

# HIPPOCRENE

Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis | 2019

literary & visual arts

A photograph of two pink flamingos standing in shallow, rippling water. The flamingo in the foreground is facing right, while the one behind it is facing left. The water reflects the birds and the sky. In the background, there is a vast, flat landscape with distant, hazy mountains under a clear blue sky.



**HIPPOCRENE** is an arts magazine by and for the students, staff, and faculty of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis (WUSM). We accept submissions year-round and publish each spring. Issues are freely available to all current medical students, graduate students in the Division of Biology and Biomedical Sciences (DBBS), and medical school and DBBS faculty.

Download an electronic version of this issue, browse past issues, and learn more about our organization as well as local arts events at [hippocrene.wustl.edu](http://hippocrene.wustl.edu). Please send submissions, comments, and questions to [litmag.wustl@gmail.com](mailto:litmag.wustl@gmail.com).

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With special thanks to Andy Wiegert

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**ANNUAL ART SHOW.** Displaying visual arts created by students, staff, and faculty of the School of Medicine in the atrium of the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center.

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**WINTER CAM CONCERT.** An annual medical campus-wide concert held in January for musicians to perform in the medical school community.

For more information, visit us online at [artscomm.wustl.edu](http://artscomm.wustl.edu).



**Hip•po•crene**, noun

*hippos* 'horse' + *krene* 'fountain'

- 1) A fountain on Mount Helicon, fabled to have burst forth when Pegasus stamped his hoof; believed to be a source of poetic inspiration
- 2) The literary magazine of Washington University School of Medicine



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# Caldera

The peaks of Mt. Mazama were thought the highest.  
Pride pierced where heaven met horizon – defiant, it seemed  
to the peoples that lived in its shadow and shelter.  
Immune to the cycles of flesh that measure lesser things:  
Birth, death, repeat.  
Same ridges lie now beneath sediment blankets, an ocean of lake,  
and the jagged spires that survived overlook their reflections  
with the fading gaze of Ozymandias.

Stillness holds the waters where once eruption.  
Reflective, silent from surface to unknown depths - a clasped-hand monk.  
Or perhaps a monument to the Dead, sans epitaphs, to  
the mother deer with faun still slick from birth;  
the heavy mantle of ancient Alpine;  
the old, young, ill of the Klamath who could not run in time  
to witness the sky god Skell battle the Underworld:  
futile war with alien earth heaving sulfur  
like distant Christendom renderings of Hell.

We too stand tall, you and I,  
until we are felled by unseen gods – pagan, biblical, vengeful.  
Or perhaps by just nature, chaos, uncaring skies  
that break the patterns, habits, flaws in genetic chains  
where sameness is fragility, blood the cost of growth.  
A mountain must be broken, pulled outside in,  
for its innards to fill with things that spew toxic  
or with still silent waters that hold our fragments  
in memoriam to once what was us.

Ellie Taylor  
Program in Occupational Therapy



Water and Light 1 | Kathryn Louise Pagano Biesanz, Program in Occupational Therapy





Café | J.R. Peacock, WUMS

## For you

When E.T. phoned home, was it cancer?  
(Spoiler alert: it was indeed cancer).

Insulin – Glucagon – Insolent – Paragon.  
What's a pancreas good for anyway? Cancer.

Let's play some takhte<sup>1</sup>, for old times' sake. Maybe if  
You can beat me, you can outsmart agha<sup>2</sup> cancer?

Beep. (Stable). Beep. (Stable). If only this  
Monotone could last forever, cancer.

Remember that bakery in Tabriz?<sup>3</sup> Akh joon.<sup>4</sup>  
That barbari<sup>5</sup> could cure you of this cancer.

Tangled IV lines don't befit you, baba.<sup>6</sup> They bind  
You. I wish you'd be freed from that prison: cancer.

Will the niloofar<sup>7</sup> you planted still grow  
Without you? Roots spreading like a cancer.

We buried my fish in the backyard together.  
Please don't let me bury you, bury your cancer.

Your breath and my Farsi are not so different:  
I'm watching both fade away, now half past cancer.

I'm sorry all I could muster was "Good night,"  
Before you were taken from me – by cancer.

You gave me a name like a poem: Ghaznavi.  
So I wrote this poem for you, not cancer. You.

Cyrus Ghaznavi, WUMS

- 
- 1 Backgammon
  - 2 The Farsi equivalent of Mr.
  - 3 A city in Iran
  - 4 You might say akh joon when you are drooling over food  
that is yet to be eaten
  - 5 A type of bread common in Persian bakeries
  - 6 Farsi equivalent of "dad"
  - 7 The Farsi word for Morning Glories





Vulture Looking For Breakfast | Sally Vogt, DBBS Graduate Student Coordinator





Frosted | Stephanie Tin, WUMS



Yellow Skin | Jane Wang, WUMS





Devon Rex | James Lucas, DBBS

## Middle School Mistakes

After Ian died, I felt guilty for a whole week.

My first thought upon hearing the news was, “Oh. Weird. He wasn’t very nice to me in middle school.”

My second thought was, “Dude! You’re not supposed to speak ill of the dead. You’re probably not supposed to think ill of them either.”

But that was all I remembered about him. We met in sixth-grade social studies and he called me “fat” and “ugly”. We shared literature classes and marching band competitions and jazz band performances from then until high school graduation, casually ignoring each other’s presence all along the way. I didn’t remember anything he said or did, only that he was there.

After Ian died, I didn’t cry over him until three months later.

That was when I came across a Facebook post by his mom. From that post, I learned Ian had expressed the desire to spend his life helping others. I learned he had been an organ donor and his liver, heart, and kidneys lived on in the bodies of other people. In his mother’s words, he had been a “hero.”

I found this new information unsettling; the Ian in that post was totally incongruent with the Ian in my head. My Ian would never have been an organ donor. My Ian was not helpful. My Ian was not a “hero.” My Ian was not very nice.

But was anyone very nice in middle school? Were you?

If you had died instead of him, what would have been his first thought?

There is only one answer.

Because back in middle school, when he spat at me —  
I spat back.

Sharon Abada, WUMS









Art on Art Hill | Ziheng Xu, WUSM



## An Example of Atrial Fibrillation Due to Liver Failure

Patient reports feeling that “the end” is near.  
Why the scare quotes, I wonder as I take  
the man’s gray wrist and the flutter of  
something trapped troubles the skin.  
What could be more sincere than  
this perfect example of how  
a pulse should never feel.

I record my own history of his illness, and at  
the end of a list of symptoms, he adds  
“some depression,” measuring it out,  
sweeping it to the side like I do with  
the strings of his flimsy gown,  
clearing space to learn from  
his failing body while  
it is still here.

Craig Pearson, WUMS

## 80-Year-Old White Female with Memory Loss

She says she remembers the party.  
He says she forgot he was her son.  
She says she just couldn't remember his name.  
He says she asked him why he "didn't have a tail."  
She says she thought he was the dog.  
He says, exactly.  
She says these episodes are rare.  
He says they are getting more frequent.  
She says she is a little worried.  
He says she hallucinates.  
She says she has always done this.  
He says she thought a policeman was at the door.  
She says, I believe in the spirit world.  
He says she thought she saw a car accident.  
She says it's often just the hem of a dress.  
He says she thrashes and shouts in her sleep.  
She says there are some things we don't understand.  
He says they are hoping you can help.  
She says she doesn't want any tests.  
He says she will do whatever you say.  
She says it has been hard.  
He says thank you for helping us.  
She says nothing for a moment.  
He says, nice to meet you.  
She says, I'm mean to him, aren't I?  
He says, no, Mom...  
She says, I'm mean. I'm mean.  
He says, time to go.  
She says, it ain't right.  
He says, it's fine, it's fine, it's fine.

Craig Pearson, WUMS





Early Alpenglow | Brandon Lippold, WUMS





Zambia | Leora Radman, Program in Occupational Therapy





In the Making | Abby Rachel Rosenberg, WUMS



## A New Instinct

Inexplicably, there are small moments that are defining yet impossibly delicate. Moments that require us to speak about them, yet also live as a memory that feels so fragile that to even attempt to touch it would be to break it. Everyone has moments like these, and to some extent we all have the sacred duty to tell about them.

~

I never realized how much like purgatory waiting rooms must be until I actually did some waiting in one. I sat in one for eight hours, the time stretched double the size of the original prediction for the surgery of four hours. We sat on the ground, and on teal pleather chairs, and on the lone loveseat in groups of three. Family and friends brought things they thought would help pass the time—food, books, knitting, their children. Regardless, time doesn't pass quickly when your father is getting a quarter-sized tumor removed from his brain.

~

My mom, like all moms, could not figure out emojis for the first few years they were in existence. My mom, like all moms, began to use far too many emojis once she did figure the whole thing out. It was strange, then, when I got a text from her that didn't read with her usual amount of pictographic punctuation.

Missed Call: Mom.

Missed Call: Mary-Kate Duncan

Text from Mom: "Call me."

~

It's been almost five days since that strangely flat text, and the thing that both is my dad and is killing him is taking eight hours to untangle. Hours here are both good and bad news: Good, because the worst thing that can happen is for the surgeon to come out after a measly twenty minutes and say the irreversible words unable to resect. Bad, because the

hours leaking by after the predicted time of surgery are messy hours—hours that might be filled with mistakes and complications. We keep waiting.

My childhood best friend and I sit and mindlessly eat the chips she brought when she arrived along with dinner for my whole family. We watch the Bachelor, and this show I watch half jokingly and half religiously becomes entertainment that can bless us with, at maximum, thirty seconds without remembering where we are and why. Feelings of normalcy don't make sense when your father is on the operating table with his head open, but being human doesn't stop for anything.

The waiting room has a phone the surgical team can call to from the operating room. They give us and two other lingering families updates through this phone with a base and a spiraling cord that I'm sure has been stressfully wrung and re-twisted more times than any phone cord was meant to be. Every time it rings, the whole room flinches and stills. That has been our routine, until the most recent call. They call out for Duncan, and my mother rushes forward. She looks relieved, but only almost: He's done. They think they completely resected the tumor.

Now, we wait for him to wake up.

~

We get brought back into his room when the nurses get tired of hearing his half-out-of-it requests to see his wife.

My dad isn't the type to spew sweet nothings. He's one to insert a joke at the exact right pause in conversation rather than to put in an overtly serious line. The last time he came out of general anesthesia, he asked for his wife, too. That time, though, he told her the ever flattering and true statement: "I love you, but Sheila, you can't cook worth a lick." That was not a potentially life-threatening situation, and even coming out of delirium my father seems to have a sense of the outcomes that hung in the balance while he lay on the table that day.



My mom makes her way to the bedside of my sedated but miraculously okay father. All four of us siblings crowd in around them. My dad, seemingly not forming full sentences, grabs my mother's arm and says one thing clearly:

"I've loved you for thirty years and I want to spend another thirty loving you."

In another breath, he turns to his children. He looks intently on us, and says to us in the same voice:

"No matter what happens, take care of your mother."

~

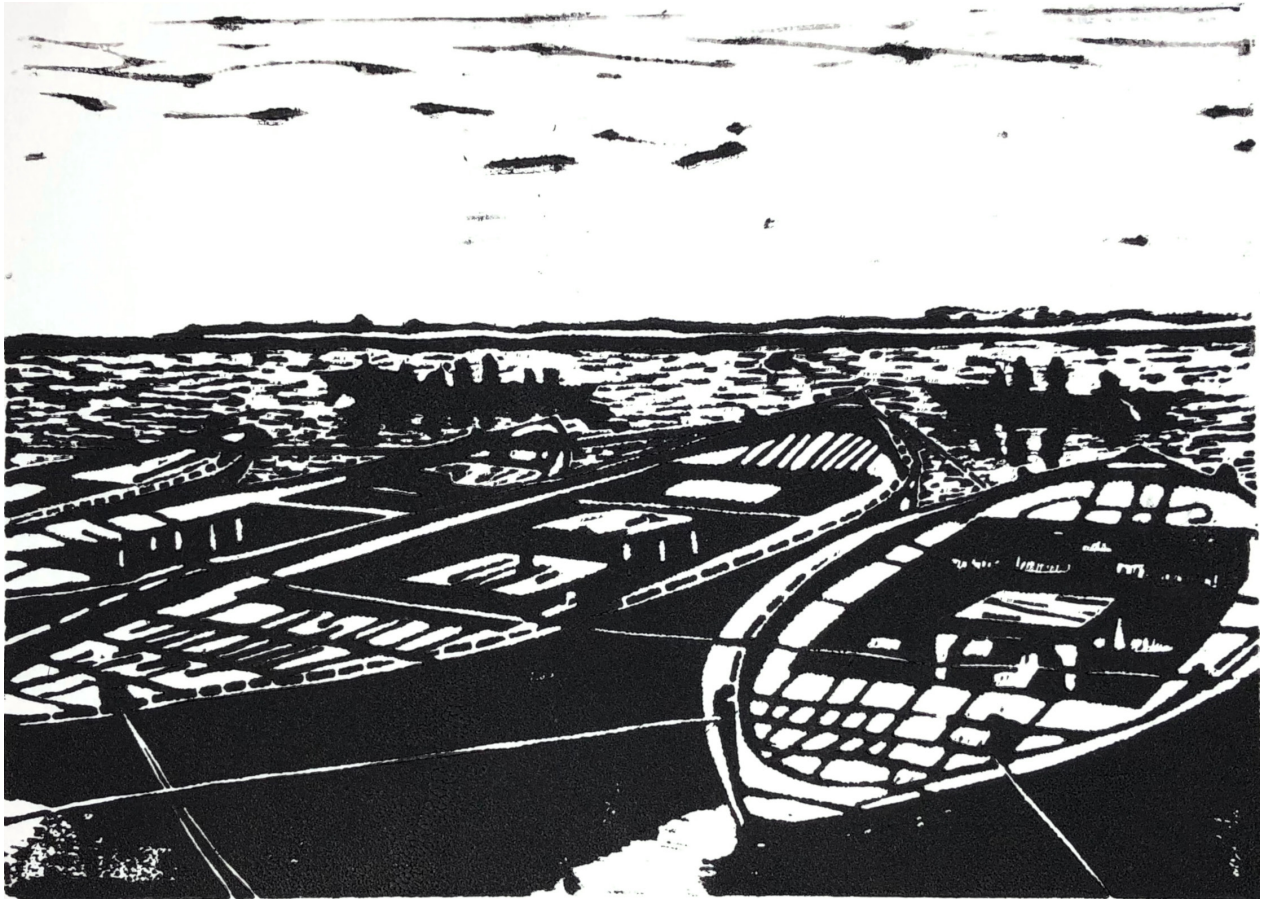
Three years warps a lot of memories. Time does not touch this one. It is an event that happened that split my life into a before and after, and for that reason will always remain deeply ingrained in me.

I cannot give a sentence that tells the lesson that moment taught—but I can describe it. Like the whole of a parent getting seriously ill, it was part of

an experience that brings sorrow, anxiety, grief, and something else. That Something Else is and was a tangled web of emotions like joy, humor, gratitude, and a deepening in understanding of something it wasn't possible to know was there before. The moment of understanding between my parents shed a glancing light on what real, gritty, ephemeral, and quotidian love looks like in its peaking moments. That a person could be barely woken up from anesthesia and their first desire, whether conscious or unconscious, was to make sure another person knew they were loved is impossible, dream-like, better than the movies. It is so entirely unselfish, and so entirely based on the other person.

This is love, even in and especially in a hospital room. It is not a picturesque love that requires huge gestures or dramatic turns in plot. It is not even love that manages perfection in all the days of the course of its years. Love is what I witnessed in the hospital, near the bedside of my father. Love became two people so entwined that to seek the good of the other became an instinct: a heart so turned and quickened by love that it no longer beats just for itself.

Margaret Duncan, WUMS



His Folding Ships | Nimansha Jain, WUMS



# MATH

I like math. There. I said it. Now you know I am one of those people who finds fumbling with numbers a fun time. You might be aghast and confused, because, honestly, who likes math? But lying buried in my love of numbers is the secret path to a realization of how my brain works.

I am a  
am a  
ricocheting  
of compilation  
random  
thoughts bouncing through life haphazardly.  
through quite  
through life

Why should I like numbers if I can't even think in a straight line?

Because math provides structure.

$$1 + 2 = 3$$

There are equations. There are questions with answers. There are patterns.

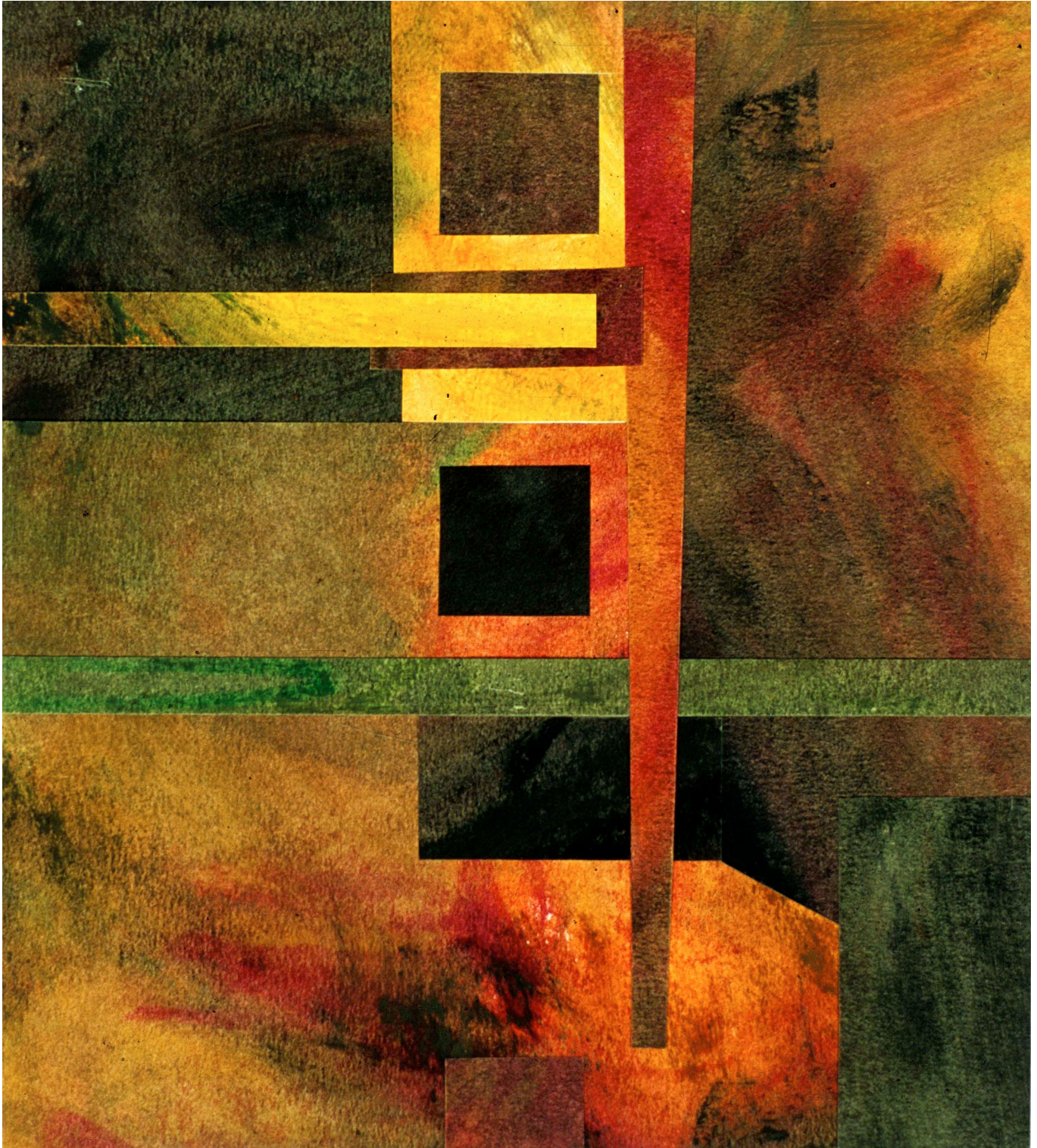
*Granted, in the more complex throes of calculus and higher-level mathematical concepts, things start taking a turn for the abstract and I am lost completely, but...*

The lower levels of math are friendly; they follow rules. I can follow those rules.  
Algebra and Geometry and Trigonometry are PREDICTABLE.

*And my mind, quite frankly, is not.*

As the laws of physics demand, I am attracted to my opposite. Thus, I love math.

Kayla R. Nygaard, DBBS



Balance | Ginger Adkins, Student Affairs





You Zhou, DBBS





You Zhou, DBBS





Florida Life | Anna Dowling, WUMS

## Bisection

We saw from the center of the scalp down through the nose and mouth, between the teeth, until the jaw bone splits and the skull unfolds, as our dissection manual says, “like a book.” It matches the illustration: symmetrical, no secrets, no surprise, no plastic trinket. Maria, someone says, you could be a surgeon—such precision with the saw—the teeth! completely undisturbed—except for a curious lemon yellow residue that turns out to be pigment rubbed off the painted blade and not a sign of some rare disease like we were hoping for.

Craig Pearson, WUMS



## The Wishes of Fontana del Nettuno

Not all wishes are good enough to steal away into your pocket. Some are too sweet, like the wish to become a healer and save all who are in desperate need of saving. Others are dangerous to take, like the wish to see your father return from war or that your daughter will survive her illness. They are protected by Gods who will smite you for taking them. I held a wish like that in my hands. It was a small, round, metal dream I played with between my fingers. I sat on the edge of the Fontana del Nettuno, the sun-baked flagstones bit pock-prints into my skin. The city-goers, obsessed with their worries and business, whorled around me in such a dizzy that you could hardly hear the dream let out a whisper as my thumb rubbed over its flat face. Darling Sophia, return to me. I cannot raise Luca on my own. It sent a jolt through my body and my mouth filled with the taste of copper. It was under the Gods protection; I couldn't possibly take that wish. I dropped it into the fountain and used the water to rinse my hands clean.

It's a gift, I think. I wasn't born talking to wishes, but it has been with me for as long as I can remember. Mama said a wish was the first thing I put in my mouth. That is probably when it started. The landlord, Mr. Giuseppe, calls it imagination, but what does he know? He's old and doesn't believe in many things. As soon as I hold a wish and my fingers trace its smoothed metal edges, I can beckon it to speak its desire. The fountain at the center of the Piazza della Signoria was a beacon for wishes. It was a giant lantern and wishes, like thousands of brass beetles, were drawn to it. Dozens littered the basin, thrown in by the elated and the desperate. Some new, some old, all drowned and forgotten. I sifted through them, marking the time that passed by the weight of my wish catcher. It was a deep navy bag with golden drawstrings, perfect for keeping wishes from escaping. The catcher rattled at my side with each step. After a couple hours it was nearly full; only a few more and I would be able to help Mama.

~

A girl, maybe a couple years older than I, stood at the edge of the basin with a wish in her hand. She

was plump and red, like the sweet cherry tomatoes brought in by Mr. Ronaldo on market days, and she was giggling to her parents. They were tall, thin, and dressed in beautiful clothes. They seemed to be in a terrible rush. The girl's mother grabbed her wrist and pulled her from the fountain. The girl shut her eyes and gave life to the wish she held. She put it between her thumb and forefinger, and as her mother yanked her arm she flicked it into the fountain. It flew high in the air, spinning over itself at least a dozen times and casting off beams of sunlight before striking the water's surface. I waited and looked to make sure no one watched before I scurried over to where the girl stood and hopped into the fountain.

My legs sliced through the cold water as I searched the basin for the girl's wish. I picked hers out from the handful of others in the area and rubbed my fingers around it. It was large and silvery, with a great deal of shine. I traced its face and instantly heard the wish's desire to become a young horse with a brown coat and a beautiful mane made of purest white. It was sweet and innocent, but not sacred enough to be protected. I placed it in my wish catcher with the others like it. If I could catch enough of them it would be worth a lot to The Man in White.

~

In my palms, pruned and creased from sifting through fountain water, sat a remarkable wish. It was large, maybe three times that of a common wish and twice as thick, with a polished surface that perfectly caught the afternoon light. I held it fast and cried out and jumped up and down, splashing the two little children playing in the fountain next to me. They started to cry, but I didn't care, I hardly noticed, I'd found the most amazing wish in the whole fountain. The Man in White would surely be pleased enough to trade my wishes for Mama's vial.

I was ecstatic and nearly shoved the wish in my catcher without even listening to its desire. I held it flat in my palm and ran a wrinkled finger around its smooth edge. Anticipation boiled within me, with such a marvelous exterior I could only begin to

imagine the contents of the wish. Seconds passed. Nothing. I coaxed it with another rub of my finger and the wish finally began to whisper. Please, it said. The voice was squeaky, I could nearly hear the tears behind it. Papa is not doing well, and the doctor has stopped making visits. I wish that I could make him better. My neck hairs stood on end.

The wish turned hot in my hand, like a molten rock from Mount Vesuvius, and I threw it into the fountain from fear of being branded. No sizzling pop of evaporating water shot out as it sank to the basin floor. My head grew foggy and the taste of metal coated my tongue. This wish was sacred. The strength of the Gods protection rattled me to the core. A pristine wish. I slumped at the edge of the fountain and could think of nothing but Mama. She had been lying in bed for a week. Her cough worsened every time I visited her room. Not once did I think to toss a wish in fountain for her. Tears trickled down my cheeks. I took up my catcher onto my lap and undid the drawstring. Inside were a hundred and one slippery wishes, glinting in the sunlight. Two droplets fell from my chin and into the bag, striking the wishes with a wet smack. I held so many in my catcher, but none of them were my own.

I looked up at the statue in the center of the fountain. Neptune's face was resolute and vigilant, the steward of all wishes in the fountain. His eyes were fixed on me and unyielding. Aren't I ashamed, he was saying. Aren't I ashamed not to make a wish for my mother and cast it into his sea? He pierced me with his trident, its spears reaching through my ribs and into my soul.

Of course I had a wish for my mother. I wiped my eyes. But making a wish doesn't mean it will be granted. I needed to pay for it. I needed that wish, remarkable and enormous, though it was protected by Neptune. I plunged my hands once more into the fountain's water and retrieved it. I tossed it into my catcher, frowned at Neptune, then waded to the fountain's edge. I slipped wet feet into my shoes and turned my back on the Fontana del Nettuno. I scurried down the street toward the apothecary with my wish catcher held tight to my chest. Each step was a prayer that I would make it before the Gods sought retribution.

~

A cold gust smacked my cheek as I pushed through the doors of the apothecary. The air was frozen and heavy in the store, pushing the breath out of me as it fell on my shoulders. Wishes were vibrant, full of life, and fleeting, but even they grew lethargic in the bitter, bone white aisles of the apothecary. I tucked my chin into the collar of my shirt against the cold and scampered to the back counter finding no one. I got up on my tiptoes and tapped the bell sitting near the edge.

It rang out through the store and stirred the creature that lived in the labyrinth of darkened aisles behind the counter. He came thundering toward me, each step shaking the very foundation of the building. I shrunk back. The Man in White stood tall as a giant, with skin pale enough to see his icy veins and piercing eyes that sat deep in their sockets, behind a pair of spectacles. He bent over the counter, sticking out a long neck, and scowled. My knees buckled.

"What is it, girl?" he said.

I shoved a hand in my pocket and retrieved the slip of paper on which Mr. Giuseppe wrote the medicine. It was too long of a word for anyone to say aloud. With trembling hands, I placed the paper on the counter. I looked up at The Man in White and forced out the only word I could think to say.

"Mama," the word squeaked out and barely made it two feet before dying. The Man in White read the paper, then quietly folded it and stuck out an enormous hand.

"Can you afford this?" he asked.

I nodded seven or eight times—enough for The Man in White to believe me—and pulled out my wish catcher. It didn't quite sit right in my hands. It was heavy with the dozens of wishes caught throughout the day, yes, but something felt different. I looked down, dark wisps permeated my catcher and swirled in the air. I smashed my hands around it so The Man in White couldn't see. It was that pristine wish. The Gods were working hard to pollute the other in my catcher, and I hoped The



Man in White would still accept them. With outstretched arms, my fingers relinquished their hold over the catcher one at a time, not wanting to suffer the consequences that would surely befall me for stealing such a wish. The catcher fell to the counter with a metallic ring. I shut my eyes tight and gritted my teeth.

My whole body tightened, preparing for the end of my short life. In an instant I would be struck dead by a bolt of lightning from the heavens, or Neptune himself would rise from the depths, skewer me with his trident, and crush me under ten thousand kilograms of seawater, or The Man in White would take me to his lair and cook me like a duck. The seconds passed like hours, each accompanied by countless possibilities of my doom. My palms grew clammy. My heart nearly burst through my eardrums. I wanted to run, but in that moment I thought of Mama. I thought of her lying in bed, unmoving under layers of blankets. And I thought of her smile. Cracked and thin, and perfect. She needed me, so I stood. When I found that I was not

charred and crispy, nor impaled by a giant fork, nor eaten for dinner, I dared to crack open an eye. The Man in White had vanished and my wish catcher along with him, replaced on the counter with a small vial containing several pills. I snatched it from the counter and ran.

~

Rays from a fast-approaching sunset painted the cobblestone streets a brilliant deep red. The breeze off the Mediterranean ran its finger through my hair as I made my way through the Piazza della Signoria. Children were still splashing about in the fountain, kicking water at each other and laughing. People milled around the various shops and restaurants that lined the square. At the edge of the fountain one man held a wish in his hand. He muttered something to himself, kissed it, then tossed it into the fountain. As I neared the entrance to Mr. Giuseppe's building, I rubbed the vial in my pocket and smiled. I didn't need their wishes any longer. I had my own.

Erek Dannenberg, Program in Physical Therapy



Picnic | Sukruth Shashikumar, WUMS



## Cheating on You (With “You”)

He has your face but not your substance and your fucking flaws. We are lyrics to pop songs and the plots of old Meg Ryans our fingers thoughts melded symbiotic there is no him under his smile. He is shimmer gleamy glitter the cheap crap from 3rd grade art class where i crafted Princes on white horses from cotton puffs and sparkle markers andand Disneyland delusion the Sweet Savior salve to my every past booboo you are my fairytale in.ject.ion SHIT not you i mean what are you but contradictions/projections/reflections of every wound/every spiral into Freudian bullshit/false dichotomies in flesh i can touch but won't because where's the thrill in what's real?

YourimperfectionsbeautifulbutrealtoorealnotmyPrincenotwhatWewerepromisednoiwant I want

“You.”

I would feel guilty. But you're cheating with “Me” too.

Elinor Taylor, Program in Occupational Therapy



Phoebe | Faith Williams, WUMS



# Homing

When I was young my grandfather lived in a large courtyard house clad in dusty red brick, a Party-issued luxury. After my grandmother passed, he retreated to an ascetic seclusion in their once bustling home, and cultivated a garden with reticent affection he was loath to afford many human beings. A low open weave brick fence guarded the perimeters of the garden, which was replete with life. Fat peonies bloomed profusely in every corner, bitter melon gourds hung knobby and grotesque from their vines, and a stout pear tree bore golden fruits, which tumbled ripe and bruised to the earth every fall. The vividness of the garden was a violent show of wanton abandon, a defiant subversion of the austerity that my grandfather, by consequence or will, had come to inhabit daily within the dusty bowels of an ever expanding cityscape.

My first sentient memories were days spent in this house, with the garden as the sole proprietor of my idleness and curiosity. I climbed trees, tore through angry rose bushes, and squatted on my heels for hours digging up musty soil, where I occasionally found bones of small animals that gave me a delicious kind of fright. Next to the garden, my grandfather had built a towering grape arbor out of bamboo. Under this natural awning he raised pigeons for eggs and meat in large cages. They cooed and hummed while sauntering around their captive home, metallic feathers occasionally flashing purple and green from the mottled light peeking behind the grape vines. There was a single white dove that I adored from the moment I saw its snowy feathers amongst the gray masses. I learned that I could unlatch the cage and pluck her from the rest of the dithering flock. She quivered in my grasp, with a frozen gaze that was unnervingly crimson against her unblemished white feathers. I felt life coursing through her body in humming pulses. She made no attempt to fly away, and in my childish conceit I believed this whole exchange a show of goodwill. Until one morning I went to the cages to find her missing. I searched edge to edge and saw nothing but umbrages of gray.

Perhaps it was the close confinement of the cages, or a natural withering of imprisoned things, the

birds succumbed one after another to an unknown death, until the cage was empty save a few feathers recalling that they once were. My grandfather buried them in the garden, where they made small hills of freshly turned soil at the foot of the pear tree. Many years down the line, their bleached bones might have stirred the imagination of yet another child excavating the soil. The quiet losses, those often missed, added up to a fateful degradation. Year after year my grandfather slowly gave up maintenance of his garden, and day after day life slowly gave up maintenance of him. The house grew accustomed to empty guest rooms, hasty calls from children, dwindling holiday gatherings. He acclimated himself to peeling paint, gurgling pipes, bitter coldness seeping from scant insulation. It was also around this time that I left China with my parents. I never came back to the red brick house, because a few years after our departure the government took its land back as the city crawled outwards. They tore down the exhausted house and buried the wild garden, and in its place planted a misanthropic high-rise the color of cadavers, which would house military retirees. My grandfather, a stoic tree now uprooted, was affixed high in the crowded skies directly above the remnants of his former life.

Eleventh floor, my mother said as we stepped into the elevator. Inside the apartment everything feels slightly less spacious and infinitely more empty. The granite tiles are cold and slippery, but he hardly walks these days. A potted plant languishes in the sunroom amidst sheets on clotheslines. My grandfather's bowed frame wilts on an armchair. His eyes are pearly with cataracts, occasionally catching light reflected from a sea of concrete outside. He keeps his gaze held far away, faithful in his solitude and loyal to the past, sleeping away most of the day. I wondered if his dreams are filled with beautiful memories of the sunlit garden that saturate his senses. I wondered if he waits for the day he can return to the ground.

Departing a forest of identically dour condominiums that day, I saw pigeons holding vigil on the asphalt, then taking off into the smog riddled air,

the same sky their predecessors had but gazed upon through a rusted cage. They are the permanent fixtures here, long before the dusty edifices of urban life, long after its shadowy vestiges. Their natural instincts tether them to the epicenter of 2 million self-important human narratives that congest the

crevices of this city. They fly over concrete towers, whose windows look out to nothing but more windows, through which can be glimpsed the lives of others, busily weaving in and out of the frames, hurdling through days that fall away into grainy shades of gray.

Jane Wang, WUMS



Ghost Rider | Skyler Kessler, WUMS





1213 | Bobbie Brown, DBBS



just one-half | Bobbie Brown, DBBS





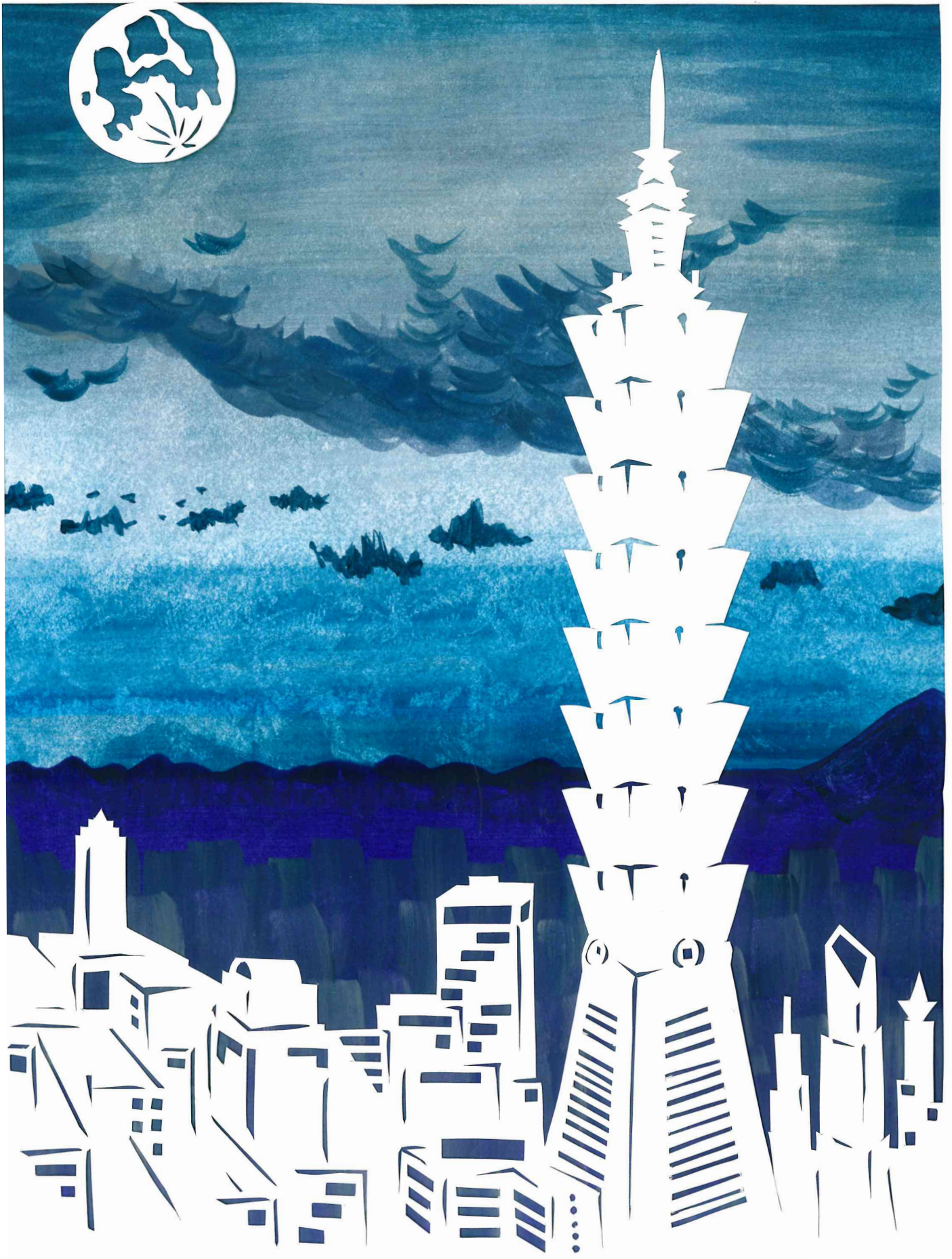
Neon | J.R. Peacock, WUMS





You Hometown Sweetheart | Juan Ferreira, DBBS, and daughter Emma (20 months)





Homesick for Taipei | Zuzana Kocsisova, DBBS



# Threads

8/10/2017

Mrs. C is a 72 y/o Indian F with a history of T2DM and depression presenting with fever, jaundice, and confusion. Recent workups indicate CKD and possible renal failure. Pt is unresponsive to anyone save her daughter and grandson, who speaks to her on the phone from overseas. Pt can only mumble certain words and names. Her daughter reports that pt has been suffering from fecal incontinence, hallucinations, and hyperglycemia for several days. Pt has been admitted previously for hyperglycemic shock on multiple occasions. Upon previous admission, pt demanded discharge to “die at home.” Pt has not consulted her physician since then. Pt’s daughter reports that pt has suffered from monthly major depressive episodes for decades, usually consisting of refusal to leave bed, refusal to eat, aggression towards family members, and suicidal ideation. Pt would typically consume several sweets on a daily basis despite dietary recommendations from physician. Pt’s daughter reports that these binge-eating episodes correlated with the depressive episodes.

Pt is non-ambulatory and does not respond to any questions posed by physician or daughter. Pt begins crying upon hearing grandson’s voice by phone. Significant 3+ pitting edema bilaterally in legs to patella. Swelling present in entire body. Skin tone is purple especially in distal limbs. Auscultation not possible through a phone call. CN testing not possible through a phone call. Help in any way not possible through a phone call. Pt’s daughter declines further treatment for mother and escorts her home.

My grandmother passed away on August 13, 2017, the same day as my 22nd birthday. Three days before I started medical school with the bright-eyed intention of saving countless lives, I watched a video of my grandmother speaking my name on her deathbed. I had visited her twice in my life. Whenever my mother would speak to her on the phone, I would make efforts to avoid having to speak to her. I would feel self-conscious about my limited Hindi vocabulary, about having to scream into a phone (because, for some reason, you have to scream into

phones when calling India), about having to bear two minutes of small talk with a person who shared a quarter of my DNA but who felt infinitely more distant than the old white woman who taught me about DNA. I had settled for seeing my grandmother as someone who was important to me by a paper definition instead of someone with whom I felt a visceral, unconditional connection. Until she passed. I sobbed uncontrollably when I saw her ballooned face and supernatural delirium, her chest heaving to force out enough air to make the sounds of my name. My sorrow did not flow from me—it was extracted, almost reflexively, like a toddler yanking the stuffing out of a rag doll. I had never felt as close to her as I did in that moment.

10/24/2018

Mr. X is a 15 y/o African American male with a PMHx of CML and depression. He presents today for his monthly check-up for the first time at this office after switching foster homes. Pt’s CML was previously treated by an oncologist at Windsor in East St. Louis, prior to his moving to St. Louis proper. Social services claim pt has attempted suicide twice in the past week. Pt presents today with the bandages still around his wrists, the taut bleached gauze looking more life-like than his actual skin. Pt’s dark complexion borders on purple, morphing into an old Indian woman’s bloated face before my eyes that are already starting to well up with hot tears. Pt’s most recent CBC shows a marked progression in his disease since his last check-up at Windsor. Social services report almost no adherence to drug regimen and lack of cooperation with current behavioral counseling. Pt reports no change in physical symptoms. Pt reports no change in psychological symptoms. Pt reports all of this through silence.

Pt arrives at office escorted by a beefy black man who “must be his father,” as whispered by my implicit bias. The man is actually a grunt worker at the foster network agency, and he just met the pt this morning. Pt did not speak to this man at all during the Metro ride to our office. Pt presents wearing a second-hand turtleneck with a long black scarf and torn black jeans. Pt’s ashy knees peek through the holes. Pt wears loafers that would have turned

heads in the 90s and elicit smirks in the present. I would have made fun of the pt ad nauseam if I had known him in high school. Pt's dress and mopey demeanor would have been the subject of my daily taunts, the tipping point in his struggle to feel that living was worthwhile. Pt nods intermittently during interview, his "father" answering nearly every question. Pt watches me as I squirm awkwardly in the corner, constantly tugging on my pretentious coat, learning absolutely nothing from the pediatric oncologist I'm shadowing, learning everything from the pt instead.

Pt appears disinterested and fatigued. Alert and oriented x3, annoyed and resentful x3, helpless and hopeless x100. RRR, normal S1/S2, no murmurs, rubs, or gallops, lungs clear to auscultation bilaterally, chest sagging with the effort from having to hold up his head. Abdomen soft, tender, and nondistended, empty of food from a brutal loss of appetite that has stalked the pt for six months now. Pt avoids sweets instead of overeating them. Radial pulse 2+

bilaterally but reluctantly, the life force coursing through the vessels out of sheer habit, not necessity. Biceps, triceps, knee, ankle reflexes all 4/4. Motor tone 0/4, arms thin and flaccid to me but like leaden weights to pt. Pt refuses to leave bed and lashes out at his foster parents.

New chemotherapy regimen described to pt, who responds with random nods and no sounds. Medication given to pt's careworker, who was on his cellphone for the final part of the appointment. Pt asked no questions. Careworker asked no questions. Pt left clinic without physician's handwritten plan for treatment. I watched my grandmother leave the hospital as that boy, but this time there was no daughter to hold her hand, no grandson's voice to jar her from her stupor—just an indifferent social worker, a physician who was already forgetting him, and an optimism-besotten medical student. I had never felt as close to him as I did in that moment.

Sajal Tiwary, WUMS



An Evening Commute | Mike Senter-Zapata, WUMS





Tinder | Jane Wang, WUMS

## Genesis

We built god by  
the fireside  
a sacred bond where  
you and I  
can offer up  
a sacrifice  
of naked souls

A caricature  
of intimacy  
a pantomime so  
selfish we  
siphon off  
the energy  
of secrets told

We spin around  
as time flies by  
explosive colors  
light the sky  
walls come down  
I start to cry  
in tears of gold

We build god in  
the dark of night  
searching for  
a guiding light  
and something seems  
to feel right  
in sharing broken souls

Jamie Moffa, WUMS





Breakthrough | Chin-Wen Lei, DBBS





# HIPPOCRENE

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