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MISSION STATEMENT

Ether Arts is the literary and visual arts magazine of the Ohio State University's College of Medicine. We are committed to the publication of artistic works by Ohio State medical students and alumni, as well as students and staff outside of the College of Medicine. We seek to demonstrate the artistic abilities of students and staff alike both inside the realm of medicine and outside of it. We hope to initiate artistic discussion within the community, allowing the exploration of what it means to be a medical professional and what it means to be a patient, blurring pre-conceived notions of what it means to be either.

SPECIAL THANKS

Linda Stone, MD
Katie Cunin, MD
E. Christopher Ellison, MD FACS
Medical Alumni Society
Medicine and the Arts
Dear Readers,

Thank you for picking up a copy of this year’s edition of Ether Arts, a magazine created and curated by medical students and other health professionals, faculty and alumni. This magazine exemplifies the mission of Humanism in Medicine in its affirmation that we are more than our white coats and stethoscopes. Though many of the pieces within these pages stem from experiences in the medical profession, they attempt to examine this world through a different lens.

In some ways, “[w]e’re all struggling to say the same old things / in new and different ways. / And so we must praise the new and different ways.” (Gibson “Are We There Yet” 16-18). These diverging perspectives are the cornerstone to innovation and advancement, for both the science and art of medicine. Ether Arts is a celebration of these viewpoints, bringing together medical and professional students, faculty, alumni and members of the Ohio State University community to a common center.

We would like to extend the greatest thanks to a number of individuals and organizations whose contributions were crucial to the success of Ether Arts. The editors from years past provided a prime example of the leadership and dedication necessary to make this magazine a reality. Additionally, they were always on hand to provide clarification and guidance, for which we are truly grateful. We would like to thank Linda Stone, MD and Katie Cunin, MD for their continued guidance and encouragement, Fred Anderle and Anna Soter, PhD for facilitating the editing process of this magazine as well as lending their expertise and E. Christopher Ellison, MD FACS for composing the foreword to this year’s edition. Furthermore, we would like to extend thanks to Medicine and the Arts as well as the Medical Alumni Society who are so generous in financially supporting us year after year.

Finally, we would like to thank our contributing authors and artists. “Some things are known / only by their limits,” but the work from these individuals blur the preconceived notions of what medical professionals are capable of accomplishing (Rosenberg “Microburst” 6-7). From this magazine we hope you glean inspiration, a sense of community and the feeling of camaraderie that comes only from understanding your peers just a little bit better.

All the best,

Sarah Horner
Editor-in-Chief
Foreword from the Dean

Welcome to the 2015-2016 College of Medicine *Ether Arts* Magazine.

I am honored to be invited by the *Ether Arts* Board, to provide a foreword for this year’s publication. *Ether Arts* is just one of the many ways The Ohio State University College of Medicine continues its rich history of integrating medicine and the arts. It is a tradition of which we should all be very proud.

While many medical schools provide some connection to the arts, Ohio State has a true commitment and has made it a priority to offer cultural experiences beyond the classroom. Our students and faculty are involved in the arts at Ohio State and throughout the community. *Ether Arts* is just one outstanding example of the talent and dedication to the arts that our faculty and students exhibit.

This year’s magazine features works by members of the Ohio State community, Ohio State medical and health sciences students, physicians from the Wexner Medical Center and even alumni. The art features include edible pathology, photographs and red cells. The poetry contributions include a variety of pieces from “Anatomy of a Heart Beat” to “The Surgeon’s Knot.” Linda Stone presents “It’s All About The Chocolate.” There are eight prose contributions ranging from *A Heart of Hope* to *The Waiting Room*.

In reviewing submissions to this year’s issue, I was incredibly impressed by the creativity of our students and faculty. I thoroughly enjoyed this issue, and I hope you will as well.

Congratulations to the team of students who made this year’s *Ether Arts* possible. Enjoy the diverse collection of material from a group of highly talented, well-rounded individuals.

Sincerely,

E. Christopher Ellison MD FACS
Interim Dean, College of Medicine
The Ohio State University
Edible Pathology

Ruptured Appendix
Broiled Bratwurst with Marinara Sauce

Cardiac Tamponade
Pan-Fried Beef Heart with Tapenade and Capers

Mesothelioma
Dark Chocolate Cake with Cream Cheese and Cherry Preserves

Cynthia Schwartz
OSUCOM 2nd Year Medical Student
It’s All About The Chocolate

Dearest morsel sitting there,
I cast you a glance, and then a stare,
I marvel at your luscious golden shell
Nestling within a little well
Of richest cream or crunchiest nut
I should truly forgo you, but
In one swift move I snatch you up,
Devour you, oh delightful chocolate cup.

—Linda C. Stone, MD
Faculty
Special Assistant to the Dean for Humanism and Professionalism
Edited by Anna Soter, PhD
The Adventures of J.J.

Adriana Giuliani
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student

Juice was the sole patron of the concerto of white noise. Oxygen hummed, bed joints buzzed, IVs dripped, and air vents sighed, each playing their part in the hushed orchestra. Two beeps, the shy piccolo, to let Juice know he was still alive.

His eyes did not fall. They followed the flittering light across the walls, orange and white and blue, that spelled out epics of dragons, firefighters, and flying super-giraffes. His mother was asleep, though just barely. The rims of her eyes were red and her mind wasted from a two-day trial of wakefulness. She had no dreams- her sleep was not so deep. No space baseball player drifted down to lift her out of reality. Instead, her mind remained on high alert. Any sudden movement- any break in that orchestra- would hurdle her into wakefulness.

Juice was too full of sleep. His veins pumped sluggishly, reined in by drugs and boosters of drugs. He wanted to be awake. The white walls of his cell were his cinema.

On those white walls, a Ferrari-turned-Transformer scaled towers to throw punches at King Kong, who was working for a Mexican drug cartel and whose roars rolled subtly into Spanish. Yet neither was a match for Godzilla's son, Mecharaptor Rex (who looked, curiously, like a wooden giraffe wearing a cape) and his rider J.J., a young unassuming brown-haired boy necessarily savior and hero.

The battle raged up corners and over wires, tucked into cabinets and slipped between the creases of Juice's sheets. Suddenly, a red hover car leapt into the fray. It revved its engines and raced towards the heroes, colliding with Mecharaptor Rex and breaking the great beast's leg.

J.J. leapt down and used his magic needle to heal Mecharaptor's leg. As Mecharaptor Rex soared back up and attacked the hover car, the tube extending from Juice's arm tugged at his IV pole. The pole clattered against his bed and its clipboard fell from its hook. SMACK it hit the ground.

With a harsh intake of breath, his mother was awake. “Baby are you okay?” she asked in an alarmed tone, looking immediately around. She groggily though warily absorbed the situation.

“Yes, mom,” came his annoyed reply. He turned away from her and hid in the tent of his bedsheets.

Juice was tired of that question. He was tired of syringes and tubes and gas masks. He was tired of white walls and tired, even, of the adventures of J.J. and Mecharaptor Rex. He was tired of breathing. He was tired of not being okay. It wasn't fair. Other kids were okay. They were okay every time someone asked: are you okay? They could run around outside and sleep in their own bed. They didn't have to drink coffee. They didn't have to be polite to everyone they saw. They didn't have to tell the truth. They could be superheroes, if they wanted. They could escape.

He was tired of his mother asking, “Are you okay?” He was tired of her sharing his room. He just wanted her to make him better. He wanted her to let him go home. Wasn't she supposed to do that, after all? What good are mothers, he wondered, if not that?

He felt her hand on his back, rubbing up and down, up and down.

“How are you feeling?” she asked.

“Fine,” he said. He may have been lying. He wasn't sure. In fact, he couldn't quite remember what fine was anymore. Maybe he was fine.

“Try to get some sleep, sweetie,” she suggested, the eerie glow of her phone offering her the time. Juice gave a groan of assent from his tent. His mother bent over to pick up the clipboard and hooked it back onto the pole. Then she settled her head back into the crook of her elbow and was soon resting, if not asleep.

He watched her for a moment, before striding back into imagination. If she had looked sad, strained, tired, wrung out,
thrown about- if she had held any emotion behind her made-up face, Juice couldn't see it. What he saw was simple: he saw his mother. She would keep him safe. She was his vestige of home.

He was a lolling ambulance and a rushing car away from home. Another bus ride from his friends. He didn’t mind missing school, nor did he miss his sisters. What he did mind was that the only other kid he saw was his own reflection. Everyone else was big with faces made of nostrils and floppy ears that were huge but never seemed to listen. They chattered over him, never stopping to listen. Never stopping to play.

Where did he hurt? (It was always his chest)

How bad did he hurt? (Bad)

Is it better than yesterday? (He didn't know)

Take three big breaths. (He did)

Hold his breath. (He held it)

Blow as hard as he can. (He tried)

Little poke. (It never was)

Turn over. (He turned)

No matter what answers he gave, they never seemed right. No matter how many directions he followed, nothing seemed to change. They wheeled him into the Blood Room to stick him with needles, the Xray Room to wrap him with lead, the Prison Room to pump him with oxygen. Back to his own room to close him in. They smiled full of forever-teeth, but they were never true smiles. He couldn’t tell what hid behind them. Worry? Disappointment? Disgust? Evil?

Was one of them going to inject him with poison? Was the other going to kidnap him? Could he defeat them with laser beams? Did he need to run away?

But his mother would protect him, he knew. She wouldn't have brought him into a place filled with evil people. Unless she was being mind-controlled, of course. Juice paused. He hadn't thought of that.

He began loosening the tape around his IV line. He'd need to rip it off to escape. He slipped the oxygen mask off his face. In one hand, he gripped his caped giraffe and in the other his model Ferrari. They were more than a match for any ill-doer that dared come near. His heart beat faster as he awaited the ninjas that would inevitably descend from the ceiling.

But what about his mother? He couldn't leave her behind. But if she was mind-controlled then there wasn't anything he could do about that. He unclipped a sensor from his finger.

The oxygen alarm went off. BEEP BEEP, it complained. BEEP BEEP. BEEP BEEP.

Juice's mother awoke in a panic. Seeing her son without his mask, she fluidly picked it up off the bed and slipped it back over his head.

BEEP BEEP. BEEP BEEP, the alarm continued to say.

His mother rummaged around and finally drew up the sensor, which she efficiently clipped back onto Juice's finger. Juice had remained immobile throughout the episode.

“I just wanted to go to the bathroom,” he quickly lied. He then regretted telling it. She was busy smoothing down the tape around his IV.

“How much longer do I got to be here?” he asked.

“I don't know, sweetie. Probably just a few more days. So they can make sure you're okay,” she explained in a low, calming voice.
“What if they don’t want me to be okay?”

“It’s their job to make you okay.”

“What if they don’t like me?”

“Oh pumpkin. Of course they like you.”

“What if they’re all secret spies and wanna kill me?”

His voice sounded like a whine. His eyes were hot with tears. He wanted to cry, but hated himself for it. He was stronger than this. He was okay, he promised himself. Okay.

“Oh don’t be silly. Nobody wants to kill you.” She gave a sad smile.

“But you’re mind-controlled so you don’t know!”

His mother gave a real chuckle. “I’m not being mind-controlled, sweetie. I promise.”

“But you would say that if you were mind-controlled.” He sniffled.

She let out a sigh that might have said, I don’t want to do this now. Please let’s go back to sleep. But instead she played along.

“How can I prove that I’m not mind-controlled?”

“I dunno,” Juice admitted, hitting a low point.

“Well what would I do if I were really mind-controlled?”

“You would pretend you weren’t mind controlled.”

“Would a mind-controlled person do this?” she asked, and attacked him with tickles. Juice giggled fervently while fighting her off.

“STOP STOP STOP!” he squealed through laughs. She stopped. He took a few wheezing breaths that evolved into a quick coughing fit.

“Oh sweetie, oh sweetie I’m sorry!” his mother repeated as he recovered and regained the smile on his face. A calm silence settled over the two of them.

“Why don’t you come sit with me?” his mother said.

“Why?” Juice asked.

“So you and Megaraptor can defend me from all these secret spies,” she whispered conspiratorially.

“Mecharaptor,” Juice corrected with exasperation, having corrected this many times before.

“Right. You and Mecharaptor Rex.” She smiled.

Juice tumbled off his bed to sit with his mother. She enclosed him in the safety of her arms. They rocked back and forth, back and forth as she sang a lullaby to accompany their orchestra. 
What’s a Little Amniotic Fluid Between Friends?

So there I was, third year medical student
green in my minimally useful glory
clinging to my book-smarts and two hands-on
demos with mannequin mommies and babies
when my first patient went into labor
writhing, screaming for the epidural
that she requested three centimeters too late.
With the arrival of the on-call doctor (thank god)
it was suddenly an estrogen party
with the patient pushing, the doctor driving, and my poor
uterus feeling awfully left out.
Refocusing to my one job, I joined in
as we yelled empuja empuja
and the patient empuja-ed until her legs kicked out of the stirrups
and she told us it was too heavy, there was no way.
That’s the funny thing about birth-days – they’re always worst
in those standstill minutes of agony between contractions
maybe she was right
and maybe this would never end
and for all of time I would stand there in my gloves and gown
awaiting a baby that would never come.
But that baby arrived in the mechanical mystery
known only to newborns
twisting and being empuja-ed
whoosh and suddenly everything was wet
and beautiful in room 209.

—Jessica Rutsky
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student
Circle of Willis

Juliana Machicao
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student

Brachial Plexus
**Motivation**

*Jessica Rutsky*

OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student

**1995**

I was 5. He pinned a white plastic-y paper-y bib on my T-shirt that said “4.” I distinctly remember because I told him importantly that it was wrong. I was 5. He said I shouldn’t worry. He was always saying that – especially about my science homework. Every night my eyes would get teary and he would say to me “Jessica, calm down. I can’t teach you if you’re crying. You can do this – don't worry.”

He told me that I would have to run as fast as I could all the way down the track to the other side. I shuffled my blue sneakers on the asphalt. “But what if I fall? What if I lose?” I asked. He told me that if I did my best, he would be proud of me. Whether he was or wasn’t – that seemed scarier than all the other things.

He walked away until he was small dot down by the other parent dots. I changed my mind. I didn’t want to do this anymore. He would understand. Like that time we went on the rackety wooden roller coaster at Geauga Lake that went way higher than it seemed. Halfway up the click-click-click hill. I told him I didn’t want to do it anymore. I cried. I begged. I told him to make it stop and that’s how I felt right now when the woman said:

“On your mark.”

When we were creaking up the wooden hill, he told me that there was nothing he could do now. We flew down the hill and I clutched my safety bar for dear life, planning to cling to it through the air as our car would most certainly detach and fly into oblivion instead of reaching the next ridiculously tall hill. Instead, I flew into my mother's arms when the contraption of fear released me. I was angry that my father had let me do that. How could he?

“Get set.”

The roller coaster was about to begin. I thought about my first soccer game last weekend. I hadn’t been nervous, just excited to do the things that my older sister Samantha could do. I wore my blue jersey and just kept running and kicking until the whistle told me to stop. After the game my dad had said he was proud of me. Suddenly, I wanted that to happen again.

“Go!”


When we got home, my parents set us up in the driveway with our trophies. Samantha had won her race. I was second. My little brother Andrew had a blue ribbon like I did last year. We lined up like the Olympics – tallest in the middle. Later, I put the trophy with the golden runner on my dresser, just like Dad's.

**2000**

It was chore day. I secretly liked dusting, but I couldn’t tell Samantha because she complained like nobody’s business about being allergic to dust. I moved all of my picture frames and trophies from the dresser to my bed.
Trophies with little golden running men and women, trophies with kids kicking soccer balls. After chores were over, I had to finish my biology homework. Dad wouldn’t be home until later but I would probably be done by then – enough time to kick the ball around in the yard with him before dark. Sometimes he could take the ball away from me. Sometimes he couldn’t.

2012
I cried. I couldn’t help it. My emotions engulfed all coherent thought processes until they burned with despair. I had started off so well explaining, rationally, that even though eighteen medical schools had rejected me, I could still apply again next year and get in. As always, he was the spark. “Stop crying. Are you sure?” I wasn’t.

2013
I was 22. I walked in quick steps and dark blue sneakers, worn from miles of pavement run. Tracing circles on the cement driveway, I bounced a soccer ball. My cell phone was wet with tears. After the life-changing news, I could finally step off the roller coaster and into line for what was next – medical school. This time he laughed. “Well of course you did,” he said. “We all knew you could. I’m very proud of you.”

Riddhima Agarwal
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student
The Waiting Room

Linda C. Stone, MD
Faculty
Special Assistant to the Dean for Humanism and Professionalism

Sitting in the waiting room has become part of our routine. We know the landscape when visiting yet another doctor for yet another visit or procedure. The subtle patterns on the chairs and couches change a bit, but the worn colors of the carpet or the fading wallpaper tend to look alike. I look around at those sharing this waiting game.

I am surprised to see a rather young couple sitting across from me quietly making comments as the news blasts from the overhead television in a continuous, monotonous stream. Do I really need to hear the news while waiting for my husband's medical results following his latest procedure? The couple doesn't seem to need the news either as they look at old magazines or share confidences that I cannot overhear because the news covers all conversations.

Another couple, more in our age group but still younger than we are, finally part as he is picked in this medical lottery to go back for some endoscopic procedure. This time, she is the lucky one who sits and waits rather than the one pulled into some machine or poked and prodded by a well-meaning physician. She is the one who waits, just like me; she is the one that wonders what is next.

More people come through the door. One woman enters wanting to know if she is in the right place. The ever-patient receptionist simply says, “I don't know, what place are you looking for?” She knows the name of the office is on the door and is also displayed at the reception area, but she also knows the stress a patient feels and so tries to elicit enough information from the patient to determine if she is indeed in the right place. It is the right place and the woman calls out the door for her portly husband to join her. The procedure is for her, not for him, so he slowly moves into the waiting room joining the others.

I begin to picture an assembly line with all those who have disappeared into the back room lined up with a scope jumping from one to another with a robot like machine in charge. I know it is not like that but I can't stop thinking about the endoscopic robot and its little snipping sounds as it sends biopsied tissue flying about the room and into properly labeled bottles.

Sunshine in the Mountains
Michelle Knopp
OSUCOM 2nd Year Medical Student
Another couple enters the room. I begin a guessing game on which one is the ‘proceduree’ and which one is the ‘waiter’. This time it is the talkative one. Sometimes those waiting talk a lot and sometimes they are the silent partner. Nervousness can come out in many ways. The talkers can’t stop talking and the silent ones just can’t start.

The young couple is called. He is the ‘proceduree’. I see a warm look pass between them as he hands over his cell phone and heads to the back room. She obviously cares for him and he cares for her. Shouldn’t that be part of the medical record? We know so much about our patients but do we know the most important things? Do we know if they are loved and cared for? Do we know if they go home to comfort or go home to nothing? Do they have someone who will give them a hug? Do they have a family that cares?

Someone calls my name to join my husband. He is all set with his IV, his monitor and his wristbands (one for basic information and one for his allergies). They have reviewed his medical history yet again and have confirmed that his ID matches his face. He has been instructed about the procedure and is ready to go but he needs to undergo the obligatory wait before being rolled back. This way the ‘proceduree’ can have his family sit with him before the procedure.

I don't see any robots.

The patient in the next curtained cubicle has an inattentive wife texting and nodding to no one in particular. Aren't loving couples supposed to put electronics aside when the need to talk and the need for hugs outweigh the need for electronic friends? She must have heard my thoughts as she gets up and closes both curtains that separate our husband's cubicles.

While, I do like air conditioning on very hot days in the middle of summer, this is October and someone has cranked up the air conditioning. Is it to cool down hot instruments? Is it to make an uncomfortable situation even more so? Did someone decide it was August? No answers seem to be available and I am glad I wore a nice warm jacket but I think my husband, in sheet and gown, must be freezing. I ask for a blanket and then I remember, he wouldn't care. The drip, drip of the IV now contains a magic elixir that will help him relax as a metal tube is inserted down his throat. Fortunately, he won't remember much about this.

I listen as more people are called to the back. Jason and Lesley, Vicki and Carl, I don't know them and they don't know me but I am reminded of the day another ‘waiter’ was a friend of mine. That time, we were in a different doctor's office. Each of us was coping with our husband's procedure and possible outcomes and the uncertain future. I think we became better friends that day. There is something about sitting and waiting together while concerned about someone you love more than life itself. It is something you can't verbalize and can't share except through a hug or a caring glance. I can't even explain it very well but now she is a more cherished friend because of what we have seen together and experienced since.

My husband will return soon from the back room. The doctor will come in and tell us the procedure went well and then will tell us what he thinks. I will process all of this differently than my husband, as I am a physician myself. But today, I am the wife and the life partner and the person who will bring him home for hugs and chicken soup and living life in a caring family.

The waiting room is a stopping place in our busy lives. Sometimes it is routine and sometimes it changes things forever.
The Shadow of Fear

I lie awake at night imagining
white coats
black microscopes
red tubes of my blood
freed droplet by droplet
counted, stained, smeared, and spread on glass slides
spine drained yellow fluid
brittles with each draw--
doctors sift through the strength, kindness, integrity
the clean eating and long workouts
searching for the cancer once more

my heart pounds in my throat

they say they will call in 48 hours
the hands on my clock seem to have grasped tightly and dug in
time crawls forward. I will it to sprint
inches, I wish it to leap
and I lie petrified
under the shadow of

fear for my job
fear for my family
fear for my future
fear for my life

the hospital was all right angles and absolutes
until the lines blurred
I will never be absolutely cured ever again
cancer rides the coattails of a remission for eternity

two days gone. I drag myself out of bed
puffy face, baggy eyes
a silhouette as I clutch my phone
waiting…
it rings and finally-
sweet relief shines through

—Preeta Gupta
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student
Girl
Mia Gamage
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student
Axis II-B

--- Borderline ---

Your diagnosis misapplied
Your hope for wholeness, brushed aside
Your self-cutting: uncured, hated
Instead of healed: shamed, berated
Classified as “simply being”

--- Borderline ---

Of treatments I wish I could give
To offer hope for you to live
But my white coat cannot invite
More healing than your own insight
To prevent crossing death’s teasing

--- Borderline ---

I draw, giving you three letters
To aid flight from psychic fetters --
Attendings speak of DBT
I watch your eyes, and hope you see
Freedom to live as you’re meeting

--- Borderline ---

—Mark Wells
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student

--- Borderline ---

1 In psychiatry, older versions of the Diagnostics and Statistical Manual referenced the second axis as personality disorders. Among these, borderline personality disorder is grouped with Cluster B types
The List

Courtney Yong
OSUCOM 4th Year Medical Student

My legs burn with fatigue when I finally reach a clearing in the woods, and my heart sinks when I see the precipice. I’ve been running for months, but now I finally come to a stop, panting, and peer over the edge.

A thick fog fills the clearing and the chasm, and all I can see within it is a gentle white haze gathering in the uncertain depths. I strain my eyes to see through the clouds to the other side, but from my point of view, there is nothing. I can hear the wind swirling in the depths, and I imagine it to be a very far drop.

I let out a sigh and sit myself on a soft patch of grass near the edge. I can feel the layers of sweat and grime crumble as my legs fold beneath me. I finally heave my pack off my back and set it beside me. I knew this was coming. At the beginning of this ordeal, when I, like many others, put my name on The List, they told us that it would come to this one final leap of faith. Literally. They told us about the paradise on the other side, the bright future that awaits us all, if we are able to make the leap.

We were also told that some of us wouldn’t make it. That instead we would fall into the unknown oblivion of the miasma before me. The fall terrifies me, not knowing where I might fall to terrifies me even more.

I take out my water bottle and finish off what little I have left. I’m at the end, after all. We were given enough
provisions to make it to the very end, but no farther. I need to make the decision either to jump or to meet my end in thirst and starvation.

I remind myself that I chose this fate from The List of choices I had, The List on which I so willingly wrote my name just months ago.

I realize that after my journey, I'm exhausted and likely won't be able to jump very far. I need to make my leap as easy as possible, if I have any hope of making it to the other side. I don't even know how far away the other side is, but I know I need to give it my best effort.

I look down at my heavy pack and immediately put it on my list of things to stay behind. Whether I make it to the other side or not, I won't need it. I remove my thick, military-style coat and the sweater underneath and shiver in my light t-shirt. I tug off my heavy boots and wiggle my sock-clad toes for the first time in weeks.

I stand right at the edge, my toes curling around the sharp angle of the drop. I take a deep breath and look back over my shoulder, reminding myself of the journey. I've come too far to not make the leap.

A figure emerges from the woods close to me and approaches the clearing, brushing her blonde hair from her face. She struggles to catch her breath, and as she does, she recognizes me. We had eaten dinner together about halfway through the trek and shared stories about our families, our lives before this ordeal. She smiles, and I smile back. I see her survey the clearing, the precipice, and her face changes as she realizes the point she's reached.

That's when I notice the other figures gathering at the edge. The fog is dense, but I can see the shadows of several others like me, standing or sitting at this break in our fate. Through my journey, I've met many of them, and we've become good friends. I know not all of us will make it, but -- naively -- I'm praying we will. I can only hope I'll see them again on the other side.

Movement catches my eye and I turn toward it. I see a figure make the leap. My breath catches in my throat. Just as he reaches the peak of his desperate dive, the fog consumes him and any sound he may have made. I almost cry out and jump toward the place where he disappeared, but I catch myself. There's no telling now what became of him. The only way to tell is to make it to the other side.

That first one sparks a flurry of others who disappear into the mist, and I know it's time. I back up from the edge and swallow, only to have it stick in my throat. My resolve wants to waver, but I don't let it. I get as far away from the edge as possible, standing just at the threshold of the trees. My legs stiffen in anticipation.

I turn my head one last time to the dark, dank trees, remembering what my life once was before this whole ordeal began. I ache, just a little, to be back there, preparing and over-preparing for this moment but not able to fully appreciate its gravity. The memories give me confidence: I am ready for this. Hope for the future encourages me.

The first deep breath, a promise not to look back. A second to check my resolve.

I run across the soft grass soundlessly, the wind catching in my sweat-encrusted hair. My last step lands perfectly against the brink, and I push off with everything I have. The mist feels cool as it engulfs me.

I reach the crest and close my eyes.
The Surgeon’s Knot

And you will tell me
it was not enough
that I cut the knot too close
to the tie and now it will all unravel.
You will tell me stand up straight,
ever slouch, never be late,
ever fail to appreciate the opportunity
I have just to be here.
You play with life like it’s a game
I’m waiting to be called in
to cut the metaphorical ribbon flick the wrist.
Play me coach, put me in
fill the room with our hands
you’re the captain, my captain
yet now you’ve forgotten my name
and at what point do I refrain
from making myself known?

Oh if only I had known
now I am pristine in my white and blonde
just a little too much “girl in scrubs, take one”
I know you’re wondering if I can take it
a punch to the gut, my dues every night to make it
the punch lands hard to my liver as I quiver
with the doubt you’ve unveiled, I’m impaled
swelling with the uncertainty
that maybe this
is too much.

Stand up straight, never slouch
always sir and ma’am giving all my damns
ever damn day and most of the nights
I fight just to stay in the race
forget winning, I only want my place on the track
I’ll stay in my lane with my scissors screw-up
flick the wrist and wonder how long the ends of a knot have to be
for you to see that I grew up
instead you just see through me with your
stand up straight, never slouch
don’t touch that get out

—Jessica Rutsky
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student
Winner, Best Poetry Piece 2016
NURSING U.

You have worked very hard
Throughout all of the year.
You have given everything:
   Blood, sweat and tear.
You may not get praised
   For a job done so well.
You bring in your lunch,
   But when you’ll eat,
   Who can tell.
You make your way back
   Day in and day out.
Most times it’s a struggle,
   No doubt.
You have compassion, warm touch,
   All virtues worthwhile,
You do what you can to bring on a smile.
You do not get paid what you truly deserve.
   Yet, you continue to serve
And to serve and to serve.
You take care of others without regard for your life.
You have many roles:
   Nurse, Friend, Sister, Mother, Husband, Brother or Wife.
   You are constantly busy
   There’s no time to be idle.
You are so important, so caring, so vital.
   Please give to yourself often, even daily,
Just a little of that which you give others so freely.
For you and you alone have made someone whole.
   Now, take care of yourself,
   Body, mind, and soul.
Time here on Earth is limited, it’s true.
   You must not forget to take care of
   YOU!

—Wendy Rickerd
OSU College of Nursing
Sore Calves

Mark Wells
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student

I woke up with sore calves this morning. My abs ached as I sat up in bed. With each swing of my arms, my triceps cried out. My heart held vigil and remembered why my body ached. My mind called up the images of yesterday, and I remembered my last day on surgery:

I rise excited for my final day, bopping away to Taylor Swift’s “We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together” immediately before heading to the hospital. Don’t get me wrong, I love learning from all patients I encounter, and I greatly respect the skill with which surgical teams assess and operate on patients. However, by this morning, I have realized that I do not want the majority of my days spent in the operating room.

After frantically rounding through new patients, I head to a surgical suite with another student to watch a minor procedure. However, as the case begins, a code is called on a patient our team had rounded on earlier. We run to the floor and find his door surrounded by medical personnel and family. After stabilizing him, the team decides to take him for an emergent surgery to prevent further complications. We gain consent from his son and whisk him to the operating room.

We tick down the usual preparations: (1) equipment arranged, (2) skin cleaned and draped, (3) repeated warnings about the sterile field that medical students are oh-so-prone to violate. The initial incision comes quickly. The surgery proceeds at a more rapid pace than I am used to. Amid the flurried activity, it strikes me how absurd it would be to any outsider that this procedure could help save this man’s --

Flat line.

Anesthesiologists rush to determine the cause of the episode, while surgeons complete the last moments of the procedure. Chest compressions begin in the non-sterile area, and a nurse motions me to join. I’m not known for my strength, and this is my first time participating in a code. Should I even help?
One, two, three.

I pump my body, hands outstretched, firmly locked over his chest. I thrust myself up on my tiptoes to ensure my whole upper body comes down upon this man’s chest with whatever weight I have. A sharp crack signals the effectiveness of my strokes.

I jump off and stumble about, finding that a line has formed to rotate through chest compressions. We pause and reassess: no pulse. I inwardly ask every saint in heaven and earth to intercede for this man, as another person gestures for a changing of the guards.

One, two, three.

My muscles are jolted back into action while pressing on this man’s sternum. I am surrounded by the noises of monitors and physicians deliberating. More sweat, more prayers.

I again leap off and notice people’s reactions around the room. For most of the students, this is our first experience actively participating in a code. We had trained on a model how to administer compressions, but in the heat of an operation, we find ourselves unsure of our ability to help.

One, two, three.

My eyes are wide with tension. I am putting every ounce of energy I can muster into preserving this man’s life. I get breathless, my prayers shifting to silent cries: “mercy, mercy, mercy.”

Off again. We have been going for thirty minutes, but it feels like hours. We get a pacemaker in place: No heartbeat. More compressions: No rhythm. More talk: No answers.

Code called. Time of death marked.

And just like that, I witness the first death of my life. Yes, I already had been touched by the death of several relatives. However, this moment marks the first time I personally had witnessed someone alive pass into death. I petition for the peaceful repose of his soul as I place a hand on his leg. Memory eternal.

“Don’t let it get to you. Once you’ve seen one-hundred thirty-four, you can’t do that,” a scrub technician comments to me.

“But you have kept tally,” I reply, the specificity of his number disclosing his personal practice.

“Yes, but it’ll drive you mad,” he says.

I know it can, but I don’t believe it must. Physicians carry a great burden in seeing people when their lives have turned for the worst, but reflection on these moments can bring peace. When we don’t resurrect the dying, we remember how to grieve, how to comfort, and – once the dust has settled – how to reflect on our own mortality.

My music shifts by evening from the likes of Swift to funerary chants. Even if I never return to the operating rooms, encounters like these stick with me because they will form my career. Clinical years not only familiarize students with a broad range of specialties, but shape our memories for a lifetime. Already, certain articles of clothing or motions of my body call me to meditation, if only for a moment, to lives, faces, people I have encountered at their darkest times.

I am still not sure of what I want to do in medicine, but this I do know: I am blessed to live and die with people in these settings. I am blessed to remember and pray for all – patients, families and colleagues alike.

I am blessed to have sore calves in the morning.
Anatomy

There is a photo my sister laid
in pallid fingers stretched
over a jazz organ whose maws are
keeping me awake to listen
to the shrieks of my siblings running
from that stiffening palm and flick
of the frozen wrist trailed
by crisscrossing tubes jutting
out of cooling blankets hiding
the bent knees crawling
towards grizzly bears stalking
Yellowstone mountains fading
away into a fog covering
memories of the strength invested
in inflated calves curving
bloated feet to kick
waiting soccer balls that cannon
into stubborn nets hoisting
Mediterranean fish that stung
the Roman nose grown
thin as the rest wastes
and the features exaggerate
like a puppet painted
jaundice yellow staining
eyes that are opened
by creaking eyelids moving
like parched lips never sated
but saying:
I love you guys... so much.
Then I remember:
this isn't him.

So a cut is made
and skin is shed
into a bucket making
everything
mechanical.

— Adriana Giuliani
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student
An Ocean’s Moment
Michael Muszynski, MD
1979 OSUCOM Alumnus
Nora’s grip on the gas pump tightened, willing the two geese negotiating traffic forward. The weekend traffic was slow and three of the four lanes had come to a standstill. Why was it, she mused, that something possessing the power of flight refused to use it at the very moment it could be most helpful, even life-saving? The screech and the squawk came in tandem; one of the geese had been clipped. Some of the other drivers honked, accusing the culprit of ruining their joint philanthropy. Nora craned her neck, seeing that the goose was alive and noisily testing its status with a dramatic flapping of wings. The buzzing in her pocket drew her attention downward. Colin again undoubtedly. She topped off the tank and skipped a greeting, mumbling, “Yes, yes. You know I’m on my way.”

“Do I, dear?” Her boss’s sugary voice startled her.

“Karen!” she blurted out, cringing at her impulsiveness. “Karen—I thought you were my boyfri—I mean, I’m sorry I didn’t check first. So out of character, but it’s Saturday, so, you know—”

Nora’s boss cut into her chatter, “Ok then. Can you swing by the office, darling? Anytime. I have an offer and this time I’m not making the mistake of discussing it with you over the phone.”

***

The glow of the TV cast Colin’s still shadow onto the curtains as Nora pulled into his driveway later that evening. She had explained she was running behind, but had not provided details. He rarely asked for them. Earlier in their relationship she had often made the mistake of telling Colin more information than he had asked for. They had not talked for a week. As a child, Nora used to squeal in protest when her mother pulled the scratchy pink sweater over her head on particularly cold winter mornings. Her periods of not speaking to Colin always provoked memories of that discomfort: piercing cold accompanied by a dull, persistent itch she could not rid herself of. This itchy silence always worked away at her nerves until she broke and sent the obligatory, “let’s talk” text. Colin did not want details or depth, they only created turbulence in his mind. And so she had settled into her placid routine.

He’ll see it in my face. Nora flipped down the mirror and studied her countenance. He’ll see it in my eyes. Suddenly she could not remember what she had looked like a few hours ago, before her meeting with Karen. She raised her eyebrows and pulled back her cheeks, but it all looked comical. She let her face fall again. He will know but he will not ask. Colin poked his head around the screen door, gazing expectantly into the lit interior of her car. With a heavy breath and one last glance at the mirror Nora stepped into the darkness.

Their romance had a formula, although Colin had scoffed at this when Nora accused him of conventionalism during an argument two Sundays ago. Did he really not realize? Date Night, as he lovingly (and she never) called it, had become calculable. There was dinner at a restaurant chosen due to its status followed by some activity commonly deemed romantic, and ending in sex resulting in mild to moderate satisfaction. Nevertheless, Nora’s underlying frustration with the relationship did not touch its overarching placidity. Just yesterday, when her mother had asked how things with Colin were, she had hummed with earnestness, “Things are really great.”

Tonight, they sat in a dim room draped in rich colors to encourage intimacy. Colin was whispering to the waiter his thoughts on the Malbec, unconsciously mimicking the hushed feel of the room. The salad in front of Nora was limp, but she kept picking at it with her fork, mindlessly forming a ring on her plate. He had not commented on her demeanor, if he had noticed at all.

“I said,” Colin’s voice roused her out of her haze, “how did you end up all the way over there?”

Nora had been gazing beyond Colin’s shoulder, unaware of their present conversation, “Where?” Her eyes flitted up to study his face, the candlelight casting grimness across his countenance. Or perhaps it wasn’t the candlelight.
“On Northwest- there are other gas stations, you know. Closer.”
Nora choked down a sarcastic response. **Yes, Colin, she knew.** Her fork began circling again, a feeling of heaviness settling on her shoulders and radiating through her fingers as they moved. She imagined her legs were bolted down. “No reason,” she shrugged, grabbing the carefully selected wine with her free hand.

There really had been no reason because there never was. She often found herself driving all over the city under pretenses that dissolved by the time she reached her destination. These pointless trips had begun a few months after she had moved to the city for her current job, still waiting for her dream company to call. There was a point somewhere after college when Nora’s “I will’s” congealed into “I am’s.” and the future became the present reality of a mid-size city moderate in all things with a strikingly similar path to her parents. In her mind, of course, she faithfully recited: **this is different.** Still every day became a purgatory of repeated behaviors. To Nora, her aimless drives felt like the only real action in her life, even if she ended each time in the same chipped carport in which she had begun. She consistently maintained a vivid image of herself quietly driving in her Jeep when she finally got the call offering her the position she had worked diligently towards for years. In reality, Nora knew the call had become an impossibility- she had stopped sending updates and watching for alerts of an opening for a year. Her ascent had lost momentum and so she stayed confined to increasingly improbable dreams.

Nora smiled at this thought just as Colin finished his story about the car rental disaster at work. He chuckled and tipped back the last of his wine, his deep brown eyes brightly studying her face.

In bed that night, Colin grunted while Nora thought of geese.
“I’m leaving,” she whispered into the darkness.

***
“Japan!” Karen’s plum lips had framed her white teeth as she held the words in the space between them with her splayed hands. She was not asking- she was selling. She and Nora had been through this before: better benefits, exciting locations, more responsibilities. Each time the incentives compiled and yet each time there was a way Nora found to decline. She had lost the will to advance in a job she had never seen as permanent.

Nora looked down at her feet pointed awkwardly inward forming a “V.” Rejection was easier over the phone. Karen’s hands stayed hovering, punctuating the silence, until Nora’s sigh brought them back down to rest on the desk.

“What is it this time?” Karen’s false enthusiasm was gone.
“You know I can’t go to Japan.”
“No, I asked you because I know you can. Nora dear, this is it-it’s time to go do things for this company. Languishing in this musty office is accomplishing nothing for either of us.”

Go. Do it. “Karen, I’m so sorry, I really am. Your confidence means so much, but bringing me in here and making me turn you down in person isn’t going to change my answer. My life is here.”

The edges of Karen’s mouth rose in an attempt to look sympathetic. “Yes, I suppose your life now is here-but I’m asking for you to take it to Japan. Japan, Nora, Japan!” Her hands were back in the air in one last sales pitch.

Yes. Yes, I would. If only I could. “Keep me in mind for next time, will you?” Nora grinned dumbly in an attempt to show her appreciation, which accomplished nothing besides making them both feel embarrassed.

Nearly halfway home, her phone began buzzing. Colin was excited, “I just made reservations at Table Mediterranean. Paper says it’s great, so does Steve at work. Sound ok, Nor?”

“Uh huh, I’ve heard good things, too” Nora replied, “Sorry I’m late. I’ll be around soon.”

Colin began reading the newspaper review as she nodded along, as if to prove she was listening. Bending her neck to cradle the phone next to her ear, Nora checked the road and made a quick U-turn. The list of the starters brought her foot down harder on the gas, the main courses pushed her past two slow moving sedans, and the final crescendo of desserts brought Nora to a screeching halt back in the parking lot she had left a few minutes earlier.

“When do I leave?” Nora’s words caused Karen to jerk her head up, her short blond bob accentuating her surprise.

At first Karen was quiet, unsure if she should sugar-coat the truth. A quick study of Nora’s face, barely containing an almost rabid, wide-eyed excitement, and she decided against it, “Tomorrow. I’ll have your flight and accommodations booked immediately.”

Back outside Nora stood on the blacktop staring into the dusk darkened sky and willing her breathing to calm. Tomorrow. The road was empty as she drove to Colin’s.

***

Nora arrived in seat 27J prepared with an itinerary, the name of a driver, and a luggage claim tag for a suitcase full of impractical clothing. Unsure of the duration of her trip or of the weather, she had stuck to her favorite outfits, throwing them hastily into her suitcase this morning. She realized in the taxi this meant a wardrobe of black, threadbare, and largely work inappropriate attire. Her revelation came too late- she had already turned over her keys to her worried mother, and any change in plans would necessitate another round of assurances and goodbyes.

She was watching 27H shove his bulging backpack into the overhead compartment when she remembered: Colin. In her hurry this morning, the “let’s talk” text had not been sent to patch over last night’s revelation. “Try doing Date Night with a missing variable,” she muttered under her breath. Her eyes widened at this audible burst of emotion. Why was leaving so easy? She had been happy.

The cabin lights dimmed and the engines gathered power, pushing the plane into the sky. Nora looked out over the wings.
Argos

Adriana Giuliani
OSUCOM 1st Year Medical Student

Argo was a mutt. He was half something and a dash of something-or-other- no one could tell. The humane shelter vet tried to convince us that he was half beagle. He grew to be two and a half feet tall. Evidently, he was not a beagle.

He was a dog stitched together from wolf, golden retriever, Labrador, Tibetan mastiff and, maybe, a tiny bit of beagle. He had thick golden hair and white markings, abandoned in tufts throughout the summer. A tail joyously curled and constantly wagging wiped clean. A tongue that always lolled out the left side of his mouth. His eyes were big and brown and trusting, stolen from a doe.

Argo was a replacement dog. Family dog 2.0. The understudy of Dog 1, Lupo, who had been hit by a car and killed. Dog 2.0 was named Argo per popular vote. “Argo” was short for “Argos” and thus satisfied the two-syllable, ending-with-a-vowel rule my mother found in a book about dog training. Argos was Odysseus's faithful pet as told in The Odyssey. After twenty years away, Odysseus returns to his home in the disguise of a beggar. Argos, now old and feeble, still recognizes his old master and manages to wag his tail in greeting. Then, he dies.

Argo was a good dog. He would appropriately growl and bark whenever a stranger or strange dog passed by the house. He knew how to SIT, STAY, COME, DOWN, SHAKE, and particularly how to TREAT. At the call of BUS at 6:36 AM, he would sprint over to hump my brother's backpack. A “good puppy boy” my mom would say. He was family.

Argo was particular family to my brother- my brother's only brother. In the first few weeks of Argo's adoption, he was kept in a cage. My brother took a sleeping bag and slept out in the kitchen with the dog, reading children's stories aloud to lull them both to sleep. As they grew up, they wrestled and watched TV together. They sprinted through snow fields and stole bacon from counters. Argo whined as he left for school and jumped when he came back.

Argo was a continuous spot of joy. He was our defender as our parents scuttled back and forth for chemotherapy and radiation. A constant, loyal, noble companion that could force a smile with a flick of the tail. He waited for us to come home, when no one else was there.

In the last two years of his life, after a near-fatal case of pancreatitis, Argo was diagnosed with diabetes while my father was diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer. Argo was submitted to a routine at precisely 6:20 AM and 6:20 PM every day: 2/3 cup dry dog food, 1/3 can wet food, spoonful of cat food, spoonful of peanut butter, six Benadryl in the morning, one Ceftriaxone in the evening. 22 units of insulin. Put out for potty. Let back inside. Two treats.

There were variations on this theme. He passed between various allergy and staph infection pills. Yogurt eventually replaced peanut butter. Insulin varied on trial and error. If he was disoriented and sliding around the floors or, as was sometimes the case, foaming at the mouth and having seizures, we fed him more treats.

My father had declared that Argo and he would pass on together. Argo did not. The cancer that gripped my father's superior vena cava squeezed more tightly and beckoned him on a new journey. Argo held on. He was a head to pet for my mother and a rock for my brother. He lived longer than anyone- the vets, my parents, even myself- had allowed.
Let me tell you a secret:

At the end of his life, every blind dog can see the history of his place. He can see the ghosts lounging in armchairs and stealing chocolate berries from cupboards. The deaf dogs can hear the piano playing Jimmy Smith and the shuffling feet to Aretha Franklin. Argo was blind and nearing deaf. He could see and hear all of these things, whining as he rambled among hallways of the past.

“Night-night Argo! Go night-night!” my mother and I would entreat, but he wouldn’t take our subtle hints. Death, though, he understood better than the rest of us. In that past, as all dying dogs hear and see and smell, he knew the having and the loss— the teetering balance of our lives. I pet him on his life-bed as he painfully slept and I awaited the arrival of his deathbed.

He did die, after three days of begging for it. My brother was on vacation at the time. He said his goodbyes via FaceTime.

We brought him to the vet on the last day, with the intention of “putting him down.” We had our reservations about non-natural deaths but these were beaten down by Argo’s feeble, pained, insistent whines. The pet gave us painkillers instead, so we could let him die as he would.

Upon arriving back home, it was clear he was already going, almost gone. He needed no drugs to slow his heartbeat, no medicine to soothe his pain. He was dying on his own.

I gave him the hug my brother had asked me to give him. I petted his head as—

There it was. Forceful knockings of key into lock and the front door burst open. My father stood there, surrounded by an aura of heavenly might. Argo looked up, attentive. He had spent the whole day in the past and was now called to the present.

One hand my father held out to the dog. The other held a leash. He was returned, late as Odysseus always was, to claim his hound. One more wag of the tail.

Sunset in Maui
Cindy Chang
OSUCOM 3rd Year Medical Student
The Anatomy of a Heartbeat

How do you measure a heartbeat?
Is it there in the lub dub, lub dub,
a familiar friend tapping at the door,
A knock-knock-knocking
that ticks away the hourless seconds?

Or is it in the spaces between?
When the expectant hush
is solely but the beginnings
of a dream of forward motion;
A lazy river of quiet solitude
as it meanders
toward the raging rapids around the bend.

Or perhaps something else entirely?
The twinning of two souls?
Each separate heart beating in harmony with the other;
Creating a new rhythm and melody
never before heard by a soul in the world,
blossoming under the tutelage
of this strange new composer.

Or even yet, is it measured by its stopping?
The death knell sounding,
its measuring time complete,
and in that completion –
Perfection.
A job well done,
signifying the end of a life
so that its shade might live on.

And at this last,
when the beating heart has stilled and cooled –
Does it still contain the life it held?
Is its wisdom imbued in every cell?
Watching for the ripe time
waiting for the One
who will know its beauty
and recognize its worth
so that it can begin to silently beat again

In the palm of her hand,
Chosen and Chooser,
each drawn to the other
with a staccato moment of fluttering
where myriad worlds are born and lived
and then implode
with a final cataclysmic force

as the sound and noise rain down around her
with the crashing of twinned towers.

And as her world begins to crumble to ash
the silent beating grows louder –
Straining at its invisible cage,
Pulling against the rigid iron bars,
Willing her to hear with different ears,
the Beauty that still remains

Pulsing in her veins,
Revealing the refuge she so desperately seeks,
Taking hold
in the echoing silence –
Growing louder,
Then louder still,
Until she recognizes the miracle
in the measured beats of her own infinite heart.

—Katie Cunin, MD
2005 OSUCOM Alumna
A Heart of Hope

Katie Cunin, MD
2005 OSUCOM Alumna
Winner, Best Fiction Piece 2016

There I was, in the middle of gross anatomy lab, scrubs and dirty white coat donned, dressed to the nines in layers of blue nitrile gloves and the dingiest, least-loved pair of shoes possible to help ward off the smell of the embalming fluid and any haphazard, low flying debris. We were elbow deep in studying the thorax. Lecture today had been about the most vital of structures – the heart with its four chambers and valves and the myriad ways the lifeblood flowed through it, pulsing its way to create this miracle of life. I remember being so excited to see this powerhouse of the body in person. Little did I know, nor did any of us, what this seemingly ordinary day would bring.

How, by the end of it, we would all lay scattered in pieces, the world as we had known it ended and never to be made whole in the same way again. The events of the day would be dissected and studied, just as we were now doing with the cadavers in front of us, but it would be some time before the miracles amidst the tragedies and terrors of that day would be brought to light.

All I knew at that time was that the day started out like any other. So cliché, but so true. Life at the beginning of medical school had become a blur of time, one day blending into the next, only the different body systems we were studying marking the passage of time. Countless hours were spent in lecture and the library, trying desperately to stay abreast of the immense amount of material we were covering each day. Time seemed to slow a bit when we were in anatomy lab, faced with the reality of what we had been reading about suddenly coming to life in front of us.

The back, with all its muscles and connections, slowly introducing us to our selfless donors so that we might learn more about the human body than any book could ever teach us. Moving down to the legs to see just what it was that let us walk upright and live this life that we do. Turning our cadavers over eventually to discover the arms and the hands.

And, oh, the miracle of the hands; those delicately intricate structures that give us the ability to write, to type, to create, to touch, to do so much that we take for granted. I’d never really given a thought to how complex the hand was until I saw it laid out before me.

But on this particular day, that extraordinary moment was far away, because I was now holding a human heart, quite literally, in my hands. It gave new meaning to the phrase and the significance of the moment was not lost on me. There was such reverence and awe as we cut the last ties of our donor’s heart from her body and lifted it out for all our group to see. This moment, this precious gift of seeing the magic at the core of life made manifest, this was what we had come for. Even amidst chatter about the different structures we needed to locate and examine, there was a hushed, sacred feeling to our conversations. We knew that we were in the presence of the miraculous.

At the time, we were so engrossed that we didn’t notice the whispers that started to spread like wildfire throughout the lab. Different levels of conversation were old hat by this time and we’d learned to tune out the distractions when we needed to. But this noise kept building until we finally had to look up and saw a teaching assistant making his way through the lab. The cacophony of voices seemed to swirl around him but in his wake were eddies of shocked silence. We watched in anticipation as he made his way to our end of the room, many thoughts running through our group.

Was there going to be a pop quiz?
Did someone cheat on the last test?
Had someone fainted again?

We had no idea what he was going to say and when he was close enough to hear, his words didn’t compute, for they had nothing, and everything, to do with us. Comprehension just wasn’t a possibility in that moment.

“A plane just crashed into the World Trade Center in New York,” he said, the echoes of his words reverberating, changing our past and our future in that one instant.

We all stared at him, confused, and I shook my head disbelievingly. It didn’t make sense, nothing about it made sense. My first thought was that there was some sort of terrible accident, a pilot miscalculation, images of a small plane flying through my mind. Then as the minutes passed and...
the realization of the unlikeliness of that began to sink in, my next thought was of the people, both on the plane and in the building, and what grief and broken hearts awaited their families and loved ones.

I tried to recall the feelings of just seconds before, to hold on to the wonder and awe as it all threatened to slip away in the crashing of the world around me. A remote part of me knew that just as my parents remembered where they were when they heard that JFK had been shot, this moment would be burned into the fabric of my life, coloring everything to come. In the space of that thought, I knew that everything was different, everything had changed and I looked for something to hold onto in the swirling maelstrom of confusion and fear that was beginning to set in.

At that moment, I glanced down and remembered what my helpless hands were holding.

I looked at this beautifully perfect human heart, with all of its lifetime contained within the caverns of its walls. All of its loves and losses, pain and joy, oceans of sorrow and great happiness, etched into its very cells that were now wide open for all to see and wonder. And even though it took me years to sift through the scars and grief surrounding September 11th, the paradox of that moment is part of what carried me through. That singular space of beauty and wonder that carried on despite the devastation and destruction deeply imprinted itself into every fiber of my being, reminding me that not all of the world is evil and that hope still exists. Even if you have to look for it in the most unlikely of places, like a human heart held in one’s hands in a gross anatomy lab.

Peace
Yasaman Kazerooni
OSUCOM 2nd Year Medical Student
Fusion

It was a moment of connection;
we moved as though we were all knocking
on the same door. And we believed somehow
if we focused all of our energy
on a single second of calling
that someone would come to answer us.
How could even the most distant
universe not feel the radiation of our gazes
or the lights from thousands of cell phones
as we swayed to the anthem of our generation?
We have never been more united
in breath and the exhalation of our hopes
into the warm summer air. Surely, there must be
guardians of these dreams that float like lanterns
into the abyss that astronauts call dark matter
and Christians call Heaven.

—Sarah Horner
OSUCOM 2nd Year Medical Student
And So She Soars

It is time to learn how to listen to the wind,
sway to and fro in its deep caresses,
feel its smoky tendrils traipse across your face.
Secrets not yet told
to be found between the folds of its invisible threads –
Of a love transcendent,
Of a grief transparent,
Of a heart made whole.
Of limitlessness,
And omnipotence,
And a resounding joy.
All contained within the whispering,
heralded by the starry night sky,
flashing across the luminescent heavens
where her soul now flies.

—Katie Cunin, MD
2005 OSUCOM Alumna

Bee
Mia Gamage
OSUCOM 1st Year
Medical Student