

The background of the cover is a rich, textured painting. It features a central human figure, possibly a woman, rendered in a style that blends realism with abstraction. The figure is surrounded by large, stylized flowers in shades of red, orange, and yellow, set against a deep blue and green background. The overall effect is one of intense color and emotional depth.

THE HUMAN CONDITION

an exploration of art & literature

VOLUME XVIII | 2023
UCSD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

STAFF

Editor Staff:

Anushree Dugar (Editor-in-Chief)
Tonya Lee (Editor-in-Chief)
Carolyn Clark (Managing Editor)
Kanchi Mehta (Managing Editor)
Sanjay Nigam, MD (Faculty Advisor)
Jamie Nye (Staff Advisor)
Ariana Mueller (Staff Advisor)

Prose:

Divya Prajapati (Senior)
Tanya Jain (Senior)
Katelynn Tran
Bhavana Rai
Esha Lal

Poetry:

Esha Lal (Senior)
Divya Prajapati (Senior)
Nour Hussari
Jasmine Arora
Natalie Sarafian
Brigid Larkin
Mirha Mahmood
Letitia Mueller
Tanya Jain
Katelynn Tran
Bhavana Rai

Art & Photography:

Sumana Mahata (Senior)
Ishan Saha (Senior)
Julia Yuan (Senior)
Emma Rice
Samhita Palakodeti
Sanjana Sanghani
Julian Cortes
Sneha Thandra
Ariadne Nichol
Celeste Hsu
Liz Timple

Layout:

Anushree Dugar (Senior)
Emma Willians (Senior)
Nicole Gamboa
Sumana Mahata
Pooja Nair
Emma Rice
Sneha Thandra
Julia Yuan

Art Show:

Emma Rice (Senior)
Liz Timple
Pooja Nair
Letitia Mueller
Nicole Gamboa



DEAR READERS,

When aspiring physicians take on the mantle of medicine, many of us bring unique lived experiences to the table. Among us are artists, writers, musicians, and athletes. Some have had full careers prior to medicine. A courageous few have taken on the responsibility of parenthood. Yet medical training is highly technical and scientific, inevitably involving rote memorization and rehearsed methods of communication. Sometimes individuality may be lost in the single-minded pursuit of becoming competent and compassionate doctors. Between juggling block exams, board exams, research, volunteering, and clinical rotations, it often feels like there is simply no time to be a person outside of medicine.

But medicine is inherently human. It is full of life, death, and the interwoven ugliness and beauty that represent the human condition. In the most turbulent of times, creative outlets can help us mark the moments in which we witness each in turn—a life saved, a disease progressed, a goal of care discussion exploring what it means to truly live. This magazine includes many of those reflections. Equally important are the works in this magazine that exist wholly outside of medicine. Our creators have contributed pieces that showcase travel and time with loved ones, as well as art, photography, poetry, prose, and music, born out of pure fascination with the very notion of beauty. These works serve, too, as a testament to the parts of ourselves that endure.

A Chinese proverb intones, “Do not forget the heart with which you began.” In many ways, the 18th edition of this magazine is a love letter to you, our readers, and the person you were before you entered medicine. It is our hope that you may continue growing from that person, now and always.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us.

Sincerely,



Anushree Dugar
Editor-in-Chief



Tonya Lee
Editor-in-Chief

TABLE of CONTENTS

Front Cover:

Growing | Carolyn Clark

Waitlist Letter of Intent	1	Kevin Lu
Reciprocity	2	Anonymous
Bargaining	2	Julia Yuan
Lilies	3	Heather Lystad
Not the Opium Poppy	3	Sumana Mahata
Rainy Rose	3	Sumana Mahata
what truly matters	4	Shelby Warren
Remember All Your Why-s	4	Linette Acosta
Sky Blue	4	Anna Lussier
My Mother's Glow	5	Tanya Jain
Wilderness Medicine 2022	5	Sumana Mahata
Semi-Storytime	6	Sumana Mahata
Onwards, and Hopefully Out	6	Anna Lussier
Flying Solo	6	Liz Timple
A New Beginning	6	Leo Miller
Softly Repeated	7	Lana Birdi
Sadhu	7	Ishan Saha
Squirrel Condition	8	Carol Girgiss
Venice	8	Visesha Kakarla
Your Relationship with It	9	Alan Aung
Alone	10	Anonymous
Untitled	10	Stephanie Lushniak
Dr. Worldwide	11	Slash Queen
Secret Garden	11	Anushree Dugar
Shehron Ke Raaz - Cover	12	Sumana Mahata
The Taj at Night	12	Ishan Saha
"Ars Longa"	13	Anna Lussier
I Write my Story on Broken Bones	13	Emma Rice
A Pink Mystery	14	Austin Powell
My Brother's Silky	14	Grace Fumari
Snapshots from Virtual Interviews	14	Gauri Shastri
Distant Stars	15	Anna Lussier
The Spice Merchant	15	Ishan Saha
mejillones	17	Ryan Miller
Crossing the Mara	17	Anjana Baradwaj
Never Use Alone	18	Shelby Warren
MS1	19	Ryan Miller
Cotton Candy Skies	19	Millie Kirchberg
A Tale of Remembrance	20	Leo Meller
Reflections at the Dock, December 2022	20	Lucas Patel
"I am Meant to be Here" – The Life of a	21	Visesha Kakarla
Third Year Medical Student		
Early Morning Views from Bachman	21	Visesha Kakarla
seventeen minus five is twelve	22	Jimmy Yu
Windjammer	22	Anna Lussier
Allez, Allez!	23	Leo Meller
Season of Life	23	Leo Meller
Loch Lomond	24	Ryan Miller
it rained on lover's lane	24	Jimmy Yu
High Noon 1	24	Jeffrey Hendel
High Noon 2	24	Jeffrey Hendel
Heart Waves - Part 1	25	Jasmine Arora
Mise en Place	25	Katja Lazar
Pink Peppercorn Cephalization	25	Katja Lazar
Meeting the Shore - Part 2	26	Jasmine Arora
Reflections	26	Anushree Dugar
Mountain Mirage	26	Timothy Heintz
BeyonSCE	27	Bhavana Rai
Sulfur Springs	27	Vasan Jagadeesh
Loomy Tunes	28	Samhita Palakodeti
Hump Day	28	Samhita Palakodeti
Half Dome	28	Millie Kirchberg
Notions of a Natuni	29	Yasoda Satpathy
My Grandfather Cannot Hear Me	30	Gauri Shastri
Namesake	30	Sid Machiraju
Questions and Answers	31	Shreya Banerjee
The Architect	31	Liz Timple
Robotic Surgery	32	Sumana Mahata
Warm Winters	33	Jasmine Arora
The Circle of San Ramon	33	Vasan Jagadeesh
Dustbath	33	Anjana Baradwaj
Hug Often	34	Shelby Warren
Annie	34	Stephanie Lushniak
Naptime	35	Pani
A Day in the Life	35	Pani
The Miracles Before Us	36	Heidi Banh
Earth's Spine	36	Timothy Heintz

Back Cover:

Among Giants | Anjana Baradwaj

Waitlist Letter of Intent

Inbox x



Kevin Lu <lukevin0091@gmail.com>
to somadmissions@ucsd.edu ▾

May 7, 2019 11:32:06PM



Dear Admissions Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to interview at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. I want to inform you that UCSD SOM remains my top choice for medical school. Two specific reasons for this interest include: UCSD SOM's preventative medicine initiatives and the circumstances surrounding my family.

At UC San Diego, I will be able to remain close to my loved ones. Currently, my mother is undergoing treatment for Stage 4 Lung Cancer. It is important for me to stay close to my family so we can best support one another. At UCSD, I would feel at home. During my interview day and free clinic tour, I enjoyed speaking to fellow interviewees and current medical students. I appreciated how everyone was like-minded and driven, but diverse in their own way. I hope my nutrition and preventative care background will add to your program's diversity and primary care initiatives. Thank you for the consideration and I hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully yours,
Kevin Lu
Medical School Applicant



To somadmissions@ucsd.edu X

Cc Bcc

Dear Admissions Committee and the UCSD SOM community,

Thank you for making my dream come true on May 16, 2019. The last blissful moment with my mom was when I shared my UCSD acceptance with her. I vividly recall shrieking and running to her when I saw my inbox spammed with onboarding information. She tearfully hugged me and replied, "Thank God you will stay close to me."

After her passing a month before orientation, I recollect the isolative, grief-stricken thoughts that plagued my mind during Fall quarter of MS1 year. I want to express my gratitude to the friends and community that helped me through this transition. I rarely share this aspect of my life, so most are unaware of the impact they made on me. Thank you so much. To those who have or will undergo personal tragedies, reach out to me, reach out to your community. You deserve to be uplifted like I was.

With love,
Kevin Lu, MS4

Send

RECIPROCITY

Anonymous

I try so hard to make people feel
They are Wanted

Important

Needed

And all I get in return is silence.

After everything you've put me through
You don't deserve my Friendship

Loyalty

Trust

And yet I blindly give it to you anyways.

Every day I come home

All I want to do is to Scream

Cry

Shout

And yet I keep it all bottled up inside.

I want to believe that the world

Can be Caring

Fair

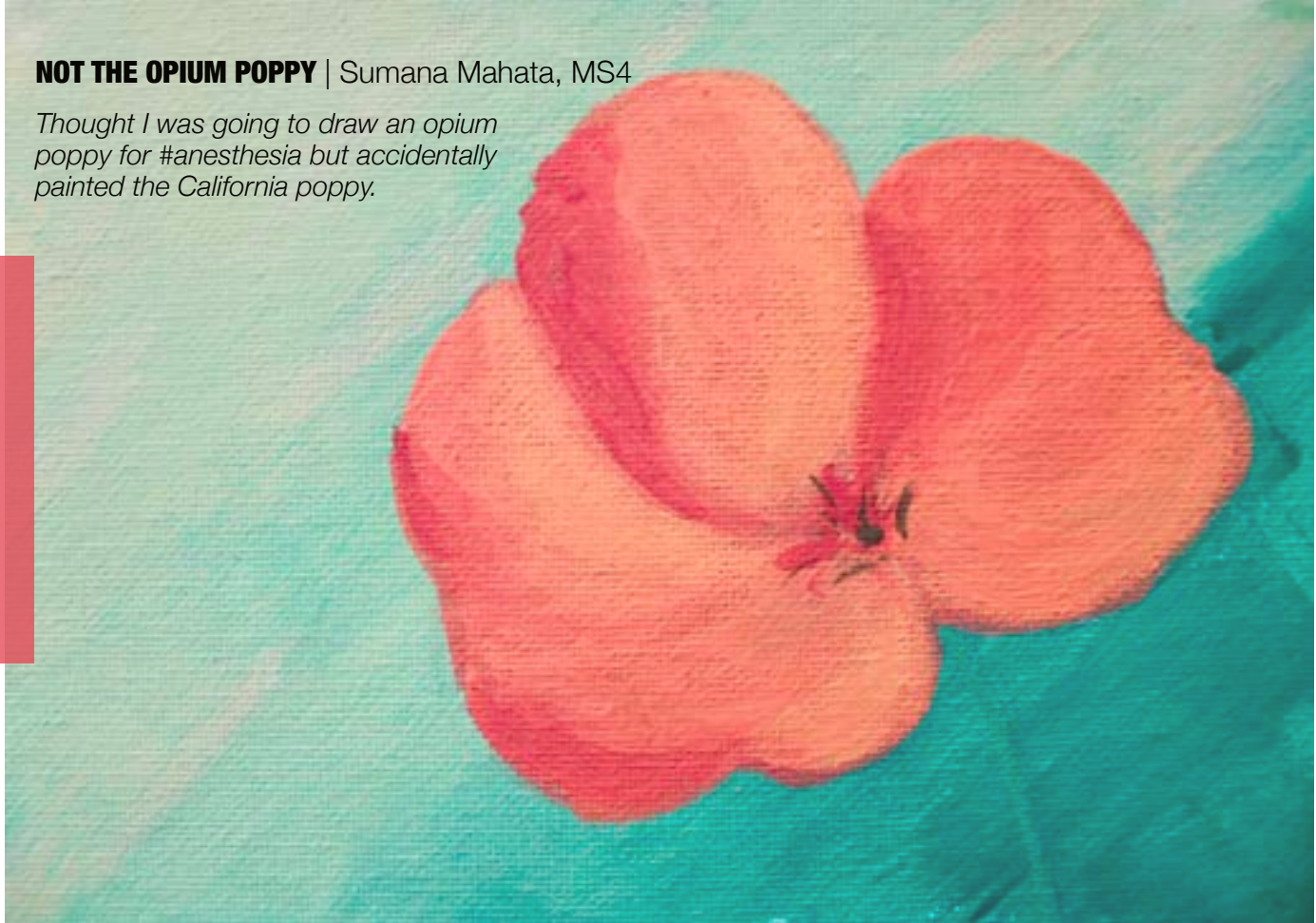
Considerate

But now all I see is darkness.



NOT THE OPIUM POPPY | Sumana Mahata, MS4

Thought I was going to draw an opium poppy for #anesthesia but accidentally painted the California poppy.



RAINY ROSE | Sumana Mahata, MS4



LILIES

Heather Lystad, MS3

April in Paris
A slight cough in May
A scan to be safe
Disbelief. Dismay.
Fighting, spreading, fading
Our toolbox runs dry
A hospital bed in the living room
By middle of July.
Daughters turned nurses
A husband in shock
Grappling with goodbye
Cursing the clock.
Medicine defeated
By Nature's true Devil
Our drugs, her comfort
The score yet unlevelled.
Blue skies turned black
Lilies in December
Make April in Paris
Hard to remember.

WHAT TRULY MATTERS

Shelby Warren, MS3.5

the more seasons pass
the more I know
there is no rhyme or reason
to who comes & who goes.

each morning I thank
the luck that has been
my verdant existence
thus far a sweet win.

may we never lose sight of
how fleeting life is
changing every moment...
we must live!

REMEMBER ALL YOUR WHY-S

Linette Acosta, MS1

Remember all your why-s

Por mis abuelos que no pudieron,

Por mis padres que se vinieron,

Por familias como la mía,

Estudio medicina.

Remember all your why-s



SKY BLUE | Anna Lussier, MS2

*Where glaciers meet the sky:
hiking above the Fjord town of
Balestrand, Norway*

If you want the unparalleled joy of learning medicine but being outside of the hospital and having the opportunity to explore SD, this is the course for you.

MY MOTHER'S GLOW

Tanya Jain, MS2

When I was five, I remember my mother carrying me to the beach, to the point where the ocean water rests calmly on the sand. We would shove our toes in deep between the warm golden granules. It was wet yet soft and I was in awe of the footprint I would leave behind. I thought it might stay there forever—my existence might be eternally carved into the surface of the Earth, of the beach. But with the next wave, it was gone.

The day I bled for the first time I thought I might be dying. All I could do was stare at the toilet, at the way the blood mixed with the water, forming spirals and specks, forming art from my very body, from the carmine, maroon, vermilion, mahogany, crimson, rust, and burgundy that came dripping out of me like a broken faucet. When my mother found me, she hugged me and shushed me and promised me that this wasn't my ultimate demise. She showed me that big plastic box of pads in her closet that I could use, that would help keep the bleeding our little secret.

After that, I was regularly rummaging through my mother's closet in search of pads, which seemed to magically disappear from my bathroom every time I started to bleed. My mother perpetually carried an extreme excess of pads. She warned me to always play it safe, to carry as many as possible, so that no one would ever see the blood, so we

could keep it our little secret.

When my mother started menopause, there was a lot of talk about sweat and arguments about who would buy the pads. My sister would laugh at my mother when the beads of sweat would accumulate above her lip and I would run and hug her and tell her not to listen to my sister, that sweat was just water after all and that I thought it made her glow. My mother would push me away, embarrassed that the entire room was aware of her fluctuating hormones.

My father started buying the pads. He said he could get them cheaper, and my mother didn't have time to worry about something she no longer used. So then began the years of cheap, bulky pads that you could see through leggings and would form bulges and troughs at the crease of the thigh. I would try to fix the positioning during class and others would stare as I pulled at the crotch of my pants.

Menopause made my mother tired. We used to hike to this dwindling waterfall in Monrovia, a hiking trail that I had come to know so well that I touted I could traverse it blind. I would try not to notice that my mother would tire earlier and earlier on the trail. Just like how, for months, I had tried not to notice how often she started to glow with sweat.

In college, my pads sat in a disorganized, crowded drawer in my

dorm room. They resided next to scrunched up papers from some class I hated, free condoms from the overly invested resident advisor, and a journal full of advice I had scrambled to memorize and transcribe from my new, and first ever, therapist. When my mother visited, she asked where I kept my pads, and I lied; I didn't want her to see the evidence of how I had changed, how I was no longer her perfect daughter.

Sometimes I think my mother is getting too old to be lied to. I always hated lying to her, but now when I see her, she always says she's been waiting to see me, and I feel guilty already. She wishes me happy birthday a month after my birthday because she says she hasn't seen me since, and sometimes I even find a small balloon floating in my room when I get home with bolded letters **H A P P Y B I R T H D A Y** around the circumference.

She told me we were going to the beach and when we got there, we both just stared at the ocean, letting the water tickle our feet. I stamped my foot into the sand and showed off my mighty footprint. When the water swept it away, I frowned, sighing that I wish it had stayed there forever. My mother looked at me with a smile and I saw the beads of sweat begin to accumulate above her lip, her glow returning.



FLYING SOLO | Liz Timple, MS1

SEMI-STORYTIME

Sumana Mahata, MS4

I'm no Polaris.
I'm no Orion's belt.

I'm one of those stars you only see once you hike
for a good while,
get away from civilization;
set up your tent in a little clearing between
the cliffside and the scraggly bushes;
step out into cool sandals,
gently lower yourself onto a freezing rock
(they get so chilly after the sun sets!);
extend your neck up towards the night sky,
clearing your head of everything else;
turn your lights off, and just...be.

For a good while.
Then you'll see me.

A NEW BEGINNING | Leo Miller, MS1

*At sunset, the shadows of the palm tree represent
the beginning of the night. A new beginning for
curiosity, and exploration of the unknown.*

ONWARDS, AND HOPEFULLY OUT

Anna Lussier, MS2

Caught in a series of mindless days
think it over, up and down.
Dissatisfied, do it anyways,
swim and do not drown.
Push forward on, and ever on.
It's there, just wait you'll see.
You tell yourself that you'll get there,
who you are's not who you'll be.



SQUIRREL CONDITION | Carol Girgiss, MS4

Provision: As people in medicine, it is often difficult for us to watch and wait, to do absolutely nothing and believe that it will be ok. Patience is a virtue, whereas gratitude and being still are challenges.

The squirrel may have toiled endlessly and yet it was provided for unexpectedly in a single instance. "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Matthew 6:34



VENICE | Vishesha Kakarla, MS3



YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH IT

Alan Aung, MS3

You lather your hands
In this liquid like gel
said to kill off 99.9% of...
What was it again? germs? bugs? bacteria?

Whatever, we walk into a room.
Our patient is sick. He's got some, no, lots of bugs — lung bugs, pee bugs, poop bugs
He asked us, "Why do you call them bugs?"
We reply by explaining the concepts of bacteria and viruses — see, they're not actually ants and flies,
only sometimes worms
You know, saying "bugs" just sounds nicer, cuter...more digestible.

He says, "You don't sugar coat my 'bugs'. I know I might pass."
I mean, yeah, we know too. I mean, we all know and we all do too.
But... you don't want to say It, we don't want to say It.
It doesn't like to be sugar coated.

Anyway, you coat your hands again
Kills 99.9% of germs!
but...it's certainly not effective against
It, Um...Clostridium Difficile.

In through another open door
Of a patient on a difficult path
On palliative care, DNR at It's door
He's asleep, family's at bedside.

Why even ask "how is he?"
Much more comfortable to just sit in silence
Lend a tissue, a comfortable presence.
It is a silent fellow.
It spends its time in sleep and delirious shadows.

Sometimes, I think that one purpose of working nights and long hours
Is so we can start to talk to It...
Amongst our own delirium.

Anyway, you return to your team, trying to formulate the perfect words to say,
But then sooner or later, It happens.

No code is called
Just a text from a nurse
That It has happened...

For the first time in your Life
you slowly march down the stairs
without a need to knock on Its door
without any desire to baptize your hands
a whole family holding each other in silence,
turning to look at you through leaking, shivering eyes.

You check a pulse, hold back a swollen tear
forgetting everything else for a moment
as a silent, still, sensationless silhouette surrounds you
and

You speak your first words to Death.

ALONE

Anonymous

I lie awake at night
Thinking about the better days
When talking to you felt right
Instead of what it feels like today

You don't ask me how I'm doing anymore
You don't tell me about your life either
I've never missed someone so much before
And to you it doesn't even matter

I tell you that I'm ok
When really I'm crying inside
I put a smile on my face
When all I want to do is hide

You don't include me anymore
You don't think twice about it either
I've never felt so alone before
And to you it doesn't even matter

I thought that we were in this together
I thought you wouldn't leave me behind
Somehow you made it out without me
Now I'm all alone losing my mind

You don't message me first anymore
You don't answer my messages either
I've never had a friend like you before
And to you it doesn't even matter

I'm sitting here all alone
Waiting for you to open your eyes
And in the meantime
I'm going to try to be alright



Untitled | Stephanie Lushniak, MS1

DR. WORLDWIDE

Dedicated to the Green AC and POM Group 17

Slash Queen, MS1

Unsuspecting medical students in POM Group 71 and the Emerald Academic Community guided blindfolded high school students balancing bouncy balls on spoons to brightly colored orange buckets filled with Halloween candy. Today was the Emerald Trees' Community Engagement event with local high school students. While the students were preoccupied with the game, Dr. José Hernandez, Emerald Academic Community director and emergency medicine physician, and Dr. Gregor Kutsenko, POM Group 71 facilitator and psychiatrist, quietly congregated next to the barren tree in the middle of the MET lawn. The two men stood side by side with a few feet separating them, not making eye contact, and instead, pensively gazing out into the scene before them.

"I was surprised to hear from you,

Gregor," said José. "You mentioned that you had something urgent to discuss, but did we really need to meet here?"

"This is the least conspicuous rendezvous point, José. We're being watched at all times," Gregor said gravely, his eyes scanning the windows of the MET, Biomedical Sciences Building, and Skaggs.

"I don't know what you're talking about," José replied, furrowing his brows.

"You can drop the act, Hernandez," Gregor said, with a slight smirk on his face.

José waved to the medical students, who were now standing in a circle with a new group of high school students, handing out paper slips with animal names to split up into pairs. Gregor, smiling like a proud uncle at his nephew's basketball game, snapped a few photos

with his iPhone of the medical students and high school students as they giggled and made noises associated with their assigned animal to find their partners for the game.

Gregor continued, "Yesterday, you were spotted scaling Hillcrest Medical Center by several civilians."

"Hospital elevators are really slow, Gregor," said José, "and I feel the need for speed."

Gregor scoffed, unable to stop himself from rolling his eyes

"For God's sake, are you trying to advertise to all of San Diego that you're an Impossible Mission Forces agent? You not only risk exposing the IMF but you're also putting us in a bind!" Gregor exclaimed.

"I had a mission in Geneva to get to after my shift at the ED. The IMF chopper was waiting for me on the roof—not that I need to explain myself. What does this even have to do with the CIA?" asked José.

"Do you really think that I'm the only one here?" said Gregor, turning his head



so that his eyes met Jose's briefly.

"You have other associates?" José paused, pondering for a few seconds. "The anatomists, Drs. Jacques and Pierre Kingsley. I've always suspected them."

Gregor nodded. "Forensics team. There are others as well."

"You know, I could say the same thing about you, Gregor. You haven't exactly been covert—I heard you were absent from your POM session last week and in the Philippines for a mission. Two weeks before that, in Greece and Peru. Last month, in New Delhi," José argued.

"They were going over the physical exam. What was I supposed to do there? I'm not a 'real doctor'," retorted Gregor, with a tinge of sarcasm.

"You don't think Joel is getting suspicious?" José inquired, tilting his head towards Dr. Joel Reyes, the other POM Group 71 facilitator, who was sitting under the tree, watching over the game with a bemused expression on his face and snacking on leftover Halloween candy.

Gregor chuckled, "No, he has no clue. But there's this one kid in my group—Mimah. She might be catching on."

"I still don't see how this has anything to do with me or the IMF," José said, clearly running out of patience.

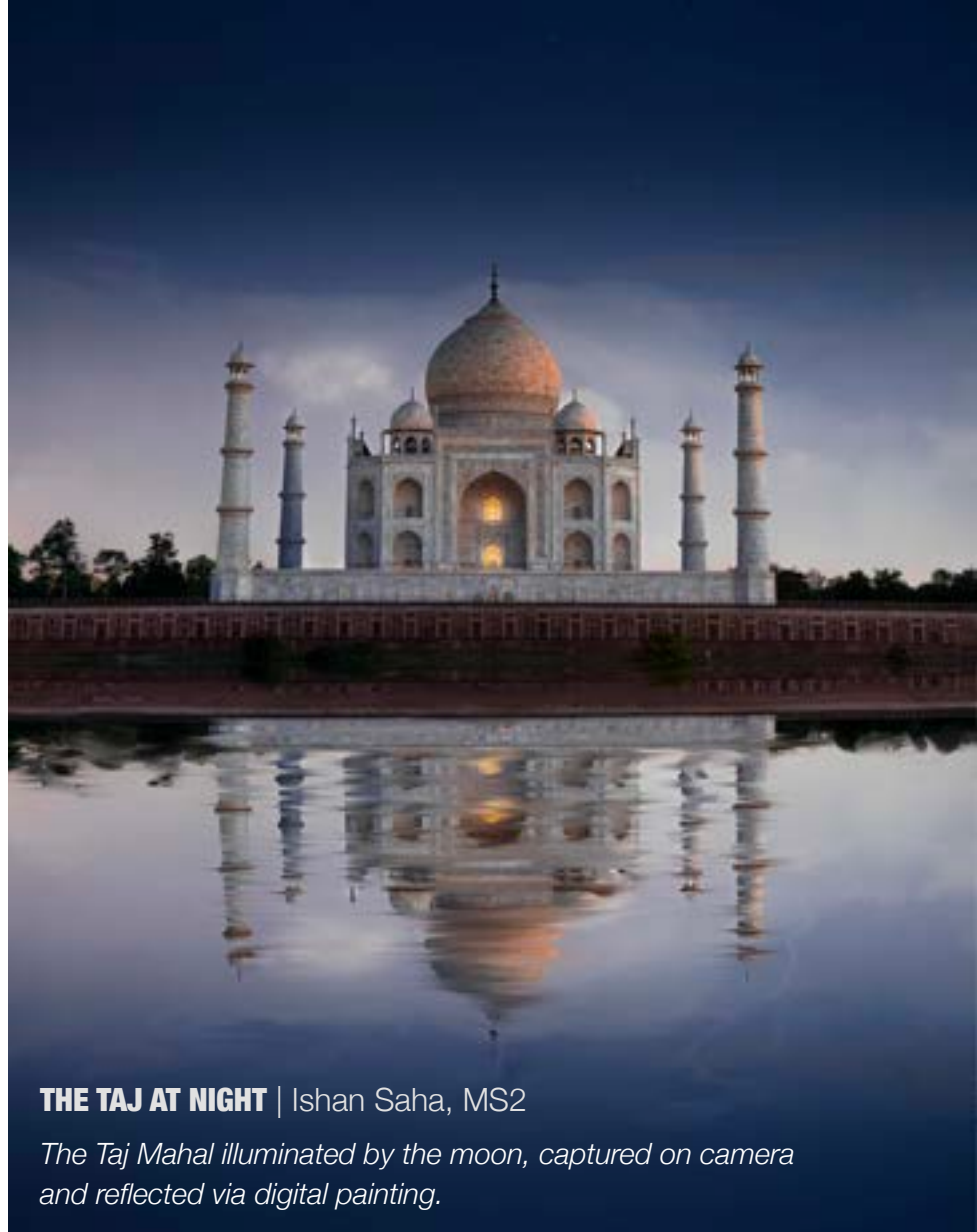
"There's a reason why the CIA has such a strong presence here, José. These students will not only become doctors, but also the leaders of our society. What's more important to humanity than their health, their ability to live? Educating these young minds, influencing them—there's a great deal of power in that," Gregor mused.

"So, the CIA is protecting them?" José asked.

Nodding, Gregor responded, "So can you, José, should you choose to accept the mission we are asking you to complete for us. There are outside forces vying for that power. From within our own government. Other nations. Private organizations. Institutions and individuals so powerful, you've never even heard of them."

José remained silent, his pale, blue eyes expressionless. After what seemed like a very long time, José turned to Gregor, now fully facing him.

"I accept," said José.



THE TAJ AT NIGHT | Ishan Saha, MS2

The Taj Mahal illuminated by the moon, captured on camera and reflected via digital painting.

SHEHRON KE RAAZ - COVER

Sumana Mahata, MS4

Shehron Ke Raaz (Secrets of the Cities)

By Prateek Kuhad – translated from questionable Hindi into English

The days go by
But tonight
It's just you and I
Together in time

When you speak
Every word is special
When you listen
Even the darkness breathes life

This song has changed
And so have our ways
Now you and I
Are the secrets of the cities

Through you
There is fire in my heart
Through you
There are feelings in my soul

Now you and I
Are the secrets of the cities
Now you and I
Are the secrets of the cities





“ARS LONGA”

Anna Lussier, MS2

Medical school is a crash course
In what can go wrong
In this life that can be
So tragically short,
Or so painfully, painfully long.

The books that speak
Of illness that grows like frost
From system to system
Irreverent to the human cost
Of life and love and moments lost

It's too much to carry
It's too much to know
How can I be merry
Knowing all that could go
So terribly, terribly wrong?

COPD and tuberculosis
HIV and apoptosis
Your skin can fall off
Your teeth can fall out
You can be born with bones made of glass.
Cancer lurks around the corner:
A shadowy punishment
for the sun-filled days of your past.

My sister has a decreased FEV1
And my brother has a spot in his lung
My partner has a family history of
Prostate cancer
Passed down from father to son.

My fish has a astigmatism
My cat has the croup
Fido has rheumatism
And there's blood in my poop.

Is it a hemorrhoid?
Is it amyloidosis?
Or is it familial adenomatous polyposis?

Do I need a proctologist
Or should I call an oncologist?
I've been on the waitlist for months
At my dog's rheumatologist

They gave me trimethoprim
Sulfamethoxazole
Is this rash Steven Johnson's
Or do I just need clotrimazole?

There's so much to learn
Too much to to remember
Clotting cascades to memorize
And cadavers to dismember.

I'll learn to catch gigantism
And drain my first priapism
And I'll diagnose every med student
With hypochondriacism.

It's hard to feel safe
Knowing what can go wrong
But med school is short

And the art is long.

A PINK MYSTERY

Austin Powell, MS1

A Haiku about Histology:

World beyond our own,

We bend light to gaze upon.

What the f*** is that?

MY BROTHER'S SILKY | Grace Fumari, MS3



SNAPSHOTS from virtual interviews:

VIRTUAL LUNCH



How do I eat without showing my mouth?

"Any questions?"

"Any questions?"



Which headphones sound & look best?

"Any questions?"



VIRTUAL SOCIAL

FRIENDS

"Any questions?"

IS THERE ENOUGH LIGHT?!?



"Any questions?"

"Any questions?"



Glasses = :(

Gauri

DISTANT STARS

Anna Lussier, MS2

Every bar has two drunks, three alcoholics, and a few more regulars who are neither. The latter are usually just lonely. A bar can be a community, and the bartender is its unwilling host. Someone who listens—someone who asks good questions and laughs at your jokes. A good bartender makes you feel known without needing to be known in return.

James Clark sat in the center barstool every Wednesday and sometimes on Thursdays. He drank the same beer, every time. Usually not more than two. He wasn't a drunk, nor an alcoholic. He had a good sense of humor and was sort-of wholesome somehow (unlike the aforementioned alcoholics). On Wednesday evenings, I would roll his coaster down the bar and have his Irish Red Ale waiting before he sat down.

He made a living doing something with computers that I never quite understood, but in his spare time, he was really into live-action lightsaber dueling. No joke. Like really into it. He started some sort of foundation for it. From the videos he showed me, it looked pretty legit. He invited me a few times, and I said I might come. It is the role of the bartender to be available (if not entirely accessible). But the bartop is one of few boundaries that exists in the industry and most of us hold it sacred, a wall against the insanity that we witness night-in and night-out. Long story short, I never went. I was working three jobs at the time, commuting between them and to community college for my pre-reqs— I had plenty of excuses, and I used them.

Thanks to our once-a-week meetings over the course of four years, I came to know James well. I knew the names of his family members, and his foibles on the dating apps. I knew his hobbies, his sense of humor, and his favorite movies. The bar is a strangely intimate part of life for some people, and the relationship bartenders form with their regulars is unique to the profession. Maybe not so different to the patient-physician relationship, if with an opposite net effect (an overall decrease in liver health).

Cut to July, 2018. The bar was busy and the weather was hot. It was a

Wednesday, and I had just changed out my keg of Irish Red. I kept an eye on his barstool, coaster at the ready, but he didn't show. Not that Wednesday or the next. A trip, perhaps? Vacation? He liked to travel.

A few weeks later, as I was getting set up for a busy evening shift, one of his friends came in. I'd seen them together enough times to know her name, and I called out. "Where's James? Haven't seen him in a while."

The bar is a strangely intimate part of life for some people, and the relationship bartenders form with their regulars is unique to the profession.

She came up to the bar, leaning uncharacteristically close across it. "I'm so sorry, but James passed away."

I was shocked. My stomach dropped and my throat went numb. My brain stumbled with the information, "What happened?" I probably shouldn't have asked. Not my place.

"I'm so sorry to tell you this but James took his life...they found him in his house when he didn't show up to work for a few days." Her face betrays her loss.

I mumble something out. "I'm so sorry. I didn't know." I didn't know—how did I not know? Did he seem sad last time I saw him, what did we talk about—?

Does it add to a tragedy if your bartender is among those who cry for you? I looked at his empty barstool and the keg I'd just changed. The Irish Red, a beer nobody else liked on account that it tastes like pennies. I'd known he was sad. Lonely even. But lots of people are lonely and sad at bars. I looked up his funeral but felt too awkward to attend. Who was I in the constellation of those who would miss him—a distant star, dim and far away in the shadow of those who had truly lost him.

People always ask me for my crazy bartending stories. They want tales of teachers dancing on tables, rowdy guests, and meeting famous people. I do have those stories, but they're not the ones I tell. It's not the picture I want to paint, because it isn't the reality. Instead, I tell them about the time a woman took drugs and pissed herself in her barstool and her husband carried her out of the bar over





his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. The time I had to kick someone out for hate speech. The time I was accused of stealing and my manager made me surrender my backpack and turn out my pockets. The constant sexual harassment that was so commonplace I never reported it, only to later learn that one of the culprits went on to repeatedly assault two of our servers before finally getting fired. The time when a regular I'd known and liked for four years was lonely and hurt enough to end his life at 46 years of age.

After five years as a bartender, I applied to medical school, and after two years as a medical student, I remain enduringly grateful to have left bartending behind me. I am tired and often stressed, but I feel a sense of gratitude and purpose that endures day in and day out, even on the busiest of days.

Today was one such busy day. I was late to the bus after taking a few extra minutes to add buttons to a little mask-attachment headband that I'd just finished knitting. It was a present for Rose, the kind, grandmotherly front-desk lady who works in the Professional Development Center, the one who reminds me of my mother, who I don't call enough.

We've had a few conversations, all of them lovely and grandmotherly and filled with warmth. Our last was during

It's strange when someone
at the periphery of your life
dies. It's sudden and
wrenching and so much
more sad than you might
think.

the Heme block. I was looking for a mask, and after giving me one, she kindly went upstairs and brought down a whole box for our group. I told her that she needn't have gone to the trouble. She just smiled. Her pleasure, she said. She asked me where I went to school, and where I was from. Then, we talked about my mother for some reason (I don't call her enough). As our conversation came to a close, I realized I didn't want it to. Would you like to get coffee sometime? She said she'd like that, and when would I like to go? We were in the middle of the Heme block. I was busy and tired and frustrated

by the many mandatory small groups and fast-paced lectures. I was doing research and trying to balance everything. I had plenty of excuses, so I used them.

It's been two weeks and Heme is over. I'm planning to stop by her desk on my way to class today, and I tuck the little knitted headband in my scrubs pocket. I considered adding a little card but decided it might be too much. I ran out of time this morning and tucked the little band away, no note. I peek at my Canvas on my way—what day would be good for coffee? But when I get downstairs, she isn't sitting in her usual place. Oh well, I tell myself. She'll probably want to chat for a bit anyhow, better to try again on my way out. I try again on my way out, but she still isn't there. I ask the other woman sitting there, "is Rose out today? Will she be in again sometime soon?" I pull the little headband from my pocket, planning to leave it there for her.

The woman puts down the paper she was holding and looks up from the computer. There is a pause. "I'm sorry to tell you this," she says, "but Rose passed away unexpectedly about a week ago."

As I sit there clutching the little knitted band with its mismatched buttons, she tells me, "She didn't come into work one day, so they called someone to do a home visit. She was found in her home. Natural causes." She gives me what might be a sympathetic smile. My brain stumbles and I say something like, "I was supposed to meet her for coffee." This beautiful woman—grandmotherly, kind, with her warm brown eyes and soft gray curls. Her kindness and reassuring presence a balm in the cold austerity of the basement professional development center. From the first time I spoke to her, she seemed like someone I wanted to know.

I wonder if I was really too busy for that coffee. What would have happened if I'd gone to the lightsaber duel with James? If I had made the time. A conversation? A story shared? It's strange when someone at the periphery of your life dies. It's sudden and wrenching and so much more sad than you might think. James—as much a fixture of my bar as the taps. An empty middle bar stool for a few weeks and then the news, delivered by a friend. Rose—her headband in my hand, a friendship never realized and a history I'll never know.

MEJILLONES

Ryan Miller, MS2

i didn't like mussels until
you filled your pockets with them
like a kid

and couldn't feel the cuts
on your feet because the
water was so cold

and boiled them in seawater
over wood
their shells still ornamented
with barnacles and other colors

and I still didn't like them. But
then i took a f***ing look
Around.



NEVER USE ALONE

Shelby Warren, MS3.5

F*** you, fentanyl sprinkler!
Yes, I am mad.
Why did you almost kill my cousin?
Why did you sneak it in her hands?

Thank God for CPR.
Thank God she wasn't alone.
Thank God for Narcan.
Your sick act has been postponed.



MS1

Ryan Miller, MS2

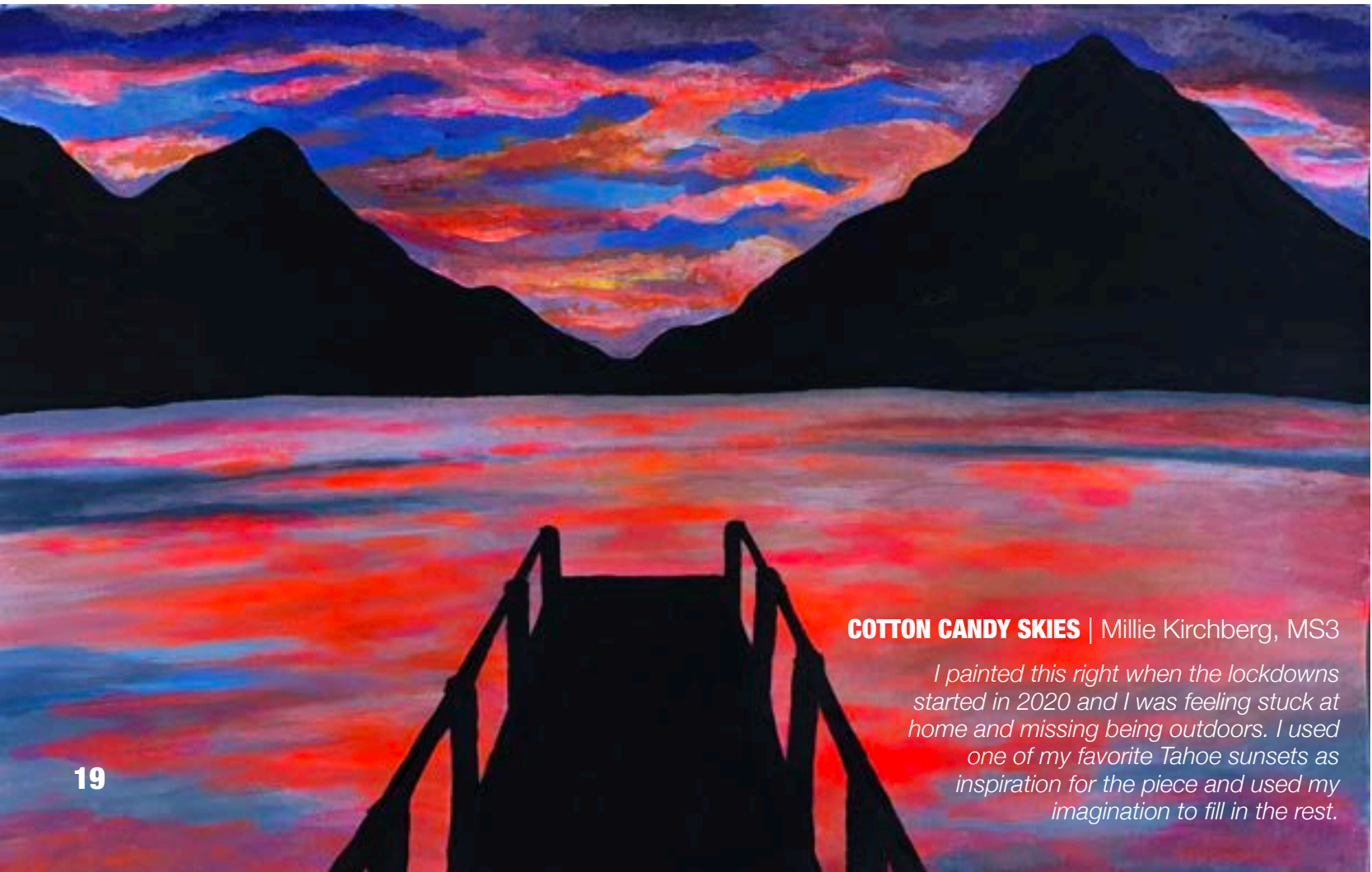
I wasn't looking for anything
when we found that coastline.

Or when I looked into a lavender sky
reflecting on the greens and life we saw
in the tide pools under it.

Or when an otherwise dead sky
glittered
with the oldest kind of light,
and the biggest one fell so loudly
that it unzipped the darkness.

Or when you looked, from over the fire,
like you were here
and nowhere
else.

I wasn't looking for anything
and yet.



COTTON CANDY SKIES | Millie Kirchberg, MS3

I painted this right when the lockdowns started in 2020 and I was feeling stuck at home and missing being outdoors. I used one of my favorite Tahoe sunsets as inspiration for the piece and used my imagination to fill in the rest.

A TALE OF REMEMBRANCE

Leo Meller, MS1

A young teenager waved goodbye to his childhood friends,
Tears in his eyes.

Leaving behind his hometown of fifteen years,
Where would the next destination be?

He traveled seven thousand miles across the Pacific Ocean,
To a whole new beginning.
There was cultural shock,
There was discrimination,
But he persevered.

Under the Hippocratic Oath, he finally donned his white coat.

He remembered his grandpa who passed away from stroke in the rural parts of China,

He remembered his suffering family unable to afford medications,

He remembered facing inaccessible healthcare,

He remembered who he was.

He is a first-generation Chinese immigrant who moved to the US when he was fifteen.

He is a son, a pillar of support for his family,

An advocate for his patients,

That young teenager was me.



“I AM MEANT TO BE HERE” - THE LIFE OF A THIRD YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

Visesha Kakarla, MS3

“I am a confident, beautiful, capable woman. I am meant to be here.” I sit in my rumbling car in the parking lot in the early hours of the morning. I listened to the Harry Styles album on the way here, the same one I listen to every morning. The soft beats always awaken my sleepy conscience. The morning dew is still sliding off the windows of my car. The drive to the hospital was short and uneventful this morning, except for the usual death-defying lane changes. As I walk up to the hospital, I savor the last glimpses of the warm glow of the sun, peeking out over the horizon. I pray that my patients will be on the highest floors so I can savor their view later in the day when we round.

That morning affirmation is essential. The second I step into the building, my confidence is no longer a guarantee. One mistake and the precarious foundation that I have built for myself could collapse. I take to my computer, I can feel the bags under my eyes start to sink further into my cheeks. I am tachypneic – I challenged myself to take the stairs up to the workroom because I scorned my body in the mirror this morning. The free lunches have made a home on my growing curves.

I shed a sigh of relief when I go in to see that my patient is already awake at 6:30am. It pains me to wake them up to ask a seemingly pointless question - did you poop today?

I feel the pit in my throat as we start to round. I am confident I went through all of the overnight events, labs, and imaging, but it never feels like enough. What if they ask me a question that I do not know the answer to?

I have learned to become comfortable with being wrong; it is not an unfamiliar feeling. I have learned that it is best to leave my ego back at home.

I have always been really hard on myself. It feels as though I have commissioned a magnifying glass to scrutinize my every thought, my every sentence, my every incorrect answer. It does not help that I have developed the looming fear that every person I interact with takes over that magnifying glass for a second, and they can see with clarity that I often do not have the right answers to their questions. I have to remind myself that they too do not always have the answers. We are learning and growing together.

I love to write. If I could, I would leave behind a novel in the progress note – document the stories that my patients tell me and all of their preferences. Their favorite movies, the names of their children, their usual omelet toppings. I always admire their ability to find ways to find joy, even in their darkest of times.

As the afternoon moves along, I wonder what my friends around the hospital are doing. I think about my friends a lot. My dear friends, I miss you all deeply. I miss the laughs, the spontaneous plans, the warmth of sharing space with you all.

I yearn for the moments that we have shared together.

“Go home.”

Music to a medical student’s ears. No matter how much we love what we do, there is nothing better than the feeling of shedding off the worries of the hospital.

I belt out the lyrics to the remainder of the Harry Styles album on the drive home. The drive is a time for overthinking - I preoccupy myself with how I performed today, as I repress the pain of witnessing a wide spectrum of human suffering.

Shower, eat, study, then sleep. The evening is simple.

As I drift off to sleep, I reflect on the day. While there are always moments of self-doubt, I think back to where I was a few months ago before starting my clinical rotations. I was merely a vessel for fragmented facts, strewn around the crevices of my brain with no real association. Now, these facts have coalesced into the story of medicine – the ever-evolving story in which we, as medical students, have the privilege of developing by learning from our patients, our mentors, our peers. It is challenging, but I am happy. I am meant to be here.

seventeen minus five is twelve

Jimmy Yu, MS3

you study the scars on her wrists hidden
most days by oversized sweaters like
children playing hide and seek. is it that
we give up too fast, or are we too
impatient? send me to the inpatient
ward. she says. or whispers, underneath
her breath. take a breath, you say.
you're only seventeen. seventeen when
you ran away from home. ten more than
the lines that trace around her wrists.
nine-one-one, eight lives less than her
cat named seven, six, five, four, three,
two, one bullet is all it takes. or took.
that rattled her father's skull like her
favorite rattle when she was four. what
are you here for? i don't know, help?
help me. help you as you lay there
lifeless with twenty-four pills in your
stomach, two times the age when she
walked into your office, and it becomes
too much to stomach.



WINDJAMMER | Anna Lussier, MS2

The Windjammer Angelique, sliding into anchorage at one of Downeast Maine's many hidden gems: an annual music festival held on an island that is only accessible by boat.

SEASON OF LIFE | Leo Meller, MS1

Generations of outdoor enthusiasts have admired the beauty of Zion canyon. Such are the seasons of life: the departure and return of passion and attachment.

ALLEZ, ALLEZ!

Leo Meller, MS1

Allez, Allez!

Allez, Allez!

Come on, Come on!

Climbing is as physical as it is mental.

Medicine is as mental as it is physical.

There will be times when you fall,

There will be times when you lack progression.

In times of adversity,

Climb on, my friends.

A climber is as strong as he is mentally.

Medicine is as triumphant as it perseveres.

Allez, Allez!



HIGH NOON 2 | Jeffrey Hendel, MS4

© Jeffrey Hendel

it rained on lover's lane

Jimmy Yu, MS3

you danced with me in the rain
when we no longer could tell
raindrops from tears
how our hair stuck to our faces
like the glue that kept us together all those years
as puddles grew to oceans
we splashed barefoot
until our skins would wrinkle
like how i imagined us
fifty years
down this road
where we danced in the rain

HIGH NOON 1 | Jeffrey Hendel, MS4

Antelope Canyon at midday is a surreal experience as the light transforms the sandstone around you, creating a dynamic experience of unimaginable beauty.

LOCH LOMOND

Ryan Miller, MS2

You actually looked like you were crying
even though you said you only might.
That this was what we'd remember
someday
when we are older.

It felt soft now, memory-like,
and I was moved already. Really
moved,
like the salt tides of the sea loch
or the small birds that flowed in wind.

Or moved like your hand
to a lemon muffin overflowing and
dusted.
And I could imagine being older
and remembering you.

But I've heard there's another peak in Scotland
that dares itself even more skyward.
And I would ride trains with you until
my end if it meant feeling the peat
under our feet again.



HEART WAVES - PART 1

Jasmine Arora, MS1

The warmth floods inside
Demanding to be felt
Lighting my body on fire
Coaxing my heart to melt

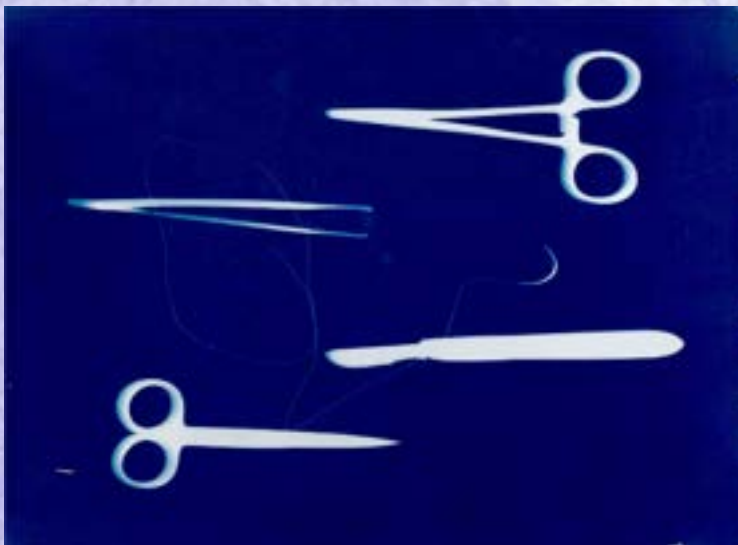
My heart smiles at my naïveté
It's already aware of my emotions
It's my brain that resists
Keeping up a barricade against the ocean

But the waves are relentless
They persistently break on the shores of my mind
As cyclic and natural as can be
The dichotomy of my brain and heart fading with time

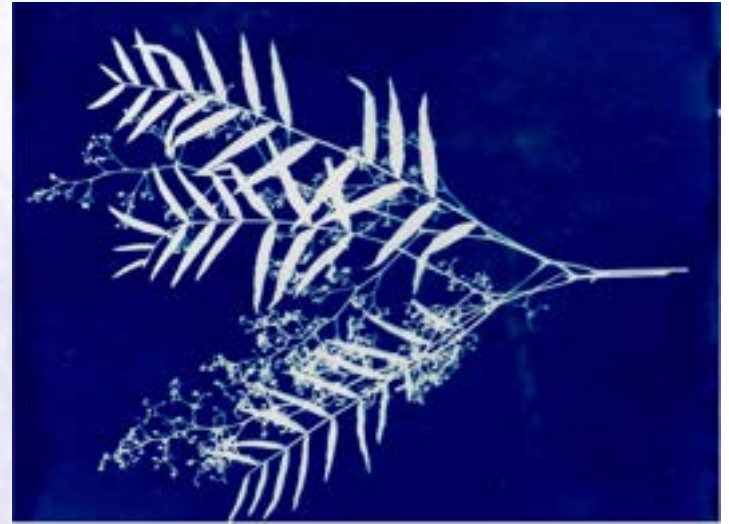
The acceptance is a bittersweet victory
The exhilaration reverberating within the walls of my brain
But it brings a dull pounding with it
The guilt of my love, I can't sustain

Suddenly I'm drowning
Trying to come up for air
And the waves my heart sent me
Are forces of destruction, ones that will tear

My brain screams for freedom, for peace
But my heart mercilessly charges on
The ancient wisdom it seems to carry
Urging me to realize the message it's been sending all along



MISE EN PLACE | Katja Lazar, MS3



I've lived my life yielding to the expectations of others
But this is a decision that I and only I can make
Perhaps this is how I enter the gates of autonomy
The beginning of a lifetime of learning and mistakes

But that's what life is
and this freedom brings so much more
A life teeming with happiness and bliss
Unapologetically myself, raw to the core

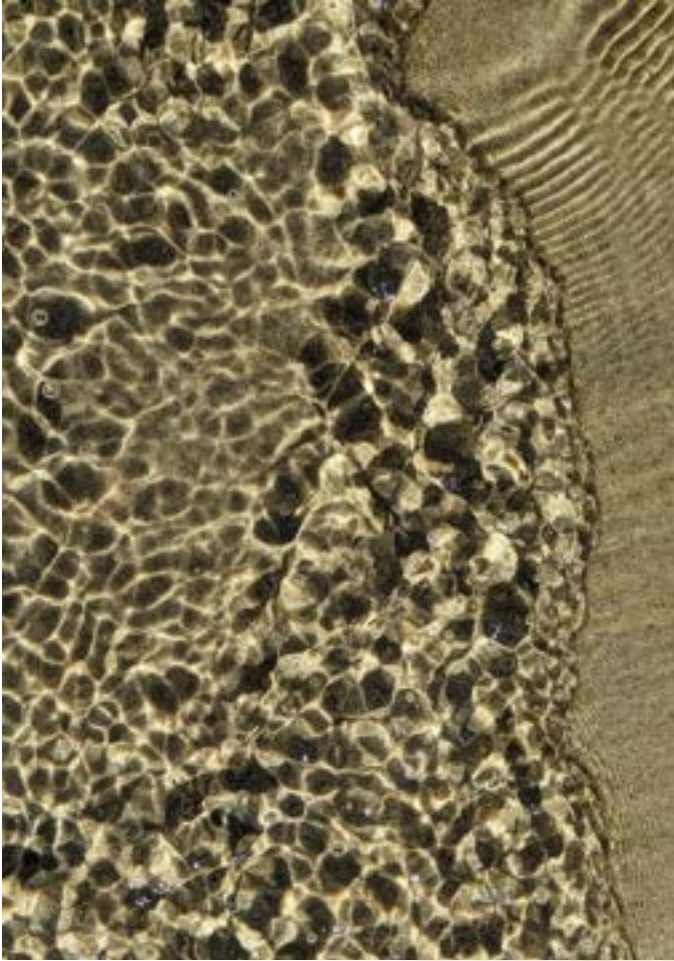
With this realization
my heart finds peace
I understand that life requires risk
And now the waves feel like a release

As I float in this water
So still and so calm
I smile at the friendship and memories
Can't help but feel charmed

Despite the unfortunate timing
I am so grateful to have found
An amazing incredible person
I'm honored to have gotten to know

My heart tells me
he is meant to be in my life
In some shape or form
A serendipitous find

The sadness remains
At the challenge I still have to overcome
But I've come to accept this experience
As I lie in the water, embracing the warm, warm sun



MEETING THE SHORE - PART 2

Jasmine Arora, MS1

Hollow inside
it's a feeling I can't escape
I replay certain memories in my head
Trying to make sense of it, is it fate?

His smile, his eyes
that were mine just a week ago
Now have a distance
And my heart can't seem to let go

I acknowledge my own fault
in more ways than one
It's hard for me to go after what I want
And now the damage has been done

And yet somewhere inside
i don't fully blame myself
It took me time to decide what I wanted
Because I had years of history to unshelve

But when I told him my truth
Letting him into the most vulnerable parts
He let go of us with an "I'm sorry"
I listened but, ironically, my heart clung to Vincent's stars

He let go of us for someone
he met 5 days ago
So how much could he have liked me?
I felt the waves crashing - my heart surrendering to the blow

Maybe he knew himself well
He said he was worried he only likes the chase
But I saw far more in him
It could have been distorted through that rose-tinted gaze

My heart still loves him for who he is
But realizing that 5 days was all it took
It's a painful recognition
But, with time, it'll also let me close our story, our book

He will always be a piece of me
Someone I would still do anything for
But for now it's time to say goodbye
The waves hum with emotion, as they crash on the pebbled shore



I stare blankly at the monitor, taking slow, shaky breaths as my heart thumps furiously

I feel the warmth of the spotlight on my skin

I hesitate for a few beats before I knock, knock and open the door

I sashay onto the stage, hips swinging

Two of my classmates are awkwardly propped up onto a hospital bed—watching me, judging me

I search through the crowd of thousands screaming my name

I tug on my unfamiliar white coat, feeling like a kid wearing their parents' clothes

A shimmering, ivory bodysuit hugs my curves

I fumble with my stethoscope, forgetting which way it goes into my ears

I hold the microphone to my lips as if it is an extension of my voice

I stutter as I introduce myself to the standardized patient

My honeyed vibrato echoes throughout the arena

“Hello, I’m a first year medical student, my name is B—”

I am Future-Dr. Sasha Fierce.

SULFUR SPRINGS | Vasan Jagadeesh, MS1





LOOMY TUNES |
Samhita Palakodeti, MS4

This picture was taken at Oriental Carpet School in Cairo. They gave us an impressive demonstration on how to make carpets out of wool, cotton, and silk. The youngest students we met were probably around 10 years old!

HUMP DAY | Samhita Palakodeti, MS4

I don't know her actual name but she looks like Camille the Camel to me. We were talking pictures of the Pyramids of Giza and she came right up to us, posing like the queen she is.



HALF DOME | Millie Kirchberg, MS2

This photo was taken during sunset and showed the beautiful Alpenglow on Half Dome. I've grown up camping in Yosemite with my family each year and Half Dome is one of the most incredible views I've seen.

NOTIONS OF A NATUNI

*Natuni - granddaughter in Odia
Yasoda Satpathy, MS1

Death and sickness are familiar to us, you see enough
Even in your first year
At first, you are scared, hesitant—who was this person, our donor?
Why is his skin so cold, is it normal to cry?
Then it becomes normal
the smell of formaldehyde, the stiff limbs, the skeletal bodies, the sound of ribs splitting, a saw for sternums
the shivering
Holding a giant heart, you
approach it all with excitement?
Wouldn't my donor want me to learn as much as I can?

Then, my Grandma passed away
right after my exam, on my way home.
I'll never forget my mother's words:
How could she be gone?
Memories whirled by me:
Spending summer days at her house, listening to her recount travels to different countries;
Making her flower garlands - I was never fast enough to match her fingers,
Long acrylics zipping through the air, faster than the eye could see!
I couldn't see her before she was cremated, but I remembered her face, her smile, her
elegance, her laughter
How long before I would forget her voice?
When she would be just another sick person I knew - one in a long list?

At the end of first quarter, anatomy had been my favorite
Yet the sounds and smells were now too close to home

As I went to a new body,
I wondered - whose grandma was I working on? whose intestines did I hold in my hands?
did they get to say goodbye to their grandchildren? did they suffer when they went?
Then I saw her
long nails just like my Grandma's, skin sticking to bones, face covered and
I wanted to run
I could only see my Grandma on that table

During winter break, I saw my Grandpa;
Their house still looked the same
Filled with ornate treasures, spotless, pure
"Are you married?" someone had asked my Grandpa recently. Obviously yes
but wait - we listened for her elegant dress, swishing gently - she isn't here anymore.
Yet every ornament stayed the same.

Death and sickness will be part of my life,
But I now see my Grandma in all the bodies I work with;
Each has a unique story,
Family members who loved it, and
Now, a medical student who hopes to make them proud
I still enjoy anatomy, but now I see her
Lovingly embracing me,
whispering affirmations in my ears.
She is there with me, I carry her in my memory
And hope I can make her and Grandpa proud throughout these years.

Special thanks to Hieu Nguyen for his advice.

MY GRANDFATHER CANNOT HEAR ME

Gauri Shastri, MS4

My grandfather cannot hear me
as I yell my greetings through video call.
Shaky hands raise the phone to his ear and
I stare at the distorted whorls of skin,
stubborn tufts of wiry gray-white hair framing
the familiar absence of his plastic hearing aid.

My grandfather cannot hear me
as I explain, yes, I am eating well
and even cooked sambar today (well, last month,
in an Instant Pot and I forgot tamarind and put
too much dhal and it remains condemned as
a yellow block of shame in the freezer)

My grandfather cannot hear me
as I explain, yes, I am focusing on my studies
and taking care of patients (and I still have
9280 UWorld questions left and thought
the pancreas was the omentum in
the OR and no one can pronounce my name)

My grandfather does hear me
when I tell him I am glad he is better, asks me
what he is to do with my "gladness," American
platitudes grating on his wretched ears (and
I wonder if he will remember this in his
delirium, lying weakened by COVID in the
rented blue hospital bed in the middle of his living room)

On our next video call, my aunt holds the phone aloft as
my grandfather tells me he is proud of me.

I tell him I am glad,
and wince.

NAMESAKE | Sid Machiraju, MS3.5

Siddharth—the name I share with Buddha—has always been a source of inspiration in everything that I do and a serves as a reminder to live with patience, intention, and compassion. It was my final project for the SURG 232 elective!



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Shreya Banerjee, MS3

A 65 year old woman was admitted to the hospital 5 days ago with altered mental status

It's my first day

I read the entire chart, I know what the consultants thought

I pored through UptoDate, I checked for asterixis

I rattle off the numbers on rounds

"Well, what's your plan for today?"

I don't know, I'm new

Well, I have a plan, I guess?

I should always state a plan, even if it's wrong

That's how we learn

The plan was definitely wrong

Maybe I'll have the answer next time

An 8 year old boy is brought to the hospital by his parent

They were in the ED all night, finally got a room to sleep

"Good morning! I'm the med student helping take care of you, any questions so far?"

Both of them look miserable

Frustrated, sleepy eyes, annoyed I woke them up at 6:30 am

"Hey buddy, could you sit up for me so I can listen to your heart and lungs?"

He won't talk to me but his body language is a clear no

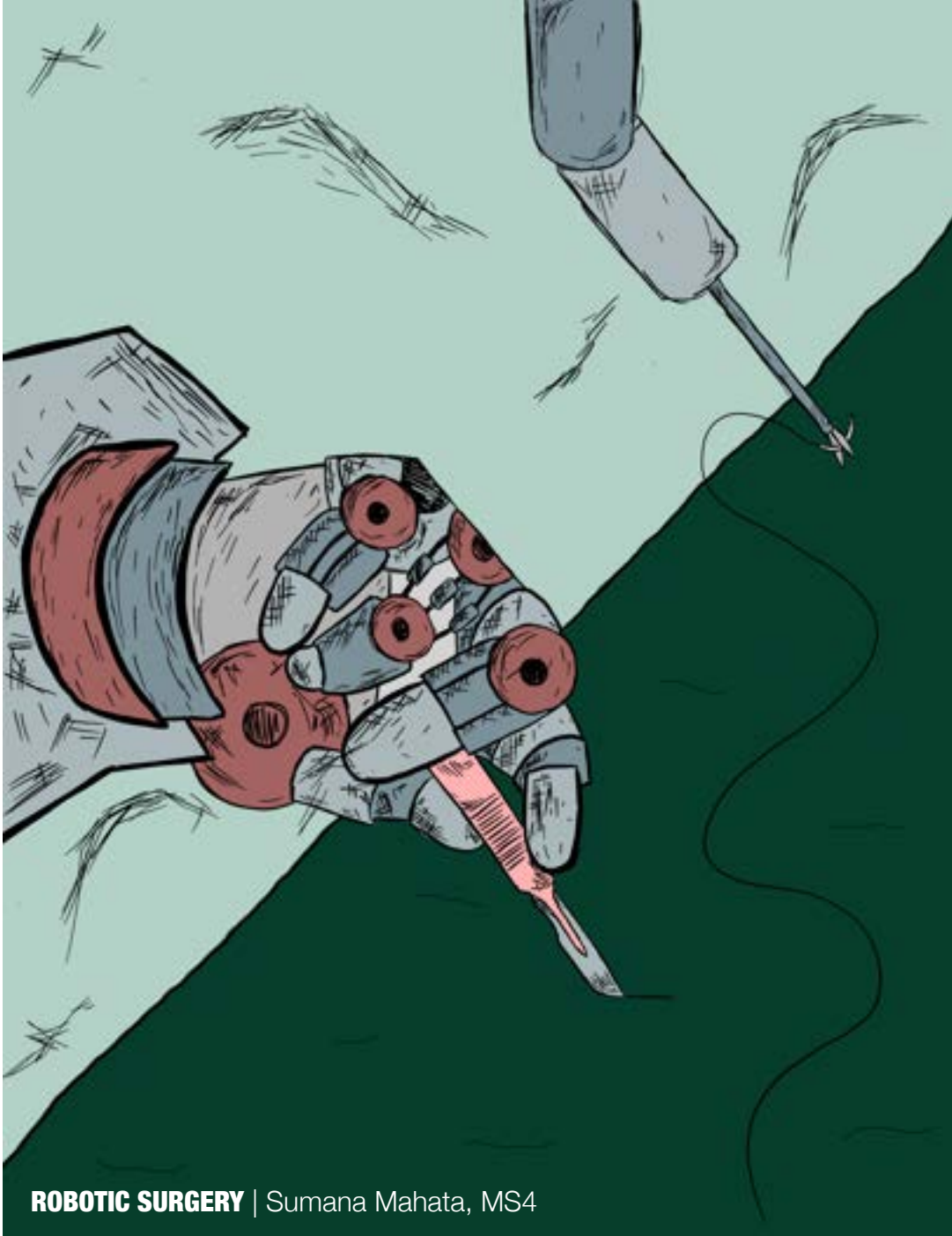
"I love your pajamas! What's your favorite Pokemon?"

He notices my Eevee pin

His favorite is Bulbasaur

He lets me listen to his heart and asks me a question I can answer for once

"My favorite is Espeon!"



ROBOTIC SURGERY | Sumana Mahata, MS4

A 30-something year old man is brought to the trauma bay by EMS
EMS said they found him in an alley near a parking garage
No one knows anything about him
The team crowds into the OR, I'm just praying I'm not in anyone's way
What could we even do for him?
Time of death: 12:06 AM
Does he have loved ones? Is anyone looking for him?
"Are you okay? That's a hard thing to see as a medical student."
Am I okay? Can't find that answer in UWorld
Every resident on call that night checks on me, more than once
But even the seventh time I'm asked, I'm not sure

There are so many questions
So many patients
So much to learn
There are so few answers

WARM WINTERS

Jasmine Arora, MS1

That twinkle of golden string lights
that line the downtown streets.
That smell of something warm, cozy, and just the right amount of sweet.
That feeling of joy bubbling up to the rim.
That Christmas time coziness lasted everyday when I was dating him.

The feeling of his hands wrapped around mine.
The way his thumb absentmindedly caresses my skin - every crease, every line.
It takes me somewhere safe and full of love.
In that single moment when his hands fit mine like a glove.

The way he hums when he gets a little bit nervous.
He tries but I can sense his discomfort rising to the surface.
It's my cue to pause, look into his eyes, breathe with him a few seconds more.
Tell him I'll always be there for him, just as he's done for me countless times before.

That's what made us special, not that we were always perfect.
But that when there were issues, we worked as a team, because we knew we were worth it.
Best friends first, lovers as a surprise.
We chose to be there for one another, through the lows and the highs.

It was a simple but beautiful love, a hallmark Christmas movie.
The way he'd hold my head softly, he could almost see through me.
We were two kids together, giddy just to be in each other's presence.
Frozen in time together, every moment a present.

THE CIRCLE OF SAN RAMON | Vasan Jagadeesh, MS1



ANNIE | Stephanie Lushniak, MS1

They say you can meet the right person at the wrong time.
Maybe we just met too young, but we sure as heck tried.
I imagined us growing old together, taking morning walks by the beach.
I hope it still happens, like we had always believed.

I called him a grandpa, because he never wanted to go out.
I adored my little old man, but eventually it wore me down.
Our small differences that always seemed so surmountable,
Started to pile, until they were no longer unaccountable.

So here I stand on a December morning.
It's Christmas time but without him, it's just winter and storming.
The fairy lights twinkle a little dimmer.
And the holiday cheer that had once surrounded my life feels like an empty echo—
the wispy smoke after the candle flicker.

I don't know where we'll go from here.
Our love still washes over us, that much is clear.
But can we move past the damage and the hurt?
All the disloyalty I've tried to forgive, every scar, every burn?

Even the happiest memories are sometimes tarnished with pain.
Will I ever feel the same love again?
But when I close my eyes and think of the love we have.
It's impossible for me to walk away, I can't.

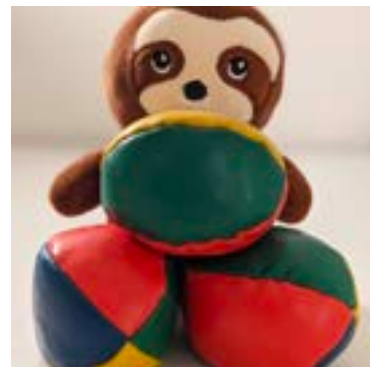
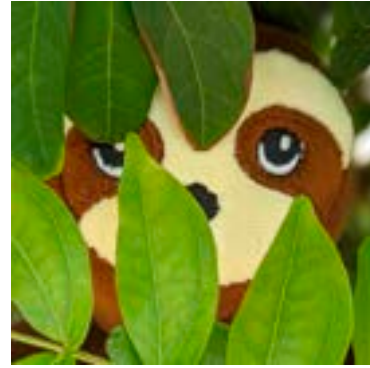
So here we stand, time frozen still
My best friend, my confidante, but all this distance we need to fill.
Once again, I close my eyes and feel his thumbs trace my skin.
I surrender to the Christmas warmth that glows when I'm dating him.



DUSTBATH | Anjana Baradwaj, MS1

HUG OFTEN | Shelby Warren, MS3.5





A DAY IN THE LIFE | Pani, MS4

NAPTIME

Pani, MS4

Peaceful sloth, in the trees he rests
Adorable, with fur so soft and blessed
Never hurrying, he takes his time
In a world of rush, his pace sublime

THE MIRACLES BEFORE US

A Reflection on the Hope of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

Heidi Banh, MS3.5

Content warning: This poem alludes to trauma and suicidal ideation.

What if we valued every child like the miracle they are
Marveled at how with every beat of their heart
A million neural connections are being made
Marveled at how they shine, how they give
Simply by being and existing as they have
Since the first day they were brought into this life?

What if we strove always to be curious to understand
How every youth navigates their world, their challenges
In the only ways they know how, and can teach us,
Whether through expressing, masking, or repressing?
And what if we then served as the gentle wind behind their sails
Just long enough to steer them towards the sun?

If youth are resilient enough to endure trauma and loss
Brave enough to question living and choose to live
And still, hopeful enough to seek self-compassion, day after day
Then let us be bold enough to rise up to meet them with acceptance
To be prepared to listen and extend a hand, at their readiness
And to challenge the roots of stigma and systems of oppression
That threaten to allow youth to believe that they are any less than miracles.

What if we treasured every child like the miracle they are
And nurtured them, walked with them until they believed this truth?
Listening will always give us the answer
Acceptance is how youth will know that mental illness can't shatter
Empathy is how generations can grow, together
And love is how children will know they matter.

EARTH'S SPINE | Timothy Heintz, MS3

