



Wild Onions

2022

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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: © *Feathered*, Marcia Riegle, *Patient*

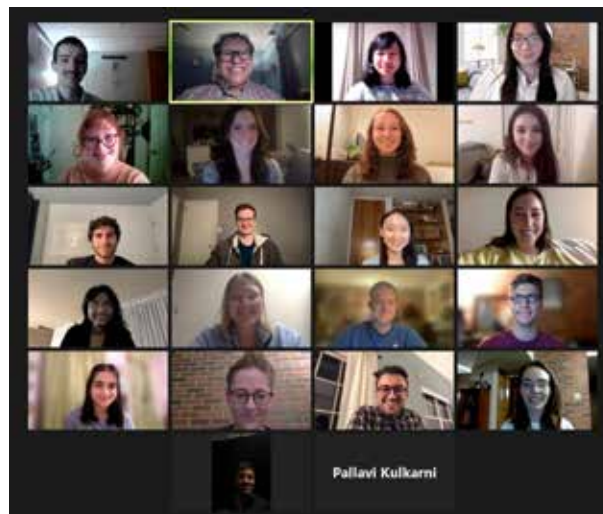
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Shivani Mattikalli, Claire Cohen, Kyle Mausteller, and Marisa Riley
Kushagra Kumar and Pallavi Kulkarni (camera off)*

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Wild Onions

The 2022 editorial team presents *Wild Onions* “Touch.” We release the journal in the spring and, this year, it feels fitting that we share this collection of photography, art, and creative writing during a time of renewal and growth.

Two years into a global pandemic, our lives have been touched and irrevocably changed. It is with deep anticipation that we embark on a more hopeful future than what we’ve all struggled through to date in this public health crisis. *Wild Onions* holds the honor and distinct responsibility of 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 reflect weariness, introspection, gentleness, comfort, trauma, and an abundance of hope translated into touching creativity.

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. *Wild Onions* is 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.

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 is 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 award three prizes, one for each genre, recognizing work that best exemplifies the theme of “Touch.”

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 2022 Judges



ART: Angela Agnes-Agapé Louise Sedun, MFA

Angela Sedun is a visual artist and musician, focusing in both realism and abstraction with subjects primarily devoted to social justice and/or spirituality. Raised in the midwest, Angela collaborated with educators on *Scholastic Art Magazine*, a publication inspiring middle and high school learners. She attended the School of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and received a BFA in Fine Arts in Art History. Seeking new scenery eastward, Angela completed an MFA from Marywood University, Scranton. Professional endeavors have included working in the Des Moines Art Center, mural painting, teaching art history, and leading chant as the head cantor and choir director at St. Ann Byzantine Catholic Church, Harrisburg. She has been an avid participant and promoter of *Wild Onions*. Orchestrating the beauties of a family of 9, Angela weaves artfulness into the everyday to make this one life better.



CREATIVE WRITING: Cheryl Dellasega, RN, PhD, MFA

Cheryl Dellasega is a professor, nurse practitioner, commercial author, and swimmer. She also is a community activist whose life work has focused on the well-being of women. An upstate New York native, she has been a Penn State faculty for the last 30 years, working with medical and nursing students. Her degrees are from Millersville University, Lancaster, the University of Delaware, Newark, Del., and Temple University, Philadelphia. Although she was already the award-winning author of seven books of fiction and Creative Nonfiction as well as a published poet and essayist, in 2015 she added a “bucket list” MFA degree. Her thesis, “Amtrak Lullaby” from Rosemont College, Bryn Mawr, will be published next year by Legacy Books Press. Active in the creative writing community, Dr. D. has conducted numerous workshops, coaching, and classes to students that range from middle schoolers to incarcerated women.



PHOTOGRAPHY: Rick Guidotti

Rick Guidotti, an award-winning photographer, has spent the past 25 years collaborating internationally with nonprofit organizations, hospitals, medical schools, educational institutions, museums, galleries, advocacy groups and communities to effect a sea-change in societal attitudes towards individuals living with genetic, physical, behavioral or intellectual difference; his work has been published in newspapers, magazines and journals as diverse as *Elle*, *GQ*, *People*, *The American Journal of Medical Genetics*, *The Lancet*, *The Washington Post*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *LIFE* magazine.

Rick is the founder and director of POSITIVE EXPOSURE, New York, a non-profit organization that promotes a more inclusive world through award-winning photography, film, and educational programs. POSITIVE EXPOSURE provides new opportunities to see beyond diagnosis to the beauty and richness of our shared humanity.



THEME: Alexandra Flamm, MD

Alexandra Flamm, MD, serves as a board-certified dermatologist and dermatopathologist and is an assistant professor of Dermatology and Pathology at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Her clinical focus is contact dermatitis and education in dermatology. She serves as program director of the Dermatology Residency and previously served as the Dermatology clerkship director.

Alexandra graduated cum laude from Duke University, Durham, N.C., with a BA in literature. She received her medical degree from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, and during this time also completed a Doris Duke Clinical Research Fellowship at the University of Iowa, Iowa City. She completed her dermatology residency at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, and served as chief resident during her final year. She then completed a dermatopathology fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She has authored numerous publications and textbook chapters and won institutional and national awards for teaching and advocacy work.

Welcome from the Senior Student Co-Editors

Welcome to the 2022 edition of the *Wild Onions* magazine! The past year has been a time of many changes for the journal, and we would like to highlight some of the most exciting recent innovations. First, last fall, the editing team worked to establish *Wild Onions Online* (sites.psu.edu/wildonionsonline). This is a means of categorizing all the journal's written and visual work into a single location and ensuring that it is as accessible as possible. The editorial team then embraced an opportunity to expand the breadth of editor experiences through outreach to the College of Medicine's University Park regional campus. Special thanks both to the University Park students for their interest and outreach and to Michael Flanagan, MD, for his faculty support!

For this year's theme, we wanted to select something that was meaningful not only to ourselves, but to our community as a whole. Now over two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, "Touch" is something that can, at times, feel foreign in a new landscape defined by social distancing. However, "Touch" is something that we crave as humans, both in a physical and emotional sense. We were thus ecstatic to have the opportunity to witness the theme emerge in this year's submissions as they rolled in during the winter. Getting to explore another's feelings through art, photography, and writing is truly something special. Each individual piece allowed us to consider a different meaning of "Touch," and for that we are forever grateful.

Finally, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on what *Wild Onions* has meant to each of us as editors. *Wild Onions* has served as an anchor point throughout our medical school experience. In the first and second years, it served as a break from didactic material, allowing us to revere creativity as a goal for healing in and of itself. Later, the magazine served as a way to bond with patients and encourage them to continue their artistic, photographic, and literary endeavors. Now, as we prepare for residency, we are honored by the ability to share this wonderful journal with the world.

Elias Harkins and Haley Hartman



Elias Harkins, MSIV

Elias was born to a military family, and while he spent many years in Washington and Texas, he always felt Hershey was home, both as the place in which he was born and where he would grow up. Elias went to Messiah University for his undergraduate degree in biopsychology, a field perfectly tailored to understanding the connections between biology and the human mind. During his time in medical school, he found a passion for teaching others, and so is pursuing an MD/M.Ed degree. In his spare time, Elias enjoys writing poetry (including doing a poem-a-day challenge every October), working with his feline writing partner named "Dickens," and playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with his medical school classmates. He is excited to pursue a residency in pediatrics at Penn State Health, where he aims to serve as an advocate, educator, and cheesy pun creator.



Haley Hartman, MSIV

Haley grew up in Punxsutawney (home of the groundhog) and went to The College of Wooster for her undergraduate degree in biology. While there, she utilized the flexibility of a liberal arts degree to explore literature, ethics, and the arts. She fell in love with the connection between her science major and the humanity that was so intricately connected. During her time in medical school, she pursued her passion for ethics by earning a master's degree in legal studies as well as her MD. In her spare time, Haley enjoys working in her garden (indoors and outdoors), embroidery, and playing *Dungeons & Dragons* with her medical school classmates. She is excited to pursue a residency in diagnostic radiology at Penn State Health, serving on an ethics committee, and contributing to *Wild Onions* for years to come.

Welcome to the 2022 Edition of *Wild Onions*!



J. Andrew Probolus, MD
2022 Guest Editor

Each issue of *Wild Onions* has a theme. I have the honor of introducing this year's theme: "Touch."

Touch has different meanings depending on the context. At a basic level it is the physical sensation of an object and perhaps another person conveyed through our bodies. Touch has always been a place of connection. The laying of hands has been an expression of care from the earliest of times of our individual lives and from our time as a species. In this era of the COVID pandemic, we have seen how the absence of touch has created great suffering for so many. However, touch extends beyond the physical to the emotional and the spiritual. Everyone has had the feeling of being touched by a poignant experience or by a powerful work of art. This collection represents a gathering of submissions from our Penn State Health and Penn State College of Medicine community, powerful words and images that share a vision of touch.

As you will see in this year's edition of *Wild Onions*, the talent possessed by this community is immense.

I want to applaud all of the contributors for their willingness to vulnerably share the works they have created. Now these talented artists touch us.

An incredible team of faculty, students, and staff are responsible for creating the 2022 edition of *Wild Onions*. Thank you to Elias Harkins and Haley Hartman, co-senior editors; Editor-in-Chief Daniel R. George, PhD; and Deborah Tomazin and Kerry Royer, managing editors. It is clear that *Wild Onions* is a labor of love for those responsible for its publication. It has been an honor to serve as the guest editor this year.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Wild Onions*!

Touch

© **Kelly Chambers, CRNA**

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

I don't like to be touched

I went to a dermatologist

He was an intern, a very light shade of green

He gingerly touched my skin

Timidly evaluating every mole

I have an abundance of moles

His touch was light

Like a small, nervous butterfly landing on my skin

He moved with such trepidation

I wondered if he had ever seen a woman unclothed

Imagining having to pick him up off the floor had I been nude

I went to an obstetrician when I was pregnant

Very far along, just a well visit

As he circled the table on which I was sitting

He tapped me

Tap on my shoulder, on my thigh, tap on my knee, other knee

As though I was a horse

I was not uncomfortable with this

I thought of the circumstances

In which I would have kicked him

I went to my family medicine nurse practitioner for a checkup

She squished all of my organs

And then the dreaded breast exam

I tried to be the model patient

Thinking of snow, purple fingernails, and bald eagles

But we were face-to-face and it struck me as funny

And it tickled

I felt the corners of my mouth start to betray me

And I laughed uncontrollably

I went to urgent care

This time for a problem, sore throat (pre-COVID)

He looked in my mouth, prescribed antibiotics

Like a touchless carwash

Later I read the report

"Bilateral breath sounds clear; Regular heart rate and rhythm,
no murmur;

Abdomen soft, nontender"

The words of an assessment that never occurred

Examination by keyboard

I would have liked to have been touched

Gentle Hands are Teachers

© **Jo Shughart**

Friend of Malgorzata Sudol, Department of Medicine



Unreachable

© **Susan Landis, CRNA**

*Retired, Department of Anesthesiology and
Perioperative Medicine*



Song of Eve

© Vera Guertler, MD

PSH Community Medical Group, Lancaster

Whisper to me
as I walk with the canvas moon
beside the water.

Wet my lips
like rain
on summer leaves.

And touch me
when I sit at the still
fountain, waiting
For stone birds to sing.



Light Touch

© Tim Attinger

Husband of Cheryl Attinger, Educational Affairs

What Do You Know About Me?

© Allison Ching | MSII

There are days when I hardly speak a word, even when surrounded by other people.

Sometimes there are good reasons—
consideration. attention. respect. awe. sympathy.
the comfort of familiarity.

Other times there are not so good reasons—
fatigue. uncertainty. judgment. fear. bewilderment.
the disconnect of being an outsider.

When someone speaks to me I respond without fail—
but how often has waiting led to anything?

And now I start to wonder—
if no one recognizes my voice,
will they ever stop to listen?



A Loving Hold

© Kasia Skocik, MA | Behavioral Health

My Most Awaited Touch

© Gayatra Mainali, MD

Departments of Pediatrics and Neurology

I waited for the day to come when I would hold my baby in my arms. The soft touch of her skin and I would hold and nurse her. I may cry in front of doctors and nurses but I hope they will understand. All the nausea and discomfort from swollen belly and legs would vanish with these thoughts. Finally, after prolonged labor, baby came crying. Nurses hurried for skin contact and even with my exhaustion, I lifted my body and was ready to hold and nurse her. I thought it would be easy and natural to nurse her but it was not. Lactation consultants, and nurses made frequent trips but with sore nipples, and engorged breasts, it did not happen. The more I tried the more frustrated I became. My daughter probably felt my stress and anxiety, so that every time she was brought close to nursing, she started to cry. I started pumping and feeding her. After 5 to 6 months of pumping at work, home, and two times a night, I was very exhausted and I stopped trying. I felt guilty that I failed the most important part of motherhood. I determined that with next child I would not let this happen.

Three years later, my son was born. I had pre-eclampsia and he had to come a little early. He was put in the NICU for hypoglycemia and started on bottle feeds. I cried that he would not latch and again and felt like a failure. My husband tried to console me but my pain and sense of failure was too deep. During pediatric residency, it was my job to encourage moms by telling them, "Breast Milk is the Best Milk. It is hard but keep trying."

In our trip to the NICU to visit our son, I cried in front of the night nurse. She understood my pain as she had gone through the same thing. Then she came up with an idea and said it may or may not work but we can try. We put on a nipple shield and through it connected a feeding tube. The other end of the feeding tube was connected to a syringe that contained my breast milk. Every time the baby made an attempt to suck, my husband would push the syringe, so a small amount of milk would flow as a reward. It seemed like Pavlov's experiment in which Pavlov rang a bell shortly before presenting food to the dogs. At first, the dogs elicited no response to the bells. However, eventually, the dogs began to salivate at the sound of the bell alone. It took us around 5 days but finally our son learned, that if he sucked, he would get milk and harder he sucked, the more milk he would get. He latched and started nursing all the time. No pumping was needed except for when I started to work. Breastfeeding created such a bond between my son and me that cannot be explained in words.

I am very thankful to the Penn State Children's Hospital team especially the night nurse who helped to create this special kind of bond between a mom and baby.

Soft Explosion

© Susan Landis, CRNA

Retired, Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine



Rays of a New Season

© Candice Maenza, MS
Department of Neurology

Memories, frozen
in time, isolated in ice,
solid captivity crystal.

Rain trickles from my eyes,
Remembering your touch,
Reliving our final goodbyes.

Reality so cold,
frostbite blackens my
frigid fingers.
I fight winter's rush,
flakes of forgiveness
falling from fluffy clouds.

Until finally,
a puddle beneath me,
melting due, time
ready to free,
no longer imprisoned
by the past.

Pity passes,
sympathy subsides,
and thankfulness overtakes me.

Clouds clear,
I am blinded by the glare
of glimmering beams,
rays of a new season.



Intangible

© Nicole Seacord | Patient

Spring Flame

© Kevin Rakszawski, MD
Department of Medicine, Division of Hematology/Oncology



Poem: **Touch** ©Roseanne Lamoreaux, RN, BSN | *Hemophilia Center*

Artwork: **Outstretched** ©Emma Lamoreaux | *Daughter of Roseanne Lamoreaux, RN, BSN*

A baby placed on its mother's chest immediately after delivery
A meaningless brush against an arm or leg in a noisy, crowded subway
A clap of enthusiastic applause for a performer after a grueling, physical show
An outstretched hand offering assistance to a person who has just fallen
The simple act of aiding someone to change positions in their bed after surgery
The rub of a thumb, while hand in hand, to provide unspoken comfort
Be it slight, like a warm wisp of fresh air
or hard, like a cold, reprimanding slap
Its value worth more than words, often underestimated
It can make sadness seem a little less sadden
Happiness appear just a bit brighter
Feeling of pride run just a little deeper
All while easing one's loneliness or fears of feeling vulnerable
It's how humans are naturally taught from birth to show their emotions
A simple act without words, which reveals inner feelings
From body to body, it feels as if it's the only real thing in the world



Imagine

© Ananya Das | *Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation*

We played with Emily, the five-year-old, on the hospital bed,
body wracked with pain but with eyes full of wonder she said,
There are so many things I long to do but I really can't do much,
Can you tell me what I can and what I cannot touch?
Can I touch the rainbow, the dewdrops and the blue sky?
Can I touch the wings of the unicorns and the butterflies that fly?
Can I touch the moon, the clouds and the twinkling stars,
Can I touch the planets, the faraway Venus and Mars?
Can I touch the snowflakes, the swings in the park?
Can I touch the wings of the fireflies in the dark?
Can I touch the brown leaves, and the bundles of hay?
Can I touch my friend's hand as we run along and play?
You can touch what you want to touch and be where you want to be,
Your imagination will take you there, where you can roam free.
At last the pain receded and along came sweet sleep,
Emily fell asleep with her mother's hand on her cheek.

Touch of Beauty

©Malgorzata Sudol
Department of Medicine

Magic and Her Sister Myth

© Dwayne Morris | *Educational Affairs*

Magic has a sister
She calls Myth
And sometimes ...
I can't tell them apart
I grow weary
Of the lines being blurred
And the toll it takes ...
On my heart

Magic's nurturing
Inspiring my faith
Myth wants to drag me
Through the mud
The devil's arsenal
Features subtle lies
Not all warfare is fought
With a mighty thud

Magic had nothing but love
For her sister Myth
But sometimes
Love isn't enough
Magic grew weary
Of all the give and no take
Even the strongest hearts
Long to be touched.



Screams of Silence

© Cassie-Mae Carver
Family and Community Medicine

Tiffani's Song

© Dwayne Morris | *Educational Affairs*

I don't need your money Papa
As much as I need you
There's a lot of ways to make a living
But love's a tougher dream to make
come true
I've always believed in that love
As long as life included you
But while your financial plan is
unfolding
I miss our walks and Winnie-the-Pooh
I don't need your money Papa
As much as I need you

Touch of Kindness

© Cassidy Poor, (Age 14)
Friend of Lisa Peters, Department of Ophthalmology



The Surprise

© Barbara Antolino-Smith, RN, BSN | Retired, Department of Pediatrics

He returned my smile one quiet simple afternoon
and the world was mine.
His tiny, chubby fingers
later gestured for me to loosen his sock,
straighten out his little shoe,
and I grabbed a million diamonds in those seconds.
A treasure long awaited,
patiently attended
and gratefully accepted.

His luminous brown eyes were warm and dark,
trusting and generous,
playful and coy.
My reward was beyond earthly measure,
from this young patient of mine.
Enclosed in a grateful heart
and suffused with joy.

I realized then, that my strength is not derived from isolation
or perseverance or spiritual fortitude.
It is derived from my own vulnerability,
of gently laying a course with this tiny boy,
and allowing my heart perhaps to be broken.

Gregariousness

© Gary Gasowski, MD

Penn State College of Medicine Alumnus, 1972



A Mommy's Touch

© LoriAnn Lockard, CPC-A
Patient Financial Services

The Touch of her arms
when she hugged me so tight,
The Touch of her face
when she kissed me goodnight.
The Touch of her voice
when I did something wrong,
The Touch of her singing
as we all joined in song.
The Touch of her eyes
when I made her feel proud,
The Touch of her tears
when she cried without sound.
The Touch of her strength
as she guarded me at night,
The Touch of her laughter
bringing such joy and light.
The Touch of her warmth
on the couch side by side,
The Touch of her fear
when there's nowhere to hide.
The Touch of her beauty
New Year's Eve dressed in black,
The Touch of a gun
Daddy please bring her back.
The Touch of pure passion
tore our family apart,
The Touch of her presence
forever in my heart.
The Touch of my Mommy
you can't take that away,
The Touch of my angel
I feel every day.



Secret Handshake

© Chandat Phan, MSIV

Cookie Kiss

© Chet Davis | Patient



Eye Contact

© Julie Orris, MOA | Camp Hill—Family Health



Judge's Comments:

This is a wonderfully executed watercolor! Watercolor is a challenging media to accurately master, and within the work shown here we see excellent treatment of the modeling of skin tone and surface, including the five-o-clock-shadow of the man's jaw, the ripples and wrinkles of the collared shirt and romper, the sparse soft hair of the infant and the slightly receding thick mane of the man. The painting harkens to a masculine version of Mary Cassatt in Norman Rockwell style. The high contrast of the well-lit figures against the dark background leaves nothing to distract from the pure enjoyment of the work, focusing attention on the tender gaze shared between the two figures: so familiar with one another, glad to have been reunited. The delightful joy of a content child, reaching out to explore the rapt attention of an adult in adoration of sweetness embodied, can't help but bring a smile to the observer's face as well.

Linger

© Ananya Das | Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation

Your touch still lingers
In the lonely snowflake
Fluttering from the grey sky
On a misty moist day,
Cold and crisp
Before it melts

In the dew drop that trembles
Sparkling like a diamond
On the emerald grass,
Watery and wet
Before it is lost

In the solitary falling leaf
That sways and swirls
Rusty brown and brittle,
Raspy and coarse
Before touching the earth

In the single drop of tear
That touches the cheek
Like a pearl a raindrop,
Salty and warm
Before losing in a flicker of smile

Your touch still lingers in memory,
Though not tactile anymore,
for it's not easy to forget
a kiss, a caress or a hug
that has reached and touched your soul.

Judge's Comments:

The solitary tone of this poem speaks to the universal desire for unity and touch. Looking to nature, the author begins by presenting the unusual scenario of a single snowflake, solitary dewdrop or falling leaf, each described elegantly but clearly destined to vanish. The last two stanzas turn to the human experience, with the contrast of a tear, easily lost, to the unforgettable impact of human touch.

Judge's Choice – Photography
Staff and Family Members Category

2022

Big Leaf

© Mary Mager | Family Member of Patient



Judge's Comments:

Technically this image is perfect, but more importantly, the artist presents us all with the force and power of simplicity, of possibilities, of tenderness.

Cocoon

© Elias Harkins | MSIV

Metamorphosis,
the beautiful transformation,
is boring from the outside.

A caterpillar walks along a leaf,
spins a small, green cocoon,
and hangs in it,
before emerging as a butterfly.

A scientist sits at a desk,
flips open a textbook,
and holds, staring but not reading,
before making the most important phone call of their life.

A student walks onstage and gets a short white coat,
studies, works hard, and goes to clinic.
Then, they walk out donning a longer coat,
several new letters to add to their signature,
and bold new financial responsibilities.

But from within,
these metamorphoses are dramatic,
beautiful,
and mysterious.

A student, donned in a coat they make their own
works through years of school,
learning more than they ever imagined.
They take on caring roles,
for people they know for less than a month.
They navigate an ancient and unchanged system
in constant flux and development.
They yearn for a role in helping and healing.

A scientist
places pieces together.
The subtle and unsubtle mingle
to form a picture
of a self mismatched.
Their call is the first step of reconciliation.
They yearn for wholeness.

No one knows what the caterpillar does in its cocoon,
but I like to imagine it.
Does it “feel” when it transforms?
Does it know who it will be?
I can almost see it,
curled up in a tight cocoon,
using the green-tinted light filtered through walls
and stretching its neck to look at its colorful wings.
Feeling beautiful.
It yearns for flight.

And, in this cocoon, they all think,
“I am becoming me,
and I am so proud of my metamorphosis.”



Lyssa

© Danielle D'Amico | MSII

Enchanted Forest

© Oana Bollt | Department of Surgery



A Doctor's Touch

© Peter M. Hartmann, MD, DLFAPA | Patient

In 1963, I had an experience that determined the trajectory of my professional life. It began as an ordinary cold with a runny nose, scratchy throat, and a dry cough. Within hours a fine, pink rash began on my face and spread to the rest of my body. Aside from mild itching, I was not physically uncomfortable, but I was worried. What did I have? Was it serious?

I went to the 4-bed infirmary at my college. There, a senior pre-med student took my temperature and told me to return in the morning when the college physician came. The doctor had a kindly manner and examined me carefully. While listening to my heart and lungs, he put his hand on my shoulder. I remember feeling my anxiety melting away. The doctor's touch was comforting.

When I reflected on what happened, I knew that I wanted to be able to do that for people who are sick. At that moment, doubts about my career choice ended. I would not become a college professor after all. I would become a family doctor.

My illness turned out to be German measles (rubella). It resolved within the usual 3 days. Later, as a medical student, I learned that rubella was unusual in the U.S., thanks to the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

At the start of my mandatory surgical rotation, I learned something I did not expect about touching patients. The chairman of surgery told us that we should examine our patients even when we already know the diagnosis. He knew that patients wanted to be touched by their doctor. That made me remember my experience in college when a doctor's touch was comforting.

Being touched is a powerful sensory experience. For example, one cause of a baby's failure to grow normally is inadequate touch by the baby's parents (Polan, 1994). Therapeutic massage can reduce anxiety and pain. Good touch from another human being is powerful. It has special significance when patients are touched by their doctor.

This was brought home to me when I was a resident in family medicine rotating on an adult inpatient unit. I had just admitted a young man only 3 years older than I. He had developed a slow heart rate, less than 35 beats per minute. This had resulted in episodes of syncope. A cardiology consultant arranged for him to have a pacemaker inserted.

The patient was scared. I accompanied him into the procedure room. When he slid onto the treatment table, he grabbed my hand and held on tight. I did not expect it. He would not let go until the procedure was over. It was clear that he wanted (needed?) to hold my hand. I was the only person he knew in the room. It was what he needed, so I was willing to do it.

The importance of a physician's touch has been well studied. For example, Dr. Keltner, a psychologist at Berkeley "found that getting eye contact and a pat on the back from a doctor may boost survival rates of patients with complex diseases" and "research has concluded that touch can be a key factor in comforting patients with Alzheimer's Disease." (Keltner, 2010).

Kelly and colleagues noted that "empathic physician behavior is associated with improved patient outcomes." They point out that empathy can be demonstrated "through the use of non-verbal communication including touch." (Kelly, 2020). Touch from a physician is healing. It reduces the stress response. It conveys compassion. Patients have more confidence. Their mental and physical health improve. Yet, it costs nothing.

Unfortunately, during this COVID-19 pandemic doctors have not been able to touch their patients as they did before. In-person visits were replaced by telemedicine in many cases. That was a beneficial approach to meeting patient's needs while reducing the risk of spread of the disease. An added benefit was the ability of patients in rural and other areas with limited access to medical care to be seen by a physician.

However, like many good things in life, there were tradeoffs. One of the significant losses was the lack of the physician's touch. The benefits of telemedicine are such that it should not be abandoned when the pandemic ends, but I hope that in-person visits will become available once again. Patients need to be touched.

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Helen Keller

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

She could neither see, nor hear, nor speak a single word,
this child,
whose whole world was nothing but darkness and silence ...
for as a toddler,
cruel illness had taken away her senses,
and they would never be returned to her ...
Poor little deaf, dumb, blind girl, they called her,
but though deaf, she was not dumb,
for she could think, and could figure, and she could learn
and learn she did ...
and so, she learned home signs
and how to tell one person from another, by the vibration of their footsteps ...
and to communicate through signs and gestures with another child
and so, doctors were found
and a proper teacher summoned
to educate this wild little animal
and attempt to turn her into a human being ...
and so, the teacher pressed letters into Helen's palm
with patience and perseverance
and with a faith and a hope,
that one day, the girl would come to understand....
Miss Sullivan would soon teach that child
what those letters stood for
Doll and Water and Mug and a thousand other things spelled out on a hand
by the touch of another's fingers ...
So many things of the world around her
which the child would never see,
but she could touch them ...
and she could know that they existed and were as real as she was
and she could learn that they all had names,
just as she had a name
and her name was Helen ...
Aside from her name and her curious mind,
touch was all that Helen had,
but that would be enough ...
enough to make a life of it
and a life that would matter ...
for this isolated girl was no longer isolated,
no longer in a world of her own,
but very much in touch with the world around her,
the outside world
with its people, and its animals, and with all the many things in it ...
Helen could enjoy music by feeling the beat
and art, by feeling the strokes of paint on the canvas
and she could feel the lips, and cheeks and jaw of another
to hear exactly what they were saying
and though her own speech was delayed
it did not stop her from having a voice
nor a most distinguished presence
that would one day,
"touch"
the whole human race.

Hands

© **Hannah Garson**

Family of Lisa Spencer

Penn State Health St. Joseph Cancer Center

My mother's hands
Cool my burning forehead,
Stroke my flushed cheeks,
Massage my aching limbs,
Touch to heal.

My mother's hands
Pick me up,
Clean my scrapes,
Bandage my knees,
Touch to mend.

My mother's hands
Spread sunscreen down my back,
Around my shoulders,
Along my arms,
Touch to protect.

My mother's hands
Squeeze mine,
Pat my back,
Rub my arm,
Touch to reassure.

My mother's hands
Work a morphine pump,
Drop it,
Grove for it,
Touch to find.

My hands
Grab the pump,
Position it back,
Caress her hands,
Touch to touch.

Close Contact

© **Ali Smolinski** | MD/PhD Program

The warmth of your body on mine
Microclimates under the covers
Constructing our own timeline
Lockdown is exhausting
Contact is restoring
Consistency creates order
Responsibilities sustained
Love is the refrain

Touch Quilt

© **Maria Joel**

Department of Microbiology



Grow Together

© **Megan Jones**

Wife of Gavin Jones, MSIII



Sunflowers

© Evelyn Potochny, DO
Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

I once read a study
about sunflower plants,
how one is aware
of another.

When side by side,
each sends out fewer shoots
than when alone,
reducing its own nutrients,
nourishing the shared soil
for its fellows.
She sits, in the donor chair
arm outstretched,
needle protruding,
as the bag fills with burgundy blood.



Warmth You See and Feel

© Regan Graham
Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine

Inside Myself

© Charlotte Chambers (Age 10)
Daughter of Kelly Chambers CRNA | Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

I am curious, wondering
I feel the rock music in the background of myself
I sense the oh-so-common flashing of advertisements
The very well-known cha-chings of vending machines
Sometimes, deep down, I feel the screaming of unknown voices
But more commonly, I feel the nice calm rustling of palm trees
The lovely sounds of crashing waves
The noisy outdoor diners humming with people
The sea blue wave of readiness
The smell of the beach allows me to see myself
In my happy thoughts and places
The wet sea foam of joy
The happy ocean waves and the florescent pink water of calmness
When I close my eyes
I see the curiosity, wonder, rock music, flashing of advertisements
And love

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



Friends

© Makayla Lagerman | MSII

I love this time, and we have grown,
But my imagination grows thick with plaques of jade.
We out-busy one another with this interest group and that service org
But still find time every day to commiserate.
Deadlines with countdowns.
“Can you believe they moved the practical to Monday?”
We speak only in acronyms and only of things we learned within the last fifteen months.
A younger me would have rolled her eyes and said,
“Are you anything but medicine?”
Is it fair to be angry with how I’ve assimilated
When someone with a rejection letter would gladly trade spots?
So.
Let’s not talk about school tonight.
Tell me instead how to build trellises and when to plant cucumber seeds.
Invite me to celebrate your daughter’s second birthday and hear whether she’s more like Mom
or Dad.
Teach me how to serve the volleyball overhand.
Ask me about the hidden messages in Taylor Swift’s new album
Or my ideas for ending homelessness.
I want pickleball,
Nights in forts,
Firefly walks,
And moments when we have to tell people,
Because they can’t tell already,
“Oh, we just happened to meet in medical school.”

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



Keeping in Touch

© Talia Potochny

Family of John Potochny, MD | Department of Surgery, Division of Plastic Surgery

Tap. Tap. Swipe. Scroll.

Like. Comment.

Stare.

Compare.

Tap. Type.

hi. i miss u. how are u?

... ...

Ding!

Tap. Wait. Ignore?

Scroll. Swipe.

Type.

I don't know pretty tired and lonely I just wish

Delete.

Oh hey. Why didn't you reach out sooner

Delete.

Where were you when

Delete. Scroll. Tap.

Swipe. Like. Compare.

Type.

Hey nice to hear from you. I'm fine. You?

Ding! Tap. Scroll. Swipe.

Tap. Type.

i miss u like crazy and i'm sry i waited to

reach out i know u have been struggling

lately...and i have too

Delete.

wanna grab coffee soon to chat?

Delete.

Swipe. Scroll. Like.

Stare. Zoom.

Type.

yeah i'm good too.

... ...
... ...
... ...

... ...

... ...

Send.

Winter Days

© Charlotte Chambers (Age 10)

Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

The crisp cold air now

The brightly flashing lights here

Winter in my eyes

The View

© Chukwudi Okafor, MD | Resident, Department of Radiology

A drop slides down the glass
And divides the mist of my breath.
Another follows close behind,
And another after that.
They all work to present the night:
The moonlight shines over the stage
Where the treetops sway and bend,
Matching the rhythm of the wind perfectly,
And the stars gather for an encore.
If I was not so afraid, I would enjoy it, too.
But I continue to fog the glass,
Hoping my breath cools enough to form ice
That blurs everything in sight
Despite the glow of the moon struggling
To take away my fright.
I am afraid to be alone,
Alone to face the night
In which the stars may disappear
And the world ceases to bear light,
The moon hidden by the clouds,
And trees shred the earth as they
Scatter from the strong winds.
I do not wish to see that,
Yet I know that it is coming.
I cannot explain why,
But it will be soon.
So I re-fog the window with lengthened
And quickened breath,

I blow harder as I see the stars fade away.
I feel warmer as the wind picks up;
Despite the snow that starts to fall
A trickle of sweat slides down my face
And joins a tear below.
They both usher in waves of despair and sorrow,
All of which I drown under within the
Midst of the storm that only blurs my eyes.
I soon feel your presence beside me,
Your arms holding me close to ensure your
embrace
Never lets me slip.
You wipe my tears,
Then the window,
Revealing how the moon still shines upon
The trees,
Who continue to dance accordingly,
While the stars watch on and cheer.
You may never admit it,
But I know you quieted the storm;
How you found me drifting is something I
Will never know.
Yet I am glad you found me,
And I can now enjoy the view.
Thank you for letting me do so,
But we can enjoy it together, too

A Place to Rest © Oana Bollt | Staff, Department of Surgery



20-Something

© Emma Lamoreaux | Daughter, Roseanne Lamoreaux, RN, BSN | Hemophilia Treatment Center

life is meant to seem perfect
once you reach the ripe age of 20
you see, i haven't reached it yet, however
months away, anxiety drawing nearer each day
i've been told you can't have "something real" before twenty
but i reflect; these past months feel like a blur
the presence of pain
the fear of finding my own way
the "once in a lifetime" opportunities
the trickiness of being an "adult"
basically put, the highs, the lows
the superficiality of life past 18, it seems
and yet all this time
i think of you
i think of before you, before 18, now before 20
the utter of your name from my lips means so much that only we know
it means growth, transformation, love, security, change
but it's unfortunately cursed with double meaning
it also means losing hope, undying uncertainty, unexpected change
it meant change, looking back on it
the love, once in the moment
now just a faint memory of the past
a picture in the stack given to you on your birthday
i have craved the feeling of your touch
the hug upon the drop of a tear
your hand running through my thinning hair
the trace of my hand on your back
your hand on my cheek after a joke left us with wrinkled eyes
i never thought someone could leave behind so much
i was wrong
and here i am
is this processing
is this leaving behind old versions of myself
is this surviving
this is changing
without you, here i am
days away from the so-called perfect age
what's so great about being 20

Six Feet

© Shengchin Lin, PhD
Cellular and Molecular Physiology



Still Touching

© Gary Gasowski, MD | Penn State College of Medicine Alumnus, 1972



Judge's Comments:

This piece encompasses a whole story in a still image. Two walking sticks overlying each other in the pale glow of moonlight. The touch of the material hints at the overlap their owners likely have. The idea of touch in this setting is both physical and metaphorical, bound to the past, present and future.

Personnel to Personal

© Barbara Junker | Patient

A springtime skyburst, springing – part of the namesake – surprisingly from a patchwork-quilt heavens. Clothing dripping in 30 seconds, muddy creeks beside curbs. Futile to dash.

I had left the hospital for G3 in the tiered parking lot. She approached me at the traffic light. Young, one-third my age. We passed. We made eye contact and exchanged typical female smiles. No greetings. Strangers.

Raindrops beaded and trickled down her glasses like tears.

I paused several sloppy sneaker steps later and turned.

Under the roof she removed her rainwear to a blue nurse's scrubs, blue as a swatch I would see amid doleful clouds. She adjusted her mask and entered The Children's Hospital.

I drove away. She stayed with patients and their parents. I kept thinking of her weeping glasses.

Judge's Comments:

In this poem, touch is described on multiple levels. Raindrops touching clothing and glasses. Skin touching rainwear and scrubs. And it is the act of a simple glance, the eye contact between two strangers, that allows for a connection to linger long after the rain has dried. This piece shows that a bond between two strangers can be as strong of a touch as any physical tactile sensation.

Leave Your Mark

© Abbi DiTonno | Patient, Daughter of Jennifer DiTonno, Revenue Cycle, Department of Psychiatry



Judge's Comments:

This photograph highlights the after effects of touch. The handprint persists even after the palm has been released from the glass. The muted tones and contemplative stance of the subject all add to a feeling of introspection and calm. I love how this piece shows that touch persists even after the contact has taken place, but often remains only as a ghostly shadow of itself.



Farm Life

© Safiye Carkaci

Family of Nurgul Salli, PhD
Department of Pharmacology

The Hug

© Eliana Hempel, MD | Department of Medicine

With stylishly coiffed grey-blond hair, impeccable makeup, and diminutive frame,
Her 92-year-old body appeared much younger.
Yet, aged by grief, her spirit seemed every one of her years,
Maybe more.

Her regular visits perplexed me.
She rarely followed my recommendations.
Most visits were spent discussing her husband,
His untimely passing at age 86 while on hospice,
And the most recent drama with her estranged family.
She lives alone in a 1-bedroom, blue-shingled Craftsman,
With a rocking chair on the front porch.
I imagine her swaying there,
Watching, as one by one,
People fade out of her life.

One day, she seemed particularly downtrodden.
Hesitantly, I asked if I could give her a hug.
Her cloudy, pale blue eyes filled as she reached her reed-thin arms toward me.
As I gently engulfed her, it dawned on me.
This was the only physical contact she'd had.
For years.

When she left that day, she seemed a bit more fortified.
I still saw her every few months.
We companionably argued about the treatments I'd recommend and she'd reject.
We ended each visit the same way,
Likely the most useful thing I did for her,
With a mutually healing embrace.

I often worry about her now.
Limited by telephone visits,
I can't peer into her face,
And gauge the degree of her pain.
The status of her loneliness.
Will she ever feel the warmth of a comforting human touch again?
Maybe not.

Any Chance We Could Talk

© Julia Simpson, BS

PhD Candidate, Biomedical Sciences

*on the phone later this morning? I have
a question on the logistics of boiling*

*6.8 microliters of salmon sperm was not
a sentence I expected to write at 8:48*

*on a Wednesday morning. Or ever. A rabbit hole
beckoned and we rolled up our sleeves. Why*

do you need it? asked a woman whose lab coat's
creases, unlike mine, had long smoothed out

*from wear. The DNA binding step, I said. We reveled
at the absurdity. How does someone think*

*to use salmon sperm – the more we said it, the more
humorous it sounded – for this? For anything? Naturally,*

*we turned to Athena's modern reincarnation,
the internet, and she took us back in time to 1868*

*and introduced us to a Swiss man named Friedrich
Miescher, whose mentor had questions*

*about the chemistry of blood. Miescher worked
to unravel human lymphocytes, and hens'*

*eggs, and – eventually – salmon sperm. Years
of dedication to methodical un-making*

*yielded nuclein, later rechristened DNA. Turns out,
in their annual twilight-of-life migration, salmon*

*swam up the nearby Rhine, so the fish
were abundant and accessible. Ah, we laughed,*

*suddenly feeling a tug of connection to the late
Mr. Miescher. In someone's stubborn head,*

*a big idea spars with a small purse. Yes, sir.
This is how it goes.*

Stage Fright

© Fiona Chambers (Age 7)

Daughter of Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine

Come on the stage

No need to run away

You can look

At your friends and stay

No need to run away

In the twilight of dawn

I said, 'I had no need to run away'

I chose to stay



Kitsune no Yomeiri

© Eresbet Spain, LPN

Cocoa Outpatient Center

Untitled Collage

© Laura Patton

Internal Medicine Residency Program



Administering the Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine on March 13, 2021

© Madison Kist | MSII

Tap. Tap.

I pop the last stubborn bubble as it rises to the top of the syringe.

“Like champagne!” she chuckles. The flowers on her cloth mask sway up and down.

“Are you ready, ma’am?”

The corners of her bright brown eyes wrinkle.

Stick!

She begins to cry.

Oh no, did I hurt her?!

She stands up and begins to walk toward the exit. As she passes me, she grabs my hand and squeezes it.

Tightly.

“For the first time, in a long time, I feel *safe*.”

Fighting COVID-19

© Devin DePamphilis

Son of Sharon W. DePamphilis, Management Reporting and Decision Support



Mother's Hands

© Hannah Garson

Family of Lisa Spencer

Penn State Health St. Joseph Cancer Center

"Talk to her," the nurse says. "She can hear you."

Talk? What to say as I watch my mother's hand work a morphine pump? Up and down her thumb goes, delivering pain relief from surgery, ovarian cancer.

I look at her hands, small, yet strong, the fingers stubby, nails cut straight and short. They have always been there for me, bandaging my scraped knees, patting me on the back, her smooth, cool hand on my burning forehead. There again last year when I cried, broken-hearted over a failed romance, holding me tight as my tears soaked her favorite sweater, rubbing my back, soothing, reassuring me that I'd get through it.

I stand frozen at the side of the bed, watching her hand clutch the pump. I'm terrified that I'm losing her. I need my mother's hands now more than ever to console me, to reassure me that everything will be alright. I want to take her hand, feel the weight of it in mine, together walk out of this hospital, smell flowers instead of disinfectant, hear a bird singing, not the clip and wheeze of machines. Be healthy.

The pump suddenly falls out of her hand. She gropes for it. I think to run to the nursing station. Or maybe stay with my mother and call out for help. I can't move but she needs me. I look at my hands, try to will them to give her back what she always gave me, comfort, strength, courage. I want my hands to be all that for her now. Can I do for her what she has always done for me? I pick up the pump and position it back into her right hand. She makes an "Ahhh" sound as she clicks her relief.

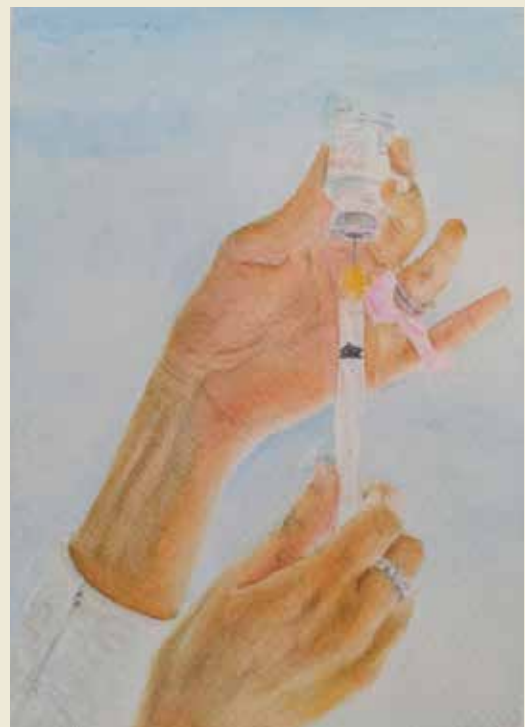
Talk? Maybe my mother can hear me. But there is no talk. There is my hand caressing hers, squeezing it, letting her know I'm here with her.



Lasting Love

© Lori Joy, CCMA

Department of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation



Ode to 2021

© Suzanne Boltz

Department of Urology

New Normal

© Olivia Okken (Age 12)

Family of Kelly Okken, Facilities Planning & Construction

What happened to being normal? Now I know that you may be thinking, “Normal?! Ha, there is no such thing as normal!” But I know and I meant what I said. To put it in a way that you may or may not understand, it’s like an out of body experience. Not for all, but for some, normal is NOT a thing for us anymore. At least it hasn’t been for a while. So, just sit there and think, think about this.

You’re in your head, you’re in the walls, you’re in your pencil, you’re everywhere! But all at the same time you’re just sitting there at your desk and doing all of your work with ease, because you have to. But you still can’t get rid of that mind-bending, stomach-swirling feeling that you’re nowhere and everywhere at the same time.

They all say describe, describe, describe, DESCRIBE! Everyone always asks you to describe what you’re going through. Explain, explain, explain, EXPLAIN what you’re feeling, but all you can do is sit and think about trying to describe the indescribable, the un-understandable. Suddenly, you finally think of a way to describe it, “It’s like I’m watching my life as though someone is watching a movie” or, “It’s as though I’m watching my life not from my eyes but through some distorted lens that I just CAN’T DESCRIBE.”

You’re taught these grounding techniques that use your five senses.

- Hearing: Identify the things that you hear. Voices change and sound manipulated, they get LOUDER, then quieter. You hear silence when everyone’s mouths are moving, or you hear chaos, just complete and utter chaos.
- Taste: Chocolate or anything on hand that you can taste that could possibly help.
- Touch: Anything near you. Your sense of touch is heightened and you have a high pain tolerance.
- Smell: Lotion, hand sanitizer, candles, anything to bring you back.
- Sight: They say, identify the things that you are seeing, when all you can do is sit, study the room and think about the distance between you and everyone else.

You are finally back in a “normal” state of mind, then BAM! You’re back, maybe forever this time. It happened as fast as a boulder would drop from an inch off the ground. There are only two big differences this time. This time it feels more intense and no grounding techniques are working. You feel trapped, as though a camera is watching your every move.

This time it is lasting longer. A month passes, five months pass, 10, 11. One year later you lose hope on ever returning back to “normal.” It’s been a year and a half since anything has worked to bring you back to your mind. You can now subconsciously figure out when you’re in this weird indescribable state deeper or shallower. You know when you feel more disconnected with everyone and everything around you, verses when you feel ok but still stuck in the camera.

Dissociation: A mental process of disconnecting from one’s thoughts, feelings, memories or sense of identity. This is only one of many things this feeling could be. Even if you are not going through exactly what I just described, I still think it’s something important. Different people experience this differently, so don’t be worried.

Now I only have one question for you after everything. Have you ever felt that way? That feeling when you’re down deep in feeling of indescribable depths of things you can’t describe. You don’t have to answer, but you should at the very least think about it. It’s something a lot of people go through. You’re not alone, and you shouldn’t feel alone either.

> > > > >

Pink Passion

© Grace Weimer

Department of Medicine, Division of Nephrology

Moments That Touch the Heart

© Emma Lamoreaux | Daughter, Roseanne Lamoreaux, RN, BSN, Hemophilia Treatment Center

A casual touch on the arm when passing by,
A warm smile from across a roomful of people,
A casual statement meant to evoke a shared memory,
A public embrace that lasts slightly longer than usual.
Brief, stolen moments that often occur naturally, spontaneously,
Not always intentionally meant to create a memory that will last a lifetime.

A slight wave over the heads of others upon entering a mutual party,
A shared smirk while chatting within a small group of acquaintances.
A brief text saying, "Good morning! How are you doing today?"
A phone call just at that moment when you needed a friendly voice.
Brief, stolen moments that often occur naturally, spontaneously,
Not always intentionally meant to create a memory that will last a lifetime.

A dark, rainy morning in which you find it difficult to rise, get out of bed,
A hard, insistent knock at your front door, hearing your name called.
A friend standing confidently in your doorway, her arms instantly around you,
A reason for your depression to lighten slightly, realizing you're not alone.
Brief, stolen moments that occur naturally, spontaneously,
Not always intentionally meant to create a memory that will last a lifetime.

A friendship filled with as many emotions as sands on a Sanibel beach,
A relationship based on many happy days, with an occasional harsh argument.
A much needed apology always delivered with deep sincerity and filled with love,
A dear friend realizing that the relationship is much too vital to ever chance losing.
Brief, stolen "touches" that occur naturally, spontaneously,
Not always intentionally meant to create a memory that will last a lifetime.





Two Sides to the Story

© Kelly Jia, MD

Resident Fellow, Department of Cardiology





The Translator

© Elias Harkins | MSIV

"Hello ma'am, it's nice to meet you.
I'll be your medical student this week."

"Yes, I already let the team know!"

"Of course! It's not my first time teaching people!
You wouldn't believe how often I have to give a crash course on that!
It's like no one here has taken care of a Muslim woman before!"

"Yes ma'am, I will let her know."

"I am not quite sure how to say that in Arabic?
I can check online,
but I do not have a Medical Arabic dictionary."

"Okay, so that was your doctor,
she wants me to talk to you about some test results.
Are you comfortable if I help translate?"

"Sounds good.
So, she's concerned.
You mentioned that you noticed a lump?
And that you've been warm, correct?"

"We think it could be due to several things
First, is when you have some kind of germ,
but you are on some pills for that.
Our main worry,
is some kind of bad growth,
like a cancer."

"I'm so sorry to hear that."

Continued on next page

Mickey in the Sunset

© Eric Popjes, MD
Heart and Vascular Institute



"It sounds like she has a strong family history of cancer.
Including several family members with breast cancer.
She could be BRCA positive,
do you want to test her?"

"Sure, I can tell her the basic information"

"Thank you so much for letting me know,
Now that we know about your family,
the doctor wants to do some more tests."

"Yes, I think she wants to do surgery too."

"It's okay, take your time."

"Do you know where the tissues are here?"

"So, the test the doctor wants to do today
is just a blood test.
So, that shouldn't hurt more than normal.
You may need to come back in later for some scans, though."

"Don't worry,
I'll be here with you every step of the way."

"Of course!
I'm glad to help!"

"She is comfortable with the tests now.
The consent forms still need to be translated,
but I think she will go through with it"

"It was my pleasure!
See you next week!"

"No plans for tonight,
but I will be visiting my partner tomorrow!"

"Yes, SHE and I are very excited to hang out!"



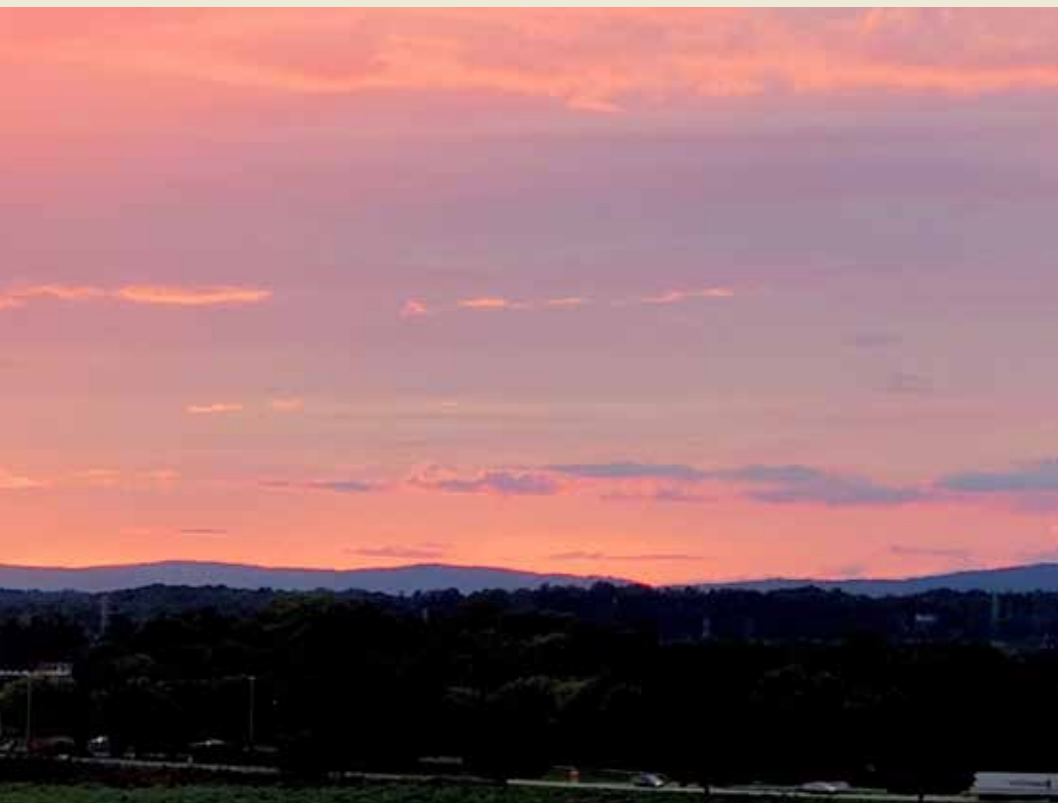
^ Whatchu Looking At?

^
^ © Suzanne Boltz
^ Department of Urology

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Hummelstown Sky

© Jonathan Foulds, PhD
Public Health Sciences





Touch of Tranquility-Absence of Touch | © Regan Graham, Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine

Permission to Hug

© Fauzia Butt, MD, FACS

Department of Surgery, Kidney Transplantation

The phone rang. It was Friday evening, just after 6 pm. That moment is seared in my memory forever. I reached for the phone and saw that it was my colleague calling. “Hello?” I answered, expecting to hear his voice. Instead, I was greeted by a completely unfamiliar voice. A woman responded, speaking perfect English. She started tentatively, “I am calling on behalf of ...” She paused, hesitating. Then she stated my colleague’s name as a question, as if she was unsure of the pronunciation. I heard someone correcting her in the background.

“Yes?” I asked, trying to encourage her to go on.

“I am very sorry to report that he has had a cardiac event.”

Still not certain who I was speaking to, or exactly what was happening, I asked, “What kind of cardiac event?” I was not prepared for what she said next.

“Well, EMS is at his house, he is unresponsive and they have been working on him for 20 minutes.”

After the initial shock of what she had just said wore off, I asked, “And who are you exactly?”

“I am his neighbor,” she responded.

I asked, “Does our boss know?”

She answered, “No.” I asked her if she would mind staying on the line as I called our boss and she started to protest, stating that she did not have any additional information.

“Can you just stay on the line?” I asked, more impatiently than I had intended. I dialed the number to perform a conference call. Our boss did not answer and the neighbor hung up.

“Crap!” I thought, “Now what?” My colleague had just moved into a new house. I did not know the address. He had just relocated his wife and son to Pennsylvania from Massachusetts. She did not speak English. He had just started as a freshman at NYU.

I sent a text message to our boss, “Just got a call from our colleague’s neighbor. He had a cardiac arrest and is unresponsive. EMTs are at his house now.”

“The boss’s reply came quickly, “He just passed.”

As my mind was still trying to process this series of events, the phone rang again. This time, it was our boss. She reported that she had missed my call because she was in the shower. The phone was ringing when she got out. It was one of the EMTs, letting her know that our colleague had just died. After she hung up, she saw my missed calls and texts. Then she called me, in a state of shock herself.

The next 24 hours were a complete blur. A series of text messages and phone calls came as the news spread rapidly. How could I tell anyone else what had happened? I was still trying to figure that out myself. Why is it that we always bring food to people who are grieving? It just seems like the right thing to do during a condolence call. So I followed protocol. I brought muffins, sandwich wraps, and whatever else I could find at my local warehouse club. As I entered my deceased colleague’s home, I first noticed his wife. She looked so small and lost, so fragile, yet somehow holding it all together. Then my eyes landed on his son; so young, yet suddenly now the man of the house. I asked permission to give her a hug. A natural, comforting act was no longer something to take for granted during the COVID-19 viral pandemic. We were all vaccinated and masked, yet I felt the need to ask her permission. She nodded timidly, “Yes.” Then she started sobbing uncontrollably in my arms.



Through the Trees to Open Seas

© Jill Stachowski | MSI

Bath

© Judy Schaefer, RN
*Member of The Doctors Kienle Center
 for Humanistic Medicine*

Water steeps parchment to tea
 Cools a temper
 Touches dusty feet
 Washes over humility
 Rock, paper, scissors
 Bath announces the start of day
 after breakfast of pale clears
 Bandage white as snow
 Cloth crisp as dew
 Water washes over pain
 Soap, water, warmed towel

Touch Starved

© Gloria Gardner | *Mother of Patient*

I am an orphan
 An only child
 And a widow.
 A septuagenarian –
 And in the past 30 days
 I wish someone
 Had held me,
 In their arms
 For just 30 seconds



Got It! | © Zhuolin Wang | *Husband of Zhexi Ma, Department of Medicine*



Inhale. Exhale. Repeat. - Ricketts Glen, Pa.

© Aakriti Bertsche, MD
Resident Fellow, Department of Neurology

Thankful

© Angela Dishman | Mother of Patient

When they said the words
It took my breath away
For the normal baby I wouldn't have
I grieved, I cried, and I mourned
Walls were built, my head hung in shame
Then May 29th, God gave me you
I didn't know if you would breathe on your own
or be able to cry
I didn't know what our future held
You, my precious angel, have shown me a new love
A love without expectation
A new joy, that comes with being patient
And the unknown
On that day when they said spina bifida
I could have never known how blessed
I would be
To be your mom

At Rest

© Jessica Matincheck (Age 16)
Daughter of Lynn Matincheck, Office of Faculty Affairs



Provider

© Makayla Lagerman | MSII

She is my age.
This is not her appointment.
She drove all this way, used her PTO, just to be here with her dad,
A man whose face is unrecognizable from only two seasons ago.
I ask him questions. Scleral icterus, reluctant eye contact. He is too tired to answer.
She looks to me, barely missing a beat.
“Dad’s been through a lot since this summer.”
She’s been through a lot since this summer.
She grabs his blue emesis bag and carries it to the trash can before I can even think to do so.
Second-nature caretaker.
She describes the alcohol with grace and without judgment.
I have spent years of schooling to become what she so naturally has become:
Provider.

Touch/Feel

© Amber Kulaga | Patient

With palpable emotions,
and psychosomatic sensations
this brain can’t easily discern
a difference between
that pair of words.
Neuropathic compromise
and Borderline hypersensitivity
only confuse it more.
Quick story—
It draws on 14 years
since we’ve touched,
and it occurs to me now,
we rarely ever did.
But I still feel you everywhere.
—And this brain struggles
with that convolution.
Still sure to touch and to feel
are the same thing.

Floating on Serenity

© Grace Weimer | Department of Medicine, Division of Nephrology



To Feel the Need

© Corinne Laity | Patient

To feel the need
To feel a strong connection
A flow of energy shared by two
Being open to its possibilities
And allowing it to be felt within you

To touch the heart
To reach out on a different level
An emotional extension of you
To communicate a sense of understanding
To provide something real and true

To be touched
To feel on a different level
To realize you matter so much
To be open to receive the gift
From the warmth of emotional touch

To feel the need for support
Everyone has a story
No two are ever the same
Life's journey is filled with countless events
The revolving door of change

To reach out when the load is heavy
It is not always easy to do
Bouncing in and out of isolation
Is there anyone out there who has been there too

There is help out there to guide you
No need to be ashamed
Reach out for the help that best supports you
So many are in pain

To touch the heart that's broken
'Cause you've been broken too
To offer your umbrella
'Cause its now pouring on them and drizzling on you

Can you shine a light of hope?
Can you share what has helped you?
'Cause someone out there is in need
Of being touched by someone like you

Impacting Black Maternal Fetal Health Disparities

© Eresbet Spain, LPN
Cocoa Outpatient Clinic



Untitled Abstract

© Noel Ballentine, MD
Department of Medicine



Stigmata

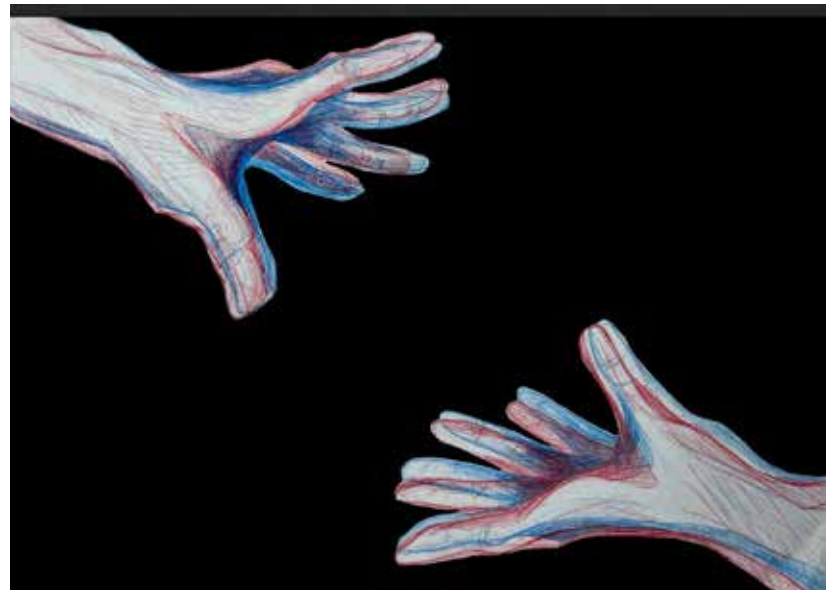
© Joshua Ryan Dellinger, MD | Resident, Department of Psychiatry

we have no blades
we trade in the soul, scars
that linger there
circadian ghosts, shadows
sparks falling upon
fields that have never felt rain
a boy
not yet fourteen,
pulling his sisters from a burning house
scorched in the night
wind-lost timbers
60-years-old
rejoined, recalled by
the old nerves stinging
singing in their memory, still clear:
a daughter in the dust
scratching with birds
screaming in their memory, still new:
a daughter underground
her son left behind
four posts of a chair
compass rose of his prison
he has buried:
wife, father, mother, daughter, sisters
still he combs his hair neatly
still he checks the mail
another boy, 7
legs tight from the year
now begins to speak
five seasons after
he found his mother dead
face down in the morning
of an ordinary school day
tell me what would you cut from him
what would you bind
that could promise a remedy
to return what is lost

a woman
tearful in front of me
tells me her story
of lifelong neglect
then, as if in counterpoint,
the endless waves
of degradation and abuse
teach me the anatomy of the unloved
a man, outside
lifts a cigarette from the sidewalk
to save for later in the day
...
a girl, pregnant
bearing her father's child
asks about vitamins
I hear his voice
see the words
pray to remove
or be removed
we have no blades
we deal in drugs and words
we have no blades
because we want to keep you whole
hole

Out of Touch

© Andrea Lin | MSII



One Touch

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

One touch,
worth more than a thousand words on a page,
Arousing tender emotions,
so often hidden,
in a flurry of casual remarks.

One touch,
more articulate
than the finest orator in the world,
each nimble movement,
an intricate message in and of itself ...
The mere stroking of one's hair,
imparting more care, than any poet could.
A tender caress
serving as the sweetest of sonnets for the human soul.

No text or libretto can ever quite capture
the moving effect,
of the mere brush of a hand,
or the glance of a fingertip,
and certainly not the consequence
of a loving embrace ...
that most intimate soliloquy,
more expressive,
than any manner
or style,
of speech ...

... but him

© **Linda Amos** | *Patient*

With just the mere touch
of his hand
to her cheek
he'd cause her
to forget everything
and everyone -
but him.

Burn

© **Stephanie Golub** | *MSIV*

When the feeling fades
And you crave the touch
Of being human

But the feeling is gone
And the nerves are severed
I am only human

Then the healing starts
And you want to touch
But risk starting over

So you wait
And wait
For the scar
Of being human.

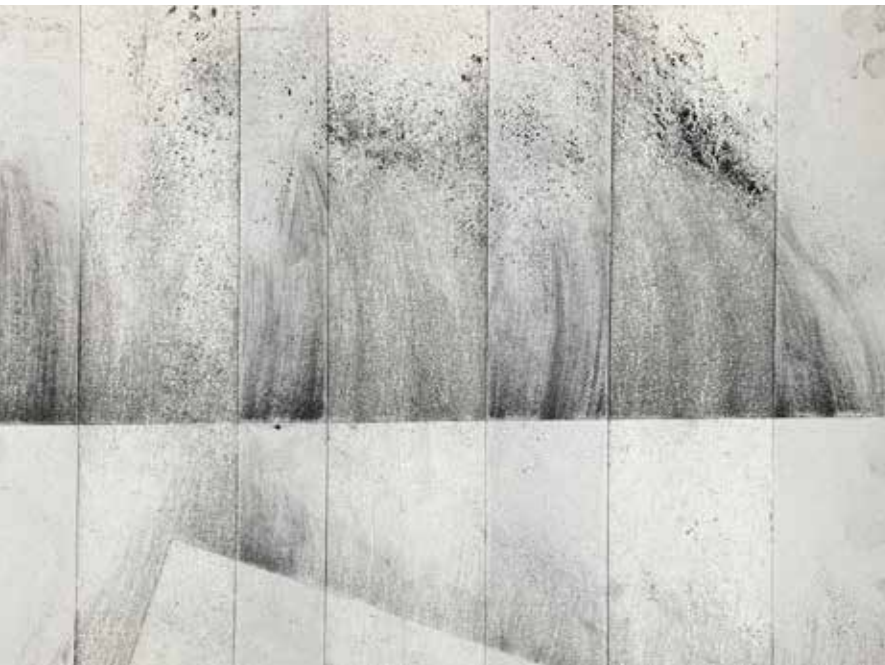
Haiku 28: Winter's Dream

© **Linda Amos** | *Patient*

Feathery snowflakes
Fall gently upon the earth
Shrouds dawn in white bliss

Untitled Collage II (11"x10")

© **Laura Patton**
Internal Medicine Residency Program





Losing Touch

© Elizabeth Raoof | MSIV

Judge's Comments:

Have you ever felt just numb?

Executed as a digital painting/drawing, the portrait “Losing Touch” insinuates there once was sympathy, energy, and will. Eyes prepared for the day’s work with mascara, eyebrows drawn in just-so, flyaway hairs in brunette and auburn hues surround her ears after taking off the face mask, a painted lip revealed, ever so slightly pursed as the thought of what has transpired gives way to a final expression: resolve waning. Accentuated by broad, aggressive facial strokes to express light and dark, it is obvious this woman has grit, but perhaps it is not so immutable as once before.

Confronted by the gaze of the subject, if willing to meet those eyes, deep multitudes of emotion surface. In recent experience, one might recognize instantly what has been dubbed “pandemic fatigue.” Results are physical and mental tiredness, loneliness, worry, extreme sadness, dejectedness at losing another patient, or even lack of compassion for those who unnecessarily perished after avoiding vaccination, a preventable loss. Or maybe we see a more timeless and particular burden of women, caring for others at work, and at home, pressured still to out-perform male counterparts, all while expressing an acutely feminine empathy. Is the expectation too crushing? Meet her eyes and confront your own thoughts and emotions. Take 60 seconds and see what is elicited from within—are you losing touch, too?

Didactic Blues

© Pallavi Kulkarni | MSII

A brown leather La-Z-Boy
Envelops my very being
Creating a feeling
Dissonance they call it

Running down halls
Intubating
Prescribing
Cutting

The ultimate image I painted for myself
The high that filled every fiber
Of my being
Simply fantasizing
No longer appears

Immunity has developed
Limiting the euphoria
Saving it for actually doing

Instead I sit silently
With tingling fingertips
Impatiently hoping
My time will come

Judge's Comments:

This poem begins with an effective use of the double entendre—are the “blues” referred to in the title a mood or the set of scrubs every student wears as part of the learning experience? While this poem does not rely on a rhyme scheme, it delivers a message by immersing the reader in a number of sensory experiences, from the enveloping chair to “tingling fingertips.” The yearning to be immersed in the hands-on parts of patient care that drives students through the academic grind of the pre-clinical years is clear throughout.

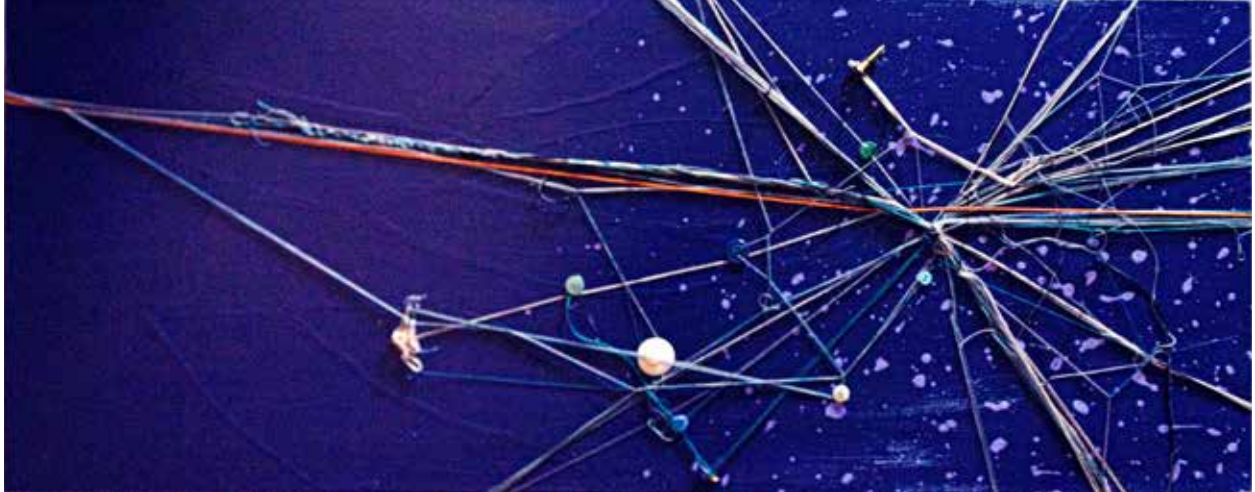
Fingerpainting

© Danielle D'Amico | MSI



Judge's Comments:

Here we are presented with a vibrant, thrilling, almost daring call to action, to create. To become the work of art, to honor the process of connecting with your passion.



Artwork and Poem:

Interweaving Chaos

© Danielle D'Amico MSI, Chenee De Ment MSI, Jill Stachowski MSI,
Ksenia Varlyguina MSI, Morgan Voulo MSI, Michael Flanagan, MD
University Park First-Year Medical Student Class

What is this interweaving chaos?
An unorganized, yet organized depiction
Colors arise,
All ending in different places, but sharing moments.
How my mind tries to make sense of this!
Many connections, like neurons, communicating a message;
Life can be messy.
The end we seek isn't always the end that is meant to be.
We are bound together
And cannot untangle alone.
Tangled, interweaving web of life experiences.
It ends how it should.

This piece of artwork and poem titled "Interweaving Chaos" was created by a group of MSI students at University Park as part of the museum-based MI Humanities Course taught by Michael Flanagan, MD. The students visit the Palmer Museum of Art at Penn State University. They choose a piece of art to inspire a group poem. Each member of the group writes a line that describes what they see. Students cut the lines into strips of paper and arrange into stanzas to create a poem. "Interweaving Chaos" reflects on the past year. Subsequently, the students met one evening in a learning center to create a piece of art to accompany the poem.

Tangible Faith (In Memory of Christina Barnhart)

© Kushagra Kumar, BS | MSII

Too many clear IVs to count, I may as well be made of plastic
White and blue Kangaroo pump forcing purulent “nutrients” into my body
I wish I could go for a walk, hell, I wish I could sit up
I press the red nurse call button, ouch that hurt my chest
“Can you prop me up please and give me my cards?”

With effort, I sit up and she hands me my black pen
From my bedside, she hands me my stack of notecards
My multicolored vitality
My hand is shakier than before, it hurts to hold the pen
Try to scribble out a thought, the lines are shaky

Take a deep breath and try again, the line is smooth
Write out the first phoneme, this really isn't easy
Power through a few Stygian letters and there it is
Romans 15:13
I did it!

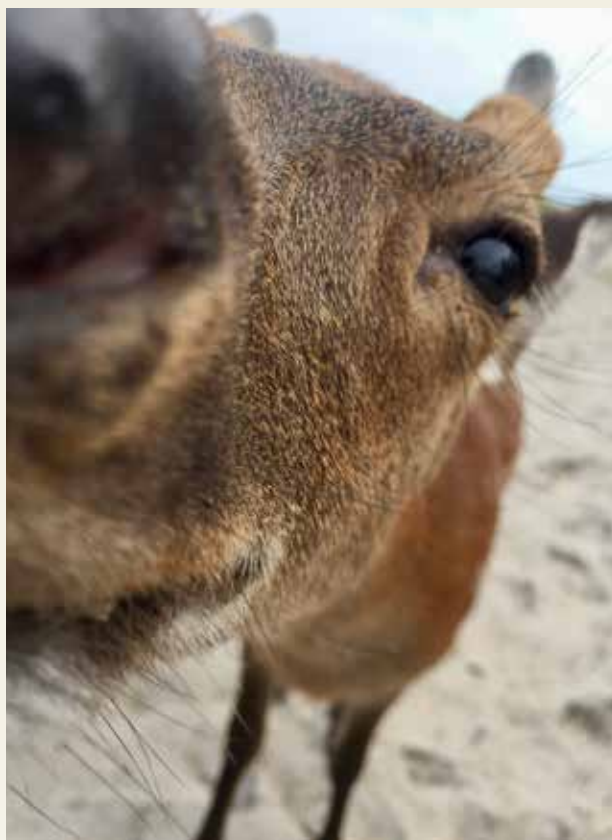
Crack a smile and cough deeply into my pale hand
Brush away the tubing covering the rest of the yellow card
What do I want to write? Hmmm
Add a few notes and thoughts, the letters glide from my pen
Hand starts to cramp, maybe it's time to read

Read through my cards, a blue one says *Nehemiah 8:10*
Oh! now that's a good one
Chuckle as I read through my notes, let out a few shaky coughs
I have to show this one to Tom next time I see him
Reach for a green one, another classic

Explore the spectrum of thoughts and prayers
Immersed in the pigmented faith
I sit up a little more stiffly, that makes my back ache, I see black spots
There's one more red card left on my side table the nurse didn't notice
I forget what this one said, I want to explore the rainbow

It hurts to move, I do so anyway, all I can see is red
I look up and see the HR number get larger; the green rhythm line spikes, I don't care
I reach and ache for the secret of the red card
Finally, I grab it and drag myself back into the original position
Excitedly I flip it over

Blank ... oh well ... I reach for my pen and uncap it
What inked vigor will I write next?



Is This How You Take a Selfie?

© Lisa Peters, COA
Department of Ophthalmology

Swatara Creek in Fall

© Jonathan Foulds, PhD
Public Health Sciences



The Ladle

© Julia Simpson, BS | PhD Candidate, Biomedical Sciences

The long metal ladle catches
my eye, scoops up my attention, a spoonful
of wonder savored between
the whirl of accelerating centrifuges
and the efficient, still-alien bustle of the phoenix
churning through its time-loop life cycle:
answers to questions to answers to ashes
to a newborn flame of inspiration, and again, and
again. The basin of the ladle
is frosted over, and ghostly tendrils
of white fog slip from it like whispers escaping
a hushed conversation over calm water.
Radiating from the point of contact
where the base of the concave instrument
meets the smooth black countertop,
a fragile-looking frost slowly
spreads, like the shallows of a lake entombed
in the grasp of a pre-dawn cold
snap. With a cautious touch, armored
in an insulated glove, I delve the instrument back
into the small abyss of the tank,
withdrawing more liquid nitrogen
with which to shower my cell culture stocks.
This is flash-freezing, a preservation,
a pausing of the cells' biological
clocks. Finished, I return my samples to their
cryogenic purgatory. I'm pulled
away; no time to dwell
on striking imagery while there's RNA
to harvest, DNA to synthesize,
and thus another phoenix to coax
into adolescence. I am supposed to be
learning how to nurture
this impossible creature, so
I dutifully note down the steps for extracting
an ancient language from a miniature
universe. *Later,*
I tell myself. I need to be
an engine now,
a prism, a budding
cartographer. I can be
a poet later.

Rounds

© **Joseph Gascho, MD**

*Retired, Heart and Vascular Institute
Department of Medicine*

Round and round they go,
this team of eight or so,
stand round my bed,
go round and round
about my case,
say maybe this
or maybe that,
then say,
before they leave,
we'll round again
at four this afternoon.

Already Written

© **Tony Oliveri** | *Patient*

I want to write
a love poem,
comforting,
sweet ...
and sticky
with passion's play;
and lasting
like feelings can be,
yet ignited with
spontaneous heat
melting all resistance
and leading to
the timeless moment
of abandoned delight
where physical bliss
transforms the soul
within this flimsy costume
of flesh and tooth and juice
into the reality of eternity
now and now and now.

But, that poem has already
been written in the pattern
of your breath on my neck
in the cool quiet of this night.



When Night and Day Collide

© **Jill Stachowski** | *MSI*

Midnight in Paris

© **Hänel Eberly** | *MSII*



The Moon

© Tuan Vu | MSII

"You know that you are deep in the COVID era when you have been to Chipotle more times than you have been to your new medical school during orientation." I nervously attempted to break the ice with my new Foundations of Patient Centered Care group. The last time that I remembered vividly being on campus was during my interview on an early morning last winter.

On that day, my mind was clouded by the nervousness from thousands of "what ifs." My lips were dried by the cold winds that would not leave my side during the short walk from the garage to the hospital's main entrance. My eyes were burning from having only two hours of sleep as my emotions ran high after listening to the words of Paul Kalanithi, MD, in *When Breath Becomes Air* during my drive to Hershey. Moments later, I stood in front of a roundabout centered by a Nittany Lion statue. I was overwhelmed by the slim chance that one day I could join Dr. Kalanithi's profession and also, I was lost among numerous possible turns.

"Do you need help getting somewhere?" a man dressed in scrubs calmly approached and asked me.

"Yes, I am looking for the entrance to the College of Medicine," I responded.

"I'll show you. You can follow me." The mysterious man led me through a hallway painted with two of my mother's favourite colors: green and red-orange. As an avid believer of feng shui, my mother told me that these two colors encapsulate the meaning of life. Green represents nature where life begins while red-orange represents fire and blood, the two forces that drive the circle of life. Suddenly, a loud beep from a pager hanging on his waist pulled me back to reality. "I have to go but following this hallway will take you there. Good luck on the interview!" I never told him what I was here for. I guessed the suit had given it away. Being led to the interview by a member of Penn State healthcare team through a hallway filled with the colors of life, must be a good omen. Months later, the good omen came true as I was accepted to Penn State. Then, COVID happened.

There I was, surrounded by monotonous white walls of my new apartment, already fatigued by another Zoom session two weeks into medical school when

my mother rushed through the door in tears. "Ba Ngoai chet roi con oi!" That means grandmother just died.

Six months ago, I held Ba Ngoai's cachectic hands in mine during my last celebration of Tet in Vietnam, telling her that I just got into medical school in America. With underlying dementia after 85 years of giving life her best, she gently smiled back at me and kept repeating, "When will you come back to live with me?"

The family chimed in, "He's studying to be a doctor. It will be a long time." I was never able to give her my own answer. But, my grief was insurmountable to my mother's, a daughter who had been robbed of the last goodbye to her mother amid the pandemic. We felt lost.

A few days passed, a classmate heard of my story and supportively suggested that we meet on campus. After getting coffee, we passed by Nittany, a point in the building at which I would always associate with a certain sense of discomfort due to the abundance of turns that we had to take. After passing the familiar "life" hallway painted with green and red-orange, she led me to the courtyard between the library and the Biomedical Research Building where we joined with other members of our class. There was another Nittany Lion statue. But at this location, it faces the middle of the courtyard where healthcare workers gather to discuss treatments, scientists elaborate ideas, and students exchange knowledge. Most importantly, they lean on each other regardless of which directions they choose.

I confidently left the courtyard after classmates showed me the way. I looked back at the crescent building thinking of my mother. She told me that in feng shui, the moon waxes and wanes much like the changes humans go through in life. During cycles it provides healing energy and clarity for the earth as did my grandmother, Dr. Kalanithi, the mysterious man in scrubs, and my new friends. As I came to appreciate the events that transpired within the past few months, the sunlight dimmed and the crescent building started to shine behind me. It is difficult to appreciate light during daytime. However when the night falls, the moon becomes the only source of navigation, guiding us to walk steadily on the path we have chosen amid the dark nights and ailments we might face.



Golden City Sunset

© Shengchen Lin, PhD | Department of Cellular and Molecular Physiology

Judge's Comments:

The title, "Golden City Sunset," suggests structures reflecting off water as a pastel sky bids farewell to a blazing last punctuation of the day's bright light. This painting is an abstract treatment of a brilliant impression.

Could this be Jaisalmer on Gadisar lake in Rajasthan, India, known for its yellow sandstone and beautiful sunsets? Or perhaps we are viewing San Francisco from Port Oakland? Possibly the Maiden's Tower of Sküdar, Istanbul, Turkey? Whichever "Golden City" we are transported to, the variety of color and texture give the notion of blurred and airy spaces with a bold and defining central structural focus through both impasto and gradient blending. This work emanates a sense of awe and wonder that the artist has captured for our own vibrant and rapturous experience.

Last Breath

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

As I sit waiting for death,
all I hear is the rattle of
your lungs and I wonder
if that's a melody you'd
want to hear for yourself

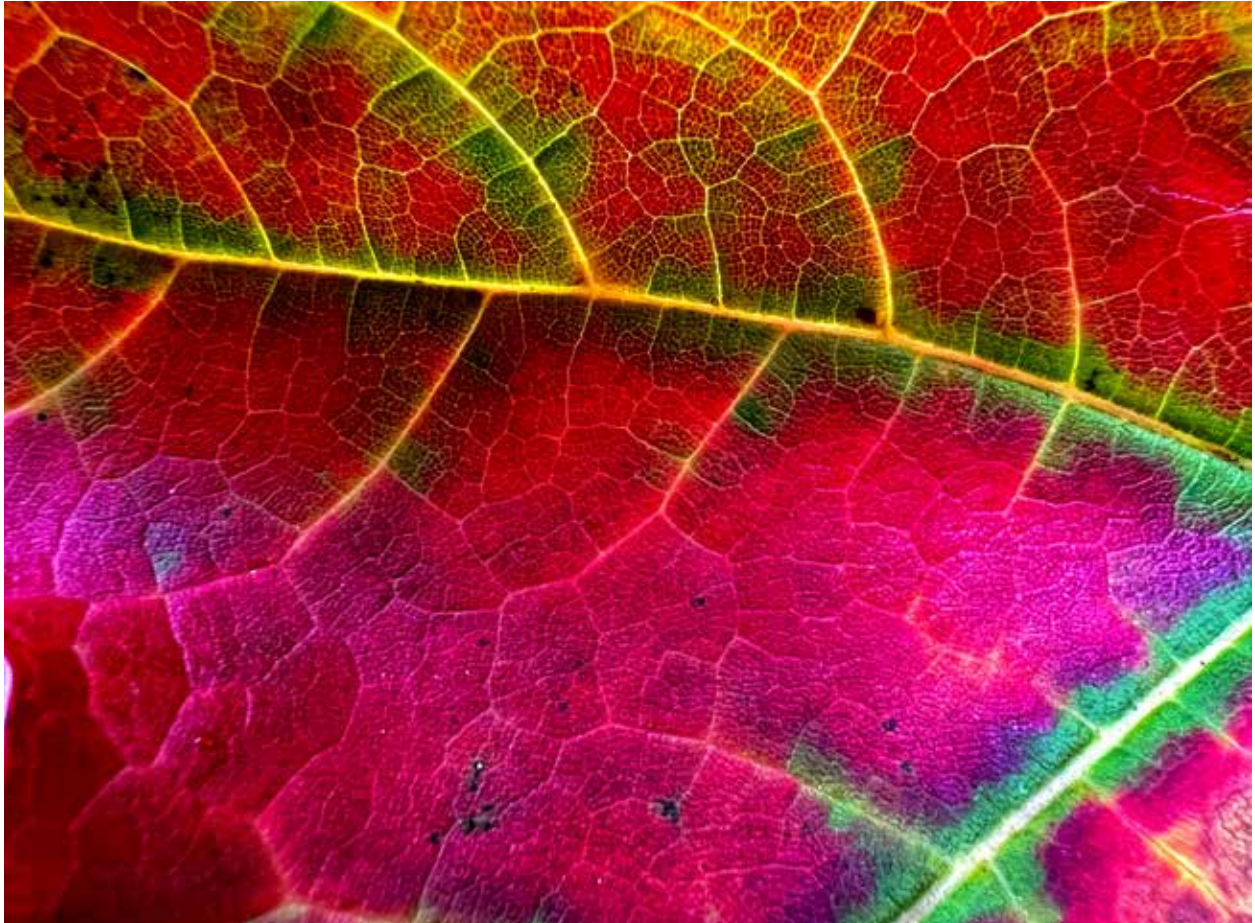
As I sit waiting for death,
I feel your presence
standing, waiting, watching,
comforting your wife
as she drifts off to sleep on you

As I sit waiting for death,
I am the only one still awake,
taking in the empty energy;
the prolonged yet sudden grief
looms above us, waiting

As you wait for your own death,
I listen to your breath,
and I know it can't be long now,
but you keep holding on,
searching for the right time to let go

Judge's Comments:

Three of the stanzas begin with the same grim message many of us have experienced: witnessing the wait for death. The reader is brought into the physical and emotional reality of ushering someone through the melody of a death rattle, comforting loved ones, and confronting the realization that despite these interventions, grief is inevitable. An interesting twist comes in the last stanza, which takes us into the (possible) perspective of the dying patient.



Fall Glory

© Robert Ganse | Information Services

Judge's Comments:

Such hopefulness, the presentation of the network of life's paths, choices, opportunities. Seeing the beauty in transitions, seasons, change. Just simply amazing!

Hands

© Gary Beemer | MSII

Hands.
Warm extensions creased with years
Rest fixed,
Now cold.

Small strings, threads of life moving
Turning
Diving
Coursing across the ocean of sinew and memory.
Lamps guiding ships of soul no more.
Lamps snuffed out,
Now cold.

Where is the mother of this boy
caressing skin that I now cut
And Peel
And Tear?

Who is this groom, bride, child, husband, father, wife, mother, friend, lover?
Whose hand do I hold under the wrappings,
Tattered plastic now your sheets?

No pillow for this head,
this child's head
no kiss for this pale cheek
Now cold.

I hold your hand
Still yours forever
Passing me the Gift.

Radio Flyer | © Mary Mager | Family Member of Patient



Chicken Broth

© Hena Choi | MSI

The white window is open I knock on the door
I remember the brittle March air
that enters the house with me
I am scared
I might make you cold
and send you away too soon
The lounge smells like lavender
and a faint residue of chicken broth
I wonder
what might have gone into that pot
other than the chicken bones
how many drops of tears
prayers
flashes of memories
regrets,
and tenderness

You are smiling on the couch
with eyes half open
Those dark eyes
that told me everything was going to be okay
when I was a scared 19-year-old
in a whole new world

You say slowly
you might return to school in August
to teach again
and continue your research
I see your eyes getting wet
Your wife is nodding
one hand grabbing her knee
the other hand rubbing your back tenderly
“He will, he’s getting stronger.”

You seem dreamy
You are not even blinking
What are you thinking now?
Your thirties spent under the vibrant sun of Africa
helping people live better lives?
Thousands of students
who call you their mentor?

Faces of your old neighbors in Paris
you haven’t seen in decades?
The oak trees outside your backyard?
The lyrics of a Sinatra song?
Whether you’ll be here tomorrow?

Your wife gets a call from the hospital
“It’s from palliative.”
She clears her throat
and articulates
stressing each syllable, a little too hard
to hide her shiver
Once she hangs up the call, she sobs
the quietest sob I have ever heard
I hug her tightly
She’s tiny but firm
And she smells like chicken broth

Air in My Hair

© Kelly Chambers, CRNA

Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine



Beyond Retelling © Hope Pesner | *Patient*

Things have changed
Beyond retelling
Left our lives estranged
Solitude swelling

No going back
To the before
Keep on track
Through a new door

We're seeking the connections
That we always shared
In a new direction
Trying to show we care

An open admission
Racing for a cure
Life in intermission
Trying to stay secure

Fatigue has grown
As the problem plagues
Our day-to-day unknown
The future vague

We've lived a lifetime
In a few years
The mountains climbed
to surmount our fears

We've passed milestones
In a time that seemed so long
Passed through the zones
Growing strong

We've come down the road
Twisting and turning
Not sure what bodes
But still learning

We depended on each other
Learned to support
One another
As we try to thwart

A challenge to who
We are
Yet we stay true
No matter how far

We will persist
Through highs and lows
Continue to resist
The repeated blows

Until we can
Emerge into the light
And then
An end to the fight.



Christmas Cheer | © Christopher Pool, MD | PGY-5, Department of Otolaryngology



Arts and Healing

© Elisabeth Kunkel, Ruth Moore, Sarah Horton
 Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Health and
 Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute

The journey to visually incorporate art into the healing environment for adolescent patients at Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute (PPI) began in 2019. A collaboration with Lower Dauphin School District and local artists provided students in elementary through high school the opportunity to create art for the center. Students created six botanical mosaics now displayed throughout the adolescent unit at PPI. A collage of lotus flowers created by community members at the 2019 ArtsFest event in Harrisburg, is also on display.

A connectedness exists between those that left their personal mark on the art pieces and the individuals who experience the art as they navigate their path to healing. The beauty in creating art for the benefit of others transcends the physical touch. Each time we touch an object, we emit energy and that energy can be felt by others. Each piece of artwork, holds the energy of those who left their mark.

Recurrence

© Kevin Rakszawski, MD
 Department of Medicine, Division of Hematology/Oncology

Hard just like a rock
 the lymph node in the right neck
 Her dog sensed it first

Just One More

© Stacie Freedman, RN | Perianesthesia

Just one more hug, one more goodnight.
 Just one more conversation that I can hold onto tight.
 Just one more laugh, one more text.
 Just one more memory to hold onto 'til the next.
 Just one more piece of advice, one more moment together.
 Just one more I love you to hold onto for forever.

Half an Hour Behind

© Joseph Gascho, MD
 Retired, Heart and Vascular Institute
 Department of Medicine

you talked about
 your spasmed gut
 but not about
 (I didn't ask)
 the blackness of the spot,
 size of a fist
 on your right arm.
 I told myself
 there isn't time,
 already half an hour behind.

In the Deep

© Vera Guertler, MD

Community Medical Group Lancaster

I touch you
and you turn,
eyes burning like fire
on a hillside.

As I lay below you,
your words ride
down to me
like horses panting
from a long gallop.

Slowly you lower your lips
that brush my wisps
of fallen hair.

With one finger,
you trace
the curve of my face.

Though the night grows colder,
my body pulses
like an artery leaving
the heart to throb
in the deep dark
of ecstasy
where our souls meet.

Our feet tangle,
as we wrestle
like wind and water
laying claim to our
helical oneness.

Then, you call my name,
and I awaken
to find you gone
long before the first
kind streak of dawn
breaks me open
to your eternal absence.



In The Absence

© Madeline Matzelle-Zywicki

MSII

Honey Boat

© Devin DePamphilis

Son of Sharon W. DePamphilis, Management Reporting and Decision Support



Visiting Pappy

© Chet Davis



Judge's Comments:

Anchoring the scene, the right and left figures, presumably the father and mother, direct their attention to the object of gathering together: the family is "Visiting Pappy." All of the subjects are externally quiet, even the unassuming dog. Our eye moves around this well-composed drawing from one portrait to the next.

In somber postures, a scene of inner disquiet ensues through the overlaid expression of the agitated lines of the figures. Does the family anxiously await their visit, do they sit and listen to the same story, retold numerous times, or silently witness an illness or death? The blurred subtlety of the portraits imply slight shifts of glance; however, all are held in place by rapt attention to their task. We are placed in their direct line of sight, yet cloistered because these figures do not reach out, do not focus completely. How keenly felt is the lack of touch! Although the subjects are so close they are touching one another, each remains isolated, not contacting one another through holding hands or the consolation of an arm around a shoulder. No, there is a stoicism in the visit this family is engaged in, but the lack of precise focus in the figure drawing suggests an emotional disquiet and unease in the situation, yet a steadfast fidelity by their very presence. How richly the artist has touched the page, caressing emotion in stillness and manifesting the inner thoughts and reality each of the subjects must experience through variety of line.

Crashmates

© Marian Frances Wolbers, MA

The car
The way home
Two days before Christmas

The night
When a careless boy turns left
Head on. BAM!!!!

The light
Blasts, explodes in my head
Shutting my eyes, I shake.

The ambulance
EMT asking - what? name
Birthdate what day time - what?

The name
He says is "Phil." My brain
chains him to grandson Phil.

The ER
Nurse says "I'm Valerie." I think
Val, my best friend's sister's name.

The shakes
Do not stop. It's hard, says Val
Getting a vein for blood.

The finance lady
Is Christine. "Like Christ. Like
Christmas." I mouth words to her.

The doctor
Is named Thomas. He
Confesses a train hit his car once.

The train
Named Thomas, from a kids' book.
An ER doc with a bad-crash story.

The voice
Post-CT scan, "Good news! No breaks."
And Phil, Val, Christ, & Thomas ...

... Head home
(Whenever) and I am brought home by my husband,
At last no longer shaking.

Judge's Comments:

This poem was able to present a serious incident (car accident) in a tight but somewhat playful form that tells us the "who, what, where" of an ER visit. (Try reading just the lead sentence from each stanza). The clipped sentences speak to the urgency of the situation while the second sentences of each stanza presents us with another moving part or person involved, reserving the last sentences for the author's response. It has the all-too-realistic feel of those who help us through the "crashes" of life.

Spinning

© Marcia Riegle



Judge's Comments:

The lighting in this image is superb. The movement and textures work harmoniously to tell such a delicate and gentle story.

Sfiorare

© David Carnish, MA, M Div, BCC
Pastoral Services

Perseus relieved Medusa of her head.
That is modernity was breathed on by the new plague.
A coronavirus affected what we thought we beheld.
Abruptly
With no pause
A cessation swept
Like a brook flows into a river and the river is
engulfed into sea
There was no more embracing
The slightest shave
The most delicate brush
One hand touching another
One smile meeting a frown
One toe in the water with another
Was a dream, a longing, and a prohibition
—A run on sentence.
Dead hands grasped. (a touch of the modern?)
More precisely we all became voluntold amputees
Lulled 'woke' by the phantom pains
Of longing to unveil
And feel the skin of human flesh against our own
For now, metaphoric tinges nudge
We labor for the day when we again press . . .

Full Charge

© Jessica Matincheck (Age 16)
*Daughter of Lynn Matincheck
Office of Faculty and Administrative Affairs*



Ablutophobia

© Christy Lucas, MD
Penn State College of Medicine Alumnus, 2020

1, 2, 3, 4, 5—Breathe.

Water sloshing out the tub,
Pounding on your chest—
Pleading for a mere lub-dub—
Body floating in arrest.

Knees buckling at the doorway,
Struggling to stand with all my might.
Pausing to pray, as your body lay
White as snow, life taking flight.

Sirens blaring up the street,
Scurrying curiously 'cross the floor.
From the stoop—scooped off my feet,
Herding this sheep out the door.

Blanketed with warmth and peppermint,
A sweet neighbor attempting distraction.
But Aquaman offered only a glint,
Left questioning what would happen.

Ushered home without you,
A phone ring soon pierced the hush:
Worst case scenario came true—
Blood pooling in legs, face aflush.

Your purse, keys, and shoes,
Remaining by the door,
Fooled me to search for you—
Yearning one moment more.

Scrambling to find your Sunday best,
Even appealing to Santa's elves,
I grabbed you gutchies for eternal rest,
Tearing-up, tearing-up shelves.

At last I could see you, now in repose,
So, I donned my Christmas best early—
Smooth shiny shoes smooshing toes,
Patting down hair, all curly.

Peacefully you lay, soundly asleep,
And instinctively I sought your caress.
Neither a stir, nor a peep—
Parceling me with distress.

Kneeling at your box with a loud clack—
Now a moment that forever lingers—
You didn't squeeze back—
Cold, hard hand: warm, soft fingers.

Returning home, water sloshing out the tub,
Pounding in my chest—
I had pleaded for a mere lub-dub—
Body floating in arrest.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5—Breathe.

Lesson Learned with a Dying Patient

© Makayla Lagerman | MSII

Time
set aside
to sit with
this passing
patient.

Classes
are busy
but I learn
more important
lessons.

This
man dies
slowly and I
ponder. Obviously,
(profoundly?),

You
cannot watch
nurses spoon-feed applesauce
on 2x
speed.



Pennsylvania Autumn

© Tim Attinger

Husband of Cheryl Attinger, Educational Affairs

Aspirations Cut Short

© Don Hoang | MSIII

Slowly but surely my hands are closing up more and more
My nails are starting to dig into my palms and cleaning my hands is starting to become impossible
No matter what I do, nothing can stop my muscles from contracting
I've seen therapists and doctors, but no one can straighten out my fingers
Ever since that tonsillectomy, I have been left this way
Nearly completely paralyzed, unable to take care of myself, unable to live the way I want to live
In truth, all I really want is to be able to play guitar again, one of my simple pleasures
However, if things continue the way it has been, infection will surely arise
Something must be done to open up my hand ... anything
Even if it means cutting my tendons and permanently cutting the strings of my guitar



In Isolation We Shine On | ©Pullavi Kulkarni | MSII

Angina Pectoris

© Benjamin Watt | MSIII

Where is my love,
The heart that was mine?
Numbed in my sleep,
Was it taken from me?
Or burdened with care,
Did it break?

A silent cold heart—

“Cannulating.”

“On bypass.”

“Cardioplegia.”

“Ice.” —

O.R. pulsing with hearts.

Where is my joy,
The song in my chest?
Deprived of its blood,
Did it wither in me?
Or smothered in schmaltz,
Did it croak?

Young voices chorus—

“Ubi caritas et amor,

Deus ibi est.

Congregavit nos in unum

Christi amor.” —

When flow returns, will it burn?



Point of View

© Nicole Seacord | Patient

So Close, Yet So Far - Lake McDonald, Glacier National Park, Mont.

© Aakriti Bertsche, MD

Resident Fellow, Department of Neurology



Touching the Other Side

© Judy Schaefer, RN

Member, The Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine

She is a woman who keeps her windows clean
Scrubs clockwise with vinegar and day old newspaper
The daily obsession took hold when her son died

She says:

I know he is not here but a better place
Not London or Paris but the other side
just the other side of the window pane.

She says:

Glass is a thin thing but a stubborn divide
Both of her red hands rise, flat, to touch in mime,
as if to clarify that which might be unclear.

My Grandmother's Hands

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

My grandmother's mind deteriorated gradually over six years, more rapidly during the final three. Her's was a strange dementia: she could still read, even if her speech became more and more difficult to understand. She no longer recognized me as her granddaughter. On good days, she mistook me for my mother.

My grandmother's hands deteriorated slowly over 20 years, her fingers bending themselves into arthritic zigzags that ensured her rings would

never come off of their own accord. She found her gnarled joints hilarious and swore they didn't hurt. She embarked on aging with a remarkable, humorous acceptance: poking fun at her arthritic limbs and shrinking frame, jovially forbidding me from continuing to grow taller.

Although never measuring above 5'3", a height I surpassed by age 12 – this stubborn, opinionated, ambitious woman had very much intimidated me well into my teens. We routinely butted heads over mundane things like wearing the proper headgear in winter or neatly pinning my hair up rather than letting it cascade down my shoulders in what was, in her opinion, a wild-looking, unkempt manner.

As her dementia progressed and her ability to carry on a conversation dwindled, her once sharp edges became rounder and softer, her ability to joke quicker. It was my father who (surprisingly) suggested that I hold her hands instead of trying to chat. On our next visit, I looked into her tired, amber eyes and took her hands, feeling those knobby knuckles and surprising warmth. Her fingers wrapped around mine in an almost automatic response, as if we had done this many times.

I truly couldn't have imagined us sitting and holding hands while I twisted up my face in silly ways to make her giggle. When I close my eyes, I can still feel her waxy, warm fingers curled around mine.

I struggle with regret that her dementia set in just as I was beginning to understand her complex sensibilities, born of out a ruthless commitment to organization and practicality. The older I get, the more I recognize our shared obsessive tendencies. I admire her innate ability to act rather than ruminate, a trait that does not come naturally to me.

The night before she died, her grip was so fierce I found it physically difficult to let go when it was time to leave. The following day, her grip became less strong, but it was still there. When I squeezed her hand, she lightly, but distinctly, squeezed back.

I fretted for months about how to say goodbye. As I sat by her bed for the last time, surrounded by her children, I realized that all I needed to do was show up, be present, and offer her my hands. There are times when love is palpable. A room full of it: unmistakable.



My Mother's Hands

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

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