Caterpillar
© Nathan Wong   MSI

Susquehanna Skies in Blue and Orange
© Jonathan Frazier   Center Stage Performer

Judge’s Comments
This artist has beautifully captured the stunning sunset reflected in the Susquehanna River. The composition with the sun as a focal point, offset to the left, helps to create dynamic tension and movement with the diagonal clouds. Their dramatic coloring is reflected in the equally colorful but calm scene of the river with its horizontal lines. Together this creates an interesting and absorbing scene.
I'm minding my own business, the only patron in the waiting room, when he comes in. Bang. "You're going to see the doctor, and that's that," his mother says. She takes a second to stomp on the carpet and cleans off her shoes. He holds her by one hand.

"Sit down, kid," I tell him. He looks up, surprised, alarmed. Then marches right over and sits right down.

He is a—what do you say nowadays?—colored child.

Dark skin. Chubby cheeks. Big eyes. No hair, just like me.

Mom looks me over, judges my approximate age and threat level. The wiry grays.

"Oh yeah?" I prod.

"Why are you here?"

"Huh?"

"What are you in for?"

"Sure have," I say.

"That ain't true," says the kid.

"That ain't true."
If the current flowed both ways?
How much more could we have shared
Those light-emitting diodes.
How I wish now I had explained then
And offered more advice.
You looked them up yourself
At the project not at you.
I refused. I was angry
You said explain it to me.
Anymore.
I said they don't work that way
My project failing, you offered advice
When I turned you away.
I should have remembered
So you became an artist.

Helianthus on High
© Clay Cooper MSII

© Spencer Katz MSI
M.D./Ph.D. Candidate
They said you couldn’t be an engineer
So you became an artist.
I should have remembered
When I turned you away.
My project failing, you offered advice
Outdated.
I said they don’t work that way
Anymore.
You explained it to me.
I refused. I was angry
At the project not at you.
You looked them up yourself
And offered more advice.
How I wish now I had explained then
Those light-emitting diodes.
How much more could we have shared
If the current flowed both ways?

The Metamorphosis of a Penn State Medical Student
© Jennifer Spicher
Wife of Jonathan Spicher MSIV

© William Christie MSII

“Mr. Christie!” Henry grinned, abruptly called off
to bring home hundreds of dollars on a good day.
I hadn’t really been embellishing when he’d claimed
he was a captivating performer. I began to wonder if he
that I had loathed in the classroom made him a
for their cameras and wallets. The disinhibition
bucket, and the spectacle had people reaching
my classroom was now focused on a single 5-gallon
ensemble plying their trade for a growing crowd.
I were downtown when we stumbled across his
the rhythm of his drumsticks on 5-gallon paint
by serenading tourist-laden Michigan Avenue with
actually provided for his family as a ’bucket boy’
neither of whom worked. To his credit, Henry
he continued to struggle with substance abuse as a
15-year-old seventh grader. So did his parents,
neither of whom worked. To his credit, Henry
was above discipline at home. His cut included a
with me. I was even more impressed by the manner
in which he did it. People stopped in their tracks
to appreciate his talent, and the confidence oozed
out of his personality. I felt proud of the Henry I
met downtown, but I also felt ashamed of myself
for never having met him previously.
My perception of Henry had everything to do with
context. The first day he walked into my class,
he brought a lifetime of negative experiences with
school, a perpetual reminder of what he could
not accomplish. As his new teacher, I faulted the systems that left the school without funding for adequate special education support or for the arts programs where he might have tasted success. That said, I became an extension of his negative experience, and by the time I’d met the proud Bucket Boy on the street it was too late for him to bring that confidence into my class.
I see shades of Henry in patients. Many of them bring the same baggage to the exam room that he brought to school: an extended history of illness, poor scores, and disappointing results, all documented in their record. The clinic becomes a place of failure rather than a place of comfort and affirmation. In our efforts to direct precious time toward the most biomedically important aspects of a case, we risk communicating that we value our patient’s latest data more than we value them as a person.
As his teacher, I let the system dictate how I valued Henry, and I based my expectations for him off of a narrative that didn’t begin to do him justice. He’d never had a good prognosis as a learner, and my vision of success for him never surpassed damage control. Despite our best efforts at data-driven improvement, the school never shook its legacy of failure and was closed by the district. We were looking at students the wrong way. I’m glad I was able to at least briefly know Henry the way he deserved to be known.

Walls of concrete rise high above my head
and resolute,
this building is one with
purpose
but a different purpose
than the cement buildings
I saw rising in Palestine, unfinished
rebar sticking out of the roof, just in case
resources are found to build
another floor for another child,
for another family, built piece by piece out of the rubble
like the doctors built piece by piece in this building.
Doctors who may one day
build families and houses,
but not yet.
Today it is the doctors who are being fashionable.
Bone breaks upon books,
each ligament of the cadavers
finding new life, shaped
by hours of lecture and overheads.
Like cells they divide and multiply
the capacity their minds and bodies can endure
until one day they emerge
stretching, the stern grey skin of this building bursting,
and find they have been changed.

© Jennifer Spicher
Wife of Jonathan Spicher MSIV

Diode

The Metamorphosis of a Penn State Medical Student
© Jennifer Spicher
Wife of Jonathan Spicher MSIV

© William Christie MSII

© Clay Cooper MSII

© Spencer Katz MSI
M.D./Ph.D. Candidate

Even in a failing Chicago public school characterized by disruptive behavior, several students’ reputations transcended the classroom. Henry was one such student. District policy required that he be present for at least two hours of school each day, and that was about as much as anyone could take. He could hardly read or write, but he always found the perfect words to antagonize his teachers and peers, who responded in kind. Quirky playing an academic game on my iPad qualified as a good day for him; an average day involved me untying his wiry frame from one of his classmates before wasting valuable class time on the physical and emotional fallout. Still, the school needed his attendance to stave off closure. I took solace in knowing that regardless of his performance, his age would render him ineligible to return to our school the next year.

To be fair, the deck was stacked against Henry from day one. He’d been born addicted to drugs, and he continued to struggle with substance abuse as a 15-year-old seventh grader. So did his parents, neither of whom worked. To his credit, Henry actually provided for his family as a ‘bucket boy’ by serenading tourist-laden Michigan Avenue with the rhythm of his drumsticks on 5-gallon paint buckets. We didn’t have resources for a school band, but my science classroom offered him ample opportunity to practice, both on his desk and on his peers. Because he held the cash in his family, Henry was above discipline at home. His cut included a consequence-free reign of terror at school complete with fast-food lunches catered by his father.

That said, I became an extension of his negative experience, and by the time I’d met the proud Bucket Boy on the street it was too late for him to bring that confidence into my class.

The summer after Henry moved on, a friend and I were downtown when we stumbled across his ensemble plying their trade for a growing crowd of tourists. As we approached, I described Henry as I had many times previously, but it must have been hard to reconcile my description with what we saw. The tornado that had repeatedly decimated my classroom was now focused on a single 5-gallon bucket, and the spectacle had people reaching for their cameras and wallets. The disinhibition that I had loathed in the classroom made him a captivating performer. I began to wonder if he hadn’t really been embellishing when he’d claimed to bring home hundreds of dollars on a good day.

“Mr. Christie!” Henry grinned, abruptly called off the set, and got up to approach me. As his audience applauded and shuffled away, he enthusiastically introduced my friend and I to several young colleagues and struck up a conversation. I was completely taken aback—Henry and I were always at odds, and I hardly expected him to acknowledge me, let alone sacrifice some business to catch up with me. I was even more impressed by the manner in which he did it. People stopped in their tracks to appreciate his talent, and the confidence oozed out of his personality. I felt proud of the Henry I met downtown, but I also felt ashamed of myself for never having met him previously.

My perception of Henry had everything to do with context. The first day he walked into my class, he brought a lifetime of negative experiences with school, a perpetual reminder of what he could not accomplish. As his new teacher, I faulted the systems that left the school without funding for adequate special education support or for the arts programs where he might have tasted success. That said, I became an extension of his negative experience, and by the time I’d met the proud Bucket Boy on the street it was too late for him to bring that confidence into my class.

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The Elixir of Defeat
© Lauren Nord  MSI
They said that it could not be done,
He’d work to no avail.
But still the chemist tried and tried
To pierce death’s gloomy veil.
He measured and mixed, fiddled and fixed
With practically pious precision
While a crowd stood outside, vicious and snide,
Shouting out words with derision.
“So you want to play God,” they spat at the man,
“By trying your hand at alchemy
Then you must learn to pay the price
For taking a part in blasphemy.”
The lonely scholar was mocked and ignored
For keeping his lifelong ambition,
And quietly he reflected aloud,
“But I had such an honorable vision!”
He knew, deep inside, that the reason behind
His endeavor was misunderstood.
His desire was to eradicate pain
And service the much greater good.
As this thought slipped away from his weary mind
So too did the vial he was wielding,
Upon products he’d not yet been yielding.
Incensed by ineptness and frustrated by failure.
He renounced any chance of recovery.
The scientist destroyed the reaction he’d employed,
Naïve of his brilliant discovery.

Who, Me?
© Jarad Hall  Patient

Taken ‘back
© Tony Olivieri  Patient
A nasty on my nose
being excised.
Playing in the Sun
during the last Millennia…
…and the past fifteen years has finally caught up with me.
The sure handed Doctor
has well trained assistants, and
the Procedure proceeds
without untoward incident.
The Doc and I got to talkin’, seems
she was conducting a little survey.
Did I have Pork & Sauerkraut
for my New Year’s dinner?
Rippling waves of bright memory
splashed across decades of ritual.
We shared our favorite recipes
as the final stitch was tied.

Locked
© Robert S. Ganse
Information Technology

Perfect Timing
© Carmen Marcucci
Daughter of Gina Marcucci
Neural and Behavioral Sciences
Wind Songs  (Reprint from 2014)
© Lynelle Patient

Call to me, Winds of the Wild North Country
Bring me the sharp scent of snow on the air
Harsh is the land where the reindeer still run free
Blue ice & glaciers & white polar bear
Ice mansion igloos, the Midnight Sun story
Like Perry, like London, I long to be there.
Soft are the breezes that blow off the islands
Scented hibiscus & sweet sugar cane
Beckon to travelers; paradise opens
Beaches, smooth sands where the silky tides drain
Sails filled with equatorial trade winds
Carry me where, far away from life’s pain
Tropical waters of turquoise remain.
Swept from my world by a childlike yearning
Spun like the whirlwinds that swirl in the sand
To vast Africa, where the soul can unburden
Wild herds of zebra & wildebeest stand
Stretching as wide and as far as the land.

Treasure
© Neil Manering  MSIV

Rope Swing
© David Baird, M.D.  PGY4
Department of Dermatology

Ghosts of the Temple Bar
© J. Spence Reid, M.D.
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

Judge’s Comments
“Ghosts of the Temple Bar” is a great conceptual image. It is mysterious and captivating. The texture of the cobble stones and the diagonal lines from the bottom corners lead the eye to the white line on the road which takes the viewer to the next point of interest—the people moving about on the sidewalk. The woman in the forefront is captivating, large, and perfectly placed in the left third of the frame. She is stationary despite being in the middle of a road, and although her features are a little more clearly defined, she is still ghostlike. She evokes a sense of wonder. The curve of both sidewalks leads the eye back towards the woman and then away to the right, and captures the viewer’s interest with the people waiting on the sidewalk. The bar placement and the lighting also gives the image a sense of intrigue, being fixed and sharp in contrast to the ethereal people in the image. The entire image displays good tones and contrast between light (highlights) and dark (shadows). This is a fabulous image, which completely encompasses this year’s theme: Unexpected Echoes.
It's truly unfair how early bedtime is when you're six. With what is worse is that I have to take a bath every night before bed. Usually I hate baths, but at Grandma's house I don't mind as much. When I'm at Grandma's, Aunt Robin is in charge of getting me ready for bed. Our bedtime routine begins with quiet time, spent coloring in the living room. Aunt Robin retrieves her coloring supplies, plops down on the tan shag carpet and opens her 3-tier Crayola crayon box, complete with 96 different crayons and an easel-like stand. I marvel at this proud display of her tools. She meticulously cares for these crayons; their tips are always sharp, giving the appearance that they are brand new despite use. She keeps each crayon in its original spot in the rainbow, never taking more than one crayon out of the box at a time. My favorite thing about these crayons is the enticing, imaginative names of each color. Mango Tango, Electric Lime, Razzmatazz and Purple Mountain Majesty. I'm not old enough to use these pristine crayons but I have my own set, a gallon Ziploc freezer bag, filled with dull-tipped crayons and peeling labels. Aunt Robin likes Barbie crayons and an easel-like stand. I marvel at this. My favorite thing about these crayons is that she and Grandma have lived in these past few funeral. Tonight, I volunteered to take Aunt Robin to help me when it's time to wash my hair. I hate to get my hair washed! The soap always finds a way to seep in between my tightly squeezed eyelids. It burns my eyes, and I cry and call out for my mom, so she can wrap me up in a towel and hold me on her lap until I feel better.

Tonight is different. Aunt Robin picks up a washcloth and drapes it over my face, telling me to press it against my forehead. The washcloth forms a seal, a cloak that protects my face. The watermelon scent of my shampoo reaches my nose, but no sudsy breech the barrier. I hear her turn on the faucet to fill the plastic Cleveland Indians cup, a souvenir brought home by a person with Down's syndrome gives it memorable poignancy. The movement from a childhood concept of death is something she may never truly understand. I'm glad that she can live just a little while longer under this veil of naiveté. But I know that eventually, sure enough, the sadness will seep in. I wish I could find a way to protect her from the pain she is bound to feel, to absorb or deflect it, but I know it's impossible. For now, it is time to wash her hair. I hand her the washcloth, "Here, hold this against your forehead." She scowls at me, indignant, and hisses her response, "No! I'm not taking a bath." I'm taken aback by her child-like outburst, unsure of how to respond to the uncharacteristic defiance of her voice. I sit down to take off my shoes, trying to buy some time to think how to coax her into taking the much-needed bath.

When I look up I see her in the doorway of her mom's bedroom, standing at the threshold with one hand on the doorknob, balanced on one foot as if frozen mid-step. She is 60 years old now, and her weary frame seems even shorter than I remember. She stands in silence, with her back towards me; I can't see her expression as she looks into her mom's room. I stand up and walk to her. "Would you like to take a shower in your mom's bathroom instead?" I ask. Without turning around, she nods.

I ready the shower, adjusting the temperature until it is just right. As Aunt Robin begins to take off her clothes, I realize the embarrassment I feel is self-generated. She extends her hand towards me, wanting help stepping onto the slippery surface. I grasp her hand firmly, placing my other hand a few inches behind her back in case she slips. Her hand is much smaller than mine and I am reminded of how much has changed since my days as her coloring apprentice. I help her in and she sits down on the chair placed in the shower. She puts her face under the steady stream of water. Drops of water roll down her face, her thick eyelids, elephant skin and just like that, she's happy again. She leans back, drapes her folded hands atop her tummy, closes her eyes and lets out an exaggerated sigh, "Ah, this feels good." I find a washcloth and gently scrub her back. She coos, soothed by my touch. I rub her feet, washing between her tired toes. I'm happy to see this reprieve from her recent disposition; I can tell that she needs this attention.

Meanwhile, I am struggling, scrambling to cope with a rush of emotions. In my mind, I can see her standing in the doorway, alone, acting for her mother. I see her extended hand, seeking my help. I see the simplicity in her smile, as she sits looking up at the water streaming down. I see her now and, for the first time, I can see the child within her. I see her brokenness, a child who has lost her mother. I think back to my bath time and I think how I would have felt if I had lost my own mother, at that time when she was the only person who could make bad things feel better. My heart aches for my aunt. I'm sure she hasn't grasped the permanence of Grandma's passing, and I'm relieved that the concept of death is something she may never truly understand. I'm glad that she can live just a little while longer under this veil of naiveté. But I know that eventually, sure enough, the sadness will seep in. I wish I could find a way to protect her from the pain she is bound to feel, to absorb or deflect it, but I know it's impossible.
No more 25-gauge butterfly needles. None. Really? I stalk out of the supply room and glance frustratedly at the other nurses at the desk. “I’m going to Station One supply room. We’re out of 25-gauge butterflies. Do you guys need anything from the other supply room?”

They shake their heads and one of the nurses scoffs. “Seems like we’ve been out of everything on night shift lately.”

“And my exaggeration starts to echo in my head like the sound of my Asics scuffing down the empty hall between the stations. As I browse the crowded shelves in Station One’s supply room, I remember another supply room I visited last spring. I shadowed a nurse educator in one of the most highly-reputed hospitals in an impoverished West African country. Halfway through my shift on its highest-acuity ward, I learned that the hospital’s half-dozen oxygen concentrators could generate no more than 3 litres of oxygen flow per minute – barely adequate to support a stable patient. As I tried to digest this fact, I noticed that the IVs were clotting rapidly and requiring frequent replacement. When I investigated I found that because the hospital had no Tegaderm (protective adhesive film) dressings, IV catheters were taped down and left open to air, causing them to clot off quickly. One nurse informed me that his three year old dehydrated patient’s IV had stopped infusing over an hour ago; would I please replace it? He had never learned how to place an IV.

Thus I discovered the unit supply room, which consisted of two shelves – boards nailed to the wall – and a locked cabinet containing 500 millitre bags of normal saline, rewashed nasal cannulas, IV tubing, a canister of cotton balls floating in iodine, a box of gloves, and a tray of 16- to 23-gauge IV catheters. That was all. The unit charge nurse told me to conserve the gloves by gloving only the hand with which I touched the IV catheter. I fished a cotton ball out of the iodine and used that to prep the child’s arm. It was easy to place the IV because the child was too lethargic to move. Retracting the needle was harder because the IV needles were flexible wires without a flash chamber or a safety cap. When I started to pull the needle back, blood bubbled out of the catheter around it, but I had to go slowly to avoid flicking blood back at myself. I attached the primed IV tubing – there was no extension tubing – directly to the bloody catheter with my ungloved hand. I attempted to cover the IV insertion site when I taped the IV down – but I also had to conserve tape. As I carefully disposed of the needle and scrubbed my hands thoroughly, I realized, “This is healthcare. Not the layers of my-IV-pump-won’t-stop-alarming or I-hate-this-new-charting-system. Healthcare is that I did the best I could for my patient with what I had, and then I let the experience change my perspective and my practice.”

But here I am ten months later in the Station One supply room, holding a 25-gauge butterfly needle when a 23-gauge would have done just as well, with the proof of my failure to change still echoing in my head.

I want to be an outstanding professional who provides the best possible patient care and advocates for change when I encounter barriers. My privileged training and experience sets a high bar for excellent practice. But have I let it lower my standards of resourcefulness and gratitude?
Anguis invidia
© Sudhanshu Bhatnagar  MSII

I envy the snakes.
They can discard the past
When they shed their skin.
Like suits of dust and rusty ash,
Scars and memories left behind,
Telling their stories that they would
Forget.

We cannot discard our pasts,
We do not build new stories
From scratch.
They grow like moss upon moss,
Invading to the core but also
Sculpting outward in definition.
The past weighs us down
Unwavering – in distilling truth
Unsettling – in reminding us
Unchanging – in its diligence
But I would leave it
To stride unbound.

I am not a snake. The skin stays.
Each moment will grow as moss
On itself and in time’s wounds,
Irking me forever,
Like a backseat driver who knows
Too much – when I cannot
See the way.

Stet
© Sudhanshu Bhatnagar  MSII

I remember the words
But not how you said them.
Lemonade without
Lemons really.

You told me the stories
And I sort of listened
But now they’re just scribbled notes
Crisping in a drawer.

Could you tell me your stories again?
Please.
I vow to listen.
Full focus…
No lie.
No lie.
Good bye.

Threads
© Christina Li  MSI

I have this image of you and me,
contained not by glossy film or wooden frame.
It comes to me in slow waves,
with each careful stroke of cashmere or silk,
each sniff of cotton—fibers that to this day still contain
the musky aroma of citrus and wood,
your favorite scent.
The pictures are tangible, the memories vivid—
holidays and birthdays,
weddings and anniversaries—
the striped button-down you wore on our first date,
the worn knit sweater I made you for Christmas,
its threads unraveling loose slowly each year.
Though after all this time,
the shirts have long been retired to the back of the closet
and the ties bundled away in the attic,
their pigments are imprinted so deep in my mind
that I name colors after you.
The ED Note
© Stacey Milunic, M.D.
Department of Family and Community Medicine

The note was from the ED
Routed to me by an unknowing EMR
That had yet to realize I was no longer Her PCP
I skimmed it out of habit
And there, between the lengthy ROS and the nursing
notes that never seemed to change
Sat a single line
“She is under increased stress due to the recent death of
her 9 month old infant.”

Her infant
The one I had delivered
The one whose heart tones had been heard in my office
month after month, week after week
And the questions echoed through my head

I called the coroner
Who confirmed an investigation was underway
And that was the last I heard

Deep in Thought
© Jarad Hall  Patient

Nancy Burnt the Popcorn Again
© Ryan Sommers
Son of Darlene Sommers  Neural and Behavioral Sciences

Judge’s Comments
This interesting composition challenges viewers to determine the artist’s intent based on the title. It could be that “burning the popcorn” indicates a life lived without focused attention on the present. The sombre mood created by the choice of blue and black, the focus on the skeletal figure, and the varied use of line and paint techniques has resulted in a perfect sense of chaos and lack of control.
Singing the Sun Down
© Claire Flaherty, Ph.D.  Department of Neurology

There was a time in my life, after the birth of my daughter, that I experienced a heightened emotional state beyond language. I made no attempt to articulate my emotions, cherishing the sense of rapture that coursed through me as she lay in my arms suckling for the first time. Unbeknownst to my darling Larry, ever and always at my side, I glowed in the absolute awareness of my womanhood – passion, conception, creation and nurturance. I felt a sense of utter indifference to him in the absence of malice. This was our child and God’s creation – but my experience. Indeed, in that moment, I felt deference to no one, neither to Larry, nor to my pastor, nor even to God Himself. By culture and tradition, I should have chosen a name like ‘Ruth’, ‘Esther’ or ‘Rebecca’. But there was only one word to describe my daughter and all she symbolized to me – Beloved.

Throughout the years that followed, I found fulfillment in the roles of wife, mother, sister and elementary school teacher. Larry and I ended many a bucolic summer day on the back porch, books in hand, reading the sun down before lulling Amy to sleep. Eventually transformed my confusion into moments of wonder, accompanied by an alluring sense of rapture and a state of pure joy. Long past the days of lullabies, language began to leave me, slowly and insidiously. Relinquishing the struggle to comprehend the language of others eventually transformed my confusion into moments of wonder, accompanied by an alluring sense of emotional bliss that beckoned like the sun on a December morn. Music took the place of semantics, supplanting logic with the balance and rhythm of cadence. Larry and I could no longer read together, or recite prayers together, but we could still worship, sharing our favorite hymns.

I grew steadily closer to God during that period, one with all the children He called heirs to the kingdom of heaven. As innocence overtook me, the concept of relationship gradually eluded me. I could no longer see my darling Larry or dear Amy as Larry and Amy. All became one, like the one hundred and forty four thousand, singing a new song. But they remain my loved ones, as I remain theirs.

Now, I am in a state that doctors call ‘Advanced Frontotemporal Lobar Degeneration’. Once again, as in my initial experience of motherhood, I find myself beyond language. It holds little meaning and even less relevance to me. I wonder, with a familiar sense of indifference, “do the articulate ever notice how contrived their rational world is; how linear, how unreal?” My world is now one of sight and sound and touch and taste and scent. My immediate experience is my reality, expressed through melody. With unabashed joy I hum, I chuckle, chortle and laugh – and oh yes! I sing!

In dedication to Larry and Roberta Sitler, whose lessons about life and relationship will endure through time like the sound of many waters.

Mirror of Matriarch
© Corinne Gibilterra
FMC/UPICU

Unexpected Echoes
© Larry Sitler  Frontotemporal Dementia Caregiver Support Group Member

Several years ago my dear wife was diagnosed with a rare and terrible form of dementia, Frontal Temporal Degeneration (FTD). I was faced with drastic changes in her lovely personality, along with her bizarre behavior and seeming indifference toward me and our long-time loving relationship. These changes impacted our children and grandchildren as well.

After three-years of caring for her at home the time came when it was necessary, for her safety and my sanity, to place her in a long-term care facility.

Not all at once, but at the same time, rather suddenly, I was faced with the prospect of having to live the rest of my life without her, and having to be alone for the first time in my life.

Having to face the fact that the old reality was past and that I was experiencing a transition ushering in a new, unknown, rather terrifying reality. I stood, in my mind, in what appeared to be an unending valley surrounded by dark and ominous mountains where the long past, the momentary present, and the scary, unknown future meet and I shouted, “HELP!”

I thought that surely there would be echoes returning to me in a place such as this. “HELP, HELP!” I shouted, listening closely for those certain to be heard echoes. Nothing was heard save the sound of my anxious heartbeat followed by a profound silence. Sadly, returning to my reality, the thought occurred and I had reoccured that there would be no return echoes from my cries for help.

Eventually, the reassuring phone calls began, and the cards and letters, then the knocks on the door. Eventually the reassuring phone calls began, and the cards and letters, then the knocks on the door. Return answering the door and finding the person standing there asking simply, “Are you...?”

Unexpected, the reassuring phone calls began, and the cards and letters, then the knocks on the door. Unexpected echo followed by a profound silence. Sadly, returning to my reality, the thought occurred and I had reoccurred that there would be no return echoes from my cries for help.

Choosing to face the reality of no return, I returned to my own reality. I put away the past, the present, and the future, and faced the critical, unknown, rather terrifying reality, I stood, in my mind, in what appeared to be an unending valley surrounded by dark and ominous mountains where the long past, the momentary present, and the scary, unknown future meet.

The valley was filled with dark and foreboding place. I really have no need to because every time I almost gave up on receiving any echoes, they manifested themselves in many forms: love, compassion, empathy, sacrifice, obligation, commitment, and identity with the terrible sense of loss that enters our lives when those we love and have loved begin to undergo these drastic changes, and we experience them slipping away a little, and sometimes a lot, at a time.

Temporal Degeneration (FTD). I was faced with drastic changes in her personality, along with all the immensely helpful suggestions and other information relating to all phases of this new reality. It has been, and is, so encouraging to be able to meet with folks who really are able to understand our personal reality.

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Wedding Day
© Ryan Sommers  Son of Darlene Sommers  Neural and Behavioral Sciences

You were born a baby blue
a soundless little girl
the cord tied ‘round your neck
to make a bow
the room was breathless
quiet as the moon
Your mother asked why
you weren’t crying?
They said they didn’t know
perhaps for times to come
and times that soon will go
you came unraveled
grace filled your lungs
to set your eyes aglow

Me a few months earlier
a newborn seconds old
“I got my boy!” my father boomed
atop a golden horse
and galloped out of the room
and down the hall to tell the earth
as I shared tears with mom
they ask me why I was crying
I shrugged my shoulders, waved my arms
red cheeks, red hands as if to say
I don’t know, I’m not exactly sure
perhaps it was the oxygen, the gravity
the February snow

Now at twenty three
it’s hard to see ahead
our faces to a wall
stuck in between an infant
and standing six feet tall
“Grow up, be good,
go be an adult.”

Swing
© Mike Nakhla  MSII

After a long day at work
I saw that you were crying
a soundless little girl
I asked you why?
but just the same you’re smiling
looking towards the sky
in business head to toe
I ask again this time you laugh
and say that you don’t know

Today a dad will gain a son
And give away his second daughter
and hope that she will put to use
the wisdom that he taught her
another dad will watch his boy
atop a golden horse
give himself to someone’s
second daughter

And here our mothers sit
a mess in the front row
wiping away mascara from their cheeks
and although the road was slow
perhaps we grew too fast
just ask them why they’re crying
and if today feels right.
like the day they first held us in their arms,
they’ll say they don’t know.

Bearer of Bad News
© Keane McCullum  MSI

A volunteer community health worker takes a break from HIV testing

Judge’s Comments

“Bearer of Bad News” is a wonderful portrait of a woman. It aptly speaks to her situation; working with and testing patients for HIV. Her posture and face indicate a grim determination. There is a superb quality of light that brings out the detail and texture of her skin, headscarf, and the wall behind her. The wall in the background is a great example of the technical skill of this photograph. Even though it is light, it holds sufficient interest because the motling of the surface is caught with this perfectly exposed image. The woman’s right arm leads strongly to her chin, where the viewer meets her unflinching gaze. The diagonal folds of her dress also draw the eye towards the hand and chin and back to her strong gaze. This composition creates a strong centerpiece for this portrait. Her left hand brings attention to the hard wooden chair where it rests, and abjectly points to the cluttered, basic wooden shelf below. This creates some background to her situation, telling us a bit about her environment. This portrait instantly transports the viewer into this woman’s world.
Kaleidoscope Eyes
© Kristin Berger MSIII

Do her two eyes of blue discern the many shades of grey? She turns her head to curtain what those windows might betray. The multitude of hues is the truth she should behold, not the dichromatic vision of the world Aesop foretold. For life, it is not written in black ink on paper white—circumstances never are so candidly forthright. Morality's complexity abounds such extremes, though heartache ails when nothing is so simple as it seems. Should she perceive the paradox of truth as bittersweet, perhaps she'd not insist to place the guilt at her own feet. So if she still has yet to see how truth in shadow lies, may she learn to view life through kaleidoscoping eyes.

Battle Scars of A Life Well Lived
© Holly Boyle MSIII

You look at your reflection in the mirror With eyes as heavy as the burden that you Carry upon your shoulders. You take a deep breath, sighing As you start another day. Another day in which You wield foundation, blush, and eye shadow brushes Like swords against humanity. Masking your complication from A society that does not understand Natural Beauty. Your foundation is your shield, concealing wrinkles As if they are something Of which you should be Ashamed, when they are merely Memories of Emotion Over the course of a lifetime. Of laughter, of anger, and of sorrow. Your wrinkles are Battle Scars of a Life Well Lived So why not show them with pride For all the world to revere.

Basics
© Jeff Feehrer Patient

(Feb. 1967)
This spring from the week before he left home, friends, all familiars, for the shouting, cursing, degrading, involuntary, helpless unknowns of collective isolation and independence of basic training—a boot camp—the week or so before when he couldn't eat, couldn't take a deep breath without shuddering it out, was quiet and nauseous among friends and their funniest anecdotes, took all of his strength just to do chores, errands, no interest, no point, no power to wash his car, diseased, praying, seeing no help, no alternative, counting down every shrinking hour, couldn't sleep but sporadically—and that too long, sped up and wasted the dwindling time he had, couldn't distract himself even momentarily from thinking about it, hot stuff in his bowels, icicles in his brain, quiet meals, sad, scared faces on his parents.

He took long walks, noting everything he'd seen innumerable times when he was a boy and unencumbered and the future was baseball that afternoon, listening to records in a best friend's den or bedroom, comic books in a shaded side yard, talking about girls, getting that driver's permit, a first job. Now it was longer, aimless journeys by car past his high school, old girlfriends' homes deserted in the daytime, places where they had dated, stockpiling loose coins of memories to be stolen in five, four, three days and ticking lower and closer. Late nights forbidding sleep to watch TV with his eyes on the wall behind it.

Down to one day, twenty-four hours. He watched each one ebb into its successor, glancing away by steady sweeps of a sickle-second-hand. He went to church with his parents, and too soon that was over. Noon already. Tomorrow at this time he'd be gone, in boot camp—

It was February, but a watery sun burned through on the church steps. He shook the hand of the minister—saved by his profession from the draft. The warming sun glittered tears in his mother's eyes and the clergyman smiled into a light laugh squeezing her hand. "Oh come on, mom. I'll make a man out of him." Lunch, then one o'clock. The temperature rose, one of those singular freak days in the dead of winter when the thermometer reaches sixty in a faux spring. It brought four friends to his door needing a fifth to run some outside hoops at a high school. He did and didn't want to play. It would so accelerate, like any sleep that night, the sixteen hours remaining. He wanted to go somewhere temporarily sunny and warm and green smelling and throw up.

The staves had the hunger of knowing and the anxiousness. Maybe they had organized this for him. These were some of the friends from his younger, clockless years, bound by youth and carelessness, bringing a goodbye gift to him. He accepted, dryly swallowing his stomach, and it worked. For two hours they played away, the weight banished, their pasts returned brightly, heedlessly, wonderfully at this rare present of a midwinter afternoon. Fastbreaking, rebounding, blocking, stealing, scoring, laughing, congratulating. But the contest neared its end, forested by the score, sweat, the sun's school shadow reaching for the court, and sickeningly at the peak of his final jump shot he was reminded. In an instant all his strength hemorrhaged out and the ball missed everything. In the car heading home, February darkening and cooling fast, the others babbled basketball commentary but he only asked what time it was.

Fifteen hours left. After supper he took a long and shivering night walk, just round and round the old sweet streets they'd circled before drivers' licenses. It felt good to be outside, skin numbed, lungs aching more and subtracting from his battered stomach. Where, or when, had the whole day vanished? The hours he had tried to slow, savor, preserve. Had they really happened? Dribbled through his fingers. Like a dream—church, basketball, the frigid walk—each one of these minutes were parts of a dream, as the dawn would be a nightmare. His parents hadn't gone to bed but he knew they weren't sleeping. Waiting watching the ceiling, telepathing. Afraid to sleep, he stayed up as late as he dared, till ten, not even to the news. Eight hours. Tomorrow night I'll be in a barracks rack.

Midnight. Continued on next page
Three more times he slipped and woke. He remembered thinking I’m all caught up. Then, incredibly, his father’s hands were gently curved and shaking his shoulders “It’s time.”

He dressed neatly in clothes he had worn to high school and a few semesters of junior college, spooned some cold cereal—more than his mother. Dad glanced at the familiar kitchen clock, there for years above the refrigerator, and nodded.

He followed his father outside. The car he’d learned to drive three years earlier was idling. February was back, stinging, cold but still and gray. Maybe it’d been this yesterday.

As he opened the passenger door, a neighbor girl was strolling up the street for the early activities bus. A high school junior, she carried layers of books. Shifting them, she smiled and waved, safe because of her gender. “Good luck.”

The gray light aged both of them. When his father turned to the car, he said, “Well, be careful”––he paused––“and good luck.”

Across the front seat his father shook his hand. He inhaled. “For what it’s worth…”

He followed his father’s stare. The Bible? This’ll… This’ll end.”

Nothing lasts forever.” He tried to smile. “This too… another hesitation. “Just remember that nothing…

The recruiter exuded a paternal persona. Overseeing six, thin, stricken, teenaged males bunched into a tiny room, he was fortyish, perhaps a father himself with kids their ages. He wore a full dress uniform smuggled gradually toward paunchiness. His amiable, round face and warm, cocoa eyes were tried on forms on his desk. The recruits milled silently and uncertainly amid the stiff wooden chairs.

One glanced outside where his father waited in the car for nothing, gazing straight ahead while exhaust smoke played lazily in the overcast morning. The recruiter checked his watch, confirmed it with a twenty four hour wall clock, slowly stood, put on a visored hat, moved around his desk. Surprisingly, he didn’t shout, scream, curse, or really order but asked them in a gentle voice to form a line and raise their right hands. His fatherly chocolate eyes fixed on forms on his desk. The recruits milled silently and uncertainly amid the stiff wooden chairs.

One inductee chose a hard chair. Another was seated, hunched forward elbows on knees and smiling, flipping through his wallet photographs of a girl, then at a gleaming customized car. Everyone else stood, two outside the door fixed on forms on his desk. The recruits milled silently and uncertainly amid the stiff wooden chairs.

Scared, choking, he returned a feeble wave over the shoulder. As he turned, her jacketed spine to the cold.

As he opened the passenger door, a neighbor girl was strolling up the street for the early activities bus. A high school junior, she carried layers of books. Shifting them, she smiled and waved, safe because of her gender. “Good luck.”

He followed his father outside. The car he’d learned to drive three years earlier was idling. February was back, stinging, cold but still and gray. Maybe it’d been this yesterday.

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Death By Chocolate
© Sharon Jia MSI
I dreamt of you last night, clutching my chicken-skinny arms breathing into my ocean-tinted lips as your hands fluttered along my mouth and my neck and the hole where my heart lies deflating, cherry-red drying on canvas like chocolate.
But in the snow I clasped your fingers, gummed by frost, the wind twisting my frame as I choked down chips of ice, my breaths coming out as fog.
And I dream of savoring chocolate, of the chocolate that stays in my senses, in my thoughts, in my memories, the chocolate you shared with me that winter night, the chocolate that seeped into the snow, anchoring you to the earth as I breathed life into you.

Echoes of Her Amber Eyes
© Allison Weinstock MSI
Life, thou art oft but a smold’ring ember Fighting to gently wrest a flame from Night. Ere audacious in the flush of love’s light, She boldly lives not as Death’s new member. Courageously futile through December, She bids on the thought of a warm spring sight And laughs bitter strength like a wounded knight, Clad in burnished armor to remember.
Fare thee well, friend, I pray your fight be bold. I hope Life’s winds will guide you to and fro Until your soul lies calmly down to rise, And shine as a sweet mem’ry I can hold. It is then I will have but an echo To relish and pine for, like amber eyes.

Water Cup
© Alexis Roldan MSIV
I remember his skin. tight, dry skin that clung over his mouth, clutching to the outline of his oral cavity, and the curves where his lips were supposed to be. My attending was beside me, talking about liver failure, renal failure. I saw his eyes—an uncomfortably yellow sclera, almost amber that they seemed to fade away and over the color of his irises. The patient winced as the attending palpated his abdomen, but the tube that extended from his throat blocked any attempts to speak, to murmur. A part of me wanted the doctor to stop, to tell him that he needs to be more gentle. He’s hurting him, just look at the patient’s face. You’re hurting him.
When the attending was done, he covered the patient back up and said, “Good job, buddy,” and immediately turned his back and walked to the door.
I didn’t follow him. Not yet. I looked back at the man in the bed who had been mouthing words. “Wa... wa...” He strained to lift up his hand, and when I realized that he was trying to point to the cup behind me, I turned around to pick up the sponge-covered stick in the water cup.
Carefully, I leaned over the older gentleman and let him drink. I remember how afraid I was. Would my attending be mad? Was the patient allowed to have water? Would I make him worse? I didn’t know anything. Anything at all.
But I also remembered how I wanted to reach out and stroke his soft, thin, white hair. I remembered wanting to hold his hand or lean down further and hug him. I remembered how much he looked like my grandfather in his final dying days. And I remembered that the mix of fear and compassion had both given me the strength to help him drink, but it also stopped me from showing him the fullness of the affection I felt in my heart.
When the sponge was dry, I pulled it from the patient’s lips and looked back to the doctor. He had stopped talking about liver and renal failure, and he simply stood in the doorway smiling at me as if listening to an unexpected echo of his past.

Echo on the Lake
© Renee Stewart, M.S. Department of Humanities
Pinball
© Julie Baird Patient

The game was outdated even when she was a girl,
A vintage novelty found in the theater arcade.
Put in two quarters; try your luck,
Keep the ball aloft.

Her brother was remarkably good.
"It's all dumb luck," she scoffed, "You're wasting your money."
"Only for those who don't have the skill," he shot,
The coins clinking through the slot.

The ball soared upward—
Bouncing off bumpers, cascading into chambers, diving toward dents.
Lights flashed, bells pinged, whistles shrieked.
He stayed focused, the distractions lost between his gaze and the ball.

With ease he flipped the ball off the flaps,
A jerk with one hand, a calculated pull with the other.
Effortlessly against the middle, breathlessly off the tip,
Evading the inevitable for a few seconds longer.

Even he couldn't direct every aspect of the game.
The ball suspended for a slice of a breath, half of a blink
And it would fall, cutting a perfect path right between the two levers,
Away from the control he had.

She didn't have to watch the machine,
She only had to watch his face.
His eyes would narrow, the futile flapping of the handles,
The silent exhalation that the game was over.

This is different, she tells herself as she enters the darkened room,
Her normally wiggly toddler, quiet and still in her arms.
The technicians bustle around,
Moving monitors, locating tools.
Wires run from her son's chest to the monitor looming before them,
His little fingers trace down the wire, straight and rigid.

She smiles when her brother enters,
His white coat much too big on his thin shoulders.
Despite years and training, he is always little to her.
They talk briefly, the echo reflected in both of their eyes.

Her brother picks up the probe as he hunches over her son's chest.
Movement flickers on the screen, distorted shapes bend and shrink,
Lights flash, bells ping, whistles shriek.
He stays focused, the distractions lost between his gaze and the monitor.

Judge’s Comments

This poem reminds us how memory leaves its traces and equips us for defining moments. The poem's simple, matter-of-fact narration leaves the reader to discover points of emotional connection with the mother who reaches back to a shared childhood for a comforting image of the brother-doctor on whose skill she has hung her desperate hopes.

A Country United
© John Ho Brother of Susana Ho MSII
Gut-wrenching, nausea-inducing loss
The feeling hit, like the semi hit your jeep.
Disbelief, pictures on social media of your smiling face
A tagline, rest in peace, God gained an angel today,
What kind of joke is this?
Not a joke…
You’re gone…
Oh God, you’re really gone, just like that.
Days before your 21st you were taken from us,
It’s not fair…
A year later we gather to honor your memory and shed tears
And sometimes I forget,
Then your face appears on social media when someone
finds an old photo
And the gut-wrenching, nausea-inducing loss returns.

The last time I saw you
In that hospital bed
Flickering in and out of consciousness
So helpless
You were no longer the strong man,
The funny man,
The loving grandfather.
Your pain was evident.
When we said goodbye
I knew it was for the best
Eighty-nine wonderful years
And twenty of them you shared with me.

I wish we could take another walk in the woods,
Listen to your stories,
And let you steal my nose.

The news came a few months later
and my whole body mourned for her
but my goodbye had already been said
on that hot August afternoon
in a tiny nursing home room.
Your Last Day
© Helen Pauly-Hubbard   MSI

On your last day, I reflected on the moment when we knew that your body rejecting the stranger's gift was the end; a waiting game, a daily deterioration, and the short leap from living to simply existing.

On your last day, I tried to imagine my life without you, and although I knew you could not see, I cried until my lips cracked and head split, and the pain of your loss will never leave.

On your last day, I did not know what to say, and although I knew you could not respond, I held your hand and pictured being carried on your shoulders, and I wanted you to stay more than anything.

On your last day, I played the chords, and although I knew you could not hear I poured my soul into the songs, and by the end you were facing me, eyes still closed.

On your last day, I pretended to not know when you took your last breath and stilled, knowing I simply imagined the rise and fall of your chest, and wished desperately that I could not feel the hole you left.

Thirteen years after your last day, I want you to know that I forgive you for the pain you caused when you left, knowing that you would have stayed if you could, and that I forgive myself for not understanding why you had to go, on your last day.

Aspens in Fall
© Brian R. Piazza, M.D., M.Sc.   PGY1
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

An Autumn Day
© Holly Boyle   MSIII

Judge's Comments

This is a skilled depiction of a quiet, peaceful, cold autumn day. The composition with the diagonal line of trees pulls the viewer in. There the viewer finds a wonderful place to walk and appreciate the colors. The play of light on the trees, the shadows, and the wonderfully-composed tree trunks all create a peaceful, contemplative scene.
Just One More Time
© Celeste V. Bailey  MSI

Listening
Just one more time, I played the album.
Just one more time, I sat beside him.
And as I did, I watched his spindly, wizened fingers interlock as they fell to his chest.
Just beneath the neck.
Just close enough to touch his lips, as he listened.
The cello was not to soothe.
The cello was to think. To wander.
To times past, to those coming.
And to be at peace with the world surrounding.

The Last Wave
© Lynelle  Patient

While watching by a moonlit wall
The nighttime waves approach my feet
...Come rolling in as if to greet
And just as swiftly they fall.
Entrained, enveloped by their vast
And wet & wild magnificence
...The world which once seemed so intense
Behind me fades, like memories past.
While still in front, in mystery,
The ocean–black, unsearchable,
Resisting not its Heavenly pull,
Moves on, like deepest destiny.
And will its waters ever cease
Their flow & ebb across the sands?
As each wave breaking on the beach
Delivers, as it leaves the land
A promise, sighing, “As I go Beneath, just as inexorably,
Another rises from the sea,
A last wave there will never be.”

Sunset in Patagonia
© J. Spence Reid, M.D.
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

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Sunset in Patagonia
© J. Spence Reid, M.D.
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

The Eve of Thanksgiving Day in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
© Judy Schaefer, R.N., M.A.
Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine Member
The morning traffic rolls through the fog
under a hospital window on Front Street
Low beams, in and out, like aberrant thoughts
Reminders of undone tasks, flits of recall
Big bumbling truck among the swift fins
A slow pedestrian on the street below
carries regrets in a heavy brief case
Dull words thrown like rocks
Poems dropped, prose left unsaid
Each year the rush starts earlier
Gift list unmade; last year’s resolutions lost
Horseman, Ferryman, pass by!
On the surge of the Thanksgiving holiday,
Each year the rush starts earlier and earlier
Some cars turn onto the bridge,
Cast a cold eye— and into restaurant row
and others into the hospital lot. A bridge spans
the Susquehanna, a divide, an in-town joke,
picking sides. Offices with wreaths and ivy
as the year counts swiftly down; windows all aglow
some mistletoe, fear of crossing with all this baggage?
How sturdy is the anesthesia,
the stones of the arched bridge across this River Styx?

Global Warming
© Mira Green  Age 17
Daughter of Michael Green, M.D.
Departments of General Internal Medicine and Humanities

West Virginia Memories
© Linda Amos Ganther
Wife of Liver Transplant Patient
a red weathered barn
evoked memories of her forgotten childhood

Snow Geese
© David Baird, M.D.  PGY4
Department of Dermatology

Hiraeth
© Sarah Black  MSI
Just Beyond the Dark
© Reverend Megan A. Lester, M.Div.
Chaplain Resident

Just beyond the dark, hovering pine grove
I see bright birches stretching their limbs
To grasp what’s behind the cloudy skies.
What do they know that I do not?
Why don’t they huddle like the pines,
Whose branches hold each other up.
So close that little light passes through,
Not even enough to grow grass.
The pines are colored the
Same dark greens and browns,
But the birches are different,
Vibrant reds, yellows, oranges.
All are losing something this day
To the unforgiving wind.
But the birches do it differently,
Exposed to the elements,
Even the sunlight.

How can I expose myself to that light this day?
And face loss with vibrancy?
Here in the grove it is quiet and safe,
On this little bench nestled under the pines.
It smells like damp campfire nights
And memories that smolder like ashes of a fire.
‘Nature trail’ appears posted like a welcome sign
And the birdhouse, its mailbox.
I’m curious, but my feet don’t move.
How can I go?
How can I keep loving people?
I try to stop because
I don’t want my heart broken.
Does God hold my heart when it breaks?
How can I stay?

Gothic Style
© Brian R. Piazza, M.D., M.Sc.  PGYI
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

Third Place Photo
Benched
© Dan Shapiro, Ph.D.
Department of Humanities

Judge’s Comments
“Benched” is an extremely well crafted image. The composition is strong, and the shadow-to-highlight detail is perfect. The two benches, and the three subjects, and their placement create an interesting scene for the viewer. The attention to the woman is amplified by her placement and her posture. Her body is not completely in the frame and is turned outwards, but her torso is turned toward the audience and she seems distressed about something. The sign behind her reads “OPEN” and contrasts with her hand over her mouth, suggesting possible shock or despair. All three characters here tell a different story with their body language and facial expressions. The viewer has enough clues to spark curiosity, and is left to wonder about their stories. The image captivates the viewer and invites multiple viewings to discover additional detail.
I stop and listen to what is often called silence
Leaves tumble against each other in the wind
clucking and sheafing in a quick confident language
I’m inclined to laugh, wondering if they’ve shared a joke
In such serious silence as this, I keep a chuckle to myself

And the woods are lovely, dark and deep
But not nightfall dark, not sinister
These woods are not weaving fear
As temperatures drop, I recite Frost’s poem
and find a noisy silence that confirms my heart
to contentment and to a woodsy overlay of joy

Paths taken, trees, and harness bells shaken
Now in the after-storm I hear acutely, see clearly
I’ve not come to the woods to hear a mythical tree fall
but to see the green moss with recent print of recent foot
I can follow, lead, or go back onto the well traveled road

Life Reflections
© Dennis Gingrich, M.D.
Department of Family and Community Medicine
What does a mirror reflect back to me?
What glimpse of self do I actually see?
How does it match with what others perceive?
And what self-awareness is there to receive?

Little Josiah is almost aged four,
Coming to me with a finger that’s sore.
Smiling post band-aid without any yelp,
Happy to get the expected help.

Carl is a teenager. Life is just grim.
Solutions to problems are not seen by him.
I think he sees me as not bad, that is true.
But a positive word is the best I can do.

Frank’s been a friend across most thirty years.
He’s crazy and funny without any peers.
And what does he find when he looks close at me?
I think it’s the memory of life yet to be.

For Sheila and me all our vows have been said
For passage together in life that we’ve led.
We see in each other a husband and wife,
And each sees the mirror of the other’s life.

My parents are wisdom and grace in slow mo.
They help me remember the things I should know.
They share of themselves in a personal way,
And their eyes say, “Thank God, you did turn out OK!”

And when I look into life’s mirror today,
I spy many people, all happy to stay.
I find joy and hope that’s a blessing to see,
Through the eyes of friends, family, and those dear to me.
Liver Allograft, Deceased Donor

The call came Friday morning, 7:00am. A liver was available. Our patient had been in the intensive care unit for nearly a week. Intubated. Sedated. Swelling with fluids that can only be captured and excreted with the liver’s assistance. Unfortunately, our patient’s liver would not cooperate.

For kidney failure, we have dialysis. For hearts, a pacemaker. For livers, not much. A team of doctors and medical staff working around the clock with crude drips and medications can never take the place of such a perfect organ. We were fairly certain she would pass over the weekend. Some were surprised that she had made it through the week.

But the call came, and she was number four on the liver recipient transplant list. Fourth worst liver in the country.

We were shuttled to a hospital outside of Philly. It was a nice neighborhood. Clean. A banner on an overpass proclaimed “Best Place to Live!” according to some magazine poll. We parked at the ambulance entrance. We asked approachable, scrub-clad strangers for directions until we found our way to the OR. A few minutes later, a pair of physicians from a hospital in Ohio showed up, Igloo cooler and duffle bag in tow. Pale attending and eager resident. They were here for the lungs.

The OR was a flurry of transplant coordinators and nurses of various roles. An anesthesiologist was attending to the tubes and wires coming from a woman on the table. This was our patient for the next few hours.

She was brain dead when we arrived. We would be the ones to kill her.

I didn’t think about this at first; I was part of the commotion. Trying to find a pair of gloves to give the scrub nurse, carefully noting her snide commotion. Trying to find a pair of gloves to don. I didn’t think about this at first; I was part of the machinery.

My friend the scrub nurse whips around. Points to the table.

“Let’s take out the blood and preserve the organs. My human brain said, this woman is dying and you are supposed to help her. Let’s take out the blood and preserve the organs. My healer brain said, this woman is dying and you are supposed to help her. Let’s take out the blood and preserve the organs.

She snatches a plastic basin off the table. Thrusts it into the scrub nurse’s precious instruments moved across the table, cut into the body, exposed its internal workings. Just like an image out of Netter’s, I could see the entire contents of the body from neck to groin, divided neatly and deliberately by diaphragm. I saw a live, beating heart for the first time. I saw how the machines behind the curtain. It was beautiful. It was predictable and satisfying. But I could sense that this operation was going to be different.

The Ohio assistant cut the aorta. “One liter. Two liters. Two and a half.”

The Ohio assistant cut the aorta.

Four suction devices were stuck in the space where the mediastinum had been. Even maximum suction was just enough to keep the blood from overflowing. It was the fastest possible bleed, and it did the job.

Then ice! An entire bin of ice mixing with the flow of blood. Packed snugly around the organs, the smaller, less jagged pieces reserved for the lungs.

The monitors of vital signs beeped in protest. Alarms went off as blood pressures dropped, pulses dwindled to nothing. I had one last glimpse of the heart’s pathetic beats as the blood spilled out. Looking down at the abdomen, a ghostly white snaking structure wound over the belly. I realized with shock that it was the colon, completely devoid of blood. The intestines changed from lively pinks and reds to a deathly white. She was dying. This was the moment of physical death.

I felt like crying. I felt like gasping and laughing and maybe throwing up all at once. This was eusaturation. Bleeding out. This was the end for this woman’s body. And the vital monitors were protesting all the while.

There is a phenomenon to explain the thrill of standing on the edge of a high cliff. The human brain, aiming for survival, is terrified. It knows the height means death, should you misstep. At the same time, the monkey brain sees the cliff as an opportunity to leap, as if from tree top to tree top. A means of travel. A birthright. An instinct. The human instinct, aiming for survival, is terrified. It knows the height means death, should you misstep.

Looking up at the abdomen, a ghostly white snaking structure wound over the belly. I realized with shock that it was the colon, completely devoid of blood. The intestines changed from lively pinks and reds to a deathly white. She was dying. This was the moment of physical death.

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This is how I felt standing at the end of the operating table. My human brain said, this is the task at hand, let’s take out the blood and preserve the organs. My healer brain said, this woman is dying and you are only concerned about the ice! And so I remained, gasping for breath behind my mask, at once in ecstasy at the spectacle of anatomy and terrified at the desperation of the dying organs.

The heart was cut out of the body, handed across the table.

“At some point this will be put back in the chest,” said the surgeon, “for the family’s wishes.”

I picked it up off the sterile blue draping, and held it. Terrified it would fall on the floor, always trying to be helpful, as medical students aim to be. It was limp and lukewarm on my palms. A thing of force now cradled easily in one hand like a kitten.

My friend the scrub nurse whips around. Points to my hands. “What is that?”

“Uh... the heart.”

She snatches a plastic basin off the table. Thrusts it at me. I place it lightly, carefully avoiding the sharp edges of the dish. We continue.
It was almost 11PM, the ED was quiet except for the low murmur of conversations from the nurse’s station. The little girl was sleeping peacefully in the hospital bed as her mother watched nervously. A petechial rash covered her chest and bruises spread across her legs. I laid my hand on her left side at the inferior border of her rib cage. Her enlarged spleen spanned the palm of my hand. Her skin was warm under my touch. I began to percuss the inferior border of her liver. Inches below her ribs the tone of percussion became dull. As I tapped on her side she opened her eyes, looking directly at mine. I saw a four year old girl with long, curly blonde hair and hazel eyes; who looked at me with unquestioning acceptance. She saw a man she had never seen before that night; in green scrubs, with a white coat, and a stethoscope around his neck. She didn’t say a word, staying still as I finished my exam. When the CBC results came in the attending dropped his head. I stood at the foot of the bed as the attending leaned against the wall for support. He told the mother that her daughter had leukemia/lymphoma. The little girl couldn’t hear the hushed conversation, but she took her mother’s hand and said “Mommy... I’m scared.” Tears welled up in my eyes. I tried to blink them away as the grandfather asked me about what would happen next for her treatment. When we left the room, we didn’t say a word.

Every night that week I wept for that little girl. She wasn’t the first pediatric oncology patient I had worked with, she wasn’t the first patient I had seen, she wasn’t the most seriously ill patient I had seen, she wasn’t the first patient I interviewed and examined on my own; but she is the one patient I can’t forget. For months I have struggled to deal with the emotions I still feel from that night. For a period, my concentration and my studies suffered. To this day, I don’t understand how I should deal with the memory. I am trained to show every patient the same level of care and attention, with humanity and empathy, bounded by the need to remain objective. I must walk into a room and be fully present for that particular patient. But when I leave the room, I need to detach myself and transition to engage the next patient or the next task. At the end of the day, I must remove myself again and focus on my studies, responsibilities, and family. Yet there are still those patients or those experiences which stubbornly refuse to be compartmentalized as I transition to what is next. I can still feel her spleen in my hand. I can still see her eyes open and meet mine. I can still hear her frightened words. I am still trying to find an answer. How will I cope with experiences and tragedies in the lives of my patients? Even when I find the answer, I know that her memory will still be with me.
Informed Consent
© Hannah Wakefield  MSIV

Even though...
She had asked him to do this.
She had thought about it for months before even going to him.
She looked up all the information and listened to his explanations.
She thought she understood it all.
She didn't know.
Though he talked with her about the procedure and scheduling the appointment.
When she went to the pharmacy to pick up her medication and the unit.
When she researched the risks, the benefits, the side effects, how long it's good for.
Even when she took her medicine the night before like he told her to.
She didn't comprehend...
When he walked her through the steps of the procedure.
When he answered her questions about possible complications.
When he had her sign the form.
Even when she saw the instruments being laid out and asked him what they were called, and why there were so many.
She wasn't ready...
As she felt the clamp of the vulsellum—the first of many pains.
When it continued and he had to dilate her more, and she stared at the ceiling as if to find meaning in the fluorescent lights.
When she tried to hold the pain inside and not to move.
She felt alone...
As tears streamed down her face and she told herself that childbirth must hurt even more.
When he felt her shaking from pain and cold.
When her sobs betrayed her, and he offered her the chance to stop.
When she took a minute to compose herself before asking him to please continue.
She felt betrayed...
When she felt the tear—perfectly normal and part of the procedure.
When he removed his instruments and gave her ibuprofen and she couldn't stop looking at her blood on the sounds.
When he cleaned up around her, telling her to rest before trying to get up off the table.
When he told her she was brave, that many women couldn't go through with it.
Even though the paper she signed giving him permission was safely filed away.
It was impossible for her to know.

Dad's in Charge
© Gordon Kaufman, M.D.  Department of Surgery

Judge’s Comments
Despite the use of complementary yellow and purple given to this painting, the artist has conveyed the deep desolation and angst of this figure: the arms wrapping the body, the static weight of the pose, the hand propping up the head that would surely collapse without it. The light playing on the white shirt, which is reminiscent of a straight jacket, highlights the depth of despair in the eyes. A Troubled Mind indeed.

Honorable mention Art
Troubled Mind
* Albert Sudol  Son of Malgorzata Sudol  Department of Medicine
Leaving Rite Aid for probably the last time and approaching his car, he was caught by evening church bells. He knew the hymn.


The summer twilight sky was that grandiose lapis lazuli firmament the Creator had in mind when He spoke it into existence. In the soft chimes and beauty he forgot for a moment.

Treatable. An in-house term, an in-hospital cipher for any malady. Everything was treatable if there was a pulse or brain wave. A man vised between hopeless couplers was treatable. He knew of such a case. But healed? Well . . .

So he had learned.

Code Blue. They still announced that in today’s digital Hippocrates? He’d never heard it; he could ask one of his doctors but it seemed, oh, passé. If they did, he would hear it one day.

The final metallic note evaporated. In his car he touched the CD knob and brought the interior alive. This simple habit always reminded him of that painting—was it Michelangelo’s on the Sistine ceiling?—where an elderly, bearded God is extending an arm and forefront to touch Adam’s and his berde edge.

Geez. He once knew this. He had a degree in theology. He had once known this. He had in mind when his imagination ran darkly, like bedtime dreaded from its deathly silence and blackness when his imagination ran darkly, like bedtime dreaded from its deathly silence and blackness when his imagination ran darkly, like bedtime dreaded from its deathly silence and blackness when his imagination ran.

Bare-bone recollections. Dreams were crueler—people, places, himself in the good past. Yesteryears were receding and the future shortening. How insignificant the major issues and interests had shrunk, displaced by a second sight like another eye had opened. Todays were vivid and microscopic, insignificants of all.

Naturally—that was an odd, paradoxic word for any malady. Everything was treatable if there was a pulse or brain wave. A man vised between hopeless couplers was treatable. He knew of such a case. But healed? Well . . .

The daily face in his bathroom mirror froze his hands on the doorknob, his jaw, holding and lifting his skull. “Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him,” said the reflection. “when he was a vibrant student of humanity.”

Music became an angel of glad or sad tidings, the harbinger of memories evoking either smiles of before or prophesying wan tomorrows. An oldies station played all day because silence nurtured darkness, like bedtime dreaded from its deathly silence and blackness when his imagination ran unedited for hours, a horrid motion picture. A conjurer it was, valedictory sorcerer with dream as its apprentice, and further direful from a dawn brightening on a worse day.

“‘Well, it’s been building up inside of me for, oh, I don’t know how long.’” Accompanying the Beach Boys in their rock & roll Ford recording studio, his scratchy tenor didn’t sound that bad, like his subdued harmonizing in the worship he once attended.

“Don’t worry baby. Everything will turn out alright . . .”

Before the song thinned he was already hitting the SEEK button to replay it and thwart that brief deadness between tracks.

Naturally—that was an odd, paradoxic word considering—the mood would overwhelm, sporadically crushing him usually after he’d been distracted for a quick fifteen minutes or a half hour, and then the macadam treks, chats with sons, school buses and kids, feeding birds, TV sports, even the seraphim’s music and prayer weren’t solace, standing him unsatisfied and deeply, soullessly scared.

So utterly lost, like cartwheeling adrift through space, and that was the most petrifying sensation of all.

Invalid and irretrievable. Madness in both definitions.

That premier, universal fear: what’s after.

“Hello. How are you doing? The meds helping? How’s the diet? Still smoking?”

“Appointments with specialists were scheduled shorter and wider apart. “Hello. How are you doing? The meds helping? How’s the diet? Still smoking?”

Queries to which he responded with a slow head and eye roll.

But they were professionally optimistic and trying. Bottom line, people, and all of them were cognizant, hadn’t been stranded on a whitecake slice of floe and slipped out to sea.

On the horizon after another day of observing and appreciating the minuscule treasures he sat near or strolled by, the hobbling and floating would end. At the unknown, predestined hour his finite existence would blink infinite.

That time sleep will win.
A Week to Remember
© Barrett Richard  MSII

I walk through the door, unsure of what to expect.
The week awaits me.
Stethoscope in hand, the murmur whispers softly.
Not sure what I heard.
The patient winces from ruthless sciatica.
Empathy won’t cure.
A distant patient whose cognition betrays her:
dementia’s cruelty.
The microscope field shows rod-shaped bacteria,
unwelcome tenants.
Relentless coughing, the rhonchi call longingly.
Acute bronchitis.
Another murmur, a systolic ejection.
My confidence grows.
Worsening chest pain, unstable angina’s sign.
Right diagnosis.
Chronic severe pain, remorseless, a reminder
to comfort always.
The week has ended.
There is always more to learn.
I walk through the door.

My Cup of Tea
© Carmen Marcucci
Daughter of Gina Marcucci
Department of Neural and Behavioral Sciences

Beauty in Ruins
© Allison Weinstock  MSI

Judge’s Comments
The composition and color in this photo are eye-catching. The gold drape falling into the left lower corner
of the image draws the eye to the man. The white wall behind his head and the white shirt he is wearing
further support him as the focal center here. The man’s shiny dark skin and white teeth accentuate the
happy expression on his face. The remaining two-thirds of the image is about texture and color. There is
the roughness of the rustic wall, the broken wooden window and the whitewashed cinder block in the
window opening. The color is rich and warm. Three sides are darker, causing one’s eye to be drawn to
the lighter, brighter part of the image. The composition, texture, and color create an image that is simple,
uncomplicated and very finely done.
We
© Allyson Stauffer  Age 13
Daughter of Amy Stauffer, MS, CRNP
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology

We
She, you, them, and I,
Climbed up the apple tree,
Way up high.
But through the journey who do we see,
She.
She falls down the apple tree.
Look who follows the same fate-
Them.
They hit the bait.
Who is left up in the tree?
You and I.
Now we see.
Climbing wasn’t the hardest part,
We must stand tall and stick to our heart.

Ootay Ravens
© Kurt Alderson
Father of Chevon Alderson  MSIV

Winter Colors
© Jessica Matincheck  Age 9
Daughter of Lynn Matincheck
Department of Humanities

Abroad
© Henry Montilla Guedez  MSII

Stopped in time I’ve been left without a life
All I know taken away By Uncle Sam
Days pass but my life is sealed
Trapped between this walls of steel
Hunger, thirst, anger, pain
They all come to judge and stare
They all come and make no sense
They all come but no one cares
I’m nothing more than just to blame
For my acts I am not ashamed
Born here, born there
It seems so trivial but it’s not vain
Years will pass but I’ll always be an other
I know they’ll never see me as a brother
They fear I’ll take their jobs
But all I want is to escape this hell
They preach freedom and equality
Cynical representation of the polity
They treat me like a criminal from the mob
“Spare the pain” I pray to God
I know it will all be over soon
Today they decide if I’m a goon
If I can get my life back
If I can leave this hell behind
All I can do is walk through those doors
And hope I’ve done a good job

Laundry
© Lisa Passmore Beyers  MSIII

I have one white coat;
I wear it every day
It covers me like the yoke on an ox,
A shawl on frail shoulders.
I have one white coat
With pockets perpetually bulging
With tools,
Stories scrawled in ballpoint,
Fates in the form of lab values,
Patient’s decline scribbled in the margins.
I have one white coat;
I wear it every day
When it smells, I spray it with Febreze,
“Fresh cotton fields.”
But once a week, I shrug it off
Dump the pockets on the couch,
Count the pens and gum wrappers,
Let my stethoscope uncoil.
I have one white coat.
It always comes clean,
But it’s different every time.

Free Rein
© Christine Clark  MSII
Rise Up
© Evan Foley  MSII

Open eyes
And a closed heart
The only way to live
Stay calm
Keep your emotions quiet
I have nothing left to give
Chaos flowing
Stand still, stay put
Feelings go through like a sieve
Stay focused
Do not be selfish
No need to be pensive
But what if I broke down
Turned around
Pushed forward
If I changed the tide
If I fought back
Would I be better off?

Stalking the Tadpole
© Sigmund J. David  Patient

Net in hand my son followed the brook
Into the river and then to shoreline.
I tried to discourage him:
It was early spring. He would catch
nothing.
He was undaunted and wanted to stalk
the tadpole.
Suddenly it was me at Lake Sebago
many years ago
Wading in an inlet
With both of our sisters
Hands cupped
Bending down collecting
Those tiny black wiggly “fish”.
Another generation had come.
I relented and let him go.

Cave of a Distant Dream
© Daniel George, Ph.D.
Department of Humanities

Me and the Boat
© Henry Montilla Guedez  MSII

St. Michael’s, Passaic
© Anthony K. Sedun  Son of Yvonne Sedun, R.N.  Pain Management Clinic

After the vigil-eve liturgy for the Conception of Anna,
Danny shared the news: You had died.
The Garden State Parkway, your silver Audi, en route to visit
a sick priest. Unspecified internal trauma, pronounced dead
at the hospital. Gather wrote right: death comes for us all.
Bishop emeritus, 84 years old. You must have known
the things they’d said: autocrat, sunnuvabitch, and worse.
“He father used to beat him. That’s why he’s the way he is.”
Son of a cantor, server, childhood friend of my Baba.
I'll always remember the way she remembered you:
“Andy, go put these flowers on the altar for me.”
Crook of Christ, Shepherd of Slavs, shake loose the bug dust
that clings to the coats of your flock. Shake loose the clouds
of creation climbing out of the kadilnitsa to the heavens in cauliflower blossoms.
I drove to St. Michael’s on a Wednesday. First Street, Passaic.
The second-half of services for a bishop in repose.
This was your vineyard. These were your brothers.
You could have been Joseph, David, or Jesus.
After all, even Wojtyła had his Wyszyński.
A few blocks away, inside a high-fenced lot, young boys
cut through the darkness below the mango-colored lights,
calling wildly for the soccer ball with reckless joy.
Stopped at the light I believed I saw you there in that crowded commotion
of bodies and blacktop: face like a furnace in the cold night air,
eyes tracking movement for every advantage, lungs gulping greedily
the last minutes, pushing away what you always must have known
was coming, a holler from your daddy
calling you home for the night.

Judge’s Comments
This poem mirrors the way memory and imagination mingle in the wake of loss to help the living come
to terms with death. It shows us how death demands a story and how the finding a story and crafting
a poem may offer a gracious way through the first throes of mourning.
Meditation is Hard
© Evan Foley  MSII

“Deep breath in…"
Okay, I’ll give it a shot
But wait, how deep is deep?
How long do I hold it?
What if I get hypoxic?
“… and deep breath out”
Wow I have a lot to do
When should I go food shopping?
Am I eating too many carbs?
What is a good alternative to rice?
“Now center your thoughts…”
That’s not really a thing
What is the function of the limbic system?
Is it something about food?
Where is the closest place to get fries?
“… Focus on your breathing”
Ugh again with the breathing
What if I am just bad at this?
What if I am just bad at life?
Why is this so hard?
“Now let your worries fall away”

EKG Whispers
© Jolene Collins   Physician Assistant Student

Lub-dub-swish
My latest echo revealed
This was not my chicken bone wish…
A valve that leaks
Is better I suppose
Than a knee that creaks
For this valve will go away
And will be replaced
With a cow valve I pray
With God on my side
I will be stronger than before
Part cow/part human, filled with pride
I hope to wake up as a normal human
Only a cow valve I told my surgeon
I guess I’m no fun
And so I leave my faith in the surgeons’ hands
For I know their medical practices
Are all a part of my life’s plans
And wake up I will
A heart as good as new
Will certainly fit a clean health bill

Please Forgive Me My Large White Pine Tree
© Sigmund J. David   Patient

I view your three open wounds
Easily from my large living room window
I had ordered someone
To cut down
Three branches
Leaving gashes
Three and four inches
In diameter
Cut cleanly
I wanted more light
To come into my room
Sap dripped
From your wounds
For weeks
Everyday I would
Be reminded
Of my callousness
What was I thinking?
You are a portal
To a world
I did not know even existed
The thistle feeder
Hanging from your
Right branch
Attracts
A steady stream
Of goldfinches
I particularly
Love
The bright yellow
Colored males
With black capped
Heads
Downy woodpeckers parade
Up and down your trunk
All day
The occasional red bellied woodpecker
Still takes my breath away
Both birds feed on the suet
Placed right next
To your trunk
At eye level
And there are others
Like the nuthatches
Then there is the magnificent
Skitterish bright red cardinal

Who feeds in your shadows
On the seed strewn
On the ground
With its draf looking mate
Almost always nearby
The hummingbirds alight
On your branches
Sometimes taking turns
Sipping the nectar
I had prepared for them
Other times resting briefly
Of course,
This is only an incomplete list
Of the birds I encounter
Every time
I view your neatly cut wounds
I become sad
And want, again, to apologize
And would do almost anything
If I could put back the branches I cut off
You give me your bounty
So freely
And I treated you
So badly

Croatian Bay
© Aldis Siltumens   MSII

University Manor
© Spencer Katz   MSI   M.D./Ph.D. Candidate

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