Letter from our Patron

It is such a pleasure for me to read yet another issue of *Ad Libitum* as it moves from infancy to the toddler stage. Indeed, this particular toddler must be a prodigy since what it says and shows are indicative of a very rapid rate of literary and artistic growth.

What I also find interesting is how the eclectic nature of the magazine’s material reflects the myriad interests, talents, and creativity of all members of the Einstein community—students of medicine and science, faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and the secretarial, administrative and support staff; they all express their hearts and minds, sharing their thoughts with each other. But in addition to sharing, which by itself is no small thing, I think *Ad Libitum* fosters a definite, albeit subtle, cognitive, emotional and spiritual connection between persons of different backgrounds, accomplishments and professional goals, bringing to fore the enormous power that prose and poetry and visual art have to inspire and enrich our lives. Particularly in an institution like this, with students, biomedical scientists and physicians working in so many different disciplines, with hundreds of research projects conducted within all these disciplines, with specialists in different disciplines and research fields challenged to comprehend one another’s work and achieve an integration of knowledge that overcomes the fragmented and reductionist nature of modern biomedical research, we find common ground between the covers of each issue of *Ad Libitum*.

My compliments to past and current *Ad Libitum* editors whose commitment to the magazine and diligence assures continuation of a product of high quality. And my sincerest thanks to all members of the Einstein community whose contributions make this possible.

Albert S. Kuperman, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Educational Affairs

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The Ad Libitum team would like to thank those who have supported this magazine through all its incarnations:

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Karen Gardner
Letter from the Editors

It is with great pleasure that we present you with the sixth volume of Ad Libitum, the annual art and literary magazine of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Ad Libitum provides a forum for original prose, poetry, photography and other arts. Within these pages, we hope that you will find inspiration for your own creative endeavors.

This year we were overwhelmed with the number and quality of submissions. This speaks for the growing popularity of the magazine, as well as the gamut of artistic talent present within this community. We have also had an extremely talented team, and the magazine in your hands represents the concerted effort of many people. We encourage you, our readers, to become involved in the process of creating next year’s magazine – it is tremendous fun.

In the tradition of our founders, we offer you with this opportunity to share in the artistic endeavors of your colleagues, and to enjoy it ad libitum.

Sarah E. Lutz & Mariam Kabir
Editors-in-Chief
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Just once, I wish that the sky at sunrise was the same as the one at sunset the night before, when Terri and I started walking along the beach. It’s my nightmare, my living hell, but she thinks it’s just schizophrenia, and that it will go away if I keep taking the medication that doctors prescribe for me.

I know better, of course.

Last night we began walking, as we do every night, hand in hand down the beach. The ocean’s careless muttering was to our right, like it’s been every night I can remember. I know, because we never really sleep, and our walks form an unbroken chain of memory of sameness and difference.

Terri’s hand is in mine, and as dawn approaches, she looks at me as the world gets lighter around us, and smiles. “How romantic is that? We stroll along the beach, talking the night away, and we get to see the sun rise.” She grips my hand more tightly, and I know she’s pulling me to her for a kiss, because we do this every night, every morning. I kiss her, knowing, because she is the only angel I have in the hell we walk through day and night.

As the morning slowly lightens over the beach, my breathing comes faster and my chest tightens. Terri notices. I delay as long as I can, but then I look up to see yellow polka dots against a green plaid background, and know that it’s wrong, it’s not blue with white clouds like it’s supposed to be. My heart does that little horror jig it does, and I want to fall down and curl and moan with fear and loss, but Terri is with me, looking at me, unaware that we have just walked into a new day even further from home.

Why she never notices the change from day to day I have no idea. Yesterday, there were no polka dots, just a green plaid sky, and it was a lousy day in a reality I was happy to leave. After my dawn kiss, we had turned left to leave the water’s edge, feeling the cool sand shift under our feet as we made our way to the parking lot. There, we found our car – it’s always there, be it a Saab, a ZuperFaktor, or a Toyota. I had the key in my right front jeans pocket, so I’d taken it out to open the door for Terri then had gone around to open my own.

“Home, Jeeves,” she’d said with a mischievous grin, and I knew, and didn’t know, where that was. I’d started up the car and pulled us out of the lot, and had driven along familiar unfamiliar streets to our home. That, at least, was never really different, no matter how alien the sky, no matter how far from our original reality we’d come. After pulling into the driveway, we’d gone in through the door on the side porch, and she’d led me upstairs as she usually did, shedding our jeans and shirts and underwear as we went, so that by the time we’d gotten to the bedroom, we were naked. We’d fallen into each other’s arms and made love as the green plaid sky outside the window had brightened into a new day of pain and longing.

Hours later, awakening from a languorous nap together, she’d brought me the pills and a glass of water like she always did, and I’d taken them, dutifully, wishing that she were right and I was wrong, that it was only schizophrenia and I’d be better with the meds. But in my heart of hearts I knew it was not.

Errands that day like usual. We ran into our neighbors going about their own day, who thought they knew us, though we’d only been in their universe for some hours by my reckoning. “Hey, what a glorious day, huh Jack?” one asked, but I’d just shaken my head and locked my jaw on what I really thought. Terri had answered them, but I’d paid no real attention to what she was saying, because to her each day is in the same place as the last, and she always knows our neighbors despite the dislocation that comes with each new dawn. The neighbors had that look they always did, that look which confirms that I don’t belong in their world, no matter their cheery greeting. I couldn’t have agreed with them more.

Later, we had dinner outside on the porch after errands, this over a chardonnay, which I’d opened without cutting myself on the corkscrew. Terri had made one of my favorite dishes, a quick sauté of smoked
salmon, basil, and tomato over angel hair pasta. We’d talked about the possibility of kids, and about our neighbors, about how we both felt that day, and about how fine the wine was, and, while I’d been distracted a bit by the green plaid of the sky, I felt the overpowering love for her that I always did. We never spoke about the color of the sky anymore – I’d given up, since when we had in the past, it had made her worry about me.

“It’s a beautiful evening, Jack. Let’s go to the beach, and have a romantic walk tonight,” she’d said, as we lingered over the last of the bottle, dinner eaten, the plates and utensils already cleared.

“Sure,” I’d replied, as I always did, though a part of my insides wanted to crawl somewhere else inside me as I contemplated the nightly ritual, and the following morning’s new reality to come.

Still, we’d gotten back into the Saab, and drove back to the beach, arriving just as the sun was going down, turning the green of the sky into an ochre, then livid purple, and then black as it finally set. Hand in hand we’d begun walking north, the ocean to our right, and although everything seemed right, being there with her, I knew it wasn’t and wouldn’t ever be, unless we managed to walk through the night to an old reality, one with a sky the blue I remember it being, and against which I compare every new day.

But every damn morning, we somehow slip more out of true, and we walk off the goddamn beach somewhere farther from home, and the horror of it is that I’m the only one who knows it’s different, no matter how many pills I choke down, and we’re always different from the people we meet, always outsiders, and how can we not be if it’s not the same world we were born to? Terri thinks it’s just schizophrenia, and that it will go away if I only keep taking the medication that doctors prescribe for me.

I know better, of course.
Rain

Emily Campagna
Medical Student, 4th year

It’s raining again
Clouds let loose their crystal breath
We are like constant rain
Its essence at our cores

You are one glassy drop
And I, for better or worse, another
We shall fall amidst the air and plop
Into the puddle together

This world of rain is big, bold and insane
Yet somehow while we survive on this planet
We swim ‘round and ‘round again
If we are lucky soon we’ve met

Long days and short days
Like love, the rapturous rain does not care
Through deep blinding fog or sunny rays
Or upon our bodies bare

It’s raining again
Water on the windows streaming down
Water for the flowers, the grain
Water for the seeds our love has sown

Window

Dmitriy Kedrin
MSTP Student, 6th year
Linocut 2008

Untitled

Yardanna Platt
Medical Student, 1st year
“How are you?” – “I am fine” (yet life is such a mess). My feelings are confined in words I can’t express.

“How was your day?” – “Terrific!” (I overslept my class, My labwork was horrific – I stepped on broken glass)

“How did you like the show?” – “I think it was simply great!”

“I felt you sitting close, I couldn’t concentrate).

I have this weird feeling I can’t translate into words. At times, it feels like healing, At times, this feeling hurts.

And when I do my homework Or eat, or dance, or sing I can only think of The phone that doesn’t ring.

**Words**
Alexandra Ogorodnikova
Graduate Student, 1st year
Homework
Chris Hawk
Medical Student, 1st year

The arc of my life
is traced and retraced
across this sheet
of equations, and inequalities

relationships of
lines diverging
never meant to meet
or those that cross
without looking back
unwavering, it seems

My pencil point
chases the arc
aims the arrow
from a simple question
of yesterday
or tomorrow

a deflection
no thicker than that
turning positive to negative
or bringing it back

The Soulful Kiss that Completes
Mariam Kabir
MSTP Student, 5th year
Ink on Paper

River Icicles
Erin McClelland
Postdoctoral Fellow
The Untaught Lesson

Jeremy Mazurek
Medical Student, 4th year

Wow! Nothing in life prepared me for this.

It was early summer 2006. Having logged thousands of library hours in the previous two years and fresh off of Step 1, I had finally reached the clinical years – a time of intense excitement and anxiety. All of the knowledge I had acquired would finally be applied, or so I thought.

I found myself on the labor and delivery floor, a world in which chaos reigns and even the most hardened of veterans get frazzled. Rachel in room 7, at 41 weeks was being induced since the previous evening. The monotonous beep and beat of the fetal monitor was intermittently interrupted by pelvic examinations, blood pressure monitoring, and of course, the screaming and writhing with each contraction. Fourteen hours and an epidural later, it was time to push.

The nurse on one side, myself on the other, we began the count, and like jockeys at the derby, prodded her to push despite the pain. My heart was racing; I could feel my pulse from my temples to my toes. Were those staccato readings of 160 beats-per-minute that of my own heart or that of the baby’s? As the contraction-pushing pair proceeded, the scalp and first few wisps of hair emerged. The attending and resident entered and methodically arranged the arena, seamlessly joining the cheerleading squad mid-count.

“Great, the head is out!” With that, the countdown and energy had intensified, and the resident began instructing Rachel when to push and when to hold off. Looking down at my clean, un-bloodied sneakers, I felt as though it was no longer my place to count. I simply watched, demoted to a fan in the stands, albeit courtside. That was just fine as I stood in awe of the scene. Having never experienced anything like this before, the cliché of childbirth as “the miracle of life” was suddenly fresh and real.

I began reflecting on my own past and future as I watched this unblemished creation being brought into this complicated world. To think that this is how we all begin…

I recalled my first days in the anatomy lab, the opposite end of life’s spectrum, with a lesson just the same: the body, no matter its superficial wrapping, is eerily similar from within. At life’s start, the same is true, a most humbling initiation, unbiased to socioeconomic status or privilege.

That global equality, imparted most clearly to us at our beginning and end, would be relevant in my future career, I mused. As physicians we are charged with ensuring the well-being of others through education, prevention, and treatment. Disease knows no boundary, unfazed by those it afflicts. It is the job of the physician to work with the individual, the local community, and society at large with respect and understanding, to better navigate that large expanse, and to forge forward with strategies better equipped to handle such realities.

Medicine as an academic discipline and in clinical practice highlights that synthesis between disease, pathophysiology, and community-entities vitally important in the preservation of health and well-being. To treat an illness is noble; to treat the patient, medically, socially, and beyond, is an art.

This experience, coming truly at the beginning of my clinical career, served to prioritize and shed light on this core truth. It was life unplugged, at its truest and purest form. It reinforced my conscience to work with the asthmatic, diabetic, or smoker; to offer real and practical solutions (to the best of my ability) to help in achieving appropriate goals while mindful of backgrounds, beliefs, and obstacles. After all, we were all once that little neonate making the foray into this unsure world, that link between generations, charged with the duty of perpetuating familial, cultural, and societal values.

What would become of this new being? A blank canvas prepared and readied for life’s brushstrokes to leave their indelible marks.

As delivery progressed, I felt tears welling up in my eyes. I hadn’t studied this for the boards.

“It’s a boy!” exclaimed the attending. “What’s his name?” she asked a little while later.

“Joseph,” replied Rachel.

At that moment, the tears, once holed up, burst forth past the threshold of the lid. Rachel, you see, is my wife, and Joseph is my son.
Nobody looks at the aquarium the same way she said.

I laughed but she didn’t see why and we both likely thought of other things we could be doing in the following quiet.

She was very polite smiling through a yawn as I spoke about refraction and light and what the fish see but the silent dialogue centered on absence – like a tank filled only with two fish of the same species no rocks no bubblers no plastic plants only my sunken ship and her little mermaid waving out to whomever watching our distorted drama unfold.

Phillipine Striped Jellyfish

Alfred J. Spiro Professor, Dept. of Neurology & Pediatrics Digital Photograph
i and leaves
Brett Negro
Medical Student, 1st year

i and leaves shake gently, absorbing thunder that manufactures itself in the grey-lit dome all above us, chewing wordlessly, swallowing nothing insects’ teeth chatter, birds converse back and forth, asking the same questions over and over; i and he, or she, or them, or it, pray (syllabically searching) with skirling tongues and fingers dug deep into damp, sweet-smelling earth and so then our necks, wringing forth songs both ancient and sad from throats made of paper, swollen threnody to an unexpected opening in the sky, bristling with lightning fleetingly illuminating trees weeping leaves of absence for (now) darkness returns i and kindlers and conjurers, nowhere to be found only heard hungrily scratching at the tethers of our minds tintinnabulation on a turgid roof of an unholy vestry swaddled in sins sounds and sounds and sounds we make while a mess in the sky gets tuckered out, collects its things and leaves, one bird braving night, alights on a small, soaked branch: warbling warily

Light in the Dark
Eric Yale Hayden
Graduate Student, 4th year
Digital Photograph
Patients do funny things sometimes. You think you have them pinned, in the first 15 seconds you figured them out. You don’t really need to listen to them; after all, you’re the doctor (and even as a mere medical student, you’re still “doctor” to them) and you know – you know them, their disease, diagnosis, prognosis, and eventual outcome.

So when a patient arrives with diabetic gangrene of the right lower extremity and requires amputation, it appears to be rather straightforward: 56-year-old male, low-middle socioeconomic class and education level. What does this patient have to show me, to teach me, to educate me… hell, to anything me?

But then, just like that, he decides to have a ruptured appendix and requires an emergency appendectomy. OK, that’s fine. Still no problem, nothing remarkably unique.

Funny thing happened though, on hospital day 19 (poor guy’s been in the hospital way too long). He started talking to me – not as to a doctor, nor as to a medical student. He approached me as another person. Strange. I guess – already – I didn’t expect that in the hospital setting, with its tendency to de-personalize and dehumanize. We began to talk, just chatting, shooting the breeze about medicine, cars (he’s a mechanic apparently), and Spanish (his primary language and my increasingly conspicuous nemesis). Over the course of the next week I found myself drawn to his bed whenever I had some free time, for no real reason – not to check on his pain, IVs, ins/outs, meds, or bowel movements.

We spoke about my becoming a doctor, what it means to me and why I chose the profession. I confessed my ignorance of the Spanish language and my desire to learn it; he, in turn, promised to teach me, albeit slowly.

My patient – my “hospital friend” – is finally feeling better, and I couldn’t be happier (although his discharge signals the cessation of my free Spanish lessons). He’s set to head home tomorrow, and I couldn’t be happier. Except that I could be; it’s a tad selfish, but it was nice speaking to him every day, arriving in the morning to flaunt my new Spanish words, to ask him, “¿Como estas?” To see him daily reminded me what this was all about. It allowed me to step back, take a deep breath and care again.
Living while dying

Jessica Rachel Furst
Medical Student, 2nd year

In memory of my friend, Pedro

An empty craving, never relieved
Even if I hear your voice or remember your eyes
Eyes with eternal hope, a sustained resolve
This hope that made my eyes water when I thought of your life
The ultimate outcome that we danced around
Never discussing the numbered days that surrounded our friendship

Hollow – the make-believe discussions about future trips and plans
Like Barbie or dress-up, a game to pass the time, to pretend that normalcy could exist
Watching you get weaker, sicker, swollen with disease while hearing your optimism left me hollow, unable
to feel what I knew you were experiencing
I heard your words and saw the disconnect between them and your body

I never knew how you felt about these conversations – were you as haunted, as afraid as I? Did you know it
was make-believe? Trips to Florida that were meticulously planned, meals at your restaurant, the details of a
life you would never continue

Now, I am left with a familiar feeling – hollow. I see your smile, beaming while you walked down the corri-
dors and its continued shine when you were wheeled down these same hallways weeks later
Yours is a tragedy I cannot process, it’s the beauty of your spirit I know I cannot appreciate, it’s the awe of
respect and wonderment at you – an eternal optimist, a believer in living while dying.
Treating Patients You Don’t Like

Mya Levy
Medical Student, 3rd year

I grabbed Mr. Clarke’s chart. It was thin, the mark of a new patient. I flipped open the manila folder and gazed at the triage nurse’s note: “50 year-old male with right shoulder pain. BP 130/80. Temp 97.9.” Nothing else known about this patient. I began to map out a game plan: How long has he had the pain – inquire on a scale from 1-10? Has he taken anything for it? Any past history of trauma? What’s his occupation, PMH, and does he smoke or drink? Okay, I was ready. First knocking, then entering and closing the door behind me, I introduced myself, “Mr. Clarke, I’m Mya, the medical student working with Dr…” As I began reciting my rehearsed introduction, he smiled widely displaying his gleaming white teeth.

For an instant my mind drifted – how peculiar to be alone with a stranger, secluded behind a heavy door, our voices dampened to the outside world. I may ask him personal questions; he will respond. I may ask to see parts of his covered body; he will oblige. I have no degree, no prescriptions to provide him, just my desire to learn. Of course I will evaluate him, listen intently, and troubleshoot his problem to the best of my ability. This man’s personal information is on display for my viewing. I found this invasive exercise as invigorating as it was frightening.

The thought faded as I blinked. I sat down beside Mr. Clarke, opened the chart, and uttered with unexpected ease, “I hear that you’re having shoulder pain, tell me about it.” Once again Mr. Clarke grinned; the familiarity of his expressions made me want to blush. I waited for his response as I collected my discomfort.

“Well, I am having shoulder pain, but that’s not really why I’m here today. I didn’t want to tell the nurse.”

So why do you feel comfortable telling me? Then I remembered – the white coat. I hid behind a disguise that equals doctor to most.

“Oh, my girlfriend keeps getting these infections, and she thinks that I’m giving them to her.”

I asked if he knows anything more specific about the infections.

“Well, she says that she’s itchy, you know, down there, and white stuff is coming out. There’s nothing on my penis but she keeps yelling at me.”

Yeast, it’s got to be yeast. I explained to Mr. Clarke that it is possible he and his girlfriend are passing a fungal infection back and forth; it’s uncommon, but can happen. I asked if they are using protection. He responded no, defensively stating that she is infertile. Clarifying condoms’ role in preventing future spread of infection I reflexively entered into the STD talk: “Have you been tested? Has your partner been tested? Have you ever tested positive to any infections?” Mr. Clarke stated that he has been tested, though not recently, and to his knowledge he has never tested positive.

I almost forgot, “How many sexual partners do you have Mr. Clarke?”

Another quick smile, “Two… The other is my wife.” He seemed pleased, unfazed as the words rolled off his tongue.

Maybe he really said “Two… I went to the grocery store yesterday.” No, he definitely just said what I think he did. I felt every muscle in my body contract; my stomach flipped. Mya, don’t seem shocked. Stay calm. Stay collected. I clenched my teeth to prevent my mouth from gaping open.

As quickly as I could, I responded – my voice may have cracked – “Do you use protection with your wife?”

“Of course not! She’s my wife.” The question clearly seemed ridiculous if not mildly offensive to him.

His overly friendly face began to disgust me. I wanted to order a phallectomy. Okay, that was an
overreaction, but this guy is a jerk. I briefly coaxed myself into not leaving the room. Maybe I can help change his behavior. Maybe he will walk away from this visit, and always use condoms. Yeah, definitely not what’s going to happen, but I can at least educate him about the diseases to which he may be exposing his partners.

“Mr. Clarke, do you understand the risks of not using protection?” He nodded. I continued, “You are putting both women and yourself at risk for infections along with the potential for future pregnancies.” He nodded, and replied, “I know. I just want to get this yeast infection taken care of.”

What about HIV and syphilis and gonorrhea and chlamydia and herpes?

“If you are willing, Mr. Clarke, I would like to do an STD screen today.” I explained what we would be testing for, and urged him both to use protection in the future and to encourage his partners to be tested.

Having agreed to the blood tests, he continued to fixate on the yeast infection, disregarding the potential for more serious life altering, if not threatening, diseases.

“I’ll take the tests, you know, to get up to date, but they’re just routine. I don’t have anything and neither do my women.”

Great, I’m sure. What a guy.

I found my teeth clenched once again. Taking a deep breath and hiding my disgust, I told Mr. Clarke that I appreciated his honesty. I had to find something positive to say. Reaching over into the file cabinet for the lab slips, I could feel his gaze. Was he checking me out? You have got to be kidding me. Being alone with Mr. Clarke, I wasn’t afraid, but I wasn’t reveling in the experience either. I gathered myself and began to fill out the forms. The interview continued; I asked about past medical history, including prior colonoscopies, medication allergies, and surgeries. As I delved into more benign aspects of his life, his shoulder injury, I almost forgot about despising Mr. Clarke.

After talking for about 20 minutes, I quickly examined him. I rechecked his blood pressure and listened to his heart and lungs. I inspected his arms, back, and chest for rashes. Touching him was tolerable; Mr. Clarke would not be the man to break my confidence. Even so, there was absolutely no way I was examining his genitals without an attending physician in the room. Oh yes, that was my limit, reasonable or not.

I left the room proud, slightly disturbed, but even more excited to present this memorable patient to the attending. I saw Mr. Clarke as one centimeter short of abhorrent, with his inappropriate manners and harmful lifestyle, but I remained professional. I collected the appropriate information from this patient, and ensured that he received quality care. Patients will continue to shock me, but I’m fairly certain I can handle what’s coming.

Thank you for your honesty, Mr. Clarke.
Wading Through the Mire

Patrice Cohen
Graduate Student, 2nd year

Everyone in town knew the McCall sisters – and by knew, I mean know in the biblical sense. Yet, for some reason I was drawn to them. If I was completely honest, I’d have to say it was because of my tendency to be defiant really, but I’m not usually completely honest, so let’s just leave that alone. Anyway, there was Mary… and a saint she was most certainly not! Her sister’s name was Anya and they were cut from the same cloth, though most in town did not know it. At first glance you would think that Mary was the looker but I think that was just ‘cause she was so obvious about it. She was all big perky boobs, smooth blonde hair and painted face. Anya was the younger one by about three minutes and I guess that extra time really helped her develop. Her body was lithe and she had masses of glossy black curls. And by curls I don’t mean stuff like the frizzled mop that sits on my head. I mean shampoo commercial curls. Stuff that guys like Jared Otel would want to bury that beautiful face of his in and just dream of sweet summer days. OK, so basically Mary was the fast one that everyone looked down on and thought was trash, and Anya was the fast one that everyone thought was so sweet and pretty (but really she was worse than Mary!). It’s a good thing though that Anya was so deceptive. If my dad thought for one second that I was hanging out with the likes of Mary he would have skinned me alive and then given me to my grandmother for her to “deal with me”.

See, my mom died in labor having me and my dad is quote unquote just not the type to take care of a little girl. Well, that’s what all the witches who came after him through the years said to me, anyhow. They would come to our home one by one with their cakes and their pies and their sympathy, trying to sell themselves to the poor grieving widower. And, thankfully, they would leave resigned and I would have some cake and pie. See, everyone knows that my daddy is as rich as can be… in fact you could say that he plum owns the whole town, but I guess I’m the only one who knows that daddy dearest was not exactly mourning my mom. It really worked out for him… he gets to pretend that he can’t get over her and live life the way he wants. OK, you know what? I am not going to think about that right now…

So we were tight, us three girls… so tight I even got them to volunteer with me at the local hospital once a week when I was going through my “I wanna be a doctor when I grow up” phase. By default I guess I had a bad rep too, but I was cool with that. Anya and Mary protected me and wouldn’t let any stupid guys at school near me, so it was really only with catty girls in school that I had a rep. You know what they say, right? It’s better to be talked about than not… or something like that anyway. Anywho, it all started in American History. Second period, sixth row. An ordinary day except for the fact that I was wearing my fat jeans cause I was bloated and Mary had put some makeup on me cause it was yearbook picture day. I was staring straight ahead telling myself to breathe and not freak out cause Hot Guy was seated right in
front of me. So close I could touch him! Normally he sat in the back but he was late that day or something. Whatever. So cut to the end of class where I reach out and touch his hair! I mean who does that? That has been my one and only stalker moment but I couldn’t help it though! His hair was nicer than Anya’s... ‘sides, he was that guy for me. You know what I’m talking about, right? The guy you lust after all through high school but never get the courage to talk to? So he turns around, and get this – smiles at me. Of course I blush and mumble that there was something in his hair but I got it out so...

Basically, every time I saw him after that he would smile a warm lazy smile and I would get all out of breath and gooey inside (and pink outside) and rush away. ‘Till one day, May 21st actually, I could run no more. We were all at Tino’s house (let me make it clear that Tino has no last name that I have heard of and was like the most connected guy in school). Mary was hanging out /sleeping with Tino (and his brother, too, but they didn’t know that) and Anya and I had to go along for moral support. To make a long story short, I got wasted and stupidly went upstairs to not make a fool of myself. Steve, the school leech, follows me and basically tries to force himself on me. I’m kicking and screaming hoarsely (yelling and screaming while partying does that to a girl’s voice) and really starting to wish I were home when out of nowhere my hero Jordan (sigh) comes! He grabs the guy, knocks him out (I got hit in the melee and got a black eye) and then gently picks me up and takes me outside. Now I swear two things: 1) It was just like in the movies; and 2) Nobody noticed! Of course I cry/slobber and he hugs me and then gently picks me up and takes me outside. Now I swear two things: 1) It was just like in the movies; and 2) Nobody noticed! Of course I cry/slobber and he hugs me and then gently picks me up and takes me outside. Now I swear two things: 1) It was just like in the movies; and 2) Nobody noticed! Of course I cry/slobber and he hugs me and then gently picks me up and takes me outside.

So that’s really how we started this strange dance. He would come knock on my window ‘most every night and we’d pass each other in school like we were strangers. I’d let him into my room and he’d just sit and stare at me for a while. Sometimes we’d play board games, sometimes I’d help him study, and other times we’d just chill. I dunno... it’s pretty hard to explain but suffice to say, every time I was around him my heart was racing and I was so excited and strangely comfortable. Bliss. I had no idea if he was into me or not and finally worked up the courage to make a move. Let me just say right now that it was definitely not smooth. I basically tried to kiss him and he pulled away, looked me deep in the eyes and said, “I’m not here for that. I don’t want that from you... I really... I mean I really dig you and that’s not cool right now... I like it here too much to be here for that.”

After I got over my mortification, I wrote him a letter explaining how I felt and that I wanted him to be my first. I told him that nothing would change unless he wanted it to, and that I was tired of seeing him strolling around school with the flavor of the month. I said if he wanted to be with me he should come to my room tonight and if not, he could come by as usual anytime and I’d be cool with it. If he was not into me at all, he should not come tonight. I gave it to Mary to give it to Tino to give it to him and she told me in fourth period that he got it. That night, I showered for like two hours and changed a thousand times before settling on simple shorts and a t-shirt (did splash on a little perfume though). My stomach was churning and I nervously kept biting my nails. I must have stayed up all night and paced a path in my carpet. I kept thinking he would not come and wishing he would. Well, just to let you know, he did not come.

So imagine my surprise when he shows up the next day and says, “I got your letter.” I was hurt and pissed off and told him to come back some other time, as I was busy. He started to climb out the window and I turned my back on him so I would not have to watch him leave. I did not want him to see me cry... that would have been so lame. Next thing I know though, I feel him grab me from behind and turn me around then we are kissing and groping and then... you know. Wow!!!! It was a lot different than I though it would be. Some parts were awkward, some were honestly kinda painful/crappy and some were magical. All in all I could not have asked for anything more. I remember corny things... I remember him breathing peacefully next to me as moonlight danced on his face. I re-
member taking in his sinewy form and wondering if love was always this perfect. I remember wishing that he could stay every night like this and hoping that we would last.

You know how this story ends don’t you? I know what you’ll say... You’ll say that basically he acts the same and I become his little secret whatever. I die a thousand times when I see him with different girls on his arm at school, although I know it was nothing serious with them. Not like with me anyway. I doubt myself and start to hate myself. My friends start to hate him. Of course, after I end up pregnant, he disappears. So that’s basically pretty much why I ended up in the hospital. Mary and Anya got me some pills and they stayed with me while I took them. Honestly, it was the last resort as I had tried to hurt myself enough to lose it to no avail. I thought falling down a flight of stairs would do it, but the bugger was hardy and I just broke my stupid arm. All that did was disturb my dad and his stupid lover, and that dude was not excited by the thought of taking his boyfriend’s kid to the ER. He was one of the catty ones and just bitchily told me trips to the kitchen were more hazardous to my waistline than my arm as I was getting a little chunky in the middle. Yup, he was that type of queen. My dad really knows how to pick ‘em, all right.

So I take the pills and we wait in my room. Anya has done this before and knows what to expect so we are not too worried. We have towels for the blood, tea for cramps and a little box for the thing. Only problem is, it does not come out. Well, not right away anyway. I was in so much misery that night; I swear I never knew pain till then. I guess they got kind of freaked out with all the blood and so Mary convinced Anya that we needed more help. They call Jordan who comes over, sees the blood and the thing (it had come out by then) and my teary face and leaves. I guess I should have told him what I was doing. So I actually ended up in the hospital ‘cause I had a nervous breakdown. Anya and Mary kept my secret and my dad shipped me to boarding school the next year. I lost touch with the girls after that. I love them though.

So it’s nine years later and I am thinking about all of this now because I am being interviewed at my top choice med school. It was going great until I got to my student interview. Jordan. Here. In this place. In front of me. His hair is the same... his face is almost the same and he’s definitely still hot. The problem is that I’m still guilty. His eyes say that he remembers me and he asks me a lot of ethical questions about abortion and assisted suicide. Ouch. He’s the devil. I guarantee he’s the devil. Is he doing it to goad me? Hurt me? Maybe he is just not over it. I swear I am on autopilot and am just praying for it to end. I go through the motions and leave sick to my stomach.

Home in my apartment later that night I cry a lot and kiss my dream of that school goodbye. I had to crawl out of the trenches after that night nine years ago. None of that matters now though. I am once again that 15 year-old girl and once again I feel stripped of dignity, choice and sanity. I curl into a ball and pray for peace.

A month later I am accepted.
The Arc
Keith Z. Hazelton
MSTP Student, 4th year

There is regality
to her robust rotundity
as she sits perched
upon the stage’s edge.

Her cream dress flows
out and around
the wealth of her girth,
as a scarf drapes
over one shoulder
and cascades across
the expanse of her torso.

Small hands,
seeming smaller still
against her largeness,
rest where her waist
is most rounded.

Her head, a smaller round
atop its cream foundation,
tilts back and a voice
ushers forth.
Its sound is rich and full.
The thrill of its sweet trill
fills the room.

Though her body is anchored
heavily to this earth,
her voice is the
lightness of being.

The Incredible Lightness of Singing
Karen Gardner
Media Relations Manager

Yosemite, Winter 2007
Kausik Chattopadhyay
Postdoctoral Fellow

Yin & Yang
Shuying He
Graduate Student, 1st year
My Kingdom

Madeline Noi
12th grade, Collegiate Institute for Math and Science
Einstein Enrichment Program

The intricate gates
Embedded with
Respect, strength
And dignity
It is hopeless to try
And break through me
My goals, concentration
Or serenity
Cause this is My kingdom
I guard my kingdom
With gentle, caring hands
And if by grace, I happen to let you in
You may Not corrupt my lands
Cause this is My kingdom
Walk with caution
Look on and appraise
But remember that it is my land,
My kingdom at the end of the day
Should you enter
To find spikes
And swords in your
Face
Do not take offense

I do so for survival
And with exquisite taste
Should I choose,
Because I can...
To deny you...
No doubt your
Whispered words
Words would be rejection
Lies and hate
But know this
Your words do not matter
You still will not get
To enter these gates
Cause this is My kingdom
Could I even trust you?
To watch over with
Concerned eyes
To protect lands
To keep it alive?
With those feeble hands
Oh no!
Cause this is My kingdom
Respect it

Storks, nesting on the wall of the Palais Badi in Marrakesh

M. Donald Blaufox
Professor, Dept. of Nuclear Medicine,
Medicine and Radiology
The First Kiss

Connieann DelVecchio
Unit secretary, Forchheimer

The setting sun; a warm summer night
The evening sky lit by the bright full moon
Twinkling stars come into sight
The trees rustle a romantic tune

Pounding hearts; his breath on my face
His tender hand caresses my cheek
I take a step closer and close the space
I hold on tight; my knees go weak

The moment we’ve waited for oh so long
We can’t seem to break the dreamy stare
His eyes close; his lips touch mine; his kiss is gentle and strong
Everything becomes hazy; we are floating on air

Lost in the moment of this magical kiss
Neither one of us would ever want another
Wistfully he says “We were born for this”
In that instant we realize we are meant only for each other
Stay with Me
Paul Gross
Professor, Department of Family and Social Medicine

I’s a warm Friday evening in early September. Humid air cradles the city in a moist embrace. Seven flights up, I’m curled over a desk, scribbling a note. The room is an amiable hodgepodge of open cookie boxes and hospital charts, images flickering from a silent television, two battered couches and a sprinkling of medical gadgetry—test tubes, tourniquets, a syringe.

I’m a medical student, halfway through a seven-week pediatric clerkship in an aging hospital on the Grand Concourse, a once-elegant Bronx thoroughfare. Tonight I’m on call with an intern and resident, both off tending to a patient.

A nurse walks in, looking distraught. “Could you take a look at Belinda? I think she’s died.”

Belinda.

Belinda is a four-and-a-half-year-old girl admitted a few weeks ago for dehydration and low potassium brought on by severe diarrhea. It’s not a terribly unusual illness for a child, but this is Belinda’s fifth hospitalization in the past year, which is unusual.

It all began last November with a bout of pneumonia, then an ominous recurrence that persisted throughout the winter and early spring. A string of gastrointestinal problems soon tumbled one upon another, each requiring a hospital stay, all combining to make her a more or less permanent visitor.

Since she first took ill late last year, Belinda has spent most of her days in this hospital, on this floor, occupying a bed labeled with a purple sign that reads “BLOOD AND BODY FLUID PRECAUTIONS.” The warning is for us, not her. For Belinda it’s too late. She has AIDS.

Belinda has a lot of friends among the staff, and this last admission was, for many, bittersweet—like the return of a small-town hero who has tried to make it in the big city and failed.

“Belinda’s back!” The words had a happy-sad ring.

I’d looked forward to meeting this little celebrity when she arrived. In my short time on the floor, I had learned that kids, against all odds, have a remarkable way of transcending illness. No matter how hard or how often they fall, they always seem to bounce back, which is why, despite the dismal surroundings, they’re fun to be around.

Belinda was different.

She looked like a Holocaust victim—all bone, with skin collapsing like cellophane about her four-year-old skeleton. As I approached her bed, I took in the knobs and hollows of her face and the bob of hair atop her head, trying to hide my dismay.

“How are you doing?”

Belinda had now retreated behind walls where few could venture. Even friends found her frighteningly remote. Some clanked about her bed in an armor of joviality. I couldn’t fake it.

Belinda’s care was taken up by another team of residents and students. I didn’t give it much thought. We had our own kids to look after, some of whom had AIDS as well. Each morning I generated multiple lists: blood to draw, tests to check, a consultant to phone. Time was short. There were always foul-ups—a lab result lost, an intravenous line clogged, a dose of medication never delivered. I was stretched thin, like everyone else, with no time for a little girl with AIDS who wouldn’t smile.
Soon after her admission, I was asked to accompany Belinda on an ambulance ride to another hospital, where she was scheduled to have a persistent cough checked out with a bronchoscopy. I wondered how it might feel to have a tube passed down my gagging throat into my lungs.

For Belinda, the ambulance ride would mean a trip from familiar surroundings into unknown territory, now twice removed from home. Imagine, I thought: terminally ill and marooned in a hospital, being cared for by strangers. The prospect would make anyone cry.

Belinda was impassive.

Belinda’s parents weren’t there for the ride. Of late, they’d taken a dim view of health professionals, even turning away visiting nurses at their door. When a routine clinic checkup showed a dangerously low potassium, it was days before they’d brought Belinda in. Once their daughter had been entrusted to us—their unwanted alter-egos—their parents became scarce.

Doctors were outraged at their behavior. Belinda’s mother, I was told, had picked up AIDS from using intravenous heroin and passed it along during pregnancy. By all accounts, she was starting to succumb to the illness herself. Belinda’s father’s HIV status was unknown. Meanwhile, there were other children at home.

For this family, it was the Dark Ages and AIDS had descended upon them like the plague. I tried to imagine my own family struggling to cope.

Belinda returned from the bronchoscopy—it showed no infection—and settled in on intravenous fluids and medications. By chance, I found myself becoming more involved in her care.

The fact that we’d found nothing in her lungs didn’t help matters much. She was still sick, with no signs of improvement. We filled tubes with her blood and plotted her falling white cell count and fluctuating potassium.

Filling the blood tubes was a problem. Her many hospital stays had left Belinda’s major veins scarred and useless, which forced us to probe for smaller vessels. We jabbed her arm two, three and four times as the task was passed from intern to resident to chief resident. Eventually, the more experienced hands would aim for an artery—a deep, painful stick—and hit home.

The job was particularly unpleasant because Belinda, who had lost so much over the past year—home, health, family—had not lost the ability to hurt. Her cries were like tiny, pointed accusations. As she yelled out one day, I noticed her pasty white throat—a yeast infection crowding out flesh, future kisses and life itself. I started wondering what all our tests were accomplishing. Belinda was on a relentless march towards death.

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Her breaths came faster; her appetite dwindled.

On the morning of that humid Friday in early September, an intern passed along the word that Belinda probably wouldn’t live out the weekend.

“What?” I was startled. A couple of days before, a resident had aroused Belinda in order to show me and another student some diagnostic findings. She’d looked bad then, panting like a runner in full...
stride. We timed her breathing and listened to her lungs. Our hands palpated her abdomen, tracing out an enlarged liver. She tolerated the ritual like a rag doll.

I thought of all the pain we’d caused her with our probing needles and repetitive tests. If she was near death, perhaps now—at last—we could devote our efforts to making her comfortable.

I tracked down the chief resident, a bright, eminently sensible pediatrician whom I admired for her empathetic way with patients and families.

“T’m going to be on call tonight,” I told her. “If Belinda’s IV falls out, can we leave it out?”

I was sure the answer would be yes. Putting an intravenous line into Belinda’s arm was more trying—and painful for her—than drawing blood. Why put her through it?

“No. She’s too weak to eat. If we don’t keep the IV running, we’re withholding nutrition.”

It made no sense.

“So what? She’s dying anyway.”

“We can’t do that.”

The logic was bizarre; it was no logic at all. I approached an attending physician—one notch up in the hospital hierarchy and in this instance an old friend of Belinda’s. Surely she would see things differently.

I posed the question: leave the IV out if it falls out?

“We can’t do that.”

I walked away muttering.

The inmates were running the asylum. I wandered by Belinda’s room and looked at this frail, sleeping child whose misfortune it was to have an incurable illness in an era when doctors are trained never to give up.

Belinda’s chest fluttered in and out. Her eyes were puffy, her arms like sticks. An oxygen mask was plastered over her nose and mouth. Her IV drip-dripped rhythmically.

She looked awful.

We were like crazed soldiers, fighting with stones and refusing to leave the field of battle. This four-year-old’s body had become our Hamburger Hill, our Dienbienphu.

I hoped she didn’t spend her last hours being tortured for an IV that would do her no good.

Her eyes opened and met mine.

“Stay with me,” she said.

I leaned on the bed railing, watching her birdlike breaths. She said something else.

“Hold me.”

I lowered the railing and lifted her limp body—a stack of bones—out of bed. I had to cradle her head to keep it from dangling back like a baby’s.

I sat in a chair, curling her in my lap and began rocking. A song came to mind:

Mama’s goin’ fishin’  All of the time
I’m a-goin’ fishin’ too...

Not far into the song, I heard Belinda’s weak, thready voice: “Stop singing.”

So much for the touching moment. She was nothing if not direct.

“Put me back.”

I again cradled the head, laid her in bed and adjusted the mask.

“I have to go now,” I told her.

Again, “Stay with me.”

“I have to go, Belinda. I’ll be back later.”

“Kiss me.”

Flurries

Elizabeth Pinzon
Board of Overseers Building Committee
I bent over her fluttering chest and kissed her on the cheek.

“T’ll be back.” It was a lame promise. The night would be busy. It could easily slip my mind.

And forgetting would spare me the pain of another visit.

Like someone hurrying past a poor man’s empty cup, I averted my eyes and walked out.

I later learned that Belinda had received several other visitors that afternoon—two doctors, a social worker and perhaps others. They figured they would never see her again and had stopped by on their way home for the weekend.

She’d asked them to stay, too.

It’s four hours later. I’m sitting in the resident’s room and a distraught nurse enters. “Could you please take a look at Belinda...”

I lean down the hall, fingering my stethoscope, with a vague notion of what I’m supposed to do. This is it. Medicine in action. Life and death. The nurse trails behind me.

Belinda lies still. No movement. No birdlike flutterings of the chest. I lay my stethoscope on her breast and listen. The silence is stunning. I think of Sherlock Holmes: the dog that did not bark in the night.

What next?

I pull out my penlight. Re-enacting a gesture picked up from countless movies, I raise Belinda’s eyelids, one by one, and flash the beam in. I only realize what I’m looking for when her pupils, now big as quarters, don’t respond.

Anything else?

Numbed by the terrible reality before me, I continue to react in some remote, automatic fashion.

Look for a pulse. The wrist. The neck.

Nothing doing.

I blink. My first death. Cast in this new role of physician, I think of Doctor McCoy’s predictable refrain in Star Trek:

“She’s dead, Jim.”

Odd how my guidance comes, not from doctors, but from actors portraying doctors.

I turn to the nurse. “I think she’s died. We’d better let the others know.” She nods and leaves.

I take a last look at Belinda—hair pulled back, expression still somber. Bubbles of saliva are frozen at the corners of her lips.

So this is death. Absolute stillness.

As I watch Belinda from my remote vantage point, that stillness begins to jangle in my ears.

I hold my ground for an extra moment.

“Goodnight sweet princess,” I mutter, “and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

For the second time that day I avert my eyes and take refuge in the hallway, thinking of Belinda’s final request:

“Stay with me.”

She never had a chance.

We offered her much in the way of medicine, much in the way of tests and probing needles. But in the end, there was little we could do to help, and the one wish we might have honored—a request for companionship—was beyond us.

Belinda, at age four-and-a-half, of birdlike breaths and solemn eyes, spent her last days in this dreary hospital, then died—alone.

I can’t believe how badly we blew it.

She’s dead, Jim.

Yes, Bones, she’s dead.
Urban Pastoral
Geoffrey Kabat
Dept. of Epidemiology and Population Health

I. The modern-day hunter-gatherer haunts a concrete landscape shouldering a large black lawn bag filled with disposable plastic and picks through the manna of each corner’s trash.

Unlike his primitive counterpart he can rework the same terrain only hours later.
Some evolution!

II. Slouched forward on a bench in the local park, head covered by a dirty overcoat, a crumpled form, neuter, shapeless, on the first day of spring.

Then as I pass by I notice a healthy-looking brown cock, fully exposed, his only visible feature, like a crocus poking up through the snow.

Moodz
Mazen Sidani
PhD Recipient, 2008
Photo Drawing

Cheetah
Saurabh Gombar
MSTP Student, 1st year
Where Are We Going?

Michael Frey  
Associate Professor, Dept. of OB/GYN

I ask as I kick my liver in the back  
and caress my southern lover,  
sitting in the red bucket seat beside me.

You say, "Ghosts and murders,  
ghosts and murders,"  
and unzip my fly.

My aorta takes the wheel  
and my vena cava  
works the stick shift.

Blood, sweat and semen  
flood the '57 convertible and  
spill over the sides onto

Yellow lines and red mountains,  
whitewall tires sipping black sand  
and a tar engine eating brown bones.

I kiss you hard  
and slap my spleen  
and love my southern lover.

Joy

Masha Kon  
MSTP Student, 3rd year

Sometimes, when I am in a crowd,  
I feel alone, I want your hug!  
I need to cry out loud  
Or sit at home with my Peruvian mug

But sometimes, even when I am there  
The nasty feeling creeps behind –  
Of total singleness, despair…  
Those are the times I have to hide in memories

Suppress  
Repress  
Displace  
Project  
In any way not to subject  
Myself to that defect of mind

But it’s still there  
It comes again all over me

And only music mends my head  
Slows down my heart,  
Allowing me to function, go ahead  
To play my part.

Music and you.

Drumheller

Aparna Mukhopadhyay  
Research Associate
A week and a half of working on the psych ward, affectionately known as Piso Siete, I had the privilege of sitting in on a “community meeting.” Community meetings were a place where the patients were given limited freedom of speech to voice their concerns and requests. Anyone could attend, and about half usually did. The meetings were primarily run by Ms. D, one of the social workers, an incredibly attractive Dominican woman, who dressed and made herself up so impeccably she had the appearance of having stepped directly off of a movie set. This exaggerated what I thought was her remarkable resemblance to Jennifer Lopez. Jessi, our manic twenty-two year-old, also seemed to think so. I caught her screaming down the hall one day: “JLo, yo, JLo, when am I getting my ultrasound?” For two weeks, Jessi has insisted that she’s pregnant (despite medical evidence to the contrary). This makes two things I now have in common with the girl. After having left an OB rotation and my forgiving drawstring scrubs, I was facing an ever-dwindling selection of comfortable pants in my closet and seriously considering maternity wear.

Ms. D started the meeting. “Thees ees a co-mu-ni-tee meee-ting,” she said, exaggerating every syllable in an accent that was alarmingly similar to my mother’s. I looked around at the fifteen or so people sitting in the circle of chairs with me, some of them more still than others. I paid specific attention to Mr. F, the patient assigned to me, who sat with perfect posture, hands clasped in his lap, looking totally at ease and equally uninterested in his surroundings – I imagined he looked the same at church. Then, as if irritated at me for taking too much interest in his statue-like appearance, he suddenly started to shake his left leg up and down. I wondered if this was the first sign of opiate withdrawal.

Ms. D explained the rules. No personal issues. No talking out of turn. No interrupting. No cross convers-
constant observation for trying to have some form of sexual contact with pretty much every female on Piso Siete (not excluding Juana), said I was Spanish. And Bill, an unassuming young black man, who had a history of what he reported to be 400 crimes in Germany, thought I was Italian.

Mittens, in an incredible and perhaps lucky moment of lucidity, was the only one who guessed right. Monday she shuffled/hopped up to me in a way that made her seem like she was 5 and not 55, or even 75. (Seventy-five was the age she appeared now, while sitting in her chair, with her white hair flying and frazzled around her tiny head, her sunken in cheeks, weathered in wrinkles, and large bug eyes behind her bottle-bottom glasses.) “Are you my daughter?”

“No, Mittens, I’m not your daughter.”

“Oh.” She stared at me intently. Sometimes when she did this, I felt she saw more of who I was than most people did.

“You’re Jewish,” she said decidedly.

I couldn’t help laughing at how ridiculous it was that she was right.

“Jewish?” Hilario asked.

“But you must know Spanish, you just don’t speak it,” said Elena, probably the most functional patient on the floor, who could not comprehend the fact that I was not Hispanic.

“My mom’s family is from the Middle East.” I said, trying to apologize for my apparently misleading looks.

So it slowly spread that I was not Dominican, Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Spanish, Greek, Italian, or Indian, but Jewish. For three days Jimmy would raise his hands when he saw me, as if he was going to announce Goal!, and instead would call out Jewish!

A few chairs beyond Jimmy sat demure Mr. F, whose sister spent an hour on the phone with me, frantically describing how he raped her and her younger brother as children. Next to Mr. F was Mary. Mary was a 30 year old who had severe mental retardation. It seemed she had three facial expressions. Usually it was an elated smile – her eyes lit up like she was looking into a birthday cake full of candles. The second was the quivering lip – the just-about-to-cry face. And the third – red faced, mouth wide, tonsil-vision open – in a bawl that shook the walls. The first time I heard it I was standing right next to her. It froze me. My stupid tractionless heels, which usually had me slipping all over the place, suddenly cemented down. She turned around and pounded her fists against the wall, coming inches from my face, the noise filling my ears as if she was pounding directly on my head. Ten seconds later she was back to her quiet, gentle, elated look.

After Ms. D had explained which snacks were allowed and when they were given out, Juana suddenly became alive again, cocked her head and bellowed out, “This is fucking terrible! No cookies?!”

“Juana, please excuse yourself.” Said Ms. D.

“I will excuse myself, but let me tell you something. I have diabetes, I never told you, but I have diabetes and I need my sugar.”

“Juana, please leave now.”

Juana got up out of her seat and sauntered over to the door, screaming and waving her finger in Ms. D’s direction. “I don’t need this bullshit. I want my cookies. My Medicaid covers it, bitch!” And slammed the door behind her.

In the wake of Juana’s departure, the room was quiet. Ms. D sighed, “Who wants to bring up the next topic?” Mary raised her hand.

“Yes, Mary?”

“I hit Mittens.”
Change?
Eric Yale Hayden
Graduate Student, 4th year
Silver-gelatin Print

Manless
LaVerne C. Davis
Secretary

If I would have known then
What I know now
I would have made the choice
To have you
Instead of my friends around
All the right things
I should have done
I did wrong
Not realizing how kind you were
Until you decided to go

I made my bed
And now I must lie alone
Because the way I mistreated you
It didn’t surprise me
When you didn’t come home

I should’ve played my role as the woman
Wore the dress and ironed your pants
Instead of abusing you
And accusing you
Of not being a man
When in fact it was you
Who made the woman that I am
Now that you’re gone
I’m all alone with my manless friends

You handed me your paychecks
For me to handle the bills
The only thing expected of me
Was a clean house and home-cooked meals
But instead of me
Having food on the table
For you to eat
I ripped and ran with another man
And hung out with my friends in the street

I made my bed
And now I must lie alone
Because the way I mistreated you
It didn’t surprise me
When you did not come home

I should’ve played my role as the woman
Wore the dress and ironed your pants
Instead of abusing you
And accusing you
Of not being a man
When in fact it was you
Who made the woman that I am
Now that you’re gone
I’m all alone with my manless friends.
Stockbridge

Michael Frey
Associate Professor, Dept. of OB/GYN

Coming into the morning kitchen, the sun reaching outstretched arms into the corners of the room.

Sunlight gently touching wooden planks and crumb-filled sheets of wax paper on the quiet kitchen countertop.

I think I can see a hundred miles, into farmhouses across the frozen pond and above the steeple of the Stockbridge churches.

Driving down a leafy road, searching for firewood. Folk rock on the radio and your hand in my lap, we repose in a baby’s first dream.

Above:
Seated Nude on Chair
8 x 10” Gouache

Left:
Seated Nude on Floor
8 x 10” Gouache

Peter Dama
Creative Director, Graphic Arts Center
A Burden Too Heavy To Carry

Meshach Heenatigala  
Medical Student, 1st year

This life is in my hands,  
My decisions will be carried out,  
Whether right or wrong, my commands will be made action.  
His very breath, his laughs and smiles,  
His entire life, rests with me.  
Who wants this responsibility,  
This burden too heavy to carry?

Because he entrusts his life to me,  
I have to always think of him, think of his life.  
I can’t be idle or think only of myself.  
This is giving my life away,  
Because I dare not ruin a life that is not my own.

Who wants this responsibility?  
Who can bear this burden?

Though I strive and strive to know it all,  
Though I take no rest outside of what my body needs,  
Though I read it all, and all again,  
I know that all this work will never be enough.  
This is a burden too heavy to carry.

I asked Him, What should I do?  
He smiled in that fatherly way,  
"Could it be that to fulfill the greatest commandments –

To love Me, and to love your neighbor,  
That these are burdens too heavy to carry?  
That even in your greatest efforts, you would never achieve perfection?"

I strive for perfection, not excellence;  
Because a human life is perfectly valuable,  
And righteousness and love is perfectly good.  
I want nothing less.

I never want to make a mistake;  
To take breath away when I was trusted to safeguard it.

And so He tells me,  
"Lay down this burden,  
Entrust your life to me.  
Nothing changed when you became a doctor –  
The burden has always been too great,  
To love Me with all you are,  
And to love your neighbor as yourself.

"To love Me is to obey Me,  
You can’t do it alone, nor do I expect you to,  
Know that my grace is sufficient,  
And trust in Me, walk with Me,  
And my strength is made perfect in you when you see this."
I
Came to You
Seeking miracles and perfection
Not knowing
That the perfection of miracles
Is the somewhat imperfect
Mirthful self
Content self
That ploughs through
This cruel world
Rejecting the notion
That one has to be perfect
To be miraculously happy.

Sometimes
You mourn what you lost
Knowing
That you’ll never
Be the same again.

Sometimes
Your loss makes you all the more
Beautiful for it.
Your loss makes you beautiful.

The other day I looked inward and outward.
And I smiled.
Life as I experience it, is not life as it is.

Sometimes that’s a consolation
Sometimes that’s a sad revelation
But as hilarious as it is,
I am continually caught by surprise
By this rather obvious reality.

You and me,
I foresee disaster
I see heaps of rubble
Gaping holes
And pain
That is why I say no.

Pain, is living
Pain, is a nostalgic reminder
Of the mirth of being
But I can’t give in
To feel pain
Excruciating gut-wrenching pain.

But you and me
Merge
Like squares and circles
Like water kissing earth
Like lost dazzled souls
In a happy hurricane.

But you and me,
I foresee disaster.
So I won’t.

I
Came to You
Seeking miracles and perfection
Not knowing
That the perfection of miracles
Is the somewhat imperfect
Mirthful self
Content self
That ploughs through
This cruel world
Rejecting the notion
That one has to be perfect
To be miraculously happy.
Chapter 24: Thursday Evening

Shortly after Dr. Gram left Naya’s room, her parents appeared for visiting hours, as promised. They brought her pajamas, clothes for the next few days, and Noodle. Naya watched as the evening nurse marked her initials on her belongings with a permanent marker and logged them in a record that was put in her chart, so they wouldn’t get lost or mixed with the other children’s.

Naya was feeling a bit more comfortable on the unit, but she still had many questions.

“Why are the other kids taking medicine, and I’m not?” Naya asked her mother, feeling a little disappointed. When everyone else got pills in paper cups, it seemed cool.

Naya’s mother looked surprised. “Well,” she said haltingly, “some kids may need medicine if they are not feeling well, and others may not. You just happen to be one of the kids who feels fine.”

Naya was satisfied with the answer. She told her parents about having witnessed the boy who had become angry and lost control. She watched as her parents tried to hide their fear and worry from her.

It was nearing dinnertime, and visiting hours were coming to end. Naya could tell that her parents didn’t want to leave her there, and it made her feel braver. She wished them a good night and headed to the dining room with the rest of the children. Any way, she would see them soon. Her mother had promised that she would be there first thing in the morning in preparation for the MRI and EEG.

As Naya stood in line for dinner, someone nudged her in the back. She turned around and saw a pale girl with brown, curly hair who was the same height as she was. She had seen this girl in the playroom with a woman whom Naya assumed was the other little girl’s mother.

“What’s your name?” the girl asked.

“Naya.”

“My name’s Sasha,” the girl said with a friendly smile.

“Hi,” Naya said politely.

“Can I be your friend?”

“Oh, yeah, sure,” Naya said, moving up in line toward the dietary staff.

“We can sit together at that table,” Sasha said, pointing out to one of the six round dining tables.

Naya was given a prepared meal containing mashed potatoes, beans, and grilled chicken.

“I’m vegetarian,” she told the staff.

“Oh! I’m sorry, dear,” a woman apologized. “Here, this is your tray.” Instead of the chicken dinner, the new tray contained yellow rice, beans, and a cup of mixed fruit. Naya was satisfied with what she saw there.

Sasha followed Naya to the table with a tray of her own. Near the door, an adult supervised the children, reminding Naya of the way teachers supervised the lunchroom at school to keep the children from fighting and goofing around.

“Do you like beans?” Sasha asked Naya, scrunching up her nose.

“Yep, I do.”

“I don’t. Do you want some of mine?” Sasha pointed to the beans on her plate.

“Nah, I have enough,” Naya said.

“Sasha, you have to eat all your food if you want those positive points,” an adult sitting at the next table said. “How else will you get that prize you wanted?”

“But I don’t want to eat beans,” Sasha whined with her lower lip poked out.

“Sasha, you like beans. You eat them all the time,” the adult said.

A naughty smile appeared on Sasha’s face.

“And if you continue to whine, you’ll get negative points,” the adult warned.

Naya observed the interaction. She hadn’t heard about the points and prizes yet. She wondered what she could win.

“Oh, well,” Sasha sighed, “I guess I’ll eat them.”

Naya couldn’t understand why Sasha would say she didn’t like beans when she really did. But in any case, she wasn’t going to ask.

Once the two girls were done eating, Sasha showed Naya what to do with her tray.

“It’s quiet time now,” they heard one of the staff members announcing. “Go on into your rooms.”

“Can I show Naya my toys?” Sasha asked loudly.

“Not now, and watch your tone of voice, please,″
said the adult who was directing the children out of the dining room and back into the hallway leading to the bedrooms.

“This is my room,” Sasha said, running into a room two doors down and across the hall from Naya’s. Naya couldn’t see into Sasha’s room, but she heard a rhythmic, springy sound that was very familiar. Someone was jumping on the bed.

Then a petite, round-faced Asian woman came down the hall and went into Sasha’s room. Naya heard the woman tell Sasha that it was time to sit or lie down. The sound of jumping continued. The woman said that if Sasha didn’t stop, she would earn negative points, and the sound stopped. Soon, the woman appeared in the doorway of Naya’s room, where Naya was sitting on the bed.

“Hi, I’m Nancy,” she said, smiling. “I’ll be sitting by your door tonight, just to make sure you’re safe while you sleep. What’s your name, sweetie?”

“Naya.”

“Naya, I’m going to help you get ready for bed, and then, if you’d like, we can read a story together.”

Nancy helped Naya get into her pajamas and showed her to the common bathroom that the girls shared. Naya waited for her turn and completed her bedtime ritual of brushing her teeth and washing her face. Her parents had raised Naya to be an independent little girl. She noticed that some of the other children who were much older than her needed a lot more assistance.

Once Naya had finished using the bathroom, she went back to her room. Nancy had pulled up a chair and sat just outside the door in the hallway.

It was close to seven o’clock; the children were expected to be asleep by eight o’clock at the latest. Nancy went into Naya’s room and sat at the foot of her bed. She had two fairy-tale books in her hand. Naya chose *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which Nancy read in a gentle, soothing voice. Naya fell asleep before Snow White had even bitten the poisoned apple.

Naya opened her eyes to bright sunshine. She sat up in a large field covered with tall, green grass. The field was surrounded by lots of trees rustling in a gentle breeze that blew from the direction of the sun. She looked all around for other people, but all she could see were a few birds flying away and butterflies frolicking in the breeze. She had never been alone in a place like this. She began to feel scared but weirdly calm at the same time. She scanned the ring of trees once again and saw something there, in the distance.

It was something big, tall, and gray, and it was swaying to and fro. She couldn’t tell what it was, but it was moving toward her through the trees. She began to walk toward what she thought must be some kind of animal. Yes! It was!

“Dummy, it’s an elephant,” Naya said to herself. “But what’s an elephant doing out here in a field? I guess elephants do eat grass.” She remembered this bit of trivia from a visit to the zoo. “And there’s lots of it here.”

Naya continued to walk toward the elephant. She heard a humming sound that got louder and louder. Was the elephant humming? Then Naya noticed a dent in the long grass, just before she nearly trampled something lying there. Naya froze, and her heart beat faster. It was a person—a girl. The girl was humming a song.

“Um, hello?” Naya said.

The humming stopped, and the girl called out, “Who’s there?”

Naya stepped closer and saw that it was a young white girl with beautiful blond hair. She was older than Naya, but not yet a teenager. The girl was looking up...
into the sky.

“Hello,” she said again. “I’m Naya. Who are you?”

“My name is Janet,” the girl replied.

“What are you doing here?” Naya asked.

“I’m taking my elephant for a walk. He’s hungry, because he didn’t eat dinner yesterday.”

“Then why are you lying in the grass?”

“I can’t get up. I need to be tied back together. Do you have some string?”

“What do you mean?” Naya asked, puzzled.

“Look, my body isn’t joined together like yours. Come closer, and I’ll show you.”

Naya moved closer. She saw that Janet wore a white, long-sleeved shirt and a plaid, woolen skirt.

“You have to bend down,” Janet instructed.

Naya knelt next to Janet, who lay extraordinarily still, only moving her eyes and mouth as she spoke. It was as if she were playing Freeze Tag or Simon Says.

“Look at my neck,” Janet said, rolling her eyeballs down.

Naya squinted and saw what Janet was talking about. There was a gap between her neck and her body. It was as though someone had sliced through Janet’s neck, then placed her head just above her body.

Naya held her breath. She’d never seen anything like this before. She studied the gap for a few more moments, then stood up and turned toward Janet’s body, which was riddled with many more gaps everywhere—even between her fingers.

Naya’s breath began coming in short, noisy bursts.

“Don’t be scared,” Janet said with a peaceful smile.

“All I need for you to do is to get some string and help put me back together.”

“What happened to you?” Naya gasped.

“I don’t know exactly how this happened, but I think somebody did it to me.”

“Who did it?”

“I think it was the big bad man,” Janet said sadly.

“Will he do it to me too?” Naya asked, terrified.

“No, he won’t.”

“How do you know?”

“Because Jerry is protecting us.”

“Who’s Jerry?”

“Jerry’s my elephant.”

“That elephant?” Naya asked, pointing toward the mammoth animal that was now standing not far from them.

“Yes,” Janet said, looking at Jerry with a soft smile.

“I don’t know exactly how this happened, but I think that other sense of calm at the same time. She knew she had to help Janet. She just wasn’t sure how.

“You can ask the doctor to help me,” Janet said, as though she had read Naya’s thoughts.

“You mean the one who’s helping me—Dr. Gram?”

“Yes, him,” Janet replied.

“Do you think he’ll understand if I tell him about you?”

“He’s the only one who will understand,” reaffirmed Janet.

“I like him,” Naya said. “I’ll tell him about you when I see him today.”

“But before you go,” Janet said, “could you lie down next to me and tell me a story?”

“Oh, yes! I remember a story I just heard,” Naya said, excited to tell the story of Snow White.

Naya lay down next to Janet and recited the story. The golden sunshine warmed her skin, and the gentle breeze cooled it. She began to feel sleepy and found her eyelids so heavy, she could no longer keep them up.

Meeting Janet was surely the strangest thing that had ever happened to her. She began to think that maybe this was only a dream.
Beach Moment
Karen Gardner
Media Relations Manager

A hint of salt scents the air, as waves crash, spraying mist. In the glint of sunlight a prismatic flash blinks a rainbow, then disappears into thin air. Erosion feasts on clay cliffs sloping steeply from shoreline to tufted bluffs. The putty masses blush hints of sandstone. Deep rivulets carve plump mounds, like wet sand dribbled through Aegir’s fist.

A gull cries, hovers, then dives, piercing the surf. It emerges beak empty. A fish lives another day. The surf roars, applauding all, sending mist borne in a forceful splash that resounds as it pounds my stony refuge. A fleeting flash of refracted light colors the moment, forever frozen in my mind’s eye.

Purple Bliss in the Desert
Aruba
Alison Sikora
Graduate Student, 2nd year

Guitarist in Seville
Fern Schwartz
Senior Major Gifts Officer Dept. of Institutional Advancement
Perfection

L. Paul Saltzman
Field Superintendent
Dept. of Engineering

I look at the latest and greatest equipment that the photographic market is releasing, in search of perfection. Yesterday I found a new tripod. It is lighter, stronger, and more compact and sells for a mere $2,200.00. The advertisement states not to wait, they are only manufacturing 300: I am waiting. This search that I am in – it isn’t driven by the equipment that I own or desire to own – it is driven by obtaining perfection in my images. In this search that I am in I will ask myself, “What makes it right?”

I look back at my early work and I see clean, crisp colors. In yesterday’s work I see landscapes, where each leaf is as distinct as the next. I look back at some of my Cooper Lake work and recall how I suffered, when my horizon line was dead center or not straight as an arrow. YIKES!!! How could I defy the rule of thirds and think I got it?

In my continued search I seek the way to achieve this perfection. I must say I found it but you need to know the history behind the discovery to appreciate the find. Why a tripod? Because, unlike the days of film, our digital equipment has no fudge area. No margin of forgiveness for mistakes. A poor lens will result in an even poorer image. Hand shakes make a really poor image. Mirror slam, well, you got it, poor image. And add to this mix the photographer’s frustration and angst in trying to get it right.

Then on a clear day in spring, on a day when others would be trekking about the glens of Woodstock, NY, I am sitting inside a friend’s home, alone, with my camera. I am sitting watching the clock tick away the light of day as I tell myself, “Tomorrow, I’ll do more tomorrow. Tomorrow morning I will leave at dawn and shoot the flora of the season. Tomorrow I will do more...” It doesn’t work, my frustration for perfection pushes me to do today, to be daring and I am pushed to continue my search for the muse that will guide me to perfection.

Up from the couch of my laziness and with camera in hand, yes no tripod, I move into the light of the mid day sun and begin to shoot a series around a yellow lily. I move about the table, where the glass vase is set, and shoot from all sides, all angles, and at all speeds. I shoot with utter carelessness of the rules of thirds. I shoot with complete disregard for the clarity, sharpness, white balance or exposure. I shoot to create a feeling that has haunted me too long. I shoot not the flower you see, but the one you don’t really see. To give away the sharpness of the image and replace it with a feeling of color. This time I shoot from my heart because I hear it saying that this is the perfection I seek. I shoot a series of soft flowers...

The lesson that I need to keep in my mind’s eye is: it’s not in the equipment, the subject, or the rule of thirds. It is in the heart of the photographer and the eye of the beholder.

Good shooting, everyone.
West West

Stephen Lowery  
Medical Student, 1st year

A drowsy blanket of morning enfolds
The encampment.
Shades of seventy-five days get smudged
Along the topography edges,
Sought out like the source of this feeling it
Turned into, somewhere
Back, when we traveled alone.

Foliate extensions of the earth
Brush the dreamers
In sleep, bruising slowly the skin
With a mark of uncertainty, unknowing,
Except that this is sleeping too much,
That somewhere the passage
Into a winter day, where we walk
Clear-eyed and wind-nipped
Snuggles among other sentiments
Or untethers at a point we can’t yet read.

Is it resignation, with a confetti of sighs,
To a library where the embers
Of a glorious wasting glow,
Whisper their final year
Into the pages of a favorite tome,
Or had the cartographers
With cautious hope extended,
Beneath the shadow of a tulip tree,
A rill, left where it is needed most,
Exiting stage right
Along the shifting cold of the stones?

Both plots unfolded, side by side
At the margins of the screen, where prop
Conifers and a painted mountain scene insist
On the amnesia that is so unassured.
As we felt it
So it was diagnosed –
Until we find the hole in the undergrowth
That leads out to wakefulness again.

Red I Drink

Sunny Gupta  
PhD recipient, 2007

I eat cherries
for maple entice me
wine flows down your delicate neck
bosom
In moments of passion
and
Red! comes to my mind

The Red-Eyed Frog

Natasha Shapiro  
Medical Student, 2nd year
The Sword of Paralysis

Yair Lev
PGY1 resident, Internal Medicine

Walking through the doors of the emergency room for a night shift, I suddenly froze in place. We have all seen in the movies and on TV these humongous, gigantic people. People who live on potato chips, hamburgers, and Coca-Cola. People who are getting bigger and bigger, requiring more and more nutrition. Eating an amount of calories sufficient to feed an average-sized village in Mongolia.

But no movie, book or dream prepared me for what I saw. Lying on a special wide bed was the biggest man I had ever seen. Fortunately, they had a bed this big since it is the Bronx, and titanic people coming to Jacobi are not a rare sight.

Mr. Abura was a 44 year-old gentleman, who was born and raised in the Bronx.

He came to the ER because during the last few days prior to the admission he was short of breath. He weighed nearly 650 pounds coming to the hospital. That’s almost 300 kgs. Surprisingly, he didn’t have any other medical conditions. No diabetes, no hypertension, no known heart disease.

So what happened to Mr. Abura?

Well, during the last months, he had continued to gain weight, needing more calories, being less mobile, decreasing his burnt calories, increasing his amount of food... A vicious cycle.

Over time, the amount of fat tissue in his abdomen, chest, and neck started to compress his lungs. Imagine a healthy set of lungs, trying in vain to expand with every breath taken, halted ferociously by a massive wall, a barrel of fat, squashing the poor lungs, not letting them draw the oxygen that they need so much.

Lying on the bed, we had to examine him. We asked him to move up in the bed.

Struggling to breathe, while trying to move up, he accidentally kicked the back piece of the bed. It was like a Kung-fu movie: that big piece of plastic and wood, which was once a part of the bed, snapped off like a tiny twig. It flew at the speed of light and crashed on the wall, about 10 meters away. He was doing really badly: started getting confused, turning blue. His labs were horrible. He was like a man thrown out of a space ship with no oxygen. Sucking in the vacuum, No Air!!! No air!!

We had no choice. A tube had to be put into his throat, allowing a machine to press in oxygen, overcoming the 300-kg cage surrounding the lungs. But who would do it?

I remember the horror in the eyes of the senior anesthesiologist when he was called from home. He’s been placing tubes into people’s throats as a profession for more than thirty years. And as good as he is, it wasn’t easy to find the tiny trachea (breathing tube), hidden in a neck as wide as my body. With the assistance of 6 more people, after a long and bloody 20 minutes, the tube was in place and he was transferred to the intensive care unit.

Shortly after being ventilated, his body crashed. He had high fevers every single day. Nothing could control those fevers of 40°. Mr. Abura was bombed with so many antibiotics, his bloodstream became an acid river, which would dissolve and melt any bacteria that would dare step inside. And yet, he had continued to spike fevers.

At first, he was also completely unresponsive. Not to words, not to pain.

When he started recovering, showing minimal response –we encountered a new serious problem that had been evident for the last two weeks. Mr. Abura couldn’t move!!! Not his legs, not his arms, not his hands or feet, not even his beefy toes or fingers. Nothing. A muscle study confirmed the diagnosis: ICU myopathy.

This is a problem that is seen occasionally in critically ill patients who are ventilated for long periods of time. It’s caused by the muscles being deprived of oxygen, leading to a loss of function. In Mr. Abura’s case, it was caused by his extreme obesity and the resulting pressure on his lungs.

For a few seconds nothing happened.
And then, a miracle...
ill patients. No one really knows why, but his or her muscles and nerves are “turned off”. So, even when he was opening his eyes and seemed to be awake and moving his neck a little, he couldn’t move his gigantic limbs! Not even a tiny finger motion.

Remember “Kill Bill”, where the bride, Uma Thurman, was found in a hospital, after being in a coma for a long time, and couldn’t move a muscle?

Well, maybe it was for a different reason, but that’s what it looked like.

Mr. Abura was extremely sick. Trying to wean him off the ventilator seemed impossible. Every time we were decreasing the machine pressures, his blood results were disastrous and we had to increase the pressure: normal pressures for him, pressures that would pop the lungs of any normal-weighing person like tiny balloons.

He was still a burning man. A huge flame in an over-cooled room under electronic cooling blankets which were working full steam, unsuccessfully.

But during the last few days we saw a change: Mr. Abura was slowly waking up and becoming more and more alert!!!

He only moved his head and neck, and he couldn’t talk (since he had the tube down his throat). But he understood where he was, and he started recognizing the people around him. From day to day he was more alert and more understanding. I encouraged him to try to move his arms, move his legs, to show me something!!

I think he understood me. He was nodding his head a little. His eyes were following me. But nothing much other than that. In spite of this improvement, he seemed anxious, something really bothered him. But what did he want? He couldn’t speak, he couldn’t write. I thought he was trying to tell me something.

How do you communicate with a man who can only look around and move his neck a tiny bit?

Are you in pain, Mr. Abura? No, a tiny shake of the head.

Are you hungry? No, it’s not that.

Do you feel lonely? Another no shake. Why would he be? His wife and sister visited him every day.

Mr. Abura, listen to me closely.

Are you… sad?

No movement... his eyes stood still, focused on me.

And then I saw it. A glittering diamond slowly rolled from his right eye on his cheek.

Hmmmm… That’s it! He is sad and depressed. How did I miss that? That’s why he is restless.

Of course he is sad!!

A man who felt short of breath, but nothing otherwise, came to the hospital to see what was wrong with him and whhhhhaaaaammm!!!

Next time he opened his eyes he was in a sterile, white room, medical machines around him, doctors and nurses hovering over with needles, like bees over flowers, drinking his blood, shoving needles into his muscles, his head.

And, and, what’s this?

I can’t move, I can’t talk!! Oh my god!!! Somebody

(Continued on page 42)
help me!! I’m trying to scream, but I can’t!! No control, my body, my dear body that I have lived with for 44 years in such perfect harmony, respond!! Mouth, open, say something! Fingers, take a pen and write them, tell them, to stop, stop this madness, I want to walk, I want to sit, I want my life back, HELP!!!!!!

A trapped soul in a gigantic, lifeless body.

How wouldn’t he be sad?

So I started explaining to him. Trying to fill him with hope. It’s all a matter of time. Be patient. You will improve. You will walk again. You will tell stories to your children. You will hold your wife’s hand and stroke it gently. Be patient.

But... wait... why is he shaking his head? Is it not that? Is it something else? Yes, he shut his eyes and another tear dropped and moistened his chapped lips.

But what?

I leaned forward to look at him carefully. He was looking at me. Or was it really me that he was looking at? Or was it something else? I slowly turned back, maybe it was something behind me.

And then I saw it. Flashing colors, enigmatic sounds. Is that it? That’s what he was looking at? I turned my head back to him. Yes, that’s it.

The TV hanging on the wall!

And then I asked him. Do you want to watch TV? His eyes shut closed so strongly – they turned into horizontal slits.

Do you want to switch to another channel?

A voice, such a deep voice. Sounded like a whale trying to communicate with his mate miles away. A deep voice echoing from within a wide chest. The windows hummed. The nurses stopped working in the station. Everybody looked around. Tears were flooding his pillow and the tube. Is that a beginning of a smile? I think so.

Cautiously, I grabbed the remote control from the little table by the TV. I walked towards him. His gaze was intensely focused on my hand, on the remote. I was not saying a word. Slowly, I moved the remote control towards Mr. Abura.

And then I told him: “Here’s the remote control. Take it.”

He looked at my hand. For a few seconds nothing happened.

And then, a miracle.

Right arm slowly rose from the bed towards my hand. Fingers moved a bit. His hand brushed my hand. He couldn’t quite grasp the remote with his hand.

This was the first time during the last month that he moved. I’m so excited. I call the nurses and my fellow resident. They are all amazed. Yes, a miracle!!!

Mr. Abura is still very sick, but this is a good sign. A first flower blooming after a long and cold winter.

There is hope. I know it; he may know it.

But he doesn’t really care.

We now understand that he wants to watch TV, so we come into his room and change it to the channel that he likes.

And he is smiling. He is happy. And that’s also a good sign. He is slowly moving his arms and learning how to use the remote control again.

I don’t like TV, I have never owned one. I think it is a box of stupidity, the biggest waste of time. A human creation to fill in the emptiness and boredom of the Western modern life.

But... I guess every coin has two sides. Did it and will it help with the recovery of Mr. Abura?

Perhaps.

Uma Thruan wiggled her toes at the thought of her enemy. Mr. Abura moved his hand at the thought of the TV. I hope to see him walking again.

I had a dream last night.

In my dream, I saw Mr. Abura holding a shiny samurai sword, standing back to back with Uma, jumping elegantly in between his enemies, slashing his way into happiness and health.
For Parents of Autistic Children

Quan Chen
Co-Director, Bioinformatics Shared Resource

“I’m going to the Disney World.”
In a quiet warm exam room
The thought traveled in me
Before light could beam
Before sound could echo

“It’s a baby boy, Mrs. and Mr. Chen.”
We were indeed in a dreamland
– for a while
Something then happened
We don’t know what we did
Someone pillaged the dream
And left you
My son
In a desert
A bird unable to fly
A deer unable to run
A tiger unable to leap
Those eyes were still ours only without us
Can one steal human from a human being?
Someone’s tried and succeeded with babies
In their tender years

We had to go on
We did not know how
You were fragile, needed a citadel
And we were alone vulnerable and mortal
As we fell in the deep shaft of isolation and desperation
We found in us something deeply human
To rise in the dark like an angel
Even the heaven above is no more

Prayers

Shuli Kulak
Medical Student, 1st year

Untitled

Xinshu She
Medical Student, 2nd year
Oil on Canvas
Mrs. Thomas sat at her kitchen table. It barely had sufficient room for the lazy susan and two dinner plates. She dipped her tea bag in a cracked porcelain cup. After counting to ten she placed the tea bag on a small plate, which she would place in the fridge. It was good for two more brews.

The room was twelve feet long by seven feet wide, and it was where she spent most of her day. Arthritis, phlebitis, and a host of aches and pains earned over sixty-seven hard years had limited her ability to walk up and down the four flights of stairs. She had four means of accessing the world outside her apartment.

The first was her husband, Jeremy, who managed to maintain a positive outlook on his circumstances by never allowing himself to become sober. Secondly, there was the U. S. Postal Service, which delivered the monthly Social Security check and the junk mail that was anything but junk to Mrs. Thomas. Her bedroom had one window that provided a view of the brick wall of the warehouse four feet away. The small bathroom had a small window which had been painted shut years ago and covered with such a layer of dirt on the outside that light barely shone through. But from her kitchen table Mrs. Thomas could look out at the busy street below her. Cars, trucks and people hurried past all day long. If they happened to look up she would wave. Some waved back and others made gestures. What she disliked the most was when they ignored her. Her most important connection to the world was the twelve-inch black and white Philco television on the kitchen counter. From the time she woke up until the time she went to bed the television was on. It was her friend, her family, her preacher, and her doctor. The small set entertained her, soothed her, and encouraged her.

“I have to go check the mail. Be back in a little while.” Jeremy stood in the doorway of the kitchen. His five foot, six inch body barely weighed a hundred and thirty pounds. His deeply lined face, bloodshot eyes, three day beard and uncombed, unwashed hair declared his occupation. The Social Security check was due, but they both knew that he would be using food stamps to buy a six pack of the cheapest beer on sale at the corner grocery.

Mrs. Thomas looked down on Thirteenth Street. It was a blessing that she lived over a busy thoroughfare, allowing her a view of great activity all day long. She could see her husband cross the street quickly, heading for his first beer of the day. She sighed and moved to her television. It was nearly ten AM and she didn’t want to miss a moment of the Christian Power Hour with Pastor Bob. She turned to channel ten and adjusted the antenna until the picture cleared. It was not an accident that ten was one of only two channels that came in clearly.

The smiling face of Pastor Bob came on the screen and lightened her day. She sat at the table with her weak cup of tea. Pastor Bob’s perfect teeth lit up his smile. He was a handsome man, mid-forties, with a slight Southern accent most Northern women found charming. His most striking feature was his long, wavy black hair that began with a wave on his forehead and swept back over his head to terminate a little below the collar of the white shirt he wore every day. Pastor Bob was an animated speaker, and his audience knew that he believed what he said with every ounce of his heart. He was sincere, humorous and compassionate. Mrs. Thomas’ favorite part of the program was when he would read a letter from a person with troubles. At some point he would be overcome with emotion, break down and sob. There would be absolute silence while Pastor Bob fought to bring his emotions under control.

“Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. The Lord has given us a beautiful day here in South Carolina and I hope it’s beautiful where you are too. It just seems sometimes that there’s not enough hours in the day for me to count the blessin’s the Lord has cast upon me. Of course I have my troubles, and so do you I’m sure. But please stop to think of all the wonderful things that happened in your life and I know, that if you’ve lived your life believin’ in the Lord, following His commandments, and supporting His ministries, that it’ll be a big task to add up all He’s done for you.”

“Pastor Bob, you’re so right.” The lovely assistant, Carolyn, came into the picture carrying several letters. She was several inches shorter and ten years younger than Pastor Bob. She was a pretty girl with short blond hair and wore modest ankle length dresses that failed to hide an attractively full figure. “Just this morning we received a letter from a long time supporter, Mrs. Sarah Longworth. She writes to say that ever since she started watching and pledged support for Pastor Bobs’ ministry the Lord has just showered her with blessings. Her daughter got married and she already has a wonderful
grandson!"

“Praise the Lord! Carolyn, that is a perfect example of how a member of our Ministry showed her faith in the Lord, and had her prayers answered. How long after she joined our family did the Lord bestow His blessings on the Longworth family?”

“Pastor Bob, this is amazing. She was only a member for seven months before her prayers were answered.” They looked at each other quickly and Carolyn immediately went to the next letter.

“Here is a less happy story, Pastor Bob. Mr. Richard Ryan writes to say that his dear wife of thirty-seven years passed away six months ago and he has been sad and lonely ever since. He has pledged to send fifty dollars a month because he believes in our work, but it is hard for him to go on.”

“Mr. Ryan is a perfect example of what I’m gonna be talkin’ about this morning. You must show your faith in the Lord if you want the Lord to shower His blessings on you. Now Mr. Ryan is probably not a rich man, and he could probably find a good use for that fifty dollars. But what better use is there than the Lord’s work? And by making that pledge, he’s now told the Lord that not only is he a believer in the Lord, but that he’s willing to put his money where his mouth is. It’s easy for people to say they love the Lord, and its easy for people to act like they love the Lord, but when it comes time to support the ministry of the Lord they’re silent with their dollars. Who do these people think they’re foolin?”

A frown came over the pretty face of Carolyn. “Pastor Bob, I just don’t understand why those people don’t make their pledges and make themselves eligible for the Lord’s blessings? Why do they want to risk being ignored by Him? Then the only one they can look to for help is the government or the devil.”

“It amazes me too, Carolyn.” Pastor Bob looked straight at the camera. “If your life don’t seem worth livin’, if you have more problems than you know what to do with, loved ones gone astray, more bills than you can handle, there’s really only one Person you can go to for help. You know that in your heart. And you probably do believe in the Lord. And you probably do make an effort to follow His commandments. But do you believe in Him enough to show your support for His ministry? If your answer is no, how can you possibly expect Him to help you in your time of need? Carolyn, let us pray.”

They brought their hands together and bowed their heads. Pastor Bob’s eyes were closed so tightly that wrinkles appeared at the corners. The jaw muscles strained in concentration as he began his prayer. “Dear Lord, we know that there are many of our viewers out there who are suffering right now. We know that they have all kinds of problems that only You can solve. And we know that You have bestowed Your blessings on this ministry and want us to continue with Your work. But there is a problem, Lord. Some viewers don’t have a faith strong enough to allow them to make a pledge of support. Or maybe the evil one works on their minds in his efforts to corrupt their souls and increase the level of misery in the world. Dear Lord, we pray that You will lift the fog from their minds. Strengthen their faith, so that they can have the courage to make that next step closer to You, by making that pledge. Dear Lord, help them, for they know not what they do. Dear Lord, help them, for by not pledging their rightful support to Your ministry on earth they are denying You, just as Peter denied You almost two thousand years ago. Thank You, Lord.”

Six hundred and thirty seven miles away tears came to the eyes of Mrs. Thomas, partly because she had never pledged and partly because the wonderful Pastor Bob was praying for her. There was a loud pop and the picture went black. She moved quickly to the set and turned dials. Moving the antenna had no effect. She unplugged and replugged the power cord. Only a slight buzz came from her beloved television. Mrs. Thomas knew that the Lord took an active part in everyday life, and it was apparent that He was speaking to her. The words of Pastor Bob...
ran through her mind over and over, and the panic of being without her television receded slowly from her mind.  

Jeremy returned and entered the kitchen. “Got the Social Security check. Here’s your mail.” When she didn’t grab the mail immediately he knew something was wrong. “Thelma, what’s the matter?”

The tears started flowing freely. “The television broke.”

Jeremy moved to the television, holding a can of Mountain Nectar beer in his hand. He fiddled with the dials and antenna for five minutes before announcing “Damn thing’s broke.” He left the kitchen and she could hear him enter the bathroom, leaving the door open as usual in spite of years of requests that he not do so. “I’ll go on down the Salvation Army and see if they’ve got a television. Maybe I can pick one up real cheap.”

She heard the pop of another Mountain Nectar and knew that he would be occupied for a few minutes. The mail was before her on the kitchen table, the U. S. government check in its distinctive brown envelope. The Lord blessed her with the answer to her problems. She had abundant faith, she obeyed His commandments. But she had not supported His ministries as an act of faith. She pulled a plain envelope from a drawer and scribbled the name of Pastor Bob and his post office box and zip code, which she had memorized from having heard it thirty times per show. She endorsed the Social Security check and put it in the envelope. She wrote a short note to Pastor Bob telling him that she needed the Lord’s blessing. She sealed the envelope and said a prayer.

“Dear Lord, I need your help. Through Pastor Bob You told me that I should support your ministry and today You worked a miracle right here in my kitchen by having my television blow up. I believe in You Lord, and I am offering my Social Security check because I know that You will answer my prayers. Dear Lord, I don’t want much. I would like to have a nice television, maybe in color this time, and I would like to be not so poor. And Lord, I know it’s difficult, but I would like it if You could make Jeremy stop drinking all the time. Amen.”

She picked up the envelope and reached into her house-dress for some money. She took out three crumpled dollar bills and called to her husband. He came back to the kitchen, holding a can of Mountain Nectar.

“Jeremy, please take this letter down to the mail box on the corner. And here’s three dollars so you can buy some more beer.”

Jeremy took the envelope without looking at the address. He did look closely at the three dollars, which he immediately pocketed. “Be right back, Thelma.”

From her seat in the kitchen she looked out at the street. By the time she could count to fifteen Jeremy appeared in view heading briskly toward the corner. He stopped at the mailbox, depositing the letter without looking at the address. He appeared eager to get to his next destination. Without looking he stepped out into the street across from the corner market.

Mrs. Thomas saw the Old World Brewers delivery truck - maker of Mountain Nectar beer - moving down the street at forty miles an hour in the direction of one of their best customers. People on the street heard the blare of the horn and the screech of the brakes just as Jeremy turned to face the truck loaded with his favorite beverage. With a full load the truck weighed over ten thousand pounds. With half a load on, Jeremy still weighed only 130.

Five tons of truck met 130 pounds of Jeremy. For a short while Jeremy was pasted to the front bumper and grill of the truck, but as the truck began to lose speed Jeremy detached and continued his airborne trip through the intersection and East on Thirteenth Street. Gravity brought him to ground but he was still traveling at over ten miles an hour and his body began tumbling awkwardly, finally coming to rest 150 feet from the initial impact.

Mrs. Thomas was in shock. She began screaming so shrilly that bystanders on the street looked up. Several knew her and her husband and started explaining to others that she had just seen her husband die.  One witness, a slightly built man dressed in suit and tie, carrying a briefcase, listened and began asking questions. He ran to the deceased and made some notes. Trotting back to the building where Mrs. Thomas lived he ran up the stairs to her apartment. He knocked on the door and, after thirty seconds, tried it and found it unlocked.

Mrs. Thomas was still crying and the man tried to comfort her. She would not look up even as he spoke to her in his
most soothing voice. He brought her toilet paper from the bathroom to blow her nose. She finally looked up.

“I’m so sorry, Mrs. Thomas. What a horrible thing to happen. I am here to help you, Mrs. Thomas. My name is Martin Gompers.”

“What am I going to do? He’s dead, isn’t he?”

“I’m afraid so. If it’s any comfort, he died instantly. He didn’t have to suffer.”

“What am I going to do now?” She wailed helplessly, and Mr. Gompers placed his hand on her shoulder.

“I would like to help you, Mrs. Thomas. The next few days are going to be very difficult. Funeral arrangements have to be made, legal matters taken care of… I can help you with those things.”

Suddenly she looked up at the kind stranger. She had never seen him before, and it dawned on her that this must be another of the Lord’s miracles. He was a handsome man in his mid thirties. He had sharp features, including a small thin nose, thin lips and gray eyes. He was articulate and wore a funeral directors smile, sympathetic, optimistic but not joyful. But the most striking feature, and the one most endearing to Mrs. Thomas, was the long, wavy black hair worn in the same exact style as Pastor Bob.

Through her sobs she managed to mumble: “please help me… please help me….”

Mr. Gompers opened his briefcase and put some papers on the table. He asked Mrs. Thomas some questions and made notes. He learned her date of birth and social security number and obtained the same information for her husband. More importantly, he learned that Mrs. Thomas had no relatives or friends. “Mrs. Thomas, if you want I will make the funeral arrangements and deal with the police and the hospital. Is there anything you need right now?”

She cried and mumbled something. He asked her to repeat it and finally made out that her television was broken. Pulling a cellular telephone from his briefcase he made a call. “I will take care of that. Now if you would like me to take care of these other matters I just need you to sign a few papers.” Mrs. Thomas signed the sheets of paper that were put in front of her without reading them. She trusted the young man with the Pastor Bob haircut. As soon as they were all signed he carefully placed them in his briefcase.

There was a knock at the door. Mr. Gompers answered the door and led a police officer into the kitchen.

The officer expressed his condolences and officially notified Mrs. Thomas that her husband had been transported via ambulance to the hospital but it was clear that he had died in the accident. “I don’t believe he suffered.” She began wailing again.

“I am the family attorney, officer. I’ll be calling you later for the accident report.” They walked to the door together, the officer writing down the name, telephone number and address of Mr. Gompers.

During the next hour Mr. Gompers made several more phone calls. A doctor arrived to examine Mrs. Thomas, and he left some prescription sleep aids. A home nurse’s aid arrived shortly thereafter, and set about making Mrs. Thomas tea. Mrs. Thomas stared out the window and saw an appliance delivery truck pull up outside. She could only dream of what was in it. Two men opened the back and carried out a large box. She lost sight of them as they entered her building. Five minutes later the two men were uncrating a forty-inch color television, which by necessity they had to place in her bedroom. A deliveryman came in carrying several bags of groceries, which the aid unpacked. The abundance of blessings seemed to continue unabated until, fighting to keep her eyes open to continue viewing the magnificent picture on her television, she fell off into a dreamless sleep.
The Great Gulf
Carl Schildkraut
Professor, Dept. of Cell Biology

Illegal Alien
Noé Romo
Medical Student, 4th year

Illegal,
is the sweat
my father dissipates
that can be easily converted
to blood shed,
becoming another martyr
for capitalistic intentions
& unsafe working conditions.

Alien,
are those that fail to see
the sacrifice of the poor
that flee homes
leaving everything they know
to a place unknown
to the north,
whom they hear opens doors of gold
but in truth,
only welcomes
to enslave the poor.

Illegal,
are the tears shed
by mothers losing sons
& infants losing fathers,
shot down & starved like animals
crossing an imaginary line in a desert jungle
where souls are claimed
in the name
of nationalistic praise.

Alien,
are the fruits from my father’s tree
that will never be
dried up by the daily risk of losing his life
to building sewers beneath streets
he’ll never drive over,
& building scrapers of the sky
he’ll never climb
from the inside.

Illegal,
are these anti-humans fleeing poverty
sentiments.

Alien,
is the blissful ignorance
of the American dream,
my father will never see.
He whispered in my ear

Lishann Shields
10th grade, Clinton High School
Einstein Enrichment Program

He whispered in my ear
Ran his fingers up my thighs
He drew me close to him
With those tantalizing eyes
He led me someplace dark
I went without a fight
I thought that it was love
So I had sex with him that night
His kisses were so tender
The feeling was so nice
For a single night of pleasure
With my life, I’m paying the price
Now, I’m HIV-positive
And so is my baby girl
I was only thirteen
When I brought her into this world
And if I could go back in time
The one thing I’d regret
Is never considering the consequences
Of unprotected sex.

Untitled
Robert Karr

Did It
Azeezat Azeez
10th grade, Lehman High School
Einstein Enrichment Program

She did it
He did it
They all supposedly did it
But guess what it’s not a shocker, the stork brings her baby
in 9 months
And him, well let’s just say it kind of burns when he pees
And we that supposedly did it are watching in shock that
your friend is pregnant or has an STD.
It’s finally sinking in that it could have been me
If you’re going to be a follower which I don’t advise make
sure you follow those that won’t lead you to your demise
because life is not just living in the “now” it’s about making
sure that “now” does not come back later and regurgitate
the things that could have waited.
One Leaf at a Time

David Kulak
Medical Student, 3rd year

Forgive me for I didn't know.
I was living in a world
Where I thought I was so old
But I had not begun to grow
Until the day I felt the snow,
And squinted from the melting cold
Watching my life start to unfold.

But just like that it was too late.
With snowdrops rolling down my cheeks
I stood there in the storm for weeks
And could do nothing, only wait
For the warmth to change our fate.
I tried to help it, but was weak

The Snowstorm

Natasha Shapiro
Medical Student, 2nd year

And still the sun refused to speak.
The darkness contrasting the white
The mercury dropped, the cold got worse.
The silent blizzard ran its course
My ungloved fingers felt the bite
My breathing slowed, I lost the fight.
But then a blanket of remorse
Made my heart beat with stronger force.

But all in vain, you never came.
The sun refused to ever shine
And this time I for real resign
Swallowing the drops of shame
I will put out my heartache's flame
And hold my head high on my spine.
Melting the snow, until I'm fine.

Bronx Skyline

David Darcy
Medical Student, 2nd year

And still the sun refused to speak.
The darkness contrasting the white
The mercury dropped, the cold got worse.
The silent blizzard ran its course
My ungloved fingers felt the bite
My breathing slowed, I lost the fight.
But then a blanket of remorse
Made my heart beat with stronger force.

But all in vain, you never came.
The sun refused to ever shine
And this time I for real resign
Swallowing the drops of shame
I will put out my heartache's flame
And hold my head high on my spine.
Melting the snow, until I'm fine.
bleeding, sometimes

Brett Negro
Medical Student, 1st year

she sleeps like crumpled flowers on my bed,
mouth so pleasant for kissing left slightly ajar
skin all painted in milky incandescence
stars discuss science quietly above her childlike head
whispering through pens and pencils the darkest stirrings
of my heart and brain, letters saying there isn’t enough hot water, turn
and count (one two three for five six seven), let’s take turns,
this stuff is for washing not laughing
(if love strings are spider’s silk, i only get more tangled up
when i try to brush you out of my branches);
you turn lights off and on in me, pull things out of my
attic, tell me your dreams lying there in your underwear,
god i just
want to smolder with no clothes on, feel your teeth,
turn on all the lights
i’m an animal and a scientist, but you can come to me like
a child, and when i grow up i want to be a
ghost(s whisper ghosts whisper ghosts whisper)
been whispering and scratching away quite some time now,
mucking up the inside of my skull with boots and bare feet and
hoarsely wrought lectures that may cause bleeding, sometimes
i just want to kiss your knees, scream in your mouth,
have you swallow up all these peace-stealers waiting
for waiters to feed us wine, not take a
temperature that’s rising like smoke from an indian
camp where i sit stirring celestial embers
on my haunches, staring up at campfire craters,
 wondering if they could possibly hold
all this lovesick;
and but now the sky’s as bare as this room
her gentle snoring dissolving darkness until nothing is left
but circles, circles traced lovingly into everything, like skeletons,
strange bones for strange bodies
Ad Lib Art & Literary Nite
Mariam Kabir

On the 5th of December, 2007, the Ad Libitum team held a wonderful evening during which artists, musicians, poets and writers from the AECOM community showcased their work and performed enthusiastically to a mesmerized crowd consisting of faculty, students, and employees. This night, called the Ad Lib Art & Literary Nite, mirrored the Einstein community’s devotion towards art, and exhibited the breadth of talent present within this scientific community. Fifty-three artists displayed paintings, sketches, sculptures and photographs, and 15 writers and poets read their written pieces. The Einstein String Quartet performed while the audience browsed artwork, sipping wine and eating hor d’ouvres. This event would not have been possible without the help of Peter Dama and the Graphic Arts Center, Karen Gardner and the MIS center. Funding for this event was provided by Dr. Albert Kuperman, Dr. Stephen Lazar, the Graduate Student Council and the Graduate office.

Some members of the Ad Libitum team. Left to right: Sarah Lutz, Irene Puga, Mariam Kabir, Natasha Shapiro, Maria Fan, Eric Hayden, Souvik Sarkar, and Soumit Roy.

Original artwork on display.

The Einstein String Quartet. Clockwise from left: Bret Negro, Michael Berlin, Jessica Lee, and Jennifer Lee, all 1st year medical students.

Sylvia Smoller, Professor in the Dept. of Epidemiology and Population Health, reading an excerpt from her novel, Rachel and Aleks.

Noé Romo, a fourth year medical student, reading his poetry.

Over 200 people gathered to listen to poets and writers read their work.
Grey Babouche

Emese El Bissatine Pasztor
Faculty Spouse
*Oil on Canvas, 18 x 24”*

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Back Cover:

**Calla Lily II**

L. Paul Saltzman
Field Superintendent
Dept. of Engineering