

wild onions

2023



Growth and Regeneration

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Wild Onions: 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, fields, and roadsides. It blossoms into an unusual purple flower. The underground bulb yields a pungent, spicy flavor and scent. The wild onion symbolizes the commonplace, yet paradoxically surprising, beauty living and growing around us all the time. An uncultivated spice, it unexpectedly thrives and – if we take time to notice – enhances life.

Front cover: Orchid, © Seamus Carmichael
Harrell Health Sciences Library

Back cover: Illuminating Voices of a Lost (Re)generation: The Transgenerational Disconnect Between Queer People Due to the AIDS Epidemic

© Joshua Snyder, Son of Gail Snyder, Public Health Sciences, and Rahn Snyder, Quality Services

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As a symbol of our synergy, the student editors (listed on the left) created this artwork to commemorate our collaboration over the last cycle of seasons. Working from two different campuses (Hershey and University Park) and all years of schooling, we are united in our celebration of growth and regeneration in the following leaves of this journal.

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Wild Onions

We release this journal in the spring and share a collection of photography, art, and creative writing during a time of renewal as the trees begin to bud and the first of the spring wildflowers push through a welcoming earth.

This journal reflects a hopeful tomorrow after living, working, and learning during several years of a generational public health crisis. *Wild Onions* holds the honor and distinct responsibility of documenting these struggles and triumphs through its pages, providing a platform for members of our healthcare community to express and interpret the impact of this time on our medical facility and in our day-to-day existence. These pages are devoted to sharing creative writing and artistic work that seeks to describe and understand the experiences of health, illness, and treatment, especially caregiving and receiving care.

The beauty of *Wild Onions* is its capacity to create a vibrant and expressive community of artists year after year. This edition features work by individuals affiliated with Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, including patients, students, faculty, physicians, residents, nurses, staff, volunteers, and family and community members.

Selection Process:

Each year, we are fortunate to receive hundreds of high-quality submissions of original creative writing, photography, and artwork. All entries are reviewed by medical student editors, and a subset are selected for inclusion in the publication. Particularly stellar pieces are identified and sent on to the corresponding art, creative writing, photography, and theme judges for review and selection. This year, we chose awards — one each in creative writing, photography, and art — for the following categories:

- Students and Residents
- Healthcare Providers and Faculty
- Patients
- Community, Family Members, and Staff

Additionally, we awarded three prizes, one for each genre, recognizing work that best exemplifies the theme of “Growth and Regeneration.”

Submissions are due by January 15 of each calendar year and can be submitted online at: sites.psu.edu/wildonions/submitting or emailed to wildonions@pennstatehealth.psu.edu.

Visit our website to download a PDF copy of *Wild Onions* at sites.psu.edu/wildonions or view our online version at: sites.psu.edu/wildonionsonline

Our 2023 Judges



ART: Bruce Johnson

Pennsylvania-born artist Bruce Johnson earned a BFA from Philadelphia College of Art in 1966. He served as an Army illustrator in Heidelberg, Germany, designing underground briefing rooms and creating magazine artwork. Later, his career spanned work for WITF-TV, Harrisburg, to executive art director for Armstrong World Industries, Lancaster, before pursuing a career as a fine artist. He traveled to England, Germany, China, Russia, France, Switzerland, Thailand, Indonesia, and other countries to paint watercolors and exhibit in 64 one-man shows. Bruce's prints and originals are represented in private and corporate collections worldwide. His work includes bronze sculptures, silk-screens, original lithographs, and offset prints. After the Susquehanna Art Museum held a retrospective show of his work, Stackpole Publishing Company released "It's A Fine Line," a book encompassing his pen and ink drawings from 25 years. He currently resides in Delaware.



CREATIVE WRITING: Evelyn M. Potochny, DO

Evy Potochny is an Associate Professor in the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. She serves as Blood Banking/Transfusion Medicine Fellowship Director, Associate Residency Program Director for Anatomic & Clinical Pathology, and Medical Director of Apheresis and the Stem Cell Collection Program. For the last two years, she facilitated Student Writers Group workshops offered through the College of Medicine and Department of Humanities.



PHOTOGRAPHY: Jay Ressler

Award-winning Fine Art Photographer Jay Ressler has an eye that can capture the soul of a Havana backstreet as beautifully as the sip of a hungry hummingbird. Also known as an encaustic and oil painter creating composite images, Jay increasingly extends his multi-layered approach to loosely rendered paintings inspired by details of some of his surreal photographs. His encaustic creations use ancient techniques beginning with cooking his own recipes of beeswax and resin. He studied advanced digital photography at Pittsburgh Filmmakers and graduated from Albright College, Reading, with a degree in psychology. He serves as president of the Berks Art Alliance and Art Plus Gallery Board of Directors, West Reading. Together with his artist-wife Martha, the couple nurtures a small forest of native trees they planted on their farm near Hamburg.



THEME: Andrew S. Freiberg, MD

Andrew S. Freiberg, MD, serves as a board-certified Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist and an Associate Professor of pediatrics at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. He focuses on teaching medical students, serves as a long-time society advisor coach, and since 2014, leads the Global Health Scholars Program site for Macha Mission Hospital in rural Zambia. He received his medical degree from the University of California, Los Angeles. He completed his pediatric residency at Kaiser Foundation Hospital, San Francisco. He then completed a hematology/oncology fellowship at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, before moving to Hershey. In his own words, "I have been here at Penn State College of Medicine since 1992, so when I celebrated my 25th anniversary, the college was exactly twice that old. My focus has always been to break down barriers between patient and doctor, adult and child, and between teacher and student, so I strive to have students with me as much as possible, especially in the clinic. *Wild Onions* is a perfect way to bring us all closer together. I consider it an honor to be selected as the theme judge for 2023."

Welcome from the Senior Student Co-editors

Welcome to the 2023 edition of *Wild Onions*! We have been honored and privileged to serve as senior co-editors during the 2022-2023 academic year. For this year's theme, we reflected on our experiences after enduring several seasons of adversity and loss in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and wanted to shift the focus onto the positive to center your creative work around the concept of "Growth and Regeneration." These are words that can carry different meanings, and our experience of them can vary from pleasant to painful, and from dramatic to prosaic. Through the light of each work featured in these pages, we have observed what growth and regeneration mean for our community members, both inside and outside of the hospital.

Everyone who submitted work this year has made the journal come alive, and we appreciate you. And anyone who engages with this issue also brings life to its pages. We hope you find within many life-giving moments encompassing a cycle of themes—from death and sorrow to birth and joy. In this year's journal, we have intentionally evoked the changing seasons by loosely dividing content into sections reflecting fall, winter, spring, and summer. Yet as the closing pieces of this year's journal remind us, words often fail to signify the whole of the mystery around us. So you will find pictures worth their weight in gold (or at least paper), from front to back, with many apt poetic and visual images, including the waxing and waning moon, the dying and renewing phoenix, and flowers from every season.

Thank you for joining us to honor the work in these pages.

Lindsey Peck and Ben Watt



Lindsey Peck, MSIV

Lindsey grew up in St. Louis and attended Duke University, Durham, for her undergraduate degree. While majoring in psychology and taking pre-health courses, Lindsey fell in love with the intimate connection between the science of the body and the magic of the mind. During her time in medical school, she pursued her passion for education and teaching by earning a master's degree in adult education alongside her medical degree. In her spare time, Lindsey enjoys crafting decorations for her house and gifts for others, going to the dog park, and watching true crime documentaries. She is excited to pursue a residency in obstetrics & gynecology at St. Luke's University Hospital, Bethlehem, where she aims to serve as an educator, advocate, and global health scholar.



Benjamin Watt, MSIV

Ben Watt grew up in North Huntingdon Township, Pa., in a household including a family business downstairs and chickens out back. He completed his undergraduate degree at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, before attending Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey. Beyond his studies, he particularly enjoys running, reading, and being part of a neighborhood as a volunteer-in-residence at Paxton Street Home, Harrisburg. He will train as a family medicine resident at Lawndale Christian Health Center, Chicago.

Welcome to the 2023 Edition of *Wild Onions*!



Michael P. Flanagan, MD, FAAFP
2023 *Wild Onions* Guest Editor

If you have enjoyed *Wild Onions* in the past, you know that each year editors choose a theme to inspire and coalesce the creativity, motivation, and artistic talent of our Penn State community and beyond. As a member of the Penn State College of Medicine's University Park (UP) campus, it is my honor to introduce this year's theme, "Growth and Regeneration." This focus is especially fitting following a season of adversity during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this point, many may now be poised for new growth — and perhaps even regeneration.

Growth implies progressive, more complex development from a simpler form or stage. Regeneration connotes a process of restoration or renewing, especially after something has been damaged or lost. Regeneration is a multifaceted term that can be applied in the fields of medicine, business, and theology, as well as to the biological, social, and physical sciences. Regenerative medicine, regenerative agriculture and regenerative policies all promote interdependence among diverse systems to build resilience and sustainability.

Like the fruit trees in my backyard orchard that remain stark and gray through the long winter, our personal growth may have also stagnated during the pandemic. Nevertheless, a change in season brings opportunity for both new growth and regeneration. Green leaves and pale buds emerge in the warming spring sun. Similarly, we too find ourselves in a new season, one of hopeful resilience. The creative expression and artistic beauty found in this edition of *Wild Onions* has the potential to promote such hope, healing, and perseverance. I encourage you to immerse yourself in it, much as our University Park medical students immerse themselves in our clinical settings from the very beginning of their education.

I want to recognize the significant number of students, faculty, staff, and patients, as well as their families, who shared artistic submissions with *Wild Onions* this year. The number of entries has been growing each year, from both the Hershey and the University Park campuses. This reflects the sustained support and esteem that our educational community demonstrates for the arts and humanities. Thank you also to our dedicated Senior Co-editors, Benjamin Watt and Lindsey Peck, as well as our enthusiastic student editors from both campuses. Gratitude is also extended to our Editor-in-Chief, Daniel George, PhD, and Managing Editors, Deborah Tomazin and Kerry Royer, for their steadfast efforts in putting forth *Wild Onions* each year, and for inviting me to serve as this year's guest editor.

Please allow this exceptional collection of poetry, photography, narratives, and paintings to stimulate your own personal growth, and regenerate both your mind and spirit. Also, please be encouraged to share this year's edition with a colleague or friend to promote their well-being. You might even be motivated to create your own art, or plant a few seeds in fertile soil this spring and then appreciate the growth that unfolds.

Michael P. Flanagan, MD, FAAFP
Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
Professor of Family and Community Medicine, and Humanities
Penn State College of Medicine, University Park Campus

Who Will Offer Up?

© **Kelsey O'Brien, MDiv, BCC**
Pastoral Services

I've witnessed a thousand worlds
running through a thousand faces.
Small sorrows, joys and longings
laid out and rushed through me.
And although I do not own them,
I hold on gently, cup my palms,
take them in and drink deeply
filling myself up with stories,
each particularly spectacular,
familiar tissue fermenting
slowly to express suffering.

These faces I take, hopes and fears,
sometimes drinking until overflowing,
filled past full with the weight of knowing
too much, a well vast and brimming
to contain in one small soul.

When I'm overwhelmed
almost drowning in the multiplied
suffering witnessed and swallowed,
stunning voices, wonder and woe,
I walk out, stagger out wondering,
who will offer up the palmed cup
of their own hands for me to vomit
up all that has been collecting
swirling inside of me?

For the ones who know what it's like to be filled past full



Gifts Within

© **Marcia Riegle** | *Patient*

Those Words

© **Hope Pesner**
Patient

Unexpected
Those words spoken
In a phone call
My mind rejected
Feeling broken
Wanting to stall
The need for more tests
learning again to cope
Waiting for answers
Not allowed to rest
losing hope
knowing it's cancer.

To live or die my choice
Accept this and fight
Or let myself go away
Finding my voice
Knowing what's right
Or trying one more day?
Wishing it would end
my body broken in pieces
these thoughts making me teary
Knowing for them I will bend
Until the madness ceases
Tired and bone weary.
Getting through hours
Letting them kill me
The ordeal numbing
I have the power
in how I choose to be
Weighing and summing

Trying so hard
But having no faith
In God's saving grace
Each day a shard
Cutting my strength
In this never-ending race
Waiting on the unknown
Effects from the remedy
Will there be a cure
What I'll be shown
From my chemotherapy
Can I be sure?
Even if my body purged
Still daunting
Impact is sensory
Those words
Always haunting
My memory

What Remains

© Vera Guertler, MD

Former Physician

PSH Community Medical Group, Lancaster

The stars have left their dust
on the winter grass again
this morning.

There was a time when you looked
at me and I could harvest diamonds —

A time when summer winds trotted
through tall grass like a pair of horses
chasing each other
And when auburn leaves tangled
like a pair of dancers at the lakehouse —

Now night is growing
day by day,
and I have come to sit
on this bench
that we once shared

to watch stars fall and wonder
how something so bright
can surrender light without warning?

If I remain until the cold
light of dawn,
will anyone find
feathers of frost in my hair
and my hands waiting
for yours to hold?



Mama's China

© Nicole Seacord | Patient



Shared Growth

© Christa Wilk, Mandy Hsu, and Camille Moeckel
MSIs, University Park Campus

Growing Up with Tommy and Lisa

© Ananya Das | Staff, Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

The homework from school for Tommy, aged 6, said — What do you want to be when you grow up? He was supposed to write the word and stick a picture if possible. Mom and Dad were busy so Lisa, aged 9, was asked to help decide what he wanted to be and stick a photo of the same.

“Okay, so what do you want to be when you grow up?”

“A policeman!”

Lisa started laughing, “You cannot be a policeman! You are so thin and tiny. You don’t eat your veggies and you fall over when there is a strong wind. Policemen can’t be like that!”

“Fireman then?”

“Same goes for firemen too, you have to be really strong!”

“How about a baseball player?”

“What? You can barely hold the bat straight! If you had any talent in that direction it would have showed up by now!”

“Can I be a farmer?”

“You could, but it would be very boring!” ‘Boring’ happened to be Lisa’s favorite word at the time.

“Astronaut?”

“Same, very boring. You will have to sit in a spacecraft alone for days with no one to talk to!”

In the same vein the ideas of becoming a doctor, bodybuilder, racing car driver, football player were all shot down or nipped at the bud.

After Lisa and Tommy had gone to bed, Mom found the homework page and showed it to Dad as they both burst out laughing. Tommy had drawn a big question mark on the page and written (with Lisa’s help), “Can I decide this when I grow up? Cannot decide now.”

On the Horizon

© Chet Davis | Patient





Target Locked

© Zhuolin Wang | Husband of Zhexi Ma, Department of Medicine

Two Worlds

© Lisa Witmer | MSIII

I live straddled between two worlds
This is by my own choosing but no less lonely
A student older than those surrounding me, a parent needing to justify my choices
There are times I get lost in my feelings of uncertainty
Age begets wisdom therefore I should know the answers
Still a student, the same as those surrounding me, yet somehow not the same
Expectations weigh on me and attempt to bring me down
Judgement stares at me and points out my flaws
I feel alone with no place to fit in

I am isolated by my own circumstances
There are few that can understand my struggles
I do not want to burden others with my own insecurities
My social anxieties keep me from getting close and shield me from potential shame
The defenses I put up to protect my fragile self-esteem push others away
My loneliness is of my own doing yet no less isolating

I am my own worst enemy, my thoughts fuel my imposter syndrome and my mom guilt
I question my every choice, living forever in uncertainty
Have I made the right choices, am I selfish for sacrificing my family time for my own goals
What happens if everyone finds out I am a fraud and unworthy
These are the thoughts that plague me alone straddled between two worlds

I fight to persevere and survive, pushing past my negative thoughts
There are times that I stumble and allow the guilt to overwhelm me
Sometimes it takes longer to overcome the darkness that threatens to pull me down
I never stop fighting, I never stop pushing, I never STOP
I live straddled between two worlds, struggling to not just survive but to thrive
I push myself for my family, to show my children what is possible
I never allow my weak moments to define me; they only make me stronger

Transitions

© Katrin Bakhil, MSI, Kelan Fogarty, MSII, Mandy Hsu, MSI, Abdul Majeed, MSI, Manvita Mareboina, MSI
Ksenia Varlyguina, MSII, Morgan Voulo, MSII, Christa Wilk, MSI | *University Park Student Project*

Starting what you've wanted but not knowing where to start
The distance to the end is hard to discern from here
Reminiscing the past while starting to build my future
New faces, experiences, and challenges - can't wait to see what's next in store
Knowing I don't know enough, but not knowing when I will
New things are challenging
Embracing the feeling of uncertainty
I'm tired. Lost, but finding my way
Alone, but still a team

This poem was written by medical students in different phases of their education. However, the experiences they share and the emotions they feel are remarkably the same. In creating this poem, one cannot discern where one student stopped and the other started. Each participant created a line or two and the overall flow is congruent with a single writer.

To Study Science

© Julia Simpson, BS | *PhD Candidate, Microbiology and Immunology*

it takes a clear and focused mind;
it takes a steady hand;
some careful calculations,
and a drive to understand

the murky machinations
of the cause for some effect —
the Question is the altar
at which students genuflect.

It takes a mental fortitude,
and thickness of the skin,
a sapling's flexibility,
a hunger from within —

for science is a trial;
one of patience, one of grit,
ambition and humility,
dexterity of wit —

for what will lend you buoyancy
when struggling to float
but camaraderie and humor
with the others in your boat?

It takes shoes with forgiving soles;
a willingness to grow;
but most: love for discovery
and eagerness to know.

Dawn Dispers

© Nathan Cannon | *MSIII*



What I Hope You Get to Be

© Makayla Lagerman | MSIII

I hope you'll get to be an animator.

We talk about how Rapunzel's locks made her Disney movie the most expensive animated film, but now you worry about the cost of losing your own.

I hope for you to be luckier.

I've heard you have a lot in common with Grandpa (maybe too much now). The same funny bone; yours just has a small lesion with a moth-eaten appearance now. I've heard he's on round three, and he gives you advice about port placement.

I hope for you to feel normal.

We talk about bad news. How I ruined Marvel movies with my pathology delivery. You ask when you can eat birthday cake. Kid stuff. Important stuff.

The neutropenic fever makes its way into the notes, but do they know about your YouTube channel?

I hope for you to be a kid. The man.

A man.

This is what I hope you get to be.



Summer's Beauty Returned

© Malgorzata Sudol | Department of Medicine

Satuzevy

© Katrin Bakhl, MSI, Kelan Fogarty, MSII, Mandy Hsu, MSII, Abdul Majeed, MSII, Manvita Mareboina, MSI, Ksenia Varlyguina, MSII, Christa Wilk, MSI | University Park Medical Students

Thematic embrace: This poem was written by medical students to reflect on a season that spurred fond memories. Each student wrote a line or two.

Capitalism is the season of death

I'm tired of the cold, Dr. Stephens can I stay home

Waiting to see the snow, but the fall here is already too cold

Shoveling soil then snow

Sun to snow to showers to sleet

New growth, predictable degeneration, hibernation and we emerge

To adapt to change

Smiling as I hear the sounds of birds chirp while I wake up

Still. Everything is still, silent, but peaceful

Resilience

© Vera Guertler, MD

Former Physician, PSH Community Medical Group, Lancaster

Among onion-domed churches
on half-deserted streets,
I roam on slippery cobblestone,
hoping this air raid siren
will not last long
this cold October morning
in Ukraine.

The road to the medical clinic
is several blocks long,
but even in the rain,
I hear the song of resilience,
grow stronger and stronger ...

in the woman stirring food for the homeless,
rising above the pain of losing her son —

in the silver-haired man sweeping city streets
before dawn with a broom of branches —

in the rising and falling of a child's backpack
on the way to school where half his day
may be spent in the bombshelter —

in the priest fastening two pieces of wood
with holes made by bullets to make a cross for a corner altar —

And I walk faster
to meet my fellow volunteers
infused with the power to make a difference.

To Have Come from Your Heart

© Dwayne Morris | *Office of Medical Education*

We cried when you closed up shop
Mr. Beef
The public doesn't buy volume
When the Dow is weak
You tried to make it affordable
For families to eat
The world said you failed
But God smelled an aroma so sweet
We smiled when God closed your eyes
And took you home
We put 79 flowers and a wreath
On a stone
You were buried among soldiers
But more a warrior of the heart
Now we consider ourselves blessed
To have come from your heart
We consider ourselves blessed
To have come from your heart



Before the Day Starts in the OR

© Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology & Perioperative Medicine

Life Finds a Way

© Lisa Harman

Department of Neurosurgery



Lunar

© **Ananya Das**

Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

I wish the moon would not shrink,
the full moon be frozen in the dark sky.
I ask the moon to stop its journey
across the inky sky each night,
but the silver moon follows its own path,
shrinking, growing small, and disappearing,
reappearing again as a shimmering crescent,
watching us live our daily lives,
the highs and lows, the crests and troughs,
it never stops on its way
as the night gives way to the day,
the iridescent moon no longer visible
in the dazzling light of the sun.

The Withering Reality

© **Shaheena Rifaie**

*Jake Gittlen Laboratories for Cancer Research
Division of Pathology*

Every green leaf in all its glory,
eventually withers with passing time.
Unannounced it browns and shrivels.
As it curls away from everything around,
no amount of love or care can make it unfurl.

It holds on to its very last,
but even a gentle breeze can carry it away.
As you watch it go, it crumbles in the air,
and you finally accept it is gone forever.

But time being the jester plays its role,
and in the very same spot a shoot appears.
With it comes hope that can light up the soul,
and with it comes a smile that can brighten life.

The Leaves Are Falling

© **Noa Erdman (Age 10)**

Son of Lisa Erdman, DA, Department of Humanities

The leaves are falling
From sky high
From the trees
They were once connected to.
From there they become so
Crunchy clean
With their bursting colors.
Finally, when they are done
They will return to the ground.



Grow, baby, grow!

© **Gail Thomas, PhD** | *Heart and Vascular Institute*

Golden Rays

© **Malgorzata Sudol** | *Department of Medicine*



Judge's Choice – Art
Staff and Family Member Category

2023

Old Friends

© Oana Bollt | Department of Surgery



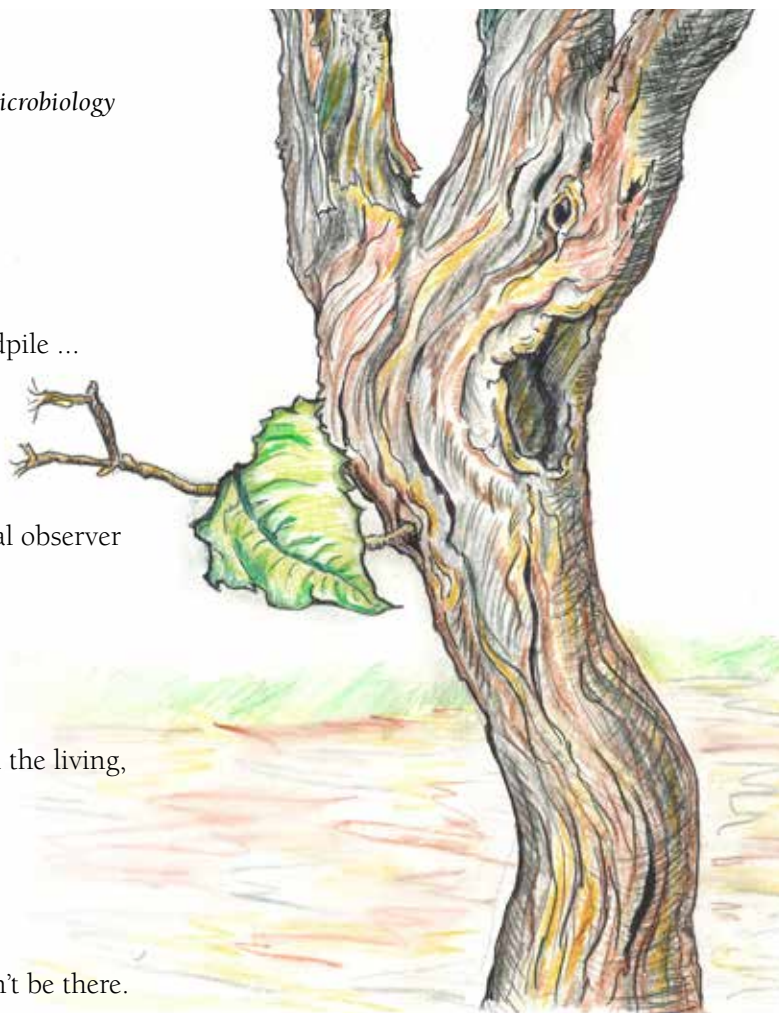
Judge's Comments:

A free and spontaneous watercolor sketch and a perfect use of the watercolor medium.

Gnarled

© Richard Cary Joel, MS, PT
Husband of Maria Joel, Department of Microbiology

Twisted and brittle,
and all dried out,
long past any sign of usefulness ...
On the surface
it would appear,
only good ... for a place ... on the woodpile ...
maybe fuel for the fire,
or perhaps a project
for an adventurous whittler ...
But hope springs eternal
and life is tenacious
and what might seem dead to the casual observer
is anything but ...
and a sprig of green
may emerge
when least expected
carrying with it
a leaf of faith ...
For undying optimism lies deep within the living,
far beneath the hardened bark,
drawing up needed nutrients
from root to sapwood pipe,
to limb and branch
and then to twig
and finally,
to that little green leaf that just shouldn't be there.
But who am I to say ...



Judge's Comments:

This poem sings a metaphor for resilience of a living being, with hope and tenacity coursing through its pith, even when least expected.

Mineral Springs, Yellowstone National Park

© Kevin Rosborough | Printing Services

Judge's Comments:

I was enchanted by this enigmatic abstract featuring understated colors: light pastel-like turquois and subdued violets, with golds, browns, greys, and muted yellows. The diagonal composition utilizing a frothy line running right top to bottom left of center features a strategic opening midway. A sensual invitation or is it a gasp for breath? Does it represent some primal hunger? Is it perhaps instead the unconquerable urge for fluent speech, that most basic of human accomplishments distinguishing us from other sentient life?. What does the image have to tell us? What does the artist want to say? The temporal reality behind the image is less important than the inherent beauty of its lines, light, and color.





Phoenix

© Chet Davis | Patient

The Moon Does Not Hesitate

© Caroline Canter Triscik, MA, NCC | Patient

The moon does not hesitate
to take its place
in the night sky
standing tall above
us, the dignity
of knowing
she reflects
light that is
not her own
she holds a force
strong enough
to pull all
the seawater to and
from the shores,
shores of dark and light
sand and smooth stones, cliffs
of rough granite, colorless
limestone and lush green,
solid exposed
ice vulnerable
to the earth's changing

I am asked, *What is
the opposite of
shame?*
and I search
the ocean
of my mind, dive deep
to find a word
to encapsulate
this elusive emotion.
We form and hold
words with our open
mouths, like pearls turned
over in our hands—
worthiness, empowerment,
the opposite of making one's self
small, instead filling
the space with one's
presence, singing out
a song with angry tears,
declaring I am here.

She sets herself steadfast
in the sky
and in the darkness lets
her self be seen,
illuminated
gently pulling and rocking
the waves from rage
to calm, a lullaby
of peace
and power
allowing each
phase to be felt,
passed through,
the only way
to fullness again

Grief Grows

© Meredith Fausey-Kreider

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

Grief grows
It is swallowing me
It plunges me down
I can't breathe
I can't move
It is crashing all around
It is consuming
I AM OVERWHELMED
I say a prayer
I heave myself upright
One foot, then the other
Breathe in deeply, exhale slowly
Rising to try
One moment, then the next
I grow through grief

*-In Memory of Evan Kreider (2008-2013)
Love always, Mommy*



Hidden

© Camellia Wallsong (Age 9)

*Daughter of Priscilla Song, PhD
Department of Humanities*

Winter's Breath

© Diana Orabueze | MSI

Chilling air
Pierces my body
Whirling around
Marking its territory
Through the nose
Where it has no goal
Calming down
To one steady flow
Into the bronchioles
And into the lungs
Searching desperately
for where it belongs
Encountering a stream
This seems to be
A place of exchange
A place of routine
This is our goodbye
The chill has warmed
Though it was short
Life circles on
The journey is at an end
But it will happen again
From the same hole
I breathe in new air

Katla Ice Cave, Iceland

© Camille Moeckel | MSI



The PICU Nights Gargoyle

© Elias Harkins, MD, MEd

Resident, Department of Pediatrics

It was once midnight in the pediatric ICU
We run our “tuck-in” rounds,
where we check on kids in the sleeping twilight.
Our hushed voices speak outside of the rooms,
A quick and subtle report.

One night, we see a patient on ECMO
Where we perform like lungs and hearts
to help those of our patients.
The child lies amidst a mired nest of tubes.

A therapist sits perched on a chair
watching the blood flow through
as a machine runs all the numbers as it sees them.
He is the ECMO Gargoyle
and we are asking for his wisdom.
“What do we do for kids on this therapy?”
“What do these numbers mean?”
“How does the machine work?”

I listen
but there is a fullness of noise in the room.
The whirring pumps
the machinery beeping
the hazy air conditioning.

I watch the patient,
And their silence belies much more.
They are growing.
The scar along their chest is healing.
We have granted the body resources to change
And held a recovery space.

And as I sit here.
and hear Flow Dynamics explained in gentle tones
I realize it is 1 AM on a Sunday.
I gently touch my patient’s hands
And feel the warmth.

It was once midnight in the pediatric ICU
And I was once a medical student
Holding an ECMO vigil.



Looking Forward

© Efthalia Karagkouni

Psychiatry and Behavioral Health



Untitled

© Kenneth Miller

Retired Faculty

Division of Health Physics, Department of Radiology

Quarantine

© **Caroline Canter Triscik, MA, NCC**
Patient

Time slows to the crawl
of a caterpillar across the cold
hard sidewalk looking
for a place to form her chrysalis
while we hole ourselves
up in our home
to keep a virus contained

My son, isolated in his room
instead of under my wing,
will he have grown taller
than me now
in these five days cocooned
behind the white wooden door?
I have missed hearing his songs,
like the orchard orioles silenced
in winter's eves, like the vanishing
blackpoll warbler homeless now
from the concrete towers we've built
We have become afraid to breathe
one another's breath, to hold
what we love inside

We hear the sound of melting ice
slide from the roof at midnight,
land like the shattering of glass,
an impossible joy in the breaking

When we re-emerge, will we
have the courage to split ourselves
open and sing again?
Will we have the strength
to devour our days?



Fortitude

© **Ryan Higgins** | *MSIV*

Haikus of the Morning

© **Julia Simpson** | *PhD Candidate, Biomedical Sciences*

1. No honey

Black tea at home, so
lab stays sterile. Savor the
indigo morning.

2. Since the haircut:

showers are quick, smile
fits better, reflection looks
like me, finally.

3. An ode to good shoes

Seclude my soles from
asphalt, acid, atmosphere:
my loyalty, yours.

4. Good omens

Walking in, boughs sheathed
in icicles, snow under-
foot: peace, in the hush.

5. Upon arrival, fill:

bucket with ice, note-
book with protocols, mind with
curiosity.

6. Meditations

Seek balance. Question,
observe, absorb. What marvels
lie as yet unseen?

The 5th Floor at Shift Change

© Gianna Dafflisio | MSIII, Patient

The gushing dark green liquid
overwhelms the little blue bag.
One pale hand reaches out to help
but it is absorbed into the river
at high tide.
Gasping for air as my face turns red
and my sheets turn green.
The other hand stays steady on my back.
A reminder.
As my body forces emptiness upon me
I fill with hatred
toward the inept clear tube shoved down my throat,
Toward every wire, line, and drain
which has infiltrated my body.
The hand moves slowly in circles.
A reminder.
Things start to settle
and I look around at what is left:
The carnage of my resting place and
the fear of my loved ones.
But I also see two hands slowly washing in the sink.
Those dirty, steady hands
that are still here even though her shift is not.
A smile and an inside joke.
A reminder,
that there is more than the pain.

The Last Cycle of Life — Loss

© Rhea Kanwar | MSII

four minutes. from just another day to last day.
killing the illusion of the permanent. burning into
me the temporary. how come even in the serenity
of rain there can be blood? i am left wondering,
was it the piercing sound of ribs shattering that
strangled me? or the long zipping of the body bag?

Potter Sequence

© Alec Harrington
Family of Medical Student

I love it here
where there is no fear
Mommy loves me so much
she's keeping me for 9 months
I feel you holding me tight
like it's our last goodnight
Mommy loves me so much
she's bereaving me for 9 months
I need your breath
until I face death

Isle of Wight

© J. Spence Reid, MD
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation



Essentially Not Needed

© Leah Washko, RN | Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center

“Be a nurse —
there will always be a job for you,
and you’ll never have a problem”
are the words I wish I could take back
from my grandfather’s lips
I think he wishes he never suggested it,
especially during this pandemic
the one in which I don’t have work ...
can’t work as a nurse
after four long years of studies
with four years long of punching in and out.
there’s no available time for me,
only causing anxiety —
anxiety over having enough money
over when I can take my laundry out next,
if it’s safe to venture out to the grocery store,
or if my grandmother is washing her hands properly
since she herself has been immunocompromised
from undergoing chemo all those years ago
yet she seems like she’s fine.

we act like we’re all fine,
but any of us could drop like flies —
or be hooked up to a ventilator for countless days
until we die, alone,
with an endotracheal tube stuffed down our throats.
I know how to lavage the lungs with saline
as the doctor suctions the fluid back up
through a scope that we sterilize for the next patient
and you lay there, choking, not knowing
that your lungs are being sucked and scraped —
you’re drowning in a controlled setting.
I know what it’s like to see your oxygen saturation
drop drastically into the twenties,
with the normal being close to one hundred percent,
and we medical professionals respond smoothly and
quickly as we maintain your airway so you continue
to live, but for us,
it’s just a normal Tuesday.

humans are dying while
my friends are complaining that they
cannot work from the comfort of their office desks.
instead, they occupy their sofas,
while an N95 engraves itself on my cheeks,
on my forehead, leaving its mark
when all I wanted to do was breathe normally
I wonder what possessed me to put make-up on —
why bother when the mask strips me of normalcy ...

but I can’t throw it away into the trash can
because we only have so many to go around,
to safely adorn our faces, to fight the evil
from spreading into our lungs and yours.

my mask sits alone in a paper bag,
taunting me —

“Be a nurse. Put me back on.
Wear me again ...
And again.”



The Faces of 2020 — Part 4

© Bob Lillie | Patient



A Reminder to All of Us | © Jill Stachowski | MSII

Kenosis

© Joshua Ryan Dellinger | Resident, Department of Psychiatry

I was not there when you died
But every other moment besides
Beside you
Your old hand in mine
Older than I ever thought it could be when this day came
A day I dreaded more deeply than any other
Since I first learned of death,
Of dust,
Of the God I knew you believed in
And the one I could only ever believe in
If He was a way to see you again

And in the warm mist of that night
As I drove the lonely road home
To an empty foodless house
I thought of Abraham
The father of three faiths
How he stood before the most godless of all cities
And pleaded to the face of God
For the sake of the godless

When I was eighteen
Meaning everything I said
I wrote that you were Jesus
And if now I ask how can I be so forsaken
It is only because your immeasurable incorruptibility
Has been met with the ultimate outrage of death
And those workworn hands
Still somehow so soft
That I held every moment of their last living
Fighting back sobs so that in your scant awakenings
You would not be troubled by my turmoil
Would be now stiff and cold and unskilled
But somehow, still, imbued with such love
It could not be questioned

... those hands never lifting me again, never holding me back again, never warming me with their pulsing life again.

And I could stand before God
The way Abraham had done
And hold the ledger and make my points
And so brazenly set myself as an equal to him
Who would not crush me as he did Job
(Though I felt I suffered so much the end would be welcomed)
But instead hear and even enact my offers
I would put one finger still redolent of your cadaverine
In the face of God
And tell Him that all the Christians had it wrong
And the one true way and light and life of this world
Never asked for a religion in his name
But should the Carlton church ever arise
It would immediately crumble
By the sheer impossibility of its aim
For while one can be Christlike
One could never become like him
Who could bounce me on his knee
Who could guide my hand to the ax and hammer and wedges
Who could make me a fisherman

Who could have me sit motionless drinking strong coffee at 9-years-old hanging on his every word in
his unflawed stories
Who could sit and groan blissfully as I rubbed the knots in his weary overworked back while we watched
another Braves game
Who could call me “cowboy”
Who could trick me on Christmas morning where a baffling disappointment of a gag gift was washed away by
a perfect blue bicycle wheeled in by you
And even then my child’s eyes did not see the gift
But instead the smile and bright eyes with which it was given
Who could laugh as you did
Purely and contagiously
Who could be as loved as you were
(An entire town in mourning)
Who could be as sensitive and yet as tough as you were
Steady and calm with the longest whiskers I ever saw you wear scraped away by a cheap razor and a little
shaving cream
(On the third day
He with more beard than I’d seen
In forty long years
I shaved him
Using zinc and lanolin
And a hot towel
To first soften his rough whiskers
Then with cheap shaving cream
And dull plastic razor
For twenty minutes
I shaved him smoother than I’d seen in ten years
Stretching his skin to expose the bristles
And feeling with careful fingertips words that only now held a meaning
(vermillion border, labial commissure, infranasal philtrum, mentolabial sulcus)
At the end, wiping his cheeks clean
And checking for strays,
In the most lucid moment of forty-eight hours,
He spoke to me,
Asking: “Are you a barber shop now, too?”)
Who could ever turn my heart inside out through a thin telephone transmission with his bright and floating
“Hey, buddy!”
Who could lift me up from under my arms to sit on his lap when I was too young to stand
Who could dig each backyard splinter out of my hands with his surgically sharp small silver pocket knife
(Who could save // a wretch // like me?)
Who was it that saved me from the serpent when I was a fool in the garden?
Who was it that the children came to, leaving behind their parents with no sense of loss?
Who was it that came to me, fatherless, and gave me the greatest father there could be?
Now there is only the silence of your ended breath.
The screaming of my agonized grief.
And the piercing rift in my heart
That at once wants to believe in your god
Just to show Him the dusty fleshy proof
That His best begotten
Came long after the Nazarene
And did more for a poor boy’s soul
Than a god or godsend ever did;
And yet the fact come far too late:
He was the Holy Spirit incarnate
And now He is dead.

In loving memory of Carl Carlton Lankford • Oct. 24, 1933 – Aug. 19, 2022

Self-Waged War

© Dwayne Morris | *Office of Medical Education*

A friend of mine with good intentions
Told me most of my pain was self-inflicted
I became angry and self-defensive
But I knew exactly what she was predicting
Your search for love has become greater
Than the pain your heart can endure
And despite your claim to be battle hardened
You've become a casualty in a self-waged war
I said, "don't be so dramatic"

"I watered it down"

"What about love's magic?"

"Fundamentally unsound"

"What if the heavens?"

"They haven't so far"

"Where does that leave me?"

"I know it seems so hard"

"More like unbearable"

"Oh the trials of the heart"

"I've never felt so more alone"

"A perfect place to start"

Higher Ground

© Kylie Manuppelli | *MSII*

i wish i could feel your face, watch
morning wash over it. combing
sunday troubles onto pancakes,
homemade blueberry marmalade.
i am at once this stained tile floor,
the patter of our dancing feet,
and all of the air in between.
i ran out into the street to
prove something, sinking
into the lines. i tried to write
my way out, fence in the days.
black coffee in pewter dawn,
a release of pressure. one day
i will call to you, but for now
this crawlspace will be
my sanctuary.



Lonely Evening

©J. Spence Reid, M.D. | *Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation*

Nature Is Growing, I Am Growing

© Louise Sedun (Age 6)
 Granddaughter of Yvonne Sedun, RN
 Retired, Pain Clinic



Judge's Comments:

As a pediatrician, I love having a child's drawing featured here. Unintentionally, the artist has created an impressionist piece, with her brushstrokes and her use of light, just as did painters who invented the movement over 100 years ago. It is a self-portrait of a child, proud over her physical growth alongside the flowers and trees she observes. More than that, it shows a self-awareness of her place in the natural world. We learn so much from our children; the world would be a better place if we all could see ourselves in this way.

Ember

© Rachel Wemhoff, MD | *Clinical Resident/Fellow, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology*

A spark
 The inspiration
 To follow a dream
 To forge a path through darkness and uncertainty
 A single tentative step toward something unimaginable but incredible
 An idea to change the world

A flame
 To follow in the darkness
 To light the way despite the treachery ahead
 Each shared smile or quiet moment of understanding
 Kindling for the tenuous flicker of light

A bonfire
 Imbuing warmth down to the core
 A swell of curiosity with every comforting brush of hands
 A symbol of solidarity among souls
 In each mutual triumph, each intimate moment exchanged

A blaze
 Burning with passion and determination
 Seeking justice for those left broken
 Heart exploding into rage
 Fury erupting

An inferno
 Unrelenting desperation
 Searing every peaceful place
 Consuming every shred of contentment
 A beacon of both power and destruction
 Every silence broken by the insatiable crackle of the flame
 And when the fuel is finally depleted

Ashes
 Unholy darkness and decimation
 The landscape unrecognizable
 Lost among the fragments of who we used to be
 Before the promise was broken
 Before the treatments failed
 Before we lost them
 The echoes of faces and names scattering in the wind

I follow my footsteps back
 Through drifts of dust and ruin
 To a place that seems familiar
 Though bleak and barren
 Under the remnants of a forgotten dream

A glow
 Delicate and isolated
 But not extinguished
 A flicker of something forgotten in the flame
 A reminder and a way home

An ember
 That still burns

Judge's Comments:

The range of emotions in this poem is expansive. Likewise, the embedded meanings apply to individuals as well as society and everything in between.

There are many stories in this piece. Mine is here. Is yours?

Hope? Despair? The birth of an idea? The endless fight against injustice? The memory of a loved one perhaps?

There are many stories in this piece. Mine is here. Where is yours?

Late Snow

© Mary Mager | Family of Patient



Judge's Comments:

*How fitting to have *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* (bleeding heart) featured in this amazingly detailed photo. I look forward to its appearance each year at this time as one of the earliest spring flowers, well before the risk of winter weather has passed. The fresh snow here enhances both the beauty and the look of resilience of the flowers. The species is adapted to early spring so always stands out spectacularly. It flowers profusely for several weeks, as the unfocused background of the photo cleverly shows.*

Home

© **Manvita Mareboina** | *MSI*

My place of retreat
Seems far from reach
I hold onto the memories
And the lessons they teach

Rustling, bustling excitement
Familiar streets that can't be beat
The sounds of laughter by the beach
I continue to miss it more

The warmth is fleeting
The sun is gone
It seems like there's an endless rain
That has not ceased from dark till dawn

Although that home seems far
I'll build a new one with care
A place to stand tall and grow
With new memories, waiting to be shared

It may not be forever
But in my heart, it will hold
A future I want to explore
And a family that I'll eventually mold

It Matters

© **Corinne Laity** | *Patient*

It matters when you're hurting
It matters when you're in doubt
It matters when you're isolating
It matters when you're afraid —
afraid to reach out.

I hear that you are broken
I hear you're incredibly confused
I hear those words unspoken
I hear you distancing yourself —
because you've been abused.

I see that logic's lost its place
I see blankness in your precious face
I see the running but nowhere to hide
I see you searching for shelter —
A place to park your pride.



Glorify Him

© **Helen Sedun (Age 6)**

*Granddaughter of Yvonne Sedun, RN
Retired, Pain Clinic*

Embrace Your Differences

© **Samie Rundle (Age 12)**

*Family of Sheila Rundle
Center for Medical Innovations*



Survive

© Hope Pesner | Patient

Endless prodding
Poking and such
My head nodding
As I take in so much
They throw words
In the air
Making sure I heard
Knowing what I must bear.
So many tests
Time is drawing out
Trying their best
To leave no doubts
They have news
Not what I want to hear
Now I must choose
Be strong or live in fear

This is reality
My body invaded
Treatment a formality
Loved ones persuade
Me to take
A chance
Working to make
Me change my stance
She insists
There will be a cure
She persists
I wish I could be
sure.
Support is strong
Through each day
Treatment is long

But no other way
Not my choice
The demon to face
But my voice
Is stuck in place.
Give it a try
My life to lose
Not a lie
This isn't what I'd choose
Wanting to kill
The threat to my health
But still
I find myself
Living this trial
Trying to thrive
Going each mile
I will survive!



Frozen Bath

© Wilson Po, MD | Department of Anesthesiology

Resting In Hope

© Makayla Lagerman | MSIII

My first patient death was on a Saturday.
My friend's parent's death was on that Wednesday.
I could medical-ize the myasthenic crisis,
Think, "How sad, but how inevitable."
But I could not demystify the sorrowful cries.
I think, "How sad, when we felt invincible."
They call it transference and countertransference
When the thought of bleeding bleeds over
From your identity as medical professional to friend of a grieving soul and back again.
We cannot escape death,
Cannot leave the brokenness behind so long as we place ourselves in its path,
So long as we are enmeshed in the pieces.
I am thankful today that God is near to the broken-hearted.
I think that Healing would just be medicine
Without this hope.

Blank

© Pallavi Kulkarni | MSIII

It's almost as though
Their happiness
Their hurt
Leaves their soul
And enters
 Scratch that
Infiltrates
The empty canvas
That is my head
Laughter
Even the crying
Synchronize
Making it the hardest task
To strip myself
Of these drenched sheets
Covered in tears
Colored with joy and sorrow
Taking me to the point
Where it feels
Better to be without emotion
Than to feel anything at all



Blessings upon You

© Harmony Zimmerman | MSI

Planting Tulips

© Lauren Dennis | MSIV

These little bulbs snitch on my acceptance of waiting.
They are living contradictions that betray my capacity to hope.
As I plant them, the environment is threatening with chill, yet I am sure that they are safe.
Winter, in agriculture, is time of stability, of depth rather than death.
It makes me wonder.
Maybe not all delays of beauty make me afraid.
Maybe good can grow from the grime of my life too.
When I plant tulips, my actions speak beliefs very different from the ones my anxieties spiral around.
Maybe I know that Spring will come.



There Are Many Ways To Get To Where You Want To Go

© Jonathan Foulds, PhD | Public Health Sciences

The Gap in the Tasman Sea

© Roberta C. Andrade, PhD
Department of Humanities

If only I would die,
I wished innocently
as the crushing wheels of academia
— the egos, the expectations, the pressure
& the precariousness of PhD life
— the debts, the insecurities, the pressure
slowly maimed my still-dreamful mind.

I want to die!
I screamed
— in between cuts
as the anxious voices in my head
spread like a virus.
As they colonized, invaded
— in between cuts, painful cuts, deeper cuts
a mind that once dared to dream.
My thoughts, no longer orderly.
Just words on pages.
Keep writing.
More words on pages.
Keep going.
Producing.
Presenting.
Pretending.
Disappearing.
Two more years pass.
Hold on.
Two weeks left.
Just a little longer.
Seven days 'til due date.
I can't —
The dream that once steered me
lost.
& a once-innocuous wish
became the only way out.

I am going to die,
I sighed with relief,
as I walked to the place
where my pain, my shame, my failure!
would be laid to rest.

“The Gap,” it is called.
A site of heavenly beauty,
guarding the gates to the Sydney Harbor,
guarding my end.
Like a mischievous siren,
it has dragged countless souls
into the enthralling waters of the Tasman Sea,
into the darkness of their own fears,
into the depths of their own anxieties,
into the permanence of their own death!

Breathe . . .

If you asked me what made me turn around,
I could not say.
Maybe the Lifeline signs and cameras
reminding me at every corner
that I was not alone.
Or maybe the carefully placed fences
detering my empty self
from taking that final, liberating leap.
Or maybe even a lingering sense of guilt
to finish what I had started four years earlier.
But turn around I did.

& while I write these words today
I feel no pride, no satisfaction
for wearing a cap and gown.
For almost drowning
in exchange for that one word
— Doctor
that now precedes my name.
For what is a title
if it has no person to honor?

But I feel,
plain and simple.
Joy and pain
Awe and shame.
Because I am still alive,
And I do not want to die.

Persistence

© **Katrin Bakhl, Manvita Mareboina, Diana Orabueze**
MSIs

Barren, desolate
Waiting desperate
Hope no longer prevalent
Nothing is left of it

Beyond the time of waiting
Things are changing
Questioning our fate
Can change be made?

As new year dawns upon us
Resolutions in place
What can we do while we wait?
Trying to escape my complacent state
Life seems to move in the same pace
Struggling to keep up with this race
Is this really what I must face?

Striving for more,
I pick up my feet
Open the door
I emerge
But not alone
Arising
To a new challenge
Ready to grow



Life from Death

© **Harmony Zimmerman** | MSI

Tête

© **Amber Kulaga** | Patient

Tête-à-tête explosion
on the first day of spring.
Cold-shocked and squishy
two days later.

Reclamation.

And I have to accept it,
however much it stings.

Using this try
to fuel the next,
and the next.

Growth doesn't have to
penetrate the surface.
There is still life
in a dormant root.

Something New Out of the Old

© **Everett Fasnacht (Age 14)** | Patient



Incrementum

© David Carnish, MA, MDiv, BCC | *Pastoral Services*

A rebirthed Shoah grows
efforts to cancel others out
this the real plague that our human race has always
been fighting
the voices of the martyrs seep out
An African-American mother's lament extolled
Another queer sister slain
Another Muslim dead
A Synagogue on fire
A school with bullet holes
The crucifixions of our unholy time
a parade of 'justified' indignant masses
shouting fattening insults
sporting defeated flags
as if filling harmless balloons
Germinating hatred
under the banner of "true love"
In the wake of failing
the last time the gas turned on
in the showers
And seeing that in capitalism
Love just happens at Christmas
Maybe just maybe this time
We will revile
Pietà never again
No more smithing swords
No more crowns upon heads
This cancer needs must die,
which means growing spine



Bright Beginnings

© Sheila Rundle

Center for Medical Innovations

Lilies

© Seamus Carmichael, BA, HDipEd

Harrell Health Sciences Library



Excerpts from My Parents' Story

© Allison Ching | MSIII

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge killed half of the population. No other country in the whole entire world went to help ... For four years, no one did anything. The only organization that went to help us was the Red Cross, that was it. No one else.

My parents are immigrants from Cambodia, a Southeast Asian country that was taken over by the Communist Party of Kampuchea, known more commonly as the Khmer Rouge, from 1975-1979.

They took over all over the country. They said, "Get out of your house. You can take whatever you need for a week, then you can come back."

They told us three days. I still remember. It was a hot, sunny day in the afternoon. Soldiers came into the house and pointed guns at us. They said, "You have to leave right now. You do not need to take anything. In three days, you will come back to your home."

They **never** let us come back.

My mom was the oldest daughter of four at the time. When the soldiers came, my maternal grandfather was away at work; only my grandmother was there for her family, having recently given birth. My dad was the third youngest of seven. His mom had died several years before; my grandfather was the one who kept their family together.

We'd travel from town to town. We didn't have food to eat, we would stop by peoples' houses and ask for rice. They'd give us some but we didn't have enough, so you know what we did? We'd find wild vegetables and eat just the tip, the rest of it was tough and chewy. In the old days, they'd cook it and feed it to the pigs.

You would just go wherever. The whole town was like a circuit, you just followed each other and went wherever. And when nighttime came, we had no homes, no water, no idea where we were. We slept on the street. Everybody, the whole town, slept on the street.

The people of Cambodia were herded into the countryside, where they were forced to work in the fields from sunrise to sunset. Nothing of their past lives mattered anymore — the educated, the ethnic minorities, the ones who opposed the new regime were executed. These and more who died of starvation and disease are the ones buried in the infamous "killing fields."

If you were 6 years old or so, they'd take you away. The older you were, the further you'd go from your parents. I was less than ten years old, so I stayed closer. They'd take you, and you weren't allowed to come home.

They left me to watch my 3-year-old baby sister. When my parents came back home, she'd sing a song and say, "Mommy and Daddy are coming home now." I don't know how long it was ... She died because we had no medicine, no food, nothing. She was swollen, her body got big ... My sister died on the second floor of the house. I'll never forget.

Eventually, an army from Vietnam invaded Cambodia to liberate the country. My grandparents managed to sneak their children back home from the fields. The families were reunited, but they still lived amid gunshots and fear.

The Vietnamese had already invaded, so every night, every day, when we went to work we had to dig a hole to bury ourselves, can you believe it? They told us, "You dig a hole, this is for you," meaning that even though the Vietnamese had invaded, they were ready to kill you.

The Red Cross had set up a refugee camp in the neighboring country of Thailand, and my parents' families planned to flee there. My dad's family made it on their first attempt. My mom's family and others were not so lucky.

People from Cambodia just walked into Thailand, but the Thailand camp was already closed, so do you know what they did? They'd take you in a car, bring you up the mountain to the border, and say, "You go down. You go back to Cambodia, you're not allowed to stay." There were a lot of mines there to prevent people from getting into their country, so a lot of people got killed because of that. People walked there and were blown up and killed.

On the third attempt, my mom's family was separated and captured, placed in a holding area in the camp. An aunt from Australia bribed the camp officials to set them free, and they were allowed to stay. My parents then lived in the refugee camp for several years, applying to different countries for sponsorship.

We applied to France, the United States, even Japan I bet, you name it, as long as it was a free country. Then a pastor from a church in Philadelphia was willing to sponsor us to come over. Without him sponsoring us, we'd never be here. We saved up money and we gave the church back the cost of our plane tickets.

Continued on next page

My aunt and uncle in Australia wrote a letter to an American couple in Tennessee, who never had any children, to adopt my sister, who was just born in the refugee camp. It was a hard decision of course, for parents, but my uncle said, "If you get to America, you'll have freedom and you'll always see your child." That American couple sponsored our family, but while they were doing that, the wife got pregnant. When we came to Tennessee, she held the baby at the airport. That's why your aunt never left the family.

My parents were both teenagers when they finally made it to the United States. They had never had any chance for education before in their lives, but that didn't stop them from learning English, math, and everything else they needed to graduate high school, working part-time to support their families all the while. My mom went on to graduate from Penn State University with a bachelor's degree in hospitality management, while my dad graduated from Temple with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. They live comfortably now, raising a family of their own.

From where they started to where they are now, their perseverance and determination has wrought for them a better life, one where the dirt, sweat, and blood of their youth have only ever pushed them forward to grow and triumph. Though my childhood in the U.S. is vastly different from what theirs was, I hope that someday, I too bloom as proudly as they have, like towering evergreens that never fade, or perennials in spring.



Unfurling of a Fern

© Courtney Landis | MSI

Growth from Within

© Brandon Portnoff | MSIV



Burn Out

© **Christine Quimby, MA** | *Department of Medicine*

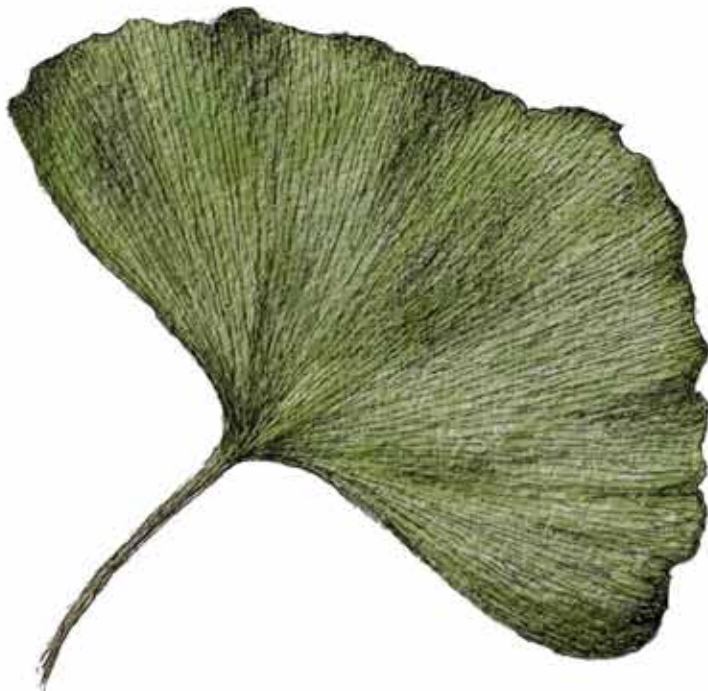
My spirit might not look like it has burned to the ground multiple times.
Each fire, all consuming, leaving me brittle and exhausted.
Once the resin and hard coating are gone, though, and the seeds start to sprout,
I become tender and bend toward the light, knowing I will thrive again.

LIFE

© **Charlotte Chambers (Age 11)**

Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA, Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

What truly is life, but a collection of memories, to be whisked away at any second?
Why do we fear death, do anything to avoid it, when we know one day it will claim us, no matter what we do?
No one is invincible to this force.
No one can outrun it.
Not even if you're the smartest or strongest person on earth.
But knowing all this, what makes us push through every day?
Why do we go to work and school, even if we don't like it, knowing that the time we spend there is still using
our valuable time on earth?
Love.
Love is what motivates us.
We don't want to die because we don't want to lose the feeling of love.
We fear our loved ones getting hurt because we don't want to live with the grief.
The grief of thinking that we should have been there, done something, even when we couldn't.
Love is what makes us live.



Ginkgo Leaf

© **Melanie Payton**

Public Health Sciences, Research Computing

Four Sisters Reborn 4x4x4

© Daniel Hale, MD | Department of Pediatrics



Excerpts from Artist's Statement

“In March of 2020, I was suddenly confronted with more free time than I had in many years. ... I decided to organize the leftover threads from other needlepoint projects. ... At this time, we learned that one of our cats, Bebo, did not have very long to live. Bebo had three littermates who also lived with us, Dixie, Pixie, and Ms. Handley. At the time, the four sisters were 18 years old — the equivalent of 88 years old in human years. Thinking about all of the pleasure that Bebo and her sisters had given us over their lifetime, I found my theme — four cats with lives closely linked. ... Over the course of the next 18 months, four needlepoint pieces were created. The four works have a common color scheme and four panel layout. In each panel all four of the cats are touching each other — tail-to-tail, toe-to-toe or ear-to-ear — not only symbolizing their relationship but the full circle of their lives together. Thus, my leftover threads were regenerated into a celebratory piece of art that commemorates the four sisters and their lives with each other and with us.”

Judge's Comments:

A great example of repetition and variation. Skillful graphic designs repeated and changed using beautiful color.

Judge's Choice – Creative Writing
Faculty and Healthcare Provider Category

2023

Daily, Annually, Perennial

© Judy Schaefer, RN

Member of The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine

Each morning
I wake up
and lose you again.
There are numbers for this
Three hundred sixty five
Twenty-four and seven.
Each night
I fall asleep
 in a ritual of peace.
Sweet flannel amnesia
Temporary memory loss
Then awake. Then again.

Judge's Comments:

This poem was a riddle — perhaps about the routines of the day, the regenerative power of sleep, and the ability to repeat the process over and over again. It begs for its beautiful music to be read and re-read to get there.

Judge's Choice – Photography
Faculty and Healthcare Provider Category

2023

Canyon Art

© J. Spence Reid, MD | Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation



Judge's Comments:

The sensual lines of iron-oxide-laden desert rock carved over millennia by wind and water, though barren, create a feeling of emergent life gasping a first life-giving breath. This photograph is a well-composed abstract with engrossing lines and complementary colors amid contrasting values. Well done! Its message is clear.

Intermezzo

© **Judy Schaefer, RN**

Member of The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine

No beginning. No ending.
Just here and now.
In between
Dreaming, music playing
Holding on, slowly,
Seagulls calling, loud with hunger
Holding on, small raft
healing through the night
In between
Now. Awake. Here.
Not ending. Just beginning.



Spring Shower

© **Kimberly Perkins, RN, CCRC**

Clinical Trials Office

Prickly Hearts

© **Oana Bollt** | *Department of Surgery*



A COVID Education

© **Thomas McGarrity, MD** | *Faculty Physician, Gastroenterology*

Minding the grandkids on Inauguration Day
In the year of COVID. I'm up early hugging
The coffee pot. Buzz Lightyear surveys from
the kitchen counter, gathering reconnaissance.

Laser-focused parents retreat to their
bedroom command centers, twin screens ablaze.
Math lessons to impart, electronic
constructs to assemble. Words buzz
Through the air. Hit send. Saturate the Cloud.

"Rise and shine," I announce, echoes of my father.

Shaggy-blanketed Sherpas descend
warding off the morning chill. Owen and Ashlyn
bed-heads two, sandy-eyed and silent, munch
chocolatey cereal, waffles drowned in syrup and a multi-vit.

Trade in their blankets for light sabers
Zoom in, enter the wormhole, approaching
warp speed, greet their Jedi master.

A cartoon video on the U.S. Constitution:

"We the people ... promote the general Welfare."

Gym class, jumping jacks and hopping over scattered
pillows like rocks strewn on the shore outside.

"Adventures of Hombre Perry," holding down the fort.

Count to 100 in Spanish. "Cien." "Bueno!"

From my armchair reading "Dragons Love Tacos"

I arise to refresh my tepid tea, stepping
across the clutter, a Simon Sorry plastic pawn
piercing my foot. "Ooowwww!" I howl.

Pop-pop's bloody paws stencil the floor and
Owen and Ashlyn run for peroxide and bandages.

Apply pressure, blow gently, the tincture, now the Band-Aid.

Two battle-tested medics stanch the blood.

Step back, silent, observe, console. Repeat.

Then clean up, clean up.

Education complete.

Perspective

© **Charlotte Chambers (Age 11)**

Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine



Immutable Cycle

© **Gary Gasowski, MD**

Alumnus, 1972



Looped Around

© **Himani Devabhaktuni | MSII**



Brown Men Matter — A Message from My Son

© Catherine Piermattei | Telehealth Program

Final Penn State Hershey radiation ...

Andre my son joined the celebration ...

Only eight and insisted he was needed ...

My expectations of the event so much exceeded ...

His school environment not very diverse ...

But our friends include everyone, inclusion we rehearse ...

When sitting on his own in the waiting room ...

His message on the white board thanked the staff for taking the cancer out of his mommy ...

Made my tired heart boom ...

When I returned to my son, he smiled and we ran to the bells ...

As they began to ring, hopes of staying well ...

Our celebration was extended by a man who also proclaimed to be commended ...

I let go of the rope so he could ring the bell as intended ...

My son also swinging the rope like he knew the man and what could be ...

Then realized that the only people celebrating were us three ...

My son then stated out loud and with a concerned yell...

Excuse me everyone this man is ringing the bell ...

But many still on their phones, not noticing very well ...

My son approached their space with tact ...

Lowering his head to make eye contact ...

When his eyes met theirs ...

He pointed to the man and pleaded for cheers ...

Clapping his hands and jumping for joy ...

All in the room began clapping as they smiled at my boy ...

The man ringing the bell also had a gleam in his eye ...

Then the man said thank you as he said his good-bye ...

We left the hospital and I was so proud ...

My son stating to me out loud ...

So glad I came today because not only did you need me ...

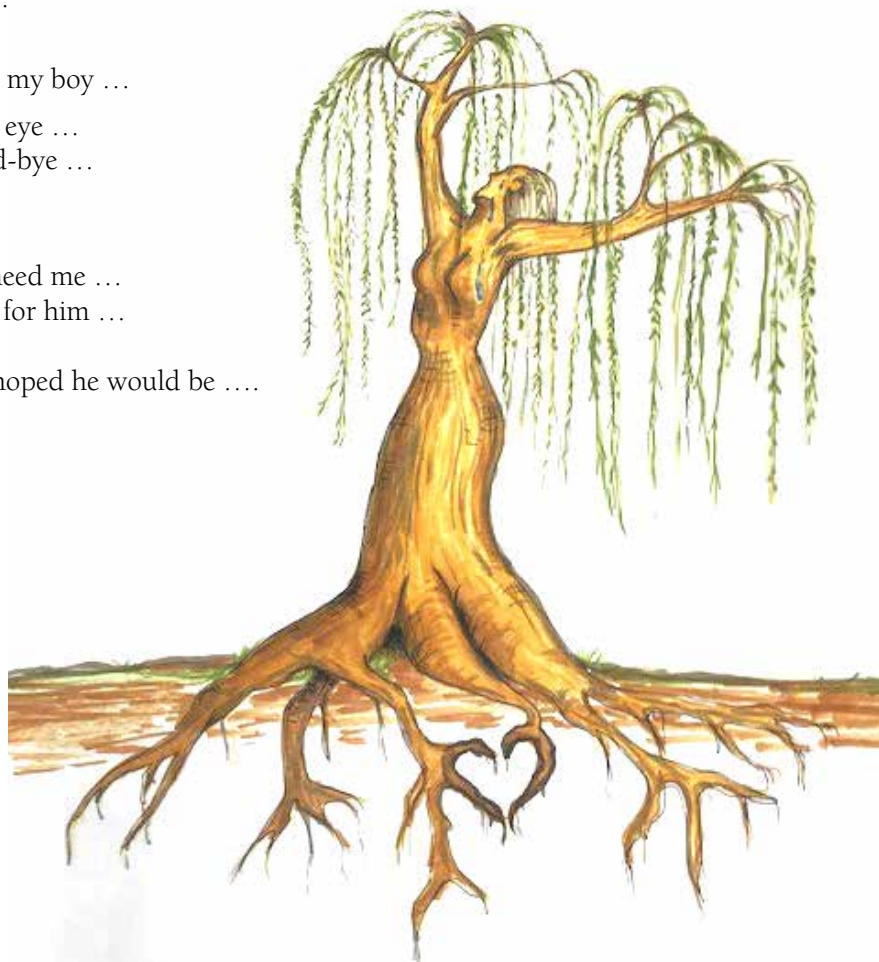
But that brown man had no one and I was there for him ...

I admired my son as he made me believe ...

That he was becoming the kind human being I hoped he would be

Rooted in Love

© Macie Zimmerman | Patient



Day of Life 1

© Zachary High | MSIII

Chills, cold stadium lights
Supersaturation, intense brights
Bulging betadine belly
Silver blade skates the surface
Blood pool fills, spills across the skin
Teal latex fingers dive within
Peeling and snipping layers
Until
Neon pink water balloon
Swollen, thick, and heavy
One more layer, poke, then
POP
Warm pulsing geyser
Hands in flight, latching onto
The coat of sticky white

Spring

© Ananya Das
Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

Daffodils all bright and gold,
Azaleas with their colors bold,
Tulips in their glorious march,
Cleveland pears' snowy arch,
Cherry blossoms pink and white,
Forsythias are a delightful sight,
Abundant joy to our hearts they bring,
Nothing speaks of 'regeneration' like spring.

Recurrence

© Michele Meckel, JD, MHA, MBA
*Penn State Bioethics Program
Department of Humanities*

Like the Phoenix
:: well-practiced in resurrection ::
my rise resides
:: readied, once more ::
within my fall.



Bird Fight

© Wilson Po, MD | *Department of Anesthesiology*

Indigo Bunting

© Zhuolin Wang, PhD
Husband of Zhexi Ma, Department of Medicine



I Am Not a Patient

© Anna Serrichio | PhD Candidate
Department of Neurology

I used to think that growth was simple, linear, and progressive: like a caterpillar that forms a cocoon and then morphs into a butterfly, or like a baby who learns how to sit up, then crawl, and finally walk. I believed that growth consisted of a series of transformations that had to go in the right direction — and if you were moving the wrong way, or if you weren't moving, then you weren't growing.

When I worked as a speech and language pathologist, I saw this in the patients I treated, many of whom were children. We worked on the m's for "mama" and the p's for "papa" before we could work on the r's and s's. As for myself, I had gone from undergrad to grad student to a working professional, and now I felt stuck. But I figured that as long as I kept practicing and getting better at working with different populations, I would grow as a clinician.

In reality, growth is not that predictable. It took me quite some time to finally understand this, but it all started one balmy Monday afternoon in early March, when two police officers brought a highly suicidal girl to the emergency room of the hospital where I worked in New York City.

Since I worked in the outpatient speech and language pathology department, I had never actually set foot in the emergency room. Still, the environment was familiar; staff walked through the hallways quickly, with purpose, wore the same purple name tags, were all trained in Epic, a hospital's electronic medical record system, and punched in and out of their shift each day in the same way I did.

I was not used to being in the hospital on Mondays. I worked on Saturdays. Mondays were my day off, and I wasn't exactly thrilled to be there.

The police officers bypassed the line to the reception desk and directly handed the suicidal girl to a nurse. After a little waiting, the girl was asked to change into scrubs, at which point she started crying. She was seen by the psychiatric emergency room doctor, who asked her if she knew why she was here.

"I don't know," I said, flatly. I work here. I am not a patient. Hospitals are for sick people. I am not sick. I was just trying to kill myself, which is different.

While the doctor questioned me further, I did my best to calmly explain that this was a mistake. I work here, I reiterated. I politely asked to go home, explaining that Mondays are my day off, and I was not supposed to be there. As I said this, I fully and wholeheartedly believed that this was a perfectly reasonable request to be making.

It came as a complete astonishment, then, when the doctors ignored me, instead informing me that I was to be held overnight involuntarily — in other words, against my will.

Upon hearing the news, I started shrieking, futilely shaking the foolproof locked doors that separated me from the rest of the hospital, attempting to wrestle free of the nurses' tight hold, demanding that they let me go. Don't you understand that I work here? I see up to thirteen patients a day. I am not sick. I am a clinician. I am not a patient! The screaming and grappling with the nurses only stopped when they threatened me with an injection.

After spending the night at my workplace, I awoke the following day, a Tuesday, determined to make things right. This had all been a mistake, and surely it wouldn't take long for someone to realize it.

"Crazy people don't know they are crazy," the old adage goes. So as you might imagine, it is rather difficult for a crazy person to convince someone else that they are not crazy.

My first attempt was during a desperate conversation on the phone with my supervisor. "I told the police that I didn't need to go to the hospital, but they said they had to bring me!" I told her, my words spilling out in a garbled mess. "And now I keep telling the doctors that I'm fine, that I'm normal and I don't need to be here! But they don't believe me!" I paused. "But you believe me, right?"

Silence on the other end.

Still, this conversation was not enough to make me realize what all the staff on the unit already knew.

I've been mistaken for a lunatic, I thought, as I paced the hallways almost hysterically. But I held on to the hope that as long as I could persuade my doctor that I was okay, she would understand that I had no reason to be here and let me go.

"I'm concerned," the doctor said when I finally met with her later that afternoon.

After 45 minutes of pleading, she had not budged. “We’re going to have to keep you here for the time being.”

Defeated, I lay staring at the pale green walls of the hospital that night, my eyes welled up with tears. Before everything went wrong, I had dreams. I had dreams of pursuing a PhD and writing a book and marrying someone I loved. Now I couldn’t imagine a life in which I was capable of even attempting those things. All I could picture was a life of constant failures at tries to make it worth living, interrupted by sporadic trips to inpatient facilities every few years until it would become evident that I could no longer live independently. Is this my life now?

Most people grow and strengthen over the course of life, I reflected, yet I am getting weaker and moving backwards. Two days ago, I was an extremely hard-working speech pathologist who took care of dozens of patients every week. Today, I am the opposite: someone who needs taking care of. I am a failure.

I thought I was a failure because I was struggling and needed help. The way I saw it, growth was a ladder that I had fallen off of and had no hope of getting back on. The way I saw it, sickness equated weakness, weakness signified a step backwards, and any step backwards meant that I wasn’t growing. In fact, I was hardly surviving.

I would soon learn that growth is not a steady ascending path. Growth is change, and just because you are struggling does not mean that you aren’t growing.

When I awoke on Wednesday, something changed. Having finally accepted that there was no way I would be able to leave the hospital in the immediate future, I started acting differently. I stopped pretending that I was not a patient, and I stopped refusing to take the medication the nurses gave me. I started learning from the experiences of other patients and started asking the doctors questions.

“What are some of the side effects I can expect from these medications?”

“What are some strategies I can use to overcome my intrusive thoughts?”

“How can I care for my mental health while continuing to work?”

When I finally opened to accept the help that I so desperately needed, I started to feel better. After I was discharged, I continued to look for ways to make my mental health a priority and my life worth living. Healing made me a different, better person.

Being hospitalized taught me a lesson that I wouldn’t have grasped if somebody had just told me it. I needed to learn it for myself. Sickness — physical or mental — does not equate weakness. Even clinicians get sick sometimes. Struggling and overcoming painful experiences are an inherent part of growth. As healthcare professionals, understanding that we are not infallible and taking steps to address our own health is one of the most important things we can do for our growth.

Embodying the Rod of Asclepius

© Chenée Armando | MSII



Dear Succulent Plant(s)

© Leah Washko, RN

Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center

dear succulent plant(s),
why do you hate me?

I assembled you with my own bare hands,
letting my fingernails get crusted with your soil
using a paintbrush to dust the excess dirt from your leaves,
decorating your home with a little orange gnome,
and yet here you are,
dead.

string of peas,
or pearls, if we're getting technical,
you wilted before we could become friends
and I dug new holes for your propagated self to rebloom
but you chose the path of death instead
what did I do wrong?

aloe,
you're blossoming!
Or should I say — growing up nicely?
you're the tallest plant I've ever been lucky enough to grow
I wish I could etch your height on the side of a wall,
like a proud mother watching her sons sprout

succulent,
you have a longer Latin name, but let's not go there,
you're just there, living the generic succulent life
doing your thang, as the kids say,
and I can't take credit for you doing well
but maybe the water I gave you helped — who knows?

this love-hate relationship needs to end
what can I do to change your minds about me?
I put you in direct sunlight,
moving you as the sun strolls across the sky
you've gotten more sun than I have in weeks!
I can't do much more to change your mind

sincerely,
green thumb no more

A Fresh Start

© Joanne Skilton Shughart

Friend of Malgorzata Sudol, Department of Medicine



Let the Sun Shine Through

© Kimberly Perkins, RN, CCRC

Clinical Trials Office



Seasons

© Arrienne Butic | PhD Candidate, Microbiology and Immunology



Judge's Comments:

Art is a form of communicating. This well-designed piece depicts the four seasons in an instant. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words.

A Heart Too Big

© Leah Musser | MSIV

She was born with a heart too big.

I like to imagine with this big heart she loved more, gave more, & felt more of life.

Because it's with this big heart that I only watched her struggle for air, groan in discomfort, & ultimately find peace in death.

As I watched her, I held her hand, I yearned to breathe for her ...

Why was it so easy for me, but so hard for her?

I willed it to all be a sick joke. Like it was some big reality check.

But as my heart raced, hers slowed. As my breath hastened, hers arrested. And as my eyes welled with tears, hers glazed over.

Calling the nurse in, I wanted to be brave. I cannot cry for this patient. I hardly know her. Having only visited her for two days before & only knowing her first name.

But as the nurse came in, brave as ever, she affirmed what I had seen.

I wept.

I apologized for weeping. How silly of me to weep for this patient. I didn't take care of her, I didn't know her medical history, I didn't even know her full name.

I reluctantly left as more staff entered to begin her next steps. Hoping to give them space to work & feel the emotions they were more deserving of feeling.

I returned home to urgently search her chart.

I had to know more about her. I cannot feel this much for someone I hardly knew.

That's when I realized.

She was born with a heart too big.

Maybe I was too.

Judge's Comments:

This piece navigated a difficult subject delicately and lyrically, weaving the patient's story with the author's experience, while providing insight into a challenge those in healthcare may face-- the emotional toll of empathy.

Vík í Mýrdal, Iceland

© Camille Moeckel | MSI



Judge's Comments:

A dozen riders on horseback moving in unison through verdant fields thick with lavender. Who are they and where are they heading? The lines of the composition point to the left. What is their intention when they arrive at their destination? Are they sheep herders heading to tend to their flock? Are they cowboys on roundup or farmworkers en route to distant fields? Or are they merely tourists who rented horses for the day to enjoy country air and to smell the flowers? What is the location which features a greening mesa in the background and an elevated roadway separating lush meadows in the foreground? These are all questions we cannot answer. However, the leading lines, composition, and colors provide all the answers we need to appreciate the beauty of the landscape and the momentarily benign human presence.

Movement

© Anthony Sedun

Son of Yvonne Sedun, RN, Retired, Pain Clinic

The mosaic crucifix of San Damiano was lifted as tenderly as a backhoe and the reverent, rough-handed men allowed. The tempo, methodical; the percussionists, nonpareil. Their movement steady as the rain that day — steady, neither hard nor blinding. Movement in the rain, a movement of men numbering nearly two dozen. The watchers and the workers, the funeral director, and the scoop operator. The movement like ballet, like reverent music for marimba — an instrument of vaults and steel and rotted wood — of earth itself, wet and scarred with the operation long-planned, yet not without a heaviness of heart.

After an anthology of months, it was decided the friars long ago buried here would be exhumed and moved to Saints Peter and Paul where the ground offered less resistance of rocks, and rest would no longer live between negotiation and need.

Eight graves. Five already in vaults
lifted out of the sodden ground.
Three in wooden coffins,
collapsed catastrophes,
a quiet comity of Adam's legacy.

And you, my friend, a friar and a priest
who directed the production that rainy day.

Flint, Michigan. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
And dozens of provinces, states, and
time zones thereafter. You yourself, a man
on the move — at times, commotion, collision — at times,
a wary isolation. Always, a longing hope of cinders
for resuscitation — the animation of old bones,
wet wood — indeed, all things — the mosaic of sharp messes
lifted out of old graves with the music and the fire
of round majesty and trust.

Perhaps you witnessed more that day than you bargained for.
Not an elegy for what's lost, but a paean for what's in store.
The San Damiano crucifix in procession once again.



Splatter

© Shivani Mattikalli | MSI



Layers

© Robert Ganse
Information Services

Sometimes I Feel Pretty

© Estelle Green | MSIII

Pretty exhausted,
Pretty overwhelmed,
Pretty mad,
And pretty sad.

As life can feel full

Full of injustices,
Full of trauma,
Full of mess,
And full of stress.

But every day I get up,
Put on makeup,
Show up with a big smile,
And go the extra mile.

Because I am pretty

Pretty loved,
Pretty strong,
Pretty hopeful,
And pretty grateful.

And life is full

Full of gifts,
Full of greatness,
Full of changes,
And full of chances.

Dragonfly on Lilies

© Michele Morrissey

Departments of Dermatology and Ophthalmology



Beautiful Inside and Out

© Gabriella Schilling (Age 11)

*Daughter of Amanda Schilling,
Special Hematology Lab*



Wild Flowers

© Harmony Zimmerman | *MSI*

The Rainbow Daisy

© Dixie Miller | *MSIII*

This is a story about a special Daisy
Who bloomed before the touch of spring
This Daisy was always smaller than the rest
But, alas, was determined to keep growing

Daisy grew in height, she grew in petals
She grew in the sun, she grew in the snow
She grew alone in a field all her own
No one to guide her, no one to shadow

And so this Daisy, in solitude
Grew in a way unaccustomed
No longer recognizable as a Daisy at all
The only flower like her to ever blossom

But no one knew of the elements she faced
Ripped petals shed, broken stem healed
It all made this Daisy the pick of the bunch
When she was first discovered in her lonely field

She had done what no other flower could
Shedding the similarities to her kind
Her solitude bred pure individuality
That laughed at the confines of human minds

This Daisy was not destined to wilt in a vase
A flower that outlasted the snow and the sun
For who could bear to pluck from the ground
A flower whose growth would never be done

A Beautiful End to the Life Cycle

© Gail Thomas, PhD | *Heart and Vascular Institute*



Night of Dark Splendor

© Tony Oliveri | Patient

The dark moon
is a razor's edge
of endings and
beginnings.

The changing
tides ebb deep
scouring memory,
revealing possibility.

These bold currents
leave raw aching bits
in their timeless wake,
presenting us as we are.

Like a pupae struggling
to emerge transformed
by the ephemeral forces
of the helixing cycles ...

Creating harmonic futures
ripe with such possibilities
yet unreachable, unless we
are willing to be swept up.

Unless we are willing to be
the differences unfolding in
this shadowed night splendor
while growing into ourselves.



A Little Hope

© Michael Cote, MS
Harrell Health Sciences Library

Pick Me, Boy

© Ellie Cameron | Patient

In an ocean of people, I would always know you.
I'd always know your colors, the emerald green and pale blue.

In a lineup of lovers, I would choose you everytime.
I'd be drawn to your voice that sings like a rhyme.

In a fog of dreary days, I would find peace in our memories.
I'd remember the way your light healed my sadness like a remedy.

In a house of mirrors, I would see only your perfection.
I'd be blind to the shortcomings that show in your reflection.

In a garden of roses, I would get pricked by your thorns.
I'd push back red petals to touch sharp edges although I'd been warned.

In a hurricane of lies, I would remember your words as truths.
I'd see through tinted glasses to lament my surrendered youth.

In a gallery of beauty, I know your eyes would glaze over me.
I'd be helpless to your apathy and powerless to make you see.

June 14

© Taylor Goss | *MSI*

At the memorial service we took shots of tequila
at the same time they'd declared time of death.
My medical school acceptance was confirmed the day before.
Now, I am supposed to be learning — growing into a physician.
But it doesn't feel that way.

I've cut the lungs out of a cadaver, held them in my hands,
and still, I have no answers. Only echoes of, "sometimes this just happens."
Funny how all the helpful memories are gone as I learn the physiology too late.
Left behind are white-knuckled fists at the sound of a ventilator,
and a vacant stare during the lecture on lung transplants.

People always ask if it was expected.
I guess they don't know what else to say when a 28-year-old dies.
But then again, neither do I — no matter how much I've grown.
It always feels too sad in that dark, poetic way but,
I wonder what they would say if I told them it was his birthday.

I Used to Care

© Cynthia Iberg, RN
Retired RN, Obstetrics and Gynecology

But now I smoke up all the air space
and dam up all the flow. I'll mine all
precious minerals and let the
wetlands go.

I'll pump out all the aquifers, pave
roads from shore to shore. My
motto now is "drill baby drill," and
even call for more.

Cut down the trees, dry up the springs,
heat plants to a crispy crisp. I find most
people do not care if verdant green is
missed.

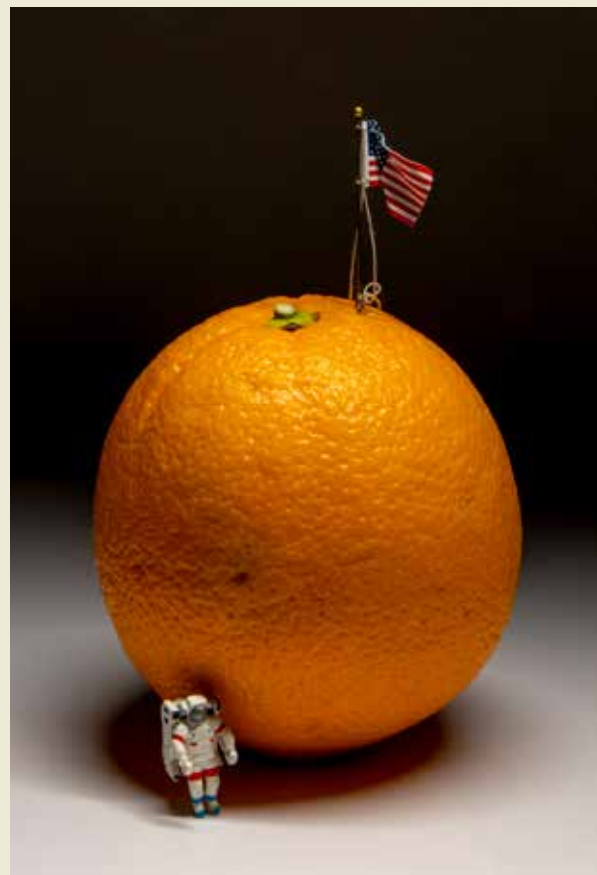
My garden is now a swimming pool,
my orchard a hole of nine. I'll melt
the poles, acidify waves, the only
species will be mine.

I've sold my Prius for a clunker,
gave my goat to Albert Gore.
My lungs are breathing CO₂ and
love it even more.

I feel so gosh darn happy,
now that I don't give a hoot,
if the earth stays as created,
or slowly goes to rot.

Apollo Orange Moon

© Devin DePamphilis
*Son of Sharon W. DePamphilis
Management Reporting and Decision Support*



Sunflowers

© Susan Landis, CRNA
Patient

They relinquished their nuclear weapons,
We will protect you, the free world said.
They planted fields of sunflowers.
Large blooms of yellow, instead.

The sunflowers grew in profusion.
They absorb the toxins and waste.
And the country developed and prospered.
Democracy flourished in haste.

But now we watch bombs and destruction.
A land suffers loss and great pain.
And the world prays and grieves.
As we watch the demolition of Ukraine.

Put these seeds in your pocket she tells him.
As a soldier stand guard with his gun.
Then when you die, sunflowers will grow.
They will bloom when his life is done.

I can't help but wonder when this is over.
And her children can all return home.
What can they plant to remove all the toxins?
Of the cruelty and hate they've been shown.

The Vault Table

© Fiona Chambers (Age 8)
*Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA
Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine*

I am at a competition
Cheers roar from the crowd as my teammate
sticks a perfect landing
My turn next
I salute to the judges and slide out to the vault runway
I start to run, faster, faster
I sprint and plunge off the ground
My feet hit the springboard
I jump up into the air
It feels like I am flying
I hit the vault table with my hands then fly again
Off the table I pop
I hit the ground, my short flight over
I want to do it again

Misery Ridge Trail

© Veronica Harrington | MSIII





Long Days

© Mary Mager | *Family of Patient*

Ruby Time

© Makayla Lagerman | *MSIII*

“No rush, no worries!”

But they appear lurking outside Room 7127

When I’ve been here only 29 minutes.

Clear doors, clouded head as they arrive.

I’m too new to know how to read between the lines of their clock.

He is confused, he does not know his name, and the blood vessels under his eyelids have begun to burst.

His wife has sat alone on this vinyl couch-bed for 13 days and has decided, for whatever reason,
to finally, tearfully, confide in me.

Then they arrive just as I’ve placed my hand over the Mrs.’.

I am self-conscious, distracted. Instead of listening to her palliative questions, I ruminate on
ways to escape to my team

So that they are not waiting too long for me to hear me say,

“This man is dying but I have one idea for medication that could help.”

(that will not cure him).

Apologies for eating time slip out of my flustered throat

But I am sorrier that I am sorry.

I am in the business of loving people, of sitting in suffering.

The RVUs and efficiency and capacity to see every patient under the sun will always come
second to drawing a picture of what the team means by “perforated diverticula” and watching
someone laugh-cry about how cheap the tissues are.

I am a student with a resource more valuable than rubies.

How dare I apologize for using it. For prioritizing healing of hearts over starting the antifungal
20 minutes sooner.

I exhale. I listen for feedback. And I take it with a grain of salt.

Silver Dollar Tabor — Dove of the Old West

© Bob Lillie | Patient



Artist's Statement

"Immortalized in film and opera, Rosemary Echo "Silver Dollar" Tabor was just 4 years old when the family's fortunes collapsed, and age 9 when her father, "the Silver King," died. While her mother "Baby Doe" tried to renew the prosperity of the famed Matchless Mine, Silver's various aspirations included poet, novelist, actress, and nun. After becoming estranged from her mother, Silver lived the last decade of her life in Chicago as a chorus girl and was found scalded to death at age 35 under suspicious circumstances. Baby Doe, however, maintained for the remainder of her own life that her youngest daughter was in a convent."

Judge's Comments:

This portrait has a wonderful feeling of another age. I can almost smell this time capsule.

This Trauma is Not My Name

© Caroline Canter Triscik, MA, NCC | Patient

After Ross Gay and Gwendolyn Brooks

It is what
it is.
They say and
say again
and I, too, say
how
can one accept
things as they
are or as
they were?
We cannot
rewrite facts, we can
water them down, maybe,
but for who's sake? Or
write, not instead,
but beside, the bitter
sorrow a list
of the joy the body
remembers
the tiny plastic figurine
of St. Jude you plucked
from the quarter machine
in LaVillita, the tacos pollo,
queso fresco, icons of Mary
and Joseph painted
on bathroom doors, Vienna
Teng pounding piano keys
in the Pensacola Barnes & Noble,
the newspaper clipping bringing

us to her singing of light through
thinning fog, the mandarin
orange segments peeled apart
in my son's palm, handed
to me across the black walnut table,
rainbow shadows dancing on walls,
reflected from the refracted
light above the sink, sudsy
cinnamon-scented water
warm on my skin, reverberations
in my arms, my chest, the weight
of mallets in hands as they
beat the skin of the bass drum
under Friday night lights

If I listen closely they pour
out, like water on them all-
the bitter, the sweet-
tender seeds we have
held carefully
in our pockets
for years, decades even, roll
them gently in our unclenched
hands, maybe bury them
again, this time not
to be hidden, but to see
what they become.
I remember. I am violet
after April rain. I am spring.

Judge's Comments:

A Matryoshka — or Eastern European nesting doll — is what this poem felt like. A poem with a nod to another poem, "Sorrow is Not My Name" by Ross Gay, which itself was a nod to the Gwendolyn Brooks poem "To the Young Who Want to Die." With rich imagery, the author lists and relishes beautiful memories to counter life's sorrows.

The Next Generation

© Susan Landis, CRNA | Patient



Judge's Comments:

Human intelligence and, with it, our ability to communicate with other beings, especially others of our species, begin in infancy. What stands out in this photograph is not the cultural differences that may separate Westerners from the adult figures in traditional costumes but the perspicacity of the infant studying what is yet a mostly unfamiliar world. While having the potential to regard the child with a bit of sentimentality, the picture evokes a deeper understanding of who we are. The youngster's eyes as captured by the photographer reveal a profound universal truth about the information-gathering minds inherent in human beings, which may absorb even more than other very curious beings, and our urgent desire to vocalize, even when it is still beyond our ken.



Pinwheel of Pollen

© Marcia Riegle | *Patient*

**Illuminating Voices of a Lost (Re)generation:
The Transgenerational Disconnect Between
Queer People Due to the AIDS Epidemic (4)**

© Jacob Thomas Snyder

*Son of Gail Snyder, Public Health Sciences and
Rahn Snyder, Quality Services*



The Cottage

© Cecilia Richardsen | *MSIII*

This is dedicated to the women I have had the privilege of walking through life with during medical school. It is about the place where we have grown together in faith, in hope, and in love.

The cottage is a sacred space
Though ordinary in appearance
It is a sanctuary of sorts
An oasis amidst the storms of life

We arrive to this place with stories
And share about our patients, struggles, and relationships
We bring our questions and fears, our dreams and tears
Entrusting these pearls to one another

We revel in raw realizations as we unpack the past
Understand our journeys, unlearn old habits
We hold each other through the hurt
And lighten the load with laughter

We grow comfortable in the tension
Caught between rejoicing and lament
We appreciate where we are
While longing still for where we hope to be

For who we hope to be

We release the self-destructive pursuit of perfection
And continue to pursue excellence
Slowly but surely, we also learn to say
This is good enough

We are good enough

We practice setting boundaries
Not as barriers, but rather as bridges
We seek to develop deeper wells
For love, for compassion, for connection

We train in a vocation often surrounded by suffering
And wrestle with topics of grief and death
We cling even more to hope for renewal
Letting the cacophony be drowned by our prayers

We leave this place changed
Souls refreshed, hopes restored
We remain always in progress
But, oh, how we have grown

In the hospital
We learn to be healers
In the cottage
We learn to be healed

Change Your Language, Change Your Mind

© Alyssa Tuan | MSIV

Through medical education, students learn medical terms
From names of medications to different types of germs.
As patients more and more see their medical records,
You may consider employing the following efforts.
When we write histories on patients we've met,
Certain words could be used that we should perhaps forget.
Deeply ingrained words like "complain," "deny,"
"Patient failed X" and "patient did not comply,"
Words that patients may perceive negatively.

For these words, there are alternative suggestions.
They may not be perfect; it's okay if you have questions.
Instead of "complain," you could try "problem" or "concern,"
A semantic difference you may discern.
For "denies" or "claims," try "reports no" or "reports"
In your notes that you might try to keep short.
Instead of "noncompliant," try "barriers to adherence."
As patients may not improve despite perseverance,
And stinging words may work to disempower patients.

We can start now to change how we use our words,
And do not fret over instances that have already occurred.
We can move forward in building relationships
By using language that builds doctor-patient kinship.
It's a change you can make with some effort,
As you present to others and write records.
It's a challenge that can be difficult to maintain,
Within the mainstream of jargon that defines this trade.
But if we try, just try ... our mindset could change.

References: Cox C, Fritz Z. Presenting complaint: use of language that disempowers patients. *BMJ*. 2022 Apr 27;377:e066720.

Joy Despite the Thorns

© Joanne Skilton Shughart

Friend of Malgorzata Sudol, Department of Medicine



Stick

© Yash Patel | MSII



Watercolor Eye

© Kasia Skocik, MA
Behavioral Health



From Afar

© Morgan Voulo | MSII

I did not know him, but I was present for the heavy conversations
I did not know him, but I watched as his mother wept over his body
I did not know him, but I wondered how his life had changed in the blink of an eye
I did not know him, but my mind raced with thoughts as I laid awake at night
I did not know him, but I prayed for there to be good news
I did not know him, but I woke up each day hopeful
I did not know him, but I saw the strength in his eyes
I did not know him, but I caught his smile
I did not know him, but I held back tears of joy
I did not know him, but he taught me about the fragility of life
I knew him

Problematic Pixels

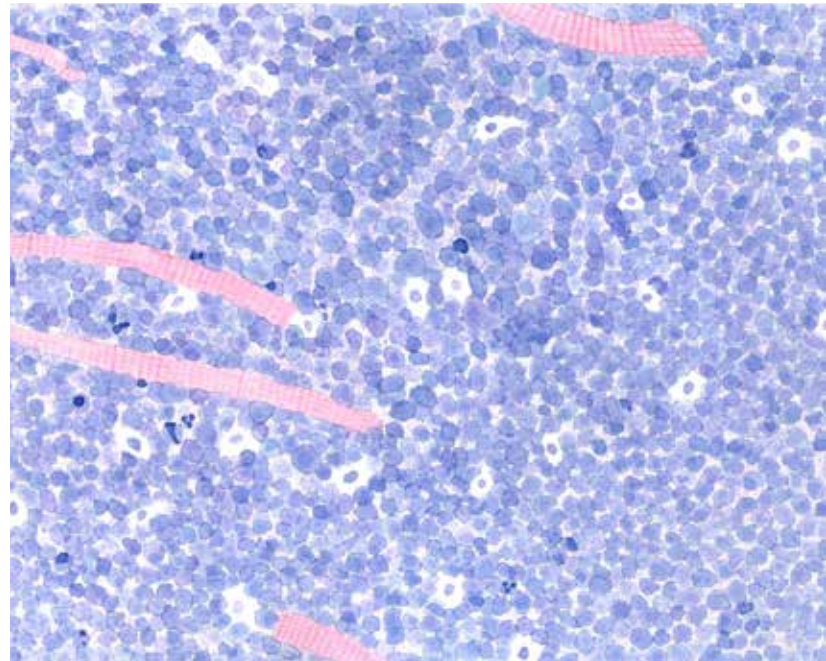
© Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

Problematic pixels propagate
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
The foundation of the human experience
Reduced to medical records

You got it wrong
The lesion is on my face
I don't smoke and that's not my weight
But now it's written in 50 places
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Until someone makes the time and space
To re-ask the question to my face
The problematic pixels propagate

Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste
Copy, Paste, Copy, Paste



A Child's Starry Sky

Growth of Burkitt lymphoma within soft tissue, observed under 40x magnification.

© Zachary High | MSIII

The Fifth Vital

© Pallavi Kulkarni | MSIV

Room 1

The patient hasn't spoken in days
Feeling an unbearable loss
Requiring Herculean strength
To even take the smallest sip of water.
"His vitals are stable."

Room 2

I saw her talking to her dead husband
Laughing at the wall
Mania, delusions
Must be withdrawal.
"Her vitals are stable."

Room 3

I want to do cartwheels
In this 10 x 10 room
You've cured me
I'm ready to get out of here.
"His vitals are stable."

Room 4

Palliation is the only option
The family holds back tears
Her story is one of medical mistakes
The cancer is spreading like wildfire.
"Her vitals are stable."

Room 5

The catatonia is consuming
Grunts are the only thing
They manage to utter
No organic cause is present.
"Their vitals are stable."

A piece of us is left in each room
No need to worry, however,
Our vitals are stable.



Centered

© Fiona Chambers (Age 8)

Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine



Eye to Eye

© Linnaea Wallsong (Age 11)

Daughter of Priscilla Song, PhD

Department of Humanities

INDEX:

Armando, Chenée	41
Andrade, Roberta C.	27
Bakhl, Katrin	5, 6, 28
Bollt, Oana	9, 36
Butic, Arrienne	43
Cameron, Ellie	49
Cannon, Nathan	5
Carmichael, Seamus	front cover, 29
Carnish, David	29
Chambers, Charlotte	32, 37
Chambers, Fiona	51, 59
Chambers, Kelly	7, 58
Ching, Allison	30
Cote, Michael	49
Dafflisio, Gianna	16
D'Amico, Danielle	inside back cover
Das, Ananya	3, 8, 39
Davis, Chet	3, 12
Dellinger, Joshua Ryan	18
Dennis, Lauren	26
DePamphilis, Devin	50
Devabhaktuni, Himani	37
Erdman, Noa	8
Fasnacht, Everett	28
Fausey-Kreider, Meredith	13
Flanagan, Michael	VIII
Fogarty, Kelan	5, 6
Foulds, Jonathan	26
Ganse, Robert	46
Gasowski, Gary	37
Goss, Taylor	50
Green, Estelle	47
Guertler, Vera	2, 7
Hale, Daniel	33
Harkins, Elias	14
Harman, Lisa	7
Harrington, Alec	16
Harrington, Veronica	51
Higgins, Ryan	15
High, Zachary	39, 58
Hsu, Mandy	2, 5, 6
Iberg, Cynthia	50
Joel, Richard Cary	10
Karagkouni, Efthalia	14
Kanwar, Rhea	16
Kulaga, Amber	28
Kulkarni, Pallavi	26, 59
Lagerman, Makayla	6, 25, 52
Laity, Corinne	24
Landis, Courtney	31
Landis, Susan	51, 55
Lillie, Bob	17, 53
Mager, Mary	23, 52
Majeed, Abdul	5, 6
Manuppelli, Kylie	20
Mareboina, Manvita	5, 6, 24, 28
Mattikalli, Shivani	46
McGarrity, Thomas	37
Meckel, Michele	39
Miller, Kenneth	14
Miller, Dixie	48
Moeckel, Camille	2, 13, 45
Morris, Dwayne	7, 20
Morrissey, Michele	47
Musser, Leah	44
O'Brien, Kelsey	1
Oliveri, Tony	49
Orabueze, Diana	13, 28
Patel, Yash	57
Payton, Melanie	32
Perkins, Kimberly	36, 42
Pesner, Hope	1, 25
Piermattei, Catherine	38
Po, Wilson	25, 39
Portnoff, Brandon	31
Quimby, Christine	32
Reid, J. Spence	16, 20, 35
Richardsen, Cecelia	56
Riegle, Marcia	1, 56
Rifaaie, Shaheena	8
Rosborough, Kevin	11
Rundle, Samie	24
Rundle, Sheila	29
Schaefer, Judy	34, 36
Schilling, Gabriella	47
Seacord, Nicole	2
Sedun, Anthony	46
Sedun, Helen	24
Sedun, Louise	21
Serrichio, Anna	40
Shughart, Joanne Skilton	42, 57
Simpson, Julia	5, 15
Skocik, Kasia	57
Snyder, Jacob Thomas	56, back cover
Stachowski, Jill	17
Sudol, Malgorzata	6, 8
Thomas, Gail	8, 48
Triscik, Caroline Canter	12, 15, 54
Tuan, Alyssa	57
Varlyguina, Ksenia	5, 6
Voulo, Morgan	5, 58
Wallsong, Camellia	13
Wallsong, Linnaea	59
Wang, Zhuolin	4, 39
Washko, Leah	17, 42
Wemhoff, Rachel	22
Wilk, Christa	2, 5, 6
Witmer, Lisa	4
Zimmerman, Harmony	26, 28, 48
Zimmerman, Macie	38





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