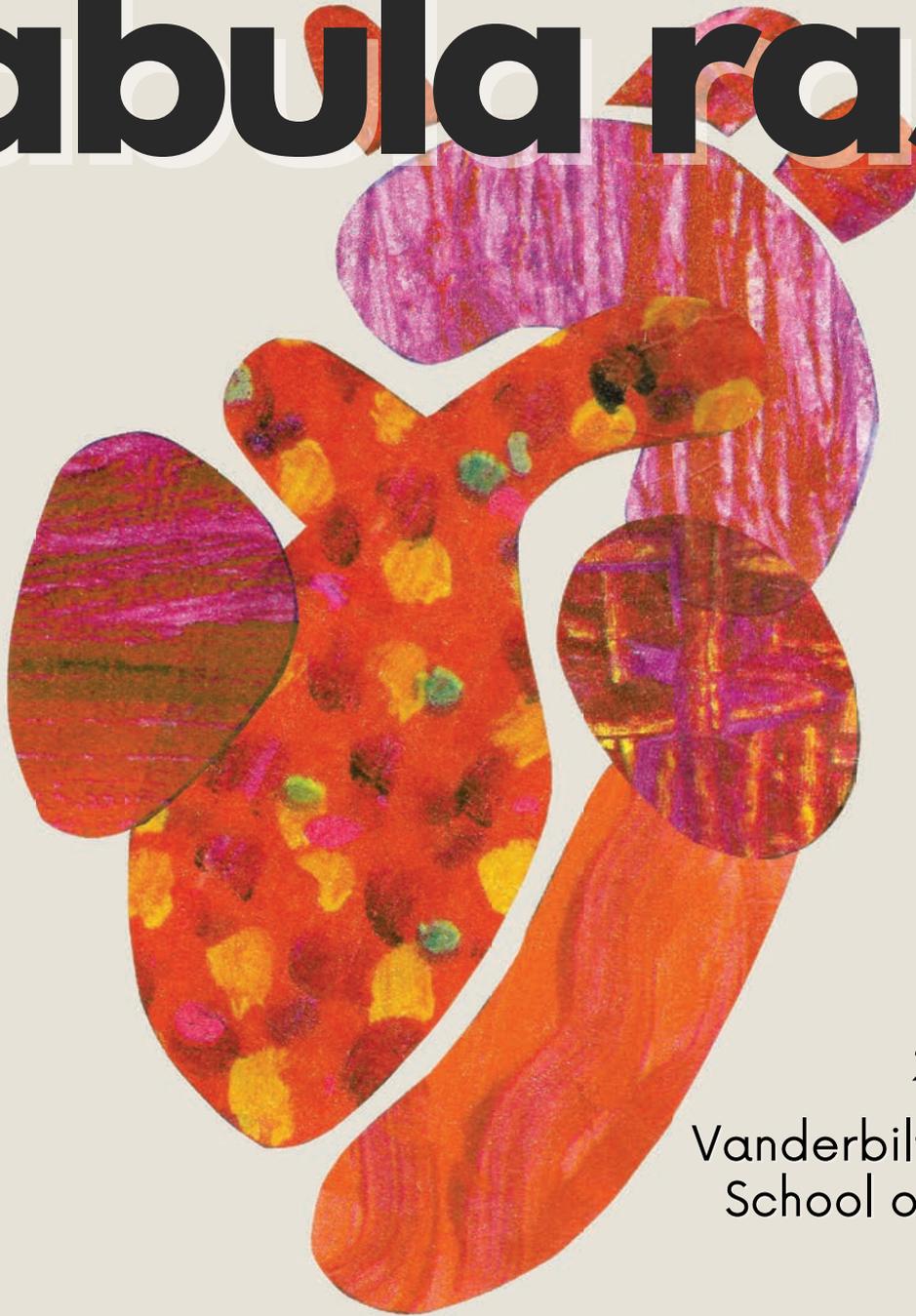


# tabula rasa



Volume XIII  
2020-2021

Vanderbilt University  
School of Medicine



## **COVER ART:**

"Bits of Heart"  
by Kyle Cassling  
p.53

The works published in this journal were selected by medical and nursing students at Vanderbilt University based on artistic and literary merit. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Vanderbilt University or Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

To contact the editorial staff or submit creative work, email [postcallanthology@gmail.com](mailto:postcallanthology@gmail.com).



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*Tabula Rasa*, Latin for “blank slate,” is Vanderbilt University School of Medicine’s journal of medical humanities. *Tabula Rasa* is dedicated to the idea that the media of pixels, paint, pen, and paper lend individuals the means with which to explore the nature of humanity and enhance their medical experience. The journal is published annually and invites submissions of original poetry, essays, short stories, interviews, artwork, and photography from medical students, residents, faculty, alumni, patients, and members of the greater Nashville community.

# A Note from the Editors:

Whether we spent the past year buried under a grid of zoom names, embracing loved ones from a distance, or questioning what the future holds, the COVID-19 pandemic has tested us all in different ways. Each of us has had different responses to the pandemic, reflected in the myriad of creative expressions in Tabula Rasa.

Through your creative work, we have the privilege of witnessing a sliver of your lived experiences, and each piece demonstrates how we are unified by resilience. Arulita Gupta's artwork invites us to peer through balcony windows at our neighbors pedaling, cooking, and meditating their way through the pandemic. We are led through a Canine Olfactory Rehabilitation Center with Dr. Yared's border collie, River, after she loses her sense of smell from COVID. And Dr. Fuchs reminds us of the multiple dimensions in which we are connected, even virtually.

As you find your own way through a rapidly changing world, we want to thank you for pausing to read through this journal. Although we are collectively processing a year and a half of loss, we hope you can find healing through the words and images of our community.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Arulita Gupta and Jessa Fogel. The signature on the left is 'Arulita Gupta' and the one on the right is 'Jessa Fogel'.

Arulita Gupta and Jessa Fogel  
Tabula Rasa Editors in Chief 2020-2021

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*With special thanks to Amy Fleming, MD, Ann Price, MD, Brian Christman, MD, Daniel Birchmore, MD, the Vanderbilt Medical School Alumni Association, and the Vanderbilt Medical School Administration for their continued and dedicated support of the medical humanities*

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 **Editors' Choice**

 Continued Online

Pieces continued online can be found at:

<https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/literatureartsandmedicine/tabula-rasa/>

# Peds ER, Beirut 1980. A True Story.

Aida Yared

With every explosion, the building shakes.

The Surgery side is busy with casualties. Pediatrics is deserted.

I sit at a desk with Nurse Nadia.

We're missing the vigil for John Lennon in the auditorium. It started at 8pm.

We nibble on dried figs. Nadia hums a song by Fairuz.

I yawn.

A woman walks in, an infant in her arms.

Leila takes the baby bundle to check the vitals, while I obtain the history:

Five-week-old boy

Severe diarrhea for five days

Stopped feeding...

Nurse Nadia interrupts with an anguished voice: "Doctor, his temp is 93F."

I turn to look at the baby.

The mother pretends not to hear and continues. "With all the shelling, we've been sheltering in the basement."

She pleads. "I tried to nurse him. With so many people in the shelter, it's hard to find a private corner. A neighbor brought us formula."

His eyes are sunken, his lips are blue.

His limbs are cold and stiff.

Slowly, deliberately, I listen to the absence of heartbeat and breath sounds.

I suction his mouth. Pungent green bile.

The mother's voice fills the space with urgency. "He's our first child, doctor. We bought him a cradle. I hand-embroidered a crib sheet for him. It's still unused."

Her voice quivers. "I wanted to come earlier, but the others begged me not to leave. Saying that we would get killed. I snuck him out."

My heart aches.

I gently touch her trembling arm.

We hear distant sirens.

I must say it.

At last, I muster the cruel courage: "Mother, your baby is dead."

I quickly add, as a sob chokes up my voice: "I am so sorry."

She lets out a small cry and nods.

Slowly, she opens her handbag.

She takes out a square of cloth and swaddles the infant with tender care.

She knew. She had brought along his burial shroud.

She wraps him in it, then leaves in silence.

I had time to notice: the linen had beautiful embroidery.

Small hearts along the edges...

# COPING WITH COVID

Aida Yared and River the Border Collie

## ***A story of denial, inspired by Covid-19 and my border collie dog.***

Damn the virus. I'll be boarded for 3 weeks.

"OK River," says Mike, "this is the place."

The sign on the turreted building reads: Canine Olfactory Rehabilitation School.

My humans, Mike and Sunny, had muzzles on when we went for walks, but they left me at risk. I first thought it was allergies, from sniffing all the sidewalk daisies. Mild congestion and sneezing. Then Mike noticed.

"This is unusual River, your nose is warm," he said.

He added laughing: "I wish it would stay that way." For shame!

Don't get me wrong! I love my humans, Mike and Sunny.

Mike likes tennis balls and Frisbees. Sunny makes me play Easter Egg Hunt, with colored plastic eggs that snap open when you bite them. She scatters them around the house with treats inside. I quickly find them. "River is very sharp-nosed," she quips. Wrong. They are clearly visible in corners, or peeking under furniture. Then there is the baby.

I wonder what she is doing.

She has started walking. It is funny how she toddles chasing me. Wearing a diaper.

I always pretend to run away, but then I let her catch me.

I hate it when she poops, so I grab her diaper and drag it to the trash bin, or bury it in the yard. Her burping has a curdled scent, very unpleasant.

Sometimes she lies on my bed. She rests her head on my belly and clutches at my fur with her tiny fists.

I imagine she is a puppy, if I had puppies.

I never got a chance.

I did not run into the kitchen when Sunny was grilling steak. That's when we knew for sure that something was wrong.

Mike forced me to Sit and go through the Jelly Bean test. Go ahead, Google it. He blocked my nostrils, I could barely breathe. "Chew this," he said. Then he let go of my nose: "Can you taste a difference?" How could I? Jelly Beans? Let's have a Chicken Liver Test instead, then I may be able to tell!

It is strange that humans have many names for colors. Take blue for example: royal, Prussian, navy, teal, turquoise. What's up with that? Yet they have only 3 choices for odors: fruity, floral, or spicy.

Unless they are wafting wine, then they wax lyrical: "This Pinot Noir has a wonderful bouquet of freshly laid mulch with hints of tobacco and dark olives." Give me a break.

The vet diagnosed me with "anosmia," a big word for loss of smell. More than 90% of humans with the virus show it. It is likely the same with dogs.

Note to self: ask the other boarders how it happened for them.

We walk into the Admission Office. There is a huge Tiffany desk and William Morris wallpaper.

Mike speaks with the director.

I hear barking.

I'm greeted by the canine leader. Blood Hound of course. He sniffs my rump and I pretend to follow suit. A priori, this is how dogs greet each other. A posteriori, I smell nothing. Who cares?

(continued online)



**Aida Yared** was born and raised in Lebanon. She attended Medical School and did her Residency at the American University of Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War. She now calls Nashville home. She is a faculty member in Pediatrics at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. Her favorite things are taking care of children, teaching medical students and residents, and reading books.



**River the Border Collie** is a smart and highly energetic family dog. When she is not catching tennis balls or chasing squirrels, she loves to explore and learn new skills. This is the first time she has submitted a piece of creative writing.

# Nashville Winter

Alice Liao



***Alice Liao** is a 3rd year medical student at VUSM. She enjoys jogging, baking, and gardening. She is missing the snowy Toronto and Boston winters.*

# Hasty Headshot at a Tasty Bread Spot

Andy Wooldridge



# Persica Dissection & Winter Quiet Place

Andy Wooldridge



**Andy Wooldridge** is a palliative care physician at Vanderbilt University Hospital. He enjoys fostering wellbeing throughout healthcare through the arts and humanities. He finds joy seeing life through a unique lens through the creative pursuit of photography.

# My Scrubs

Ansley Kunnath

baby blue, but old and wise  
the seams of my scrubs hold in their lines  
people's most private memories  
cancer diagnoses to newborn deliveries

I am used to wearing cotton that's softened  
cousins, aunts, and siblings would often  
hand me down their dresses and shoes  
outdated and old became exciting and new

now attendings and residents turn in their old scrubs  
so I can put them on and listen for murmurs and rubs  
it's comforting to see the tradition continue ahead  
connecting to my community through common threads



**Ansley Kunnath** is a second-year medical student in the Vanderbilt MD/PhD program. She was born and raised in the great state of New Jersey. In her spare time, she enjoys playing the ukulele, exploring hiking trails, and teaching her cats tricks.

# normalcy

Arulita Gupta



Exploring the lives behind different balconies, this piece is a reflection of how the pandemic redefined, united, and challenged humanity



**Arulita Gupta** is a proud triple 'dore. She studied Neuroscience and Medicine, Health and Society as an undergraduate and is currently a third year MD/MBA student at Vanderbilt University. Her earliest memories are of painting with her mother and she loves gardening, crafting, and sharing creative reflections to foster healing in her community.

# Partial Obstruction

Audrey Campbell

I wondered about you while I was lying there horizontal,  
you perpendicular. You were looking down at me with  
that intent clinical gaze reserved for specimens preserved  
in glass bell jars. Well, I was 72, and you looked 15,  
a third year medical student, none the less.  
I wondered about you, yes, through my foggy 5 A.M.  
morphine haze of pain, you adorned in scrubs  
and garnished with a stethoscope, saying,  
"How are you this morning?"

And I thought I should tell you. I thought  
I should say, "Well, I have been dozing  
and worrying. That is how I am. I am worrying  
that my intestines are becoming increasingly distended.  
True, the morphine has stopped the peristalsis, you  
know, so though the pain is bearable, these big  
distended sausage balloons might pop!! -----just pop,  
and spill vile intestinal effluvium and bile  
all over my heretofore unpopulated peritoneum.  
That is just how I am."

But I must have been talking instead of only thinking,  
because I heard you saying from a thousand miles away,  
from your world of learning about bedside manner  
and physical exams, from your world of all nighters  
of painless study about pain, I heard you say,  
"Well, of course, if you have an emergency  
you should report it."  
And ever since then, I have wondered about you.



**Audrey Campbell** has a Master's Degree in Education (Nursing) from the University of Rochester in New York. Her poem "Muster" was featured in last year's edition of *Tabula Rasa*. Her husband, Dr. W. Barton Campbell, is a Professor in Vanderbilt's Department of Cardiology.

# Minerva Taming a Centaur

Bill Doak



**William "Bill" Melville Doak, MD**, was born in Nashville in 1930. His interest in sculpture dates back to the early 1950s when he took sculpture from Puryear Mims, an academic sculptor at Vanderbilt. He pursued this throughout his undergraduate years, medical school, and into Pediatric practice beginning in 1960. Soon after beginning practice, he launched The Bluefield Foundry group, a successful bronze casting cooperative operating from 1968 to 1982. As the surviving member, he is still active, scounging up commissions whenever and wherever one can be found.

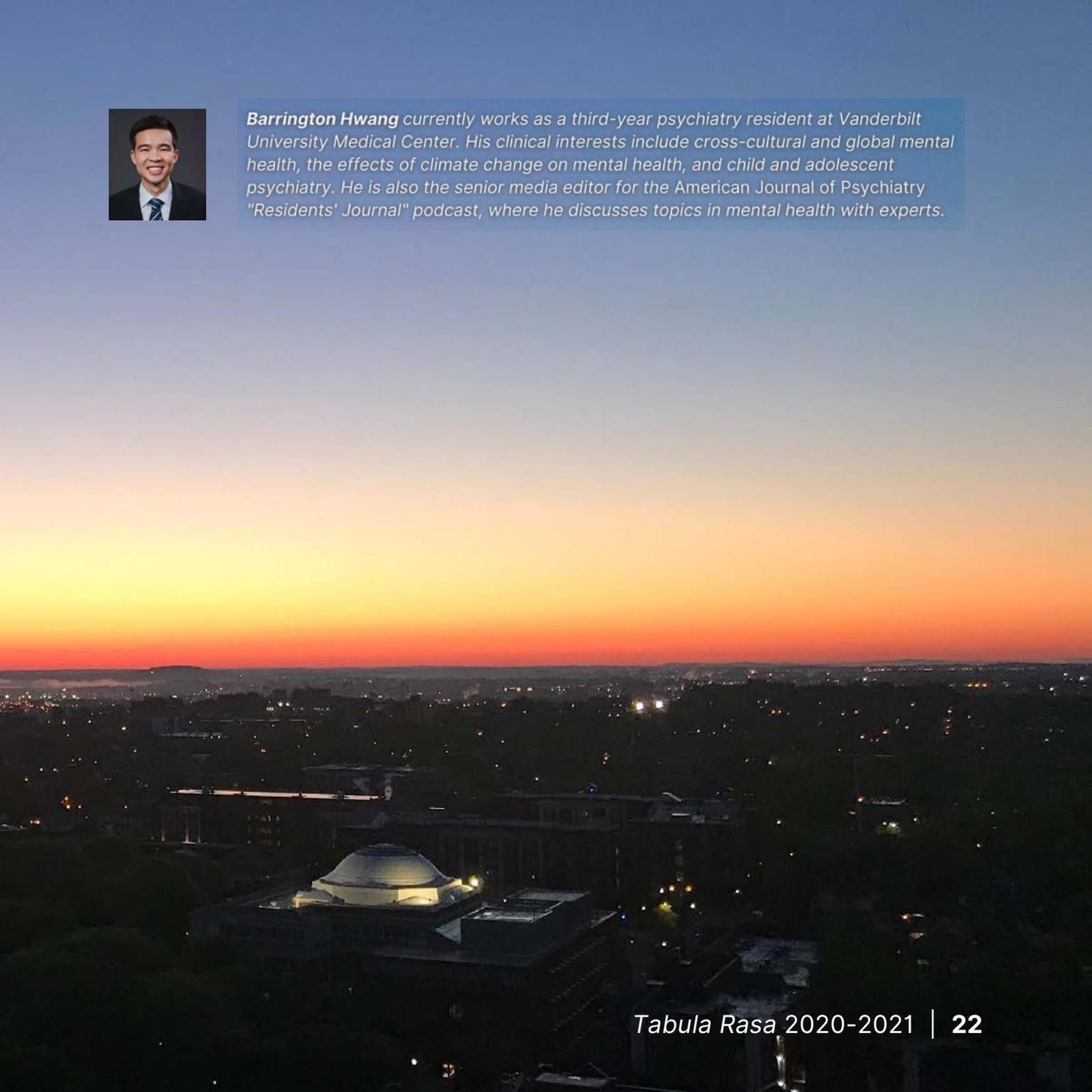
# New Beginnings

Barrington Hwang



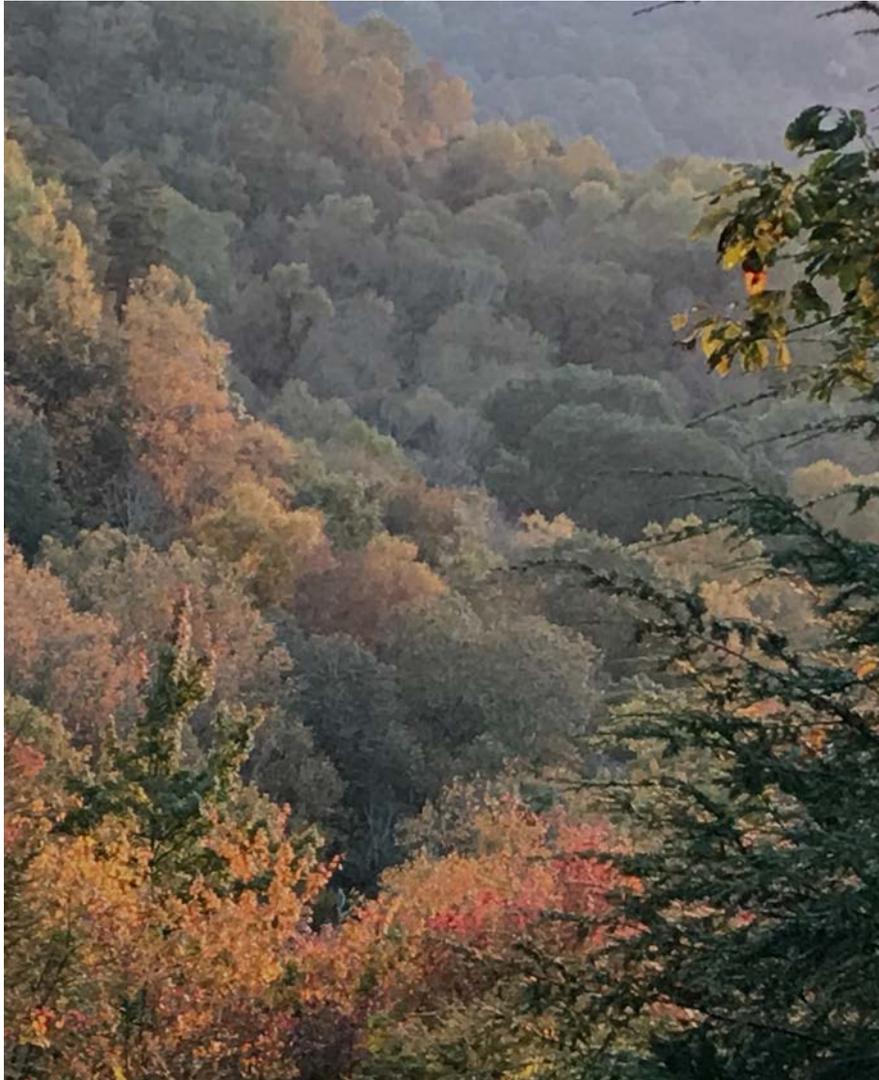


**Barrington Hwang** currently works as a third-year psychiatry resident at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. His clinical interests include cross-cultural and global mental health, the effects of climate change on mental health, and child and adolescent psychiatry. He is also the senior media editor for the American Journal of Psychiatry "Residents' Journal" podcast, where he discusses topics in mental health with experts.



# Autumn Impression

Brian Christman



# O.D.

Brian Christman

First job

Downturn

Layoff

Lockout

Shut down

White flight

Black man

Blight town

Put down

Backlash

Fight back

Punch out

Blackjack

Shot glass

Skin pop

Mainline

Found down

# Missing

Brian Christman

At the oddest times

I want to pen you a note

Or call with news

Of a fascinating novel starting from midlife, then working out to birth and death,

Or a new movie, filmed with a handheld by optical physicians lifted with chains

Or a diner where organic salads are served on ebony platters formed from molten bowling balls retired after perfect games.

But your time passed years ago.

My letters are returned undelivered

And the phone rings on and on

Without even an answering machine for solace.



**Dr. Brian Christman** is Chief/Medicine at VA-TN Valley HCS and Vice-Chair for Clinical Affairs for Vanderbilt Medicine. When not teaching or providing care for patients he writes poetry for publication in medical journals and makes furniture with a slowly improving skillset.

# The Nothing that Is

Bruce Jennings

*For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing  
that is.*

- Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man"

Find a place of focus in a place of  
absence.

Into empty white sky  
a tree branch reaches out  
from a trunk unseen,  
if there at all,  
unrooted in any soil  
unsupported by any embrace.

How can it extend so,  
how bud or seed pod open thus,  
unless the emptiness itself  
is solid?

Learn to grow as you lie upon it.

White haired mountain  
old, sacred in the distance,  
half hidden in mist,

fading off an edge  
of the earth, gazing  
over, past, through you,  
searching for its emptiness in yours.

Red sun suspended in unpainted sky  
descends toward mountain to alight  
upon the summit or slide behind it,  
erasing as it goes.

Is it a sun at all?  
Or the red ball of Nagasaki  
just after the great flash  
a world ago that left the undrawn,  
unpainted vast we now contemplate  
and before which we stand.



**Bruce Jennings** is a bioethicist and a faculty member at Vanderbilt School of Medicine in the Department of Health Policy and the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Society. "The Nothing that Is," is inspired by Wallace Stevens, of course, but also by the Japanese art and design form, Yohaku no bi, that appreciates the beauty in white or unoccupied space. It explores the active presence of absence, and the experience of emptiness—things pressing on us everywhere, not least in hospitals, in these times."

# The Forest and the Trees

Caitlin Hughes  
*mixed media, 12"x36"*

Because sometimes the details matter, especially in pathology!



**Caitlin Hughes** is a fourth-year pathology resident who plans to start a pediatric pathology fellowship at VUMC in July 2021.

*"I am a new mom, a dog mom, and I love art. Growing up, my art teacher told me art could be a hobby but not a career. However, I feel very fortunate to be in pathology because I get to look at art in the form of slides every day and I can still paint, draw, collage, and create in my free time. For me, art is both my career and my hobby."*



# Talking to the Clouds

Catherine Fuchs

The redbirds in this viral world  
draw my gaze,  
briefly balanced on branches  
filtering rays of light.  
Path to a kaleidoscope...  
white and gray  
bright and dark  
Patterns softly catching my eyes.

I talk to the clouds,  
high and mighty  
thin and wispy  
Boot of Italy and unformed shapes  
Embracing imagination.  
Measure of storms to come  
and calm beyond the storm  
Finding connection in patterns...

Universally seen,  
Individually grounding.

*February 15, 2021*

# Zoom

Catherine Fuchs

A 2-D world with 3-D capacity, zooming through the day  
As physics provides connection in absence of physical.  
My brain challenged to rewire perceptions  
Yet my flat screen is balanced by birdsong  
Heard through the audio thread  
Bringing a smile to my face.

*April 29, 2020*



**Catherine Fuchs** is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and a lover of the outdoors. Poetry is "a new endeavor for me which gives me an opportunity to think about the use of language in the expression of emotions. During the year of COVID, there have been many opportunities to observe the natural world and listen to the sounds of nature. These poems are a product of my observations about nature during COVID."

# Horizontal Redeployment

Dane Chetkovich

I wish this was not necessary  
and that the hospital was not full, and that  
our neighbors understood  
that they were facing monsters;  
who would steal their breath  
and make us put cold metal far past their lips  
and a plastic tube after that;  
and that they would get a call  
from an accomplished woman who normally  
looked at screens that were scratchy lines  
recording electricity;  
or screens that reflected paths of atomic particles,  
unimpeachable;  
but who had empathy  
and a comforting tone  
and some knowledge of death  
to say things are better or worse;  
to the husbands and mothers and children  
waiting outside, waiting for  
the sprinkles of soil  
or a return to the monsters.



**Dane Chetkovich** is a neurologist and neuroscientist who moved to Nashville from Chicago in 2017. He is the author of "Danger at Rocky River: A Memorable Misadventure," a children's book about Alzheimer Disease, as well as several short technical musings on ion channels.

# Black-Eyed Susans

David Chalpin



# Pumpkin Boy

David Chalpin



**David Chalpin** is a retired radiologist whose primary hobby is landscape photography. "Aside from taking snapshots since childhood, I got into this field "backwards" via underwater photography and did not purchase my first SLR till 1995. I later obtained my first digital SLR, subsequently replacing its internal filter with a  $>650\text{nm}$  that yields both color & Infrared images. Five years later, I bought a dual thermal/optical camera & acquired my first "Full Spectrum" camera in 2018. Last year, I bought ultraviolet-compatible lenses, opening up a third world to me, thus far only with respect to flowers and skin."

# Get a Vax

David Young

*A parody to the tune of "Be Our Guest" from  
Disney's "Beauty and the Beast"*

Get a vax

Get a vax

Tony Fauci has your back

This pandemic's killed so many;

Now is not the time to slack

Get informed

Use your brain

And you'll find it's not a strain

Understanding general concepts

And identifying nonsense:

"They don't work

Don't you know?

Dr. Google told me so.

Found a website, therefore this is surely fact!"

Our healthcare force beleaguered,

As the cavalry nears, begs,

Get a vax

Yes, a vax

Get a vax!"

Hope has been razor-thin

Seemed like science couldn't win

Many treatments failed, including hyped

Hydroxychloroquine

It's not hard

Don't you see

Wear a mask (and properly!)

Wash your hands, don't touch your face

Stay out of crowds, for goodness' sake

Let's not give up

Not today

Nearly there; we must stay safe!

Health officials say, "We cannot yet relax!"

Undoubtedly we're vexed, but

We don't trump the experts

Get a vax

Feeling taxed?

With yourself, do make a pact to

Get a vax

Either vax

Get a vax!

2020's been

A year of prevalent chagrin

So much misinformation hasn't helped with  
this

Ubiquitous these days is social media

A Twitter-less world sometimes we might  
miss

We are tired of social distance

All our gatherings, we miss them

We needed a solution to this mess

Our scientists worked hard to bring us just  
that  
Effectiveness was steady  
FDA said it is ready

It's a vax  
t's a vax  
Please, let's stop denying facts  
Whether Pfizer or Moderna,  
These things work - they're data-backed!

Get those shots, no delay  
Maintain masks;  
This is the way.  
That's how we should operate  
The evidence says largely safe

In record time  
It has come  
May the myths remain debunked  
It's the moment we've been waiting for at last!  
We cannot pay you back, STEM  
But we can take action,  
We've a vax  
We've a vax  
We've a vax

Get a vax  
Get a vax  
You won't want the chance to lack  
Surely losses heretofore have us

Collectively gobsmacked  
Now an answer is here  
In the aggregate we cheer  
Let the hesitancy go  
And all the world together show that:

Jab by jab  
Shot by shot  
We'll show COVID what we've got  
With determination we'll be standing fast  
We've fought this battle long enough  
But we'll stay strong and  
Get a vax  
Get a vax  
Get on track to  
Get a vax!



**David Young** is an alumnus of Vanderbilt's medical school and residency. He wrote a satirical commentary on medical school in *Tabula Rasa's* inaugural issue, and is pleased to be returning after a fifteen-year hiatus to present a COVID-themed parody set to a classic melody. For those who prefer a more audiovisual experience, his YouTube channel ([youtube.com/AnElectricViolin](https://www.youtube.com/AnElectricViolin)) includes a karaoke version, as well as videos of instrumental music recorded over the years. He hopes you will enjoy this newest feature and, more importantly, get COVID-vaccinated if you have not already.

# On the Subject of a Black Woman's Silence

Eboné Ingram

★ **Editors' Choice:** Poetry

*September 24, 2020.*

my silence is not willful apathy.  
it is not the absence of rage.

it is not a lack of desire  
to process,  
to protest,  
to educate.

it is not consent,  
no inaudible whisper of  
"yes" to injustice,  
no hushed utterance of  
"this is ok, everything is ok."

do not equate the shutting of my  
mouth  
with the closing of my eyes and ears  
to the tension so tangibly felt.

i am aware.

i know that for some,  
silence is agreement  
with all of the above.

not so for me.

it has become hard to believe  
that the pen is mightier than anything,  
that one's voice holds power.  
when reality hits  
and history repeats,  
i feel choked and powerless.

in saying nothing,  
i preserve self.  
it feels like the only power i have.

*for Breonna Taylor.*

# Echoing Icarus

Eboné Ingram

I'm too close.  
I know it.

But I can't  
step away from  
the fierce desire  
to protect you  
from your demons  
and your plagues  
even though it's  
not my place.

You are suffering.  
I am sick  
to my stomach  
with this knowledge.

And I would  
blur boundaries and  
defy logic and  
attack the sun  
to heal you  
even though I  
am fully aware  
of the futility.

I know it.  
I'm too close.

*for every clinician who has struggled  
to leave work at work.*

# Parallel

Eboné Ingram

May 30, 2020.

the life-breath of God // the last-breath in death  
rage-fueled fires tonight // Holy-Spirit Pentecost tomorrow

an agent of protest // a murder weapon  
violence begets violence // sirens beget sirens  
black and white thinking // protests into riots

proud to live in this skin // scared to die because of it  
numbness // sadness // fear // rage

too tired to keep writing // too tired to stop

*for George Floyd.*



**Eboné Ingram, MD**, has dabbled in creative endeavors such as music and writing since childhood. She has maintained blogs that feature several years' worth of her best—and worst—poetry and prose, and she occasionally finds the time to add new videos to her YouTube channel. Eboné graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School in 2016 and stayed at Vanderbilt for psychiatry residency. She will be completing a fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry in June of 2021 and will join the psychiatry faculty at Vanderbilt as an attending in August of 2021.

# Essential

Eric Rafla-Yuan

They say I am an essential worker.

As they take my insurance

my job

my home.

My hands are worn

And my heart is tired.

Tell me

how this is

Essential.

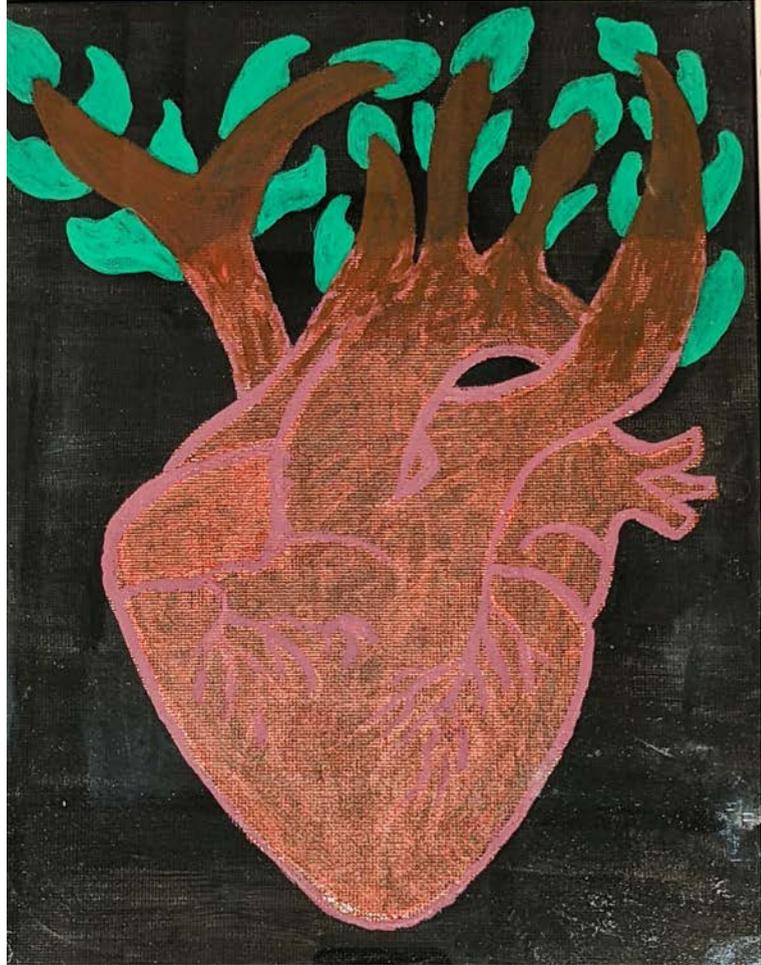
Hey we got a 31yo  
Hispanic male here, no  
insurance though, past  
medical history of DM II,  
HTN, not on any meds, of  
course. He says he's got a  
cough that won't go away  
so they won't let him on  
the job site. Can we do a  
COVID test? Do we have  
any left? Can we do those  
without insurance? I don't  
know man, you gotta  
check with the social  
worker



**Eric Rafla-Yuan, MD**, graduated from VUSM in 2016 and then completed psychiatry residency at UCSD, where he served as chief resident and now as faculty chair of the Psychiatry Residency Diversity Committee. Eric is also a member of the board of the California State Association of Psychiatrists and legislative director of the San Diego Psychiatric Society. His work in advocacy and policy focuses on mental health crisis services and health equity for vulnerable communities. More information can be found at [DrEricMD.com](http://DrEricMD.com).

# Myocardial Remodeling

Eileen Shiuan  
*acrylic on canvas*



**Eileen Shiuan** is a graduating Vanderbilt MSTP student. During the pre-COVID era, she frequented the lab, the pool, the recently opened restaurant or arcade bar, and the couch, though not always in that order. Since then, she has dabbled with many random things, including paint brushes. She thanks her ladies at The Enclave for making this piece of art possible, as well as her patients and Google Images for being the inspiration for this work. She is very excited about moving back to California with her partner and starting internal medicine residency training at UCLA.

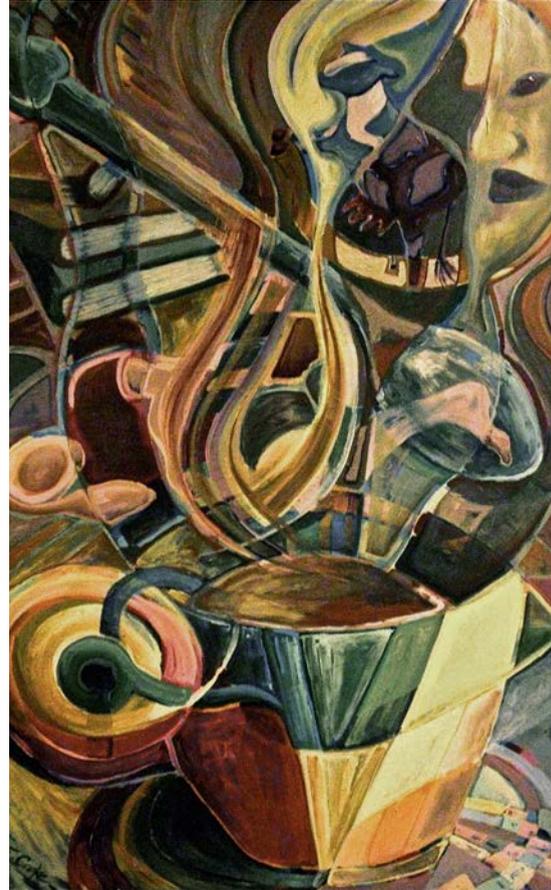
# Wrist

Erin A. Cooke  
*acrylic on canvas*



# Coffee

Erin A. Cooke  
*acrylic on canvas*



**Erin Cooke** is an Associate Professor of Radiology at Vanderbilt as well as a practicing artist. Recent works have been primarily large-scale acrylic paintings focusing on movement and texture, with subject matter including landscapes, cityscapes, and medical imagery. Additional pieces can be viewed at <http://www.erincookeart.com/>.

# Sun on Sun

Gary B. Strong



**Gary B. Strong:** "I was asked for an "artist's bio." I wouldn't dare add "artist" to my meager CV but certainly appreciate consideration of such a moniker. My photography interest dates to med school when my parents gave me my first 35 mm SLR. It became a welcome sporadic diversion from studying. Judy cringed at every shutter snapped (envisioning the cost of developing film). Thank God for digital! Our grandkids would likely draw a Nikon as a biological extension of my arms now. My view of surroundings is warped by how a particular shot might enhance my desktop background. How deep!"

# Acts of Love

Heather Jordan



**Heather Jordan** has been a Program Manager at the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health for five years. She has a BA in Spanish Literature and an MPH in International Health and Development. Originally from Tallahassee, Florida, she now lives in Old Hickory Village with her husband and two children.

# The Secret of My Success

Henry Quach

Last year, I became a brand-new physician  
Treating patients in the medical tradition  
As for the secret of my success  
I'll share it so you can impress  
Oh hold on, I just got a new admission

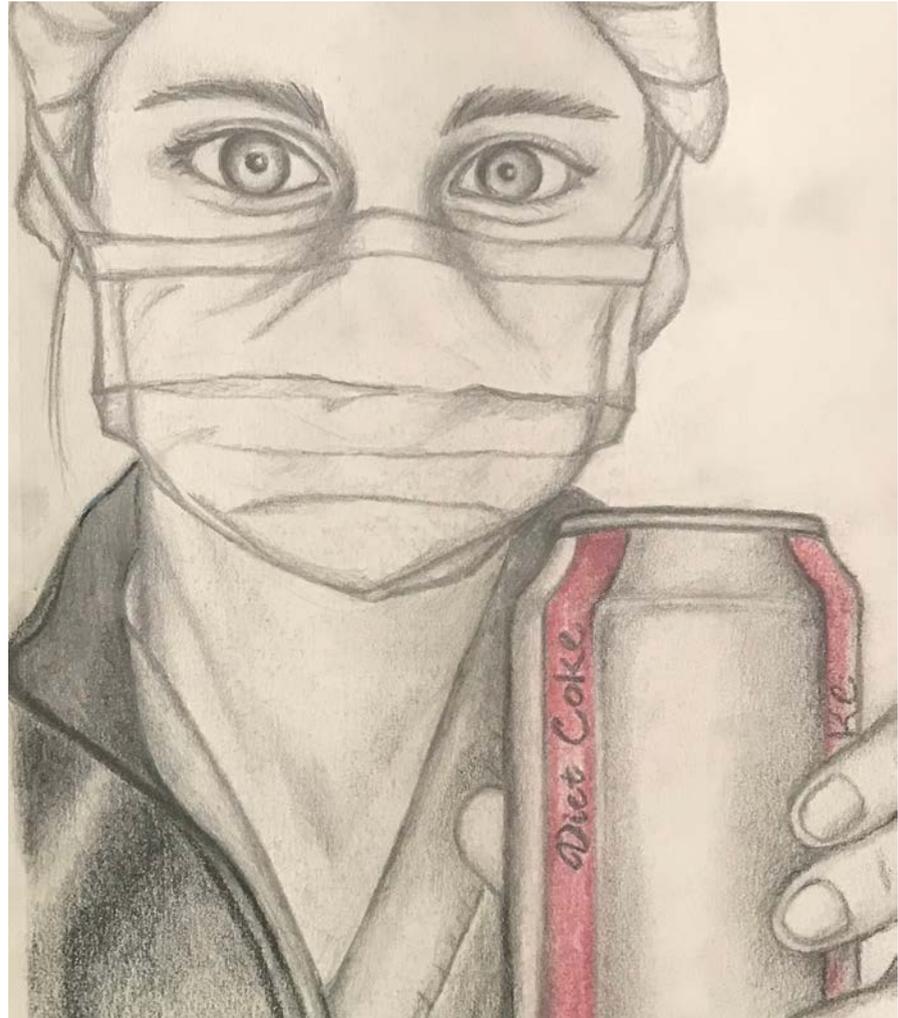
-Dedicated to Dr. William Stone



**Henry Quach** recently graduated from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and has stayed at Vanderbilt for his first year of residency. He attended UC San Diego for his undergraduate degree in Biology, during which time he also took a fiction writing class that inspired him to create and share stories. He has recently published a picture book titled "Morningly," which has become an Amazon bestseller with international downloads.

# #thriving

Jessa Fogel



**Jessa Fogel** is a 3rd year medical student at VUSM planning to pursue a career in orthopedic surgery. She grew up in Bow, NH and graduated from Dartmouth College with a degree in biology. Outside her studies, she enjoys running, writing, and drawing.

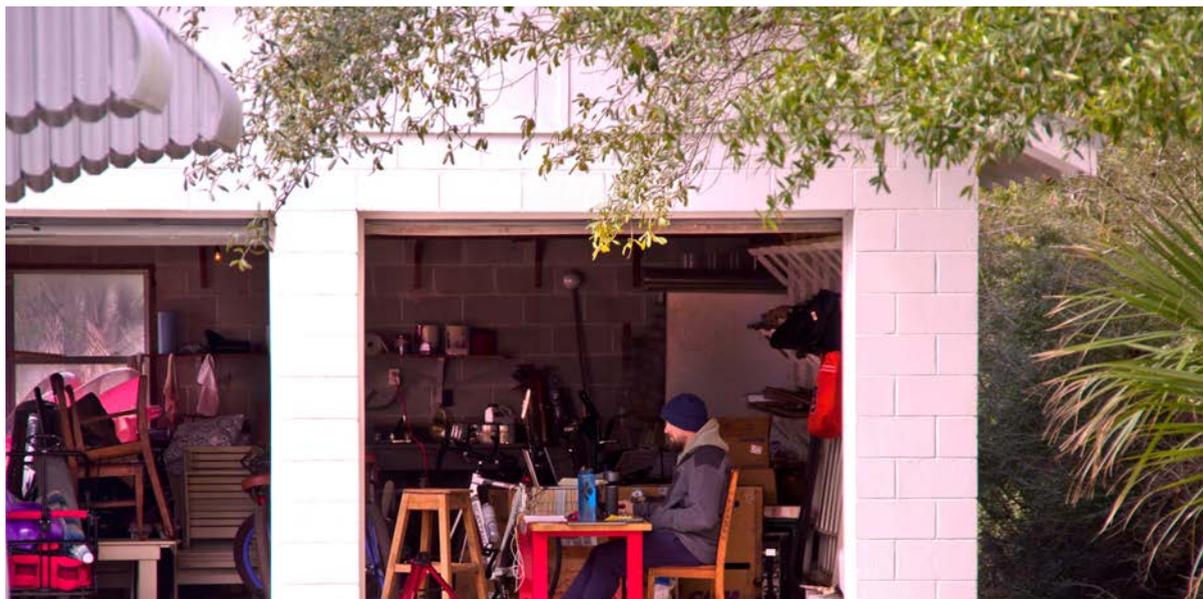
# Tornado Shelter & COVID Shelter

Joe Rutledge

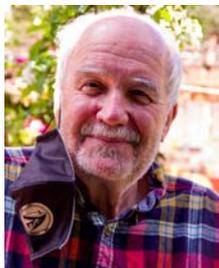
Caves have long sheltered us both from the daily weather, and also from threats. These photographs taken within 2 weeks of each other and 250 miles apart depict one older sanctuary and a newer retreat, the later bearing little physical resemblance to its ancestors, but fulfilling the same need in ways not imagined prior to 2020.

This northeast facing storm shelter was dug decades ago into the red dirt of the hilly SW tail of the Appalachian Mountains, 160 miles south of Nashville. The farm home is only 50 feet away allowing its inhabitants to flee to the cave when the wind, hail, and thunder of an approaching storm takes on the freight train roar of a tornado. Clearings in the thick forest nearby attest to prior precision point touchdowns. The clutter and probable snakes within are almost hidden by the invading vines and piled up remnants of fall. Thankfully, the small shelter suffices for a family for the short duration of a house destroying storm. With the morning light the family will seek out, on farms up and down the road, their neighbors to make sure they too are safe.





Further south a somewhat cluttered garage has been suddenly appropriated and.... well, converted would be an overstatement.... utilized as a remote office for telecommuting. The threat in this case is silent though its vectors come with conversation, song, and touching. While unseen the Covid's diffuse destruction is manifest as hospitals' swirling, forceful winds and newly opened graves. The garage cave is an improvised physical hideaway from other people though it provides worldwide, instantaneous contacts to a multitude of others materializing only as fleeting images on a small screen. Nevertheless, conversations often begin with a safety check of one's virtual neighbors. Hopefully, it will not last as long as the tornado shelter has.



**Joe Rutledge, MD**, a middle Tennessee product, took his first photography course at Rhodes College, and then rarely picked up a camera until graduation from Vanderbilt Medical School in 1976 and migration to the Seattle's UW for residency. Black and white photography supplemented eight years at UTSW medical school after which he returned to Seattle Children's Hospital to serve as Director of Laboratories. That career in the laboratory required a spectrum of scientific photography, and the Pacific Northwest provided unparalleled subjects for landscape photography. His recent retirement from academic pediatric pathology hopefully opens up more opportunities.

# Mud Dance

Joseph A. Little III



# a virus

Joseph A. Little III

scattered by a virus  
we seek shelter

two generations  
since an embryo  
served as another's host  
in my grandfather's lab

before it had a name

his woods are  
where I return  
until the science  
leads me home

perhaps another vaccine  
grown in chicks

but there will be  
no end to it

no more than  
the waterthrush  
that arrived today

from South America  
looking for its mate

crossing pointless borders  
in search of its best future

with helices that  
bind it to the valley  
of our woods

until they amend or break  
and it seeks another stream

as we search  
the reassurance  
of familiarity

it is the work  
of the life  
around us  
to invisibly test  
the possibilities of change

joseph a little, iii - Med '77, HS '80



***Dr. Joseph A. Little III** graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School in 1977 and then completed his pediatric residency at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. After working for the National Health Service Corps he was in private practice for 38 years before retiring. His photography and writing are informed by his patients, family and friends and time spent reading about and observing the natural world- especially at his family's property, Basin Spring.*

# Lakehouse Scraps

Kelly Sopko  
*fiber art*



# paper bag

Kelly Sopko

morning awake early

reusable lunch containers stored empty under the counter

not allowed.

nothing reused.

carefully pack homemade school lunch

in a paper bag

early morning rounds

white coat items sit idle draped over the chair

not allowed.

nothing wasted.

grab carefully preserved mask saved

in a paper bag



**Dr. Kelly Sopko** grew up in a home that valued both medicine and art; her father is a physician and mother is an artist. During the pandemic as a full-time Hospitalist and a mother of two, art is her outlet for expression and renewal. She has been with Hospital Medicine at VUMC for over 13 years and currently is the Assistant Chief of Medicine Service at VA TVHS. She is grateful of her mother's incorporation of art in her everyday life and she carries those values on in her family.

# Wellness

Kenneth Richard Ziegler

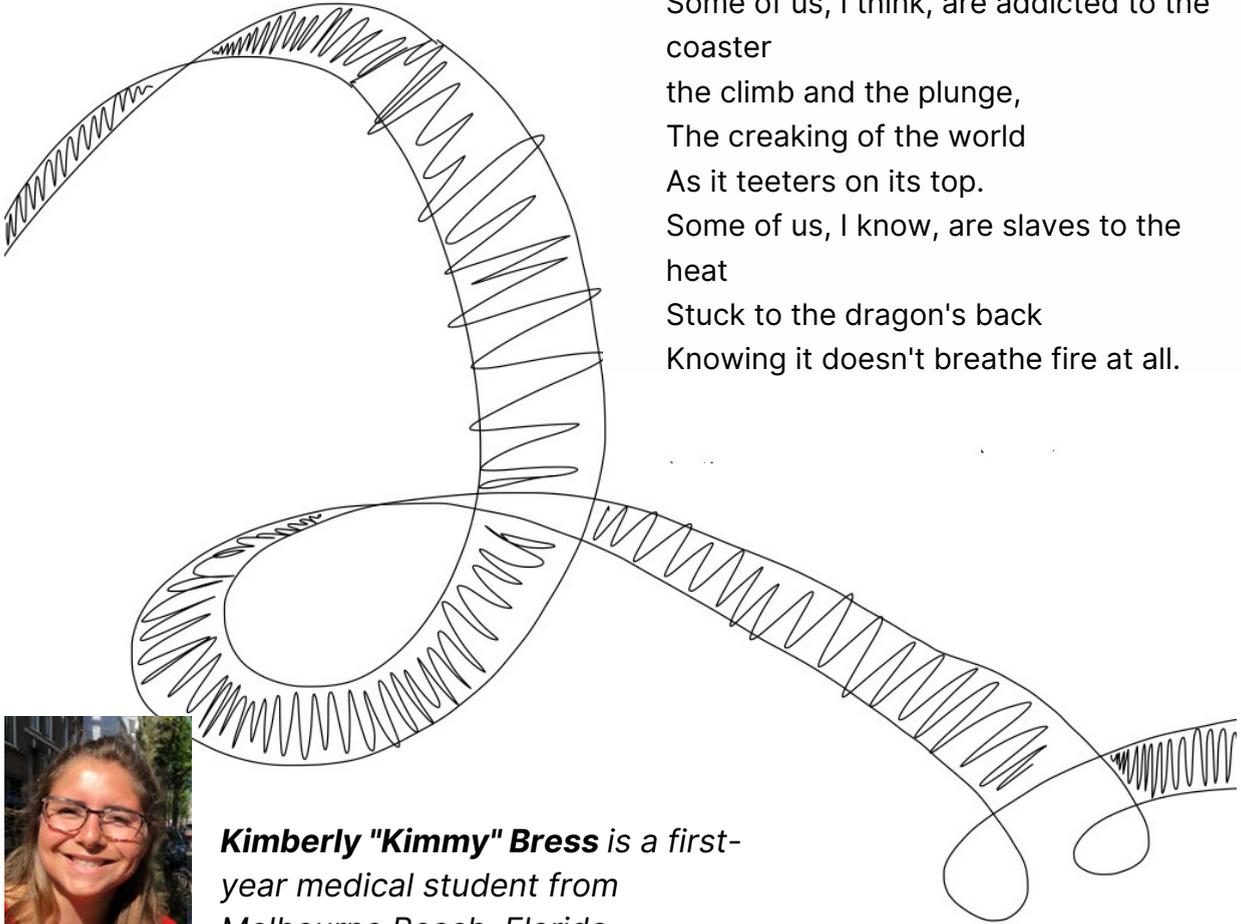


**Ken Ziegler** joined the faculty at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles after completing his Vascular Surgery fellowship at VUMC in 2016. In addition to photography, he pursues his interests in painting (acrylic on canvas), drawing, and writing – to the degree that his dog Yoshi lets him.

# To Ride the Coaster

Kimberly Bress

How would it be  
If the world spun at the same speed  
Everyday  
And there were no mountains,  
No trenches,  
No gravity for tears?  
Some of us, I think, are addicted to the  
coaster  
the climb and the plunge,  
The creaking of the world  
As it teeters on its top.  
Some of us, I know, are slaves to the  
heat  
Stuck to the dragon's back  
Knowing it doesn't breathe fire at all.



**Kimberly "Kimmy" Bress** is a first-year medical student from Melbourne Beach, Florida.

# Bits of Bowel

Kyle Cassling



# Bits of Heart

Kyle Cassling

★ **Editors' Choice: Art**



# Bits of Kidney

Kyle Cassling



**Kyle Cassling** is originally from Omaha, NE and moved to Nashville in 2016 to begin residency in general surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. She has always loved the practice of creating and sharing art of all mediums and chose the field of surgery because of the discipline's overlap between the science and artistry of medicine.

# Lines

Lealani Mae Acosta

At the grocery store,  
queued for entrance and hand sanitizer,  
coiled around corners and across parking lots.  
Brightly colored strips of yellow/and/black tape on the floor,  
neatly and precisely placed  
6 feet apart.  
Furrowed brows temporarily silence laugh  
Enhancing crow's feet.

Snaking from the ventilator and pouches,  
Central, peripheral, art, foley  
Red, white, clear spool and splay across the bed.  
A square box borders the jagged edges of the EKG, the sinuous curves of  
respiration;  
techs and nurses stand vigil, framed by IV poles.

Fewer black shoe skids streak across the linoleum,  
but with renewed vigilance the maintenance team pushes the handle of a  
mop,  
its twisted strands ripe with bleach and purpose.

Administrative staff connect the dots, patients to open spots.  
Information technology hammers out the code of telemedicine.  
Fiberoptic cables pulse through air and earth,  
mobiles, tablets, computer cables charge into walls,  
Earbuds tether the physician and patient.

Receivers uncoiled and cradled, auditory oracles:  
nurses, EMS, dispatchers evoking calm and reassurance.

Masks with elastic looped around ears  
Or neatly tied bows adorning heads unaccustomed to such decoration,  
pinched around noses that leave a telltale crease after removal.  
Donned, worn, recycled.  
Uniform in purpose.

You We are the front lines.

*\*with gratitude to Victor Narcisse, MD*



**Dr. Lealani Mae "Leah" Acosta** is an Assistant Professor of Neurology specializing in neurodegenerative memory disorders. She completed residency training in Neurology at the University of Virginia and fellowship in Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology at the University of Florida, focusing on creativity, stemming in part from her interests in poetry, drawing, and calligraphy. Her range of publications reflects these varied interests, including peer-reviewed research articles and creative writing, both prose and poetry, which have appeared in publications such as JAMA, JAMA Neurology, and Neurology. She is grateful for all the frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Turbulence

Michael G. Clark



**Michael G. Clark** is a third-year medical student from Cleveland, Ohio. He developed an interest in film photography during college and took up darkroom printing in medical school. Amidst the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, he found solace in nature's perpetuity and resilience

# A Short Walk after Work

Lewis Schrager

Adam waited beneath the red light by the back door, out where the ambulances disgorge the sick and the dying, the broken people picked up from the streets. He removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes, as if the rubbing could somehow erase all that he had seen during the long ER shift he'd just finished. He put his glasses back on just before Laura came through door. She seemed surprised to find him there. "I thought you left half an hour ago," she said.

"I thought you might want some company," he said.

Laura smiled. "Actually, company would be nice."

They headed north along the river, the smell of it thick and heavy in the hot August night. A barge passed, a vast, looming shadow gliding on the black water, engines throbbing, red lights blinking a warning. When the sidewalk ended, they crossed under the highway and headed west, stopping when they reached Third Avenue. "Where do you live?" she said.

"I thought I was walking *you* home."

A gust of wind caught her auburn hair and whipped it about her face. She cleared the strands stuck in a corner of her mouth. "Not necessary," she said. "But I'll walk with you if you want. Where are you going?"

"Forty-fourth and Third."

Twelve blocks away, in the opposite direction from her apartment. She hesitated and glanced at her watch—1:15. But she owed him, big time.

It had been a bad shift. Without his help she might still be stuck back there, finishing up with those patients she had to leave when the craziness started. Without him there to help? It was hard to think about—and he was still a medical student.

The intern on the shift was fucking worthless. He disappeared as soon as he heard the screaming coming from outside. One of the nurses found him in the medicine supply room, hiding in a corner near the shelves for antibiotics and asthma drugs, his ass stuck to the dirty black tile floor like it was magnetized, his arms hugging his updrawn knees, his head ducked down and pressed against his drawn-in thighs like he was in the middle of an Olympic dive. Laura heard the screams of the girl being wheeled into the trauma slot and told him to get out there because she needed him, but he wouldn't budge, rocking back and forth and moaning "no, no, no" almost in time with the screams. Laura finally convinced him to get up and help the nurse in the asthma room. Better that than leave him sitting there, rocking like an egg about to fall off a counter and break.

A car zipped by, engine gunning, speeding uptown beneath yellow-blinking traffic lights. Another wind gust, funneled between the buildings lining the empty avenue, sent a stray piece of newspaper scratching by on the sidewalk. "Feels like rain," Laura said. "We better move."

They headed straight into the wind, the gusts shaking the leaves of the maples imprisoned along the avenue within solitary squares of trash-strewn soil. A flash of lightning lit up the sky as they passed a street couple lying side by side up against the granite wall of a Citibank, their things piled into a beat-up Shop Rite shopping cart covered with a sheet of black plastic flapping like a loose sail in a gale. A rumble of thunder followed. Laura tried not to think of what would happen to those people when the storm hit but trying not to think of something somehow seemed to make her think harder about it, seemed to make it all worse.

(continued online)

**Beach with couple and birds (top), Cocktails restaurant (bottom), Three people on couch (next page)**

Lewis Schrager

★ **Editors' Choice:** Photography







# Safekeeping

Lewis Schrager

Adam Cohn was finishing a note in the last of his patients' charts when Erica Marks, the senior medical resident on call with him that evening, hustled into the Cardiac Care Unit.

"Just got a call from Kornfeld," Erica said. "He's admitting an eighty-five-year-old woman to the CCU. Her name's Sylvia Montague. She's coming to you."

"A Kornfeld transfer?" Adam muttered. "You gotta be kidding."

"What's your problem with Kornfeld?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe because he keeps his patients in hospital until he's managed to run every goddamn test that he can think of, even when they're feeling just fine."

"Just rumors. He's really not a bad guy."

"Why? Because he orders deli platters for the on-call teams on Saturday nights?"

"Exactly. Why do you think everyone calls him 'Dr. Pastrami'?"

"Somehow that's just too low a bar, even for a pastrami addict like me. Besides, that business with his patients isn't just rumors. I saw it. Back in the fall he admitted some lady as a rule-out M.I. Kept her in hospital for almost a month, ran her through every test in the cardiology suite—twice. Must have run a six-figure bill before he let her go home."

"For a rule-out? What reason did he give?"

"He kept writing on her chart that she had chest pain overnight."

"Did she?"

"Hell no, at least not on my nights on call. Made the patient crazy, made me look bad—I don't like rounding on my patients and having the attending asking me if I was asleep when my patient was having angina. Really pissed me off."

“Did you report him?”

“I talked to the chief resident about it.”

“And?”

“And nothing. You know that Kornfeld’s one of their boys. Graduated from the med school; did his internship, residency and cardiology fellowship here. They all love him. The chief said that Kornfeld was acting within his discretion—so that’s about it.”

“Wow. Well, to be honest, I always thought there was something a little sleazy about him. But if what you’re saying is even half right, he’s really a schmuck.”

“A schmuck who should have his admitting privileges taken away,” Adam said. “Where’s this patient coming from, anyway?”

“Pittman,” Erica said.

Adam glanced at the clock on the wall and then back at Erica, his expression pained. “Kornfeld’s transferring someone from Pittman at ten-thirty on a Friday night? Why?”

“The note says it’s for safekeeping.”

“Safekeeping? What the hell does that mean?”

“Who the fuck knows?” Erica said. “Kornfeld probably considers it one more chance for him to save another patient from those know-nothings downtown. Bottom line is that she’ll be here in about an hour. Better get the rest of your work done while you still can. With any luck you’ll put her to bed quick and still get a couple hours of sleep.”

Adam was just completing his night rounds in the Medical Intensive Care Unit when he received a page from Kathy McCarthy, the night nurse in the Coronary Care Unit, informing him that Sylvia Montague had arrived and was ready for him.

Adam finished writing his last note, headed up the one flight of stairs to the CCU and stopped at the nurse's desk. "Her name's—"

"Sylvia Montague," Adam said. Erica told me."

"Well, that's good, because that's about all I know about her so far, except that she's eighty-three years old," Kathy McCarthy said. "Here's Kornfeld's transfer note. Not a whole lot there." She handed Adam a manila folder with a single page inside. "Lucky that the Pittman folks copied her chart and sent it over with her. I'm putting it together. Should be ready in a minute."

Adam glanced at the two-inch-thick stack of papers that Kathy was hole-punching and fastening into an Eastside Hospital binder. "Looks like they were busy," Adam said.

"Oh, yeah," Kathy said. "From the little I've been able to read, she was bad sick when they admitted her a couple of weeks ago. Looks like they did a good job on her, she's stable now."

"So, why is she here? Oh wait, I know—safekeeping."

(continued online)



**Lewis Schragger, MD, MA**, is a physician, author and playwright from North Bethesda, MD. He has published a dozen short stories in literary journals including *South Carolina Review*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and *Cottonwood*. His historical play, *Fourteen Days*, dramatizing the July 2000 Camp David negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis as described in the memoir *The Missing Peace* by Ambassador Dennis Ross (FSG 2004), is scheduled for off-off-Broadway production in February 2022. He currently is working on his third novel.

# From Mister to Doctor

Loise Greene Stone

Our wedding invitations said “Mr.” in June 1956. Between his third and fourth year of Vanderbilt Medical School, after framing his bachelor’s degree also from Vanderbilt, we married. I taught high school on West End Avenue, typed his papers, listened as he rehearsed talks, washed, starched, ironed, cleaned, cooked, helped him research data. Every 17th night, I was alone, and he went without sleep.

Graduation, 1957, was to be an outdoor event. I bought daylight film for the 16mm magazine camera my mother sent. It rained. In the gym, I ran the no-flash-attachment movie camera putting precious money into footage with only hope some frames would produce an image capturing the transition from MR. to DR. Gerald E. Stone. He had earned both Phi Beta Kappa and AOA keys.

Medical internship at Vanderbilt. With a grant from the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, he researched, interviewed, and assembled data. I worked for the summer in doctor offices until teaching commenced. We collected our urine and ‘sold’ it for research, and I think he earned 50¢ an hour putting blood test results in patients’ charts. He slept home every other night.

Iron lungs were still being used for polio patients, and segregation showed itself in the four public bathrooms and separate drinking fountains in hospital hallways. Downtown Nashville had a four-way traffic light that allowed people to actually cross a specific street in any direction as it turned red in four places. Newspapers rolled out from printing presses after being typeset.

In those years, residency was not a four-year commitment. We moved to NY while he trained for a year at Montefiore Hospital, and then we moved again to Rochester, NY while he completed two more years at University of Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital. The mandatory armed service took two more years from us, and five months into my third pregnancy we found ourselves back in Rochester. It seemed that the government mandated annual increases in medical school class size, and the university needed teachers at area hospitals; it was looking for people who had trained with them. It was July 1963.

Dr. Stone was sent to The Cleveland Clinic, studied under Dr. Kolff, learned to use the artificial kidney machine, and initiated the procedure for those with chronic kidney disease who lived in western New York State. Dr. Belding Scribner, in Seattle, had developed a reusable arterial venous shunt, which made repeated dialysis possible. My husband hand-created each shunt one-by-one, as peoples' blood vessels are different distances apart, by warming, bending, adding cold water pumped with a foot-pump through tubing. Every shunt had to be totally smooth; a tiny imperfection could allow blood clot formation. Only one out of four was acceptable.

The Travenol Twin Coil dialysis machine that reminded me of an old wringer clothes-washer required a six-hour run for a patient. Three times during the process, seven different chemicals had to be added to the water to form a correct solution, and prior to the procedure, the machine was primed with blood. Nothing was disposable. Only one patient at a time could be 'hooked-up' to this life-saving treatment; kidney transplants were in infancy

FACP was earned, and I buttoned the doctoral hood on his garb for the event. But what about the person under the array? What had he become as a solo-practicing physician, father, just human being?

Here is just one example: January 19, 1984, but it could have been any date. Twelve hours after he left the house, he got home. A frightened cancer patient, also a friend, lay in a hospital bed. Emotionally, that made the ordeal more difficult; the treatment was always the same for all his patients. The telephone interrupted dinner several times. He called the floor, the oncologist, and so forth, but at 10:15pm with an outside temperature of about two degrees, he told the duty nurse: "Tell him I'll be over." I changed into regular clothes and got into the car beside my mate. In all his years in solo practice, with eventually a night-weekend coverage group, he practiced the art and science of medicine. Locum Tenens, for many years, followed retirement.

(continued online)



**Lois Greene Stone**, writer and poet, has been syndicated worldwide. Poetry and personal essays have been included in hard and softcover book anthologies. Collections of her personal items, photos, and memorabilia are in major museums including twelve different divisions of The Smithsonian. The Smithsonian selected her photo to represent all teens from the 1940's-'50's.

# Fernando

McKenzie Vater

*July 1, 2017 0500*

The alarm on my phone buzzes. It is day one of my second year of pediatric residency. I start service on hematology/oncology, which is new for me, so I am excited for all there is to learn but also nervous. I spent the weekend reviewing types of leukemia, the variety of solid tumor cancers and the differential for anemia based on MCV. I recall these details as I brush my teeth and put on my badge.

I enter the work room and see the relief on the overnight resident's face since I am their replacement. The audible sigh and body language indicate it was a long night. I take notes as they sign out different updates on my patients: the 3-year-old with nephroblastoma received two PRNs for elevated blood pressure, the 14-year-old with Ewing's sarcoma had significant nausea that was difficult to control, the 17-year-old with sickle cell disease weaned their PCA pump, and the 4-year-old with new onset ALL still will not eat. "Why?" I ask, and he shrugs his shoulder. I consider all of these new facts as I peruse their charts assessing vitals, looking at morning labs and new notes, all the while remembering the platelet transfusion threshold and how to calculate morphine equivalents. I then go see all my patients, hoping to be stealthy and not wake anyone up since they barely get any sleep overnight as it is.

Every day I show up with one additional goal: to get that sweet 4-year-old to eat an adequate meal, but I never succeed. On the last day of my rotation, I sit down with his mom and she expresses how concerned she is because he misses his brother, Fernando, so much. Sure, they have faceted, but he has not been able to visit, and

she knows this is affecting him profoundly. I inquire about other things he enjoys— games, music or art, and learn he and his brother enjoy fingerpainting and playing with their new cat. This becomes my mission for the day. I gather paper and a few dollops of paint and present them to this precious patient. He briefly makes eye contact, then turns away and buries his face in his mother’s chest. I try coaxing him and talking to him more, only to be ignored. So, I set to work myself, creating a preschool masterpiece of a green cat with long, blue whiskers, and “Fernando” painted in red at the bottom. As I leave the room and thank the mom for letting me care for him while in the hospital, she wipes away a few tears.

*July 8, 2018 0300*

The pager vibrates on my hip, indicating I have a new admit in the emergency department. I am on my last night, cross covering several services and admitting new patients to each. I contact the hematology/oncology fellow who gives me the story. It is a 5-year-old boy with fever and neutropenia. Now that I am in my third year, I have a pretty good grasp on this having admitted several patients with similar chief complaints in the past. I recall being taught the earlier the antibiotic is initiated, the better the outcome, and I also contemplate the appropriate dosing of cefepime he will need. I enter the room. Mom is fast asleep on the cot and the patient is sleeping peacefully on the bed. He only has a few, tiny wisps of hair on his head and his cheeks are puffy, indicating side effects of his medication. I politely wake up mom to gather a history, and she immediately begins to laugh. I become self-conscious, thinking I have said something incorrectly or that there are remnants of a late-night snack in my teeth, but she simply states, “You are the one who painted the cat.” It took me a moment to register what she said. I was struck that I did not recognize the patient, albeit his appearance had changed since I last saw him, but also that the mom remembered this small gesture from over a year ago. I get the information I need to care for him, and also

ask about updates regarding Fernando. He is in the third grade now with a yellow belt in karate.

*July 11, 2019 0700*

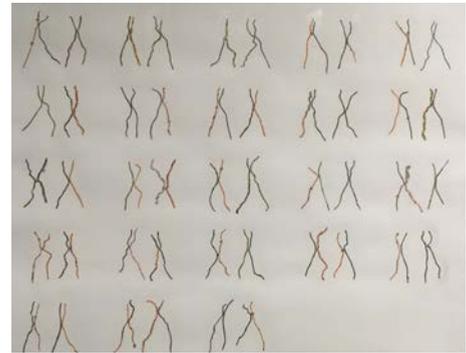
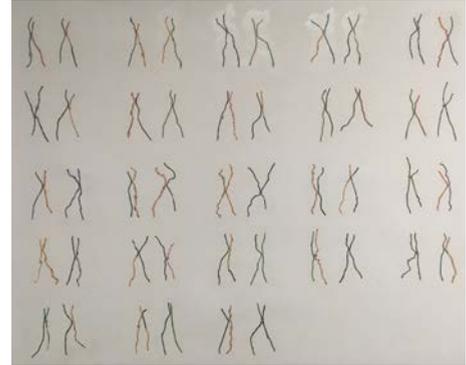
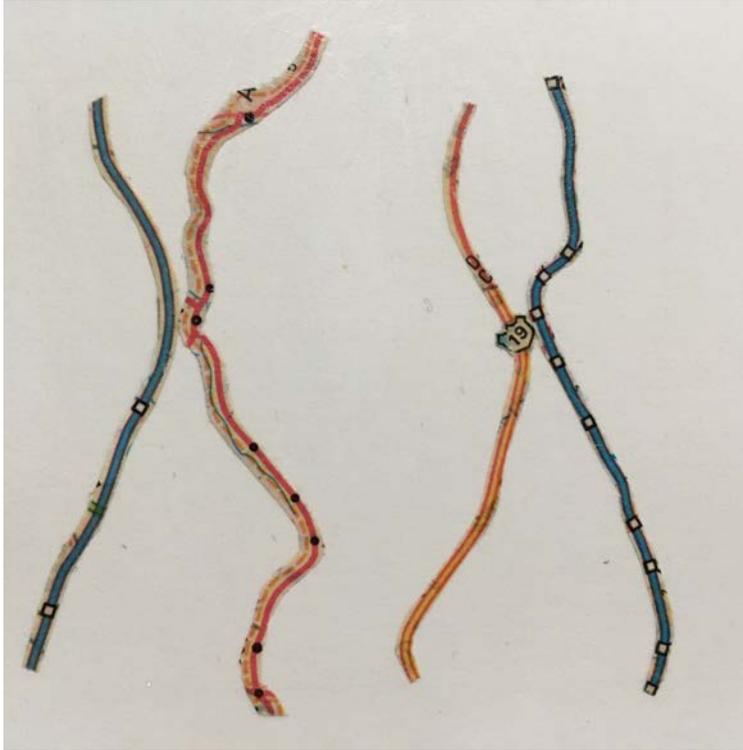
My first week as an attending. It is hard to comprehend that I have made it to this point. I enter the unit to round on my first patient when I hear a familiar voice behind me shout, "Doctor!" I turn around, and sure enough, it is that adorable patient's mom. We catch up, and she shares he is back in the hospital for fever, likely from a viral illness leading to dehydration and should be discharged soon. From a leukemia standpoint he is doing well. I follow her to the room to say hello. He is eating a cheeseburger. I learn about his favorite video game and the most recent adventures with his brother. He gives me a high five and waves goodbye. As I turn to leave, I see a painting of a green cat with long, blue whiskers and red lettering that spells "Fernando" underneath taped on the wall. I walk down the hall with a smile and tears streaming down my face.



***McKenzie Vater*** is a pediatric hospitalist at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt who will begin her pediatric rheumatology fellowship at Vanderbilt in July. She tries to exemplify humanism in medicine on daily rounds and through her writing, demonstrating its importance in caring for patients and families.

# Mapping Human Chromosomes

Nanette M. Bahlinger  
*cutouts of road maps*



**Nanette Bahlinger** received a BFA from Louisiana State University and an MTS from Vanderbilt University. She has worked at VUMC for more than twenty years.

# Tufted Titmouse

Peter J. Edmonds

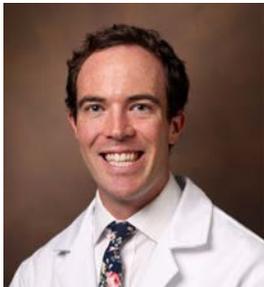
*acrylic on canvas, 12"x12"*



# Lilac-Breasted Roller

Peter J. Edmonds

*acrylic on canvas, 12"x12" and photograph*



**Peter Edmonds** is a pulmonary and critical care fellow from Cooperstown, NY. He is fond of animals, especially birds. He learned how to paint from a urologist while a medical student.

# Indulgence

Philip Wilson

Snow sows the earth  
planting a mirage  
of some new creation.

It cannot fall quickly enough.

I take my first stilted steps,  
a lattice below my faltering foot

And feel the urge to find fresh snow—  
partly  
to steady my step  
(so as to make the next more comfortable),  
partly  
to notice the effect of my own weight.

My heel strikes first; the snow huddles beneath  
and I venture on  
in grim recognition:

It is this same impulse that  
is leading to our destruction.



**Philip Wilson** is originally from Clarksburg, West Virginia. He attended the University of Notre Dame and graduated from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in 2021. He is an internal medicine resident at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and is looking forward to continuing to write through a busy intern year.

# Paths Home

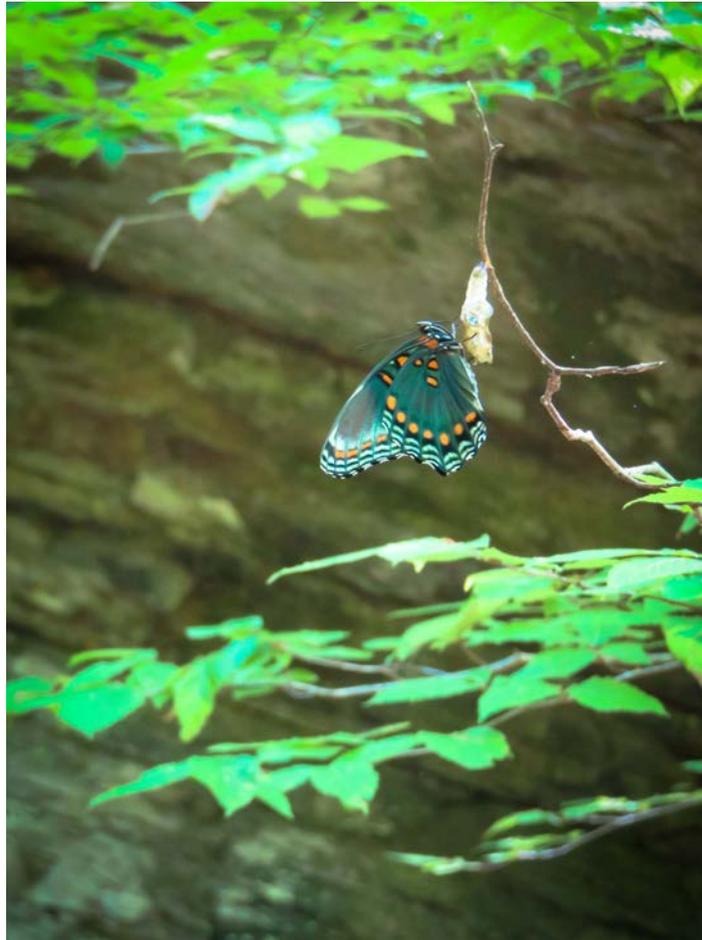
Quentin Eichbaum  
*watercolor*



**Dr. Quentin Eichbaum** was born and raised in Africa where the vast landscapes, animal life, and scenes of African cultural life inspired him from childhood to take up watercolor painting. He has studied painting with several well-known watercolorists and has also experimented with a range of techniques to develop his own style. He now paints both abstracts and landscapes. In the US, he attended Harvard Medical School, completed residency and fellowship training at MGH, and is Professor of Pathology and Professor of Medical Education at VUMC. He has exhibited his work in the US, Europe, and Africa.

# Begin Again, Butterfly

Regina Russell



***Regina Russell, PhD, MA, MEd, is an Assistant Professor of Medical Education and Administration and the Director of Learning System Outcomes for the Office for Undergraduate Medical Education.***

# Mom's Cooking

Samuel Ufuah

I remember my mom's cooking.  
Sunday afternoons filled with the aromas of curry and stew,  
A TV tuned to a Christian channel.  
Some man talks about God in the background,  
His voice drowned out by the crackles of meat hitting fresh oil,  
By the  
conversations between mother and son,  
By the  
*blub blub blubs* of boiling rice,  
By the  
Ethereal columns of light shining through our kitchen window.  
Christ is here-  
In the blender, deconstructing tomatoes and onions and peppers,  
Sugar and spice and everything nice,  
Embedding His fragrance into my memories & clothes  
So by the time I get to school  
Friends mistake God for the smell of mom's cooking



**Samuel Ufuah** is a rising second-year medical student at Vanderbilt who was born in Lagos, Nigeria. After growing up in Brownsburg, Indiana, he went to the University of Notre Dame, where he studied Neuroscience and Behavior. Sam has a love for food, passion for poetry, and a never-ending desire to explore.

# the viral load

Sharmeela Saha

Tagging the pandemic 2019 feels wrong.

It has forced distance.

Connections are halted.

Ties severed without explanation.

I am haunted by images. You seem to be somewhere beautiful but unattainable.

Ghosted.

I don't know if I know you anymore. Did I ever know you?

Is this detachment permanent?

So much more than a year.



**Sharmeela Saha** studied *International Studies and Biology* at *Washington University in St. Louis*. She attended medical school at the *University of Cincinnati* where she is also currently an *Assistant Professor*. She completed her *Nephrology fellowship* at *Vanderbilt University*. She loves *creative writing and medical education*.

# Chihuly Virus

Sharon Kam

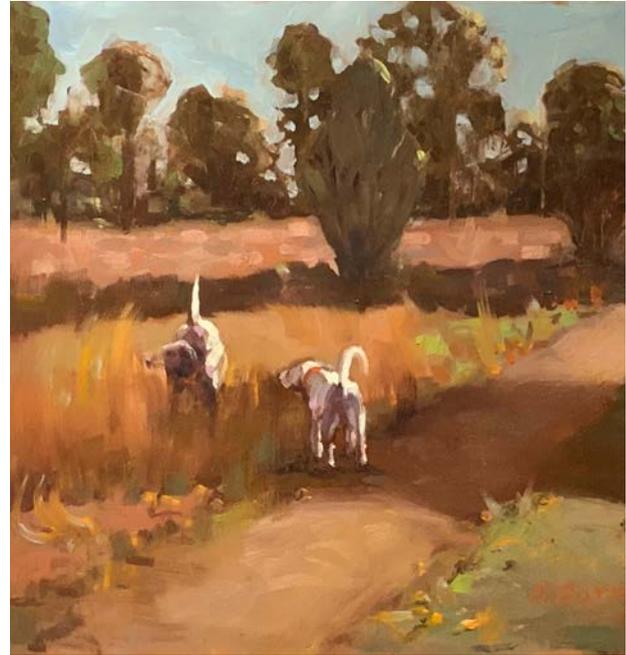
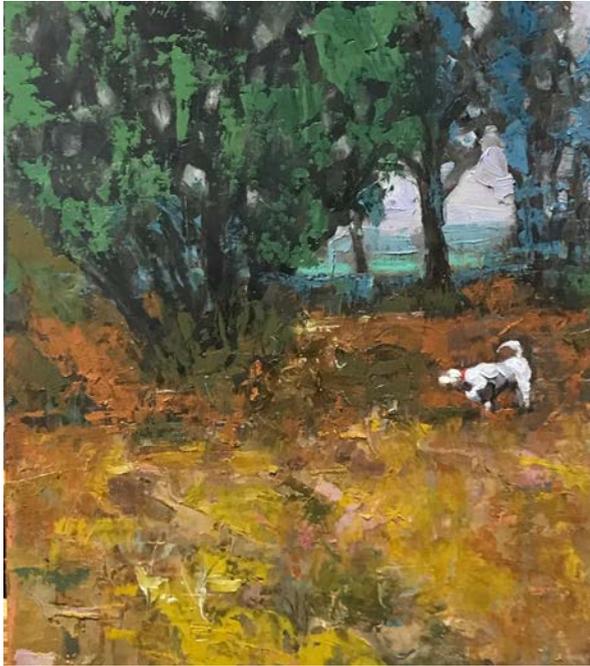
In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the “Chihuly at Cheekwood” exhibition continued through 2020-2021 at Cheekwood Botanical Gardens in Nashville, displaying Dale Chihuly’s majestic blown-glass sculptures within the grounds and mansion. I was particularly drawn to Sapphire Star, a spiking blue-and-white sculpture situated on the lawn in front of the mansion. While unintentional, it seemed to be an ode to the virus causing devastation worldwide, yet its strong glow cutting through the darkness of the night also offered a glimmer of hope.



**Sharon Kam** is an amateur photographer, classically-trained pianist, and 3rd year Vanderbilt medical student. Originally from Vancouver, B.C., Canada, she primarily uses photography as a medium to document travel and culinary memories. Her work can be found on exhibition, in home collections, and on social media. In addition to continuing to shoot casually, she plans to integrate photography into her future career.

# Holding in place & Working together

Steve Barrington  
*oil on linen, panel*



**Steve Barrington**, VUSM Class of 1985, is an orthopedic surgeon specializing in adult reconstruction and currently practicing in Montgomery, Alabama. To see more of his work, visit his Instagram page, [@barringtonfineart](#), or email [barringtonfineart@gmail.com](mailto:barringtonfineart@gmail.com) for inquiries.

# Armada Center

Steven Scaglione

*Two-color reduction linoleum print*



# The Voice on the Other Line

Steven Scaglione

★ **Editors' Choice:** Prose

Since clinical clerkships were cancelled, it has been a struggle to connect meaningfully with this intensifying pandemic while remaining entirely outside the clinical sphere. It's a special limbo to live in as a medical student: considered enough of a doctor to understand the science of the virus's respiratory bedlam but not enough to remain in the clinical battlespace. The perspectives around us medical students are complex: viewed as another mask taken at best, a fomite or potential patient at worst, and maybe most practically someone who cannot write orders. So while I complete my Pandemic Medicine course online and get most of my "patient contact" at the grocery store, I face the same question everyone on Earth has asked during this unprecedented crisis: *what do I do now?* Still, the front lines appear no less devastating from the relative safety of my place many rounds of reinforcements back, the distance only further highlighting the essential differences between those trained and those still in training.

Like thousands of other motivated medical students, being relieved of clinical duties has offered me the freedom to contribute to the cause in other ways. I have spent much of this time conducting phone interviews with COVID-19 positive patients and employees, tracing their contacts and exposure sources for my local Department of Health, my institution's medical center, and the neighboring university.

Despite some differences, these calls often resemble the patient interactions I had while still on clerkships, as they can vary wildly in tone and course. On the other line, some react warmly (“Oh, thanks for reaching out!”), others less so (“Actually, I *do* mind...”), and most simply do not even pick up (like those sleepy patients who just cannot stay awake long enough to answer my questions before rounds start, or started... three minutes ago.)

Before each call, I survey some basic information from the database: name, gender, date of birth, testing date, phone number. Even from these sparse details, it is difficult not to craft an imaginary picture of who this person could be. A birthday in the 1950’s? *I worry about them*. A 931 area code? *Michigan, quite a hot spot*. It’s that rapid-fire association cortex that makes these judgements, the same one that medical school nurtures and tortures with one-liners like “18-year old female with a butterfly rash and joint pain.”

As the phone rings and a bit of anticipatory anxiety kicks in, I again find myself thinking to the uncanny similarities of being back in the hospital. With every call, I “knock on the door” and take another glance at the last name of a new patient for whom I will soon unearth and record the details of whichever powerful process suddenly evicted them from their “prior state of health” and sent them to live with us for a few days at our 864-bed Hotel.

My first call on behalf of the Department of Health went unanswered, then promptly was returned by a young man in his mid-20’s. We walk through the basics – symptom onset and type, date of isolation, travel history – before starting the arduous task of retracing his steps, place by place, person by

person, using emails and bank statements to triangulate events that happened nearly two weeks prior. The timeline started to take shape. He had never travelled to China. He was furloughed from his marketing job. He had been self-isolating for weeks now, he insisted.

Except a nearly overlooked four-day trip to the Gulf Coast with relatives from California.

*A hard piece of history to forget, I think a bit harshly, remembering any number of patients on service who prided themselves on being “pretty healthy” and only mention their hypertension, MI, and gangrenous left pinky toe with the same tone of nonchalance one might use when remembering to add paprika to their grocery list – an afterthought’s afterthought. Upon returning, he developed the symptoms we have all heard a thousand times: body aches, dyspnea, loss of taste and smell. A positive swab at a walk-in clinic the next day confirmed the diagnosis. As we traced the timeline of the trip, I felt my anxiety toward the responsibility of notifying each person exposed, each business frequented, transform into silent judgement.*

(continued online)



**Steven Scaglione** is a third-year medical student originally from rural Southeast Michigan. He plans to pursue residency in the field of Pediatrics and is passionate about documenting the “front seat to the human condition” that a career in medicine provides. His past work has included photography, prose, and visual art on the power of eye contact in anesthesia, the symbolism of LifeSavers candies during a long surgery, and the beauty of H&E stains. A portfolio of his printmaking can be found at [artprintsbysteven.bigcartel.com](http://artprintsbysteven.bigcartel.com) and on Instagram at [@stevenscagli\\_one](https://www.instagram.com/stevenscagli_one).

# Dissolving Thought

Svetlana Eden

*oil on canvas, 24"x20"*

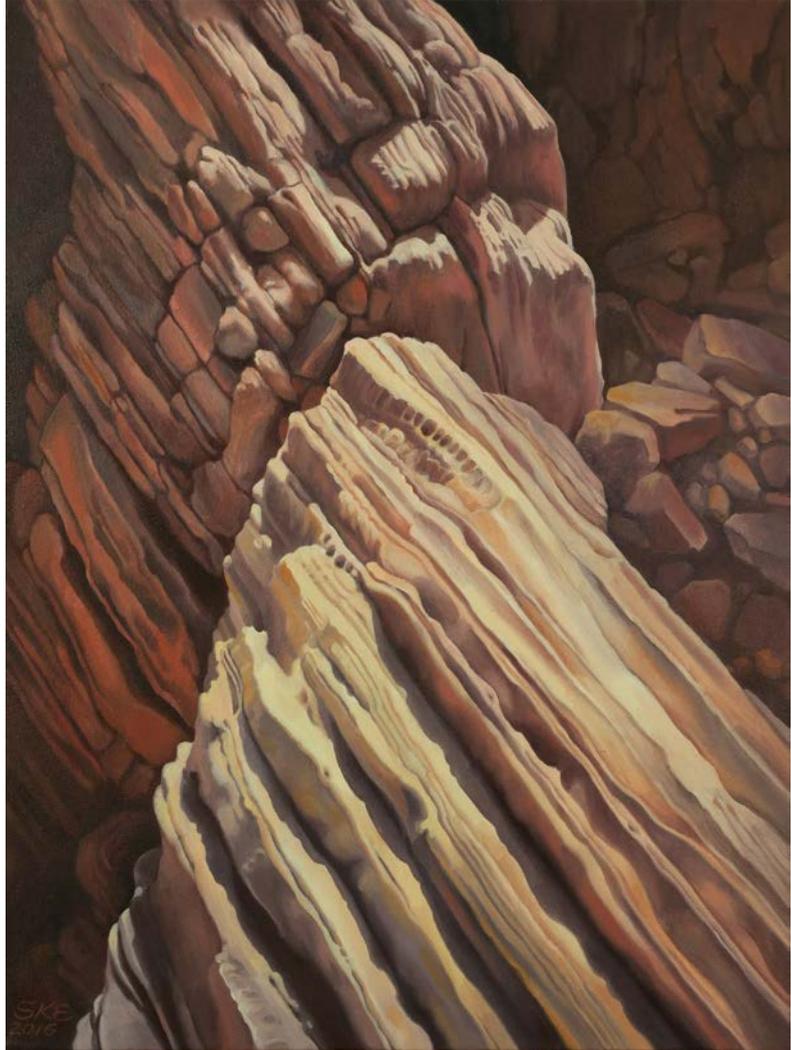


# The River of Time

Svetlana Eden

*oil on canvas, 24"x18"*

**Svetlana Eden**, a biostatistician at VUMC, has been painting for the past 17 years. Passionate about images representing the places where she has lived, including Russia, Israel, and the U.S., she has also painted portraits and still life. Svetlana believes that in art, hard work and dedication are as important as talent and creativity. Guided by the teaching of Charles Brindley, she sees art as a means of connection to people. Her realistic style and interpretive content attempt to engage the viewer's thoughts, memories, and emotions.



# Bee Among The Peonies

Tara Duffie



# Fireworks in the Dark

Tara Duffie



**Tara Duffie** is a Doctor of Nursing practice student at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing (VUSN). She graduated from VUSN Master's of Science in Nursing program in 2020. She holds a previous master's degrees in clinical psychology from Middle Tennessee State. She presently works as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner at Athena Consulting in Nashville.

A panoramic view of the Nashville skyline at dusk. The sky is a mix of soft pinks, oranges, and blues. The city's lights are beginning to glow, reflecting on the calm water of the river in the foreground. The prominent AT&T Building with its two spires is the central focus. Other buildings with various architectural styles and colors (blue, red, white) surround it. In the foreground, there are concrete steps leading down to the river and a small boat.

# This is Nashville

Trent Rosenbloom

# Favorite Places

Trent Rosenbloom



# Foster Falls in the Fog

Trent Rosenbloom



**Samuel "Trent" Rosenbloom** is an avid hiker and runner who loves to explore all the hidden places across Tennessee. He has spent most of his life in Nashville, where the Warner Parks are his second home. Trent can be found there almost daily, running the muddy trails, climbing the steep climbs, and taking pictures at the edge of days. Trent brings together runners, walkers, and supporters from all over the country to run the Harpeth Hills Flying Monkey Marathon, which he has put on since 2006. He is also a Vandy Med/Peds physician and directs My Health at Vanderbilt.

# Atrophy

Vishesh Jain

There's atrophy appropriate for age,  
Dark space inside the head where once was more-  
Perhaps some story now has lost a page  
Or lurks within some gyrus, ancient lore.

So tell me tales of those who held your hand  
In love, in loss, in toil, in glee, in gloom,  
The inside jokes I will not understand  
As laughter from your sister fills the room.

I'll listen to the fears you've hid away  
Until you had no secrets left to hide.  
I'll hear the symptoms haunting night and day  
In hope there may be care I can provide.

Or if you're busy strolling through your head  
I'll ask these souls who keep you safe, instead.

# Pencil over Paper

Vishesh Jain

Gliding with ease  
tracing loops and swirls  
crisscrossing my path  
I skate swifter than the eye can follow  
but leave meaning and  
memory in my wake.

Ice cracks. Lead snaps.  
I crash through the thin surface  
all momentum  
snatched away as I tread water.  
I reassess as I recover  
staring at what has become  
a vast white expanse  
cold, empty, forbidding  
finding myself unsure  
where I came from  
or where I was going.

I look back over my tracks  
of memory and meaning  
find some traction  
pick up speed  
and travel back through the middle  
to the start, to the end.

# A Grain of Pollen on a Winter Day

Xavier Bledsoe

Like a dream, the memory of my life in ages past  
recalls a day that scares me still- it nearly was my last.  
Proboscis poking round and round the tall and wiggly stalk,  
and yellow buzzy fuzzy bum that wiggles when it walks,  
my stripey friend came oh so close to catching me alive  
but lit aloft into the breeze in just the nick of time.

And so would I when autumn fell, with all my many friends  
we leapt and danced and spun and played amongst the wintry winds.  
Those who left their cubic caves to come and catch the show  
paid us no mind, it's tissue time! We watched them sneeze and blow!  
Until a draft that whistled past did catch me in its wake  
and lift me stories high above the forest round the lake.

Like a shooting star released and streaking back to space  
I watched the world fade away as darkness took its place  
Quite alone and growing cold, I reached out for a friend  
I s'pose they must have gotten lost in all the tumbling wind.  
But then I spied, not far away, but just beyond my reach  
A tiny glowing breathing spark that whispered on my cheek.

"What a warm surprise it is to find you've come so far

to bless us with your twirling dance, a show amongst the stars!”

“A star you are? My my I’m high, no wonder it’s so cold  
I’d love to dance but dearest friend I’m frozen to the bone.”

A rustle touched the moonlit air, an owl released her cry  
and slowly there appeared a host of stars across the sky.

Rising still upon the breeze, the air was growing thin  
A single voice with many tongues, they whispered forth again  
“Though young at heart, throughout the years we’ve spun our cloaks of light  
to keep us warm and lead the way for sailors through the night.  
Our light is all that we can give- our warmth is far too much.  
In younger days to our dismay we burned all that we touched.

And so we live among the skies and watch from high above,  
but you, dear friend, are close enough to shower them with love.  
All around- the vapors there are there for you to take  
so weave the brilliant sparkling cloak that only you can make.”  
A cloak of vapor, goodness me- how foolish and naive,  
How could these sage and ancient friends believe that’s what I’d need?

But rising still, I had no choice, and peered into the night  
and sought out all the vapors there, veering left and right  
spinning round and swooping low, a final pirouette  
A million droplets on my arms, I wasn’t even wet!  
And looking down, I saw myself, expecting the bizarre  
but saw instead a brilliant sight, a sparkling icy star!

And for a moment there we were, twins of ice and fire.  
I thanked my friends for all their care and struggled to go higher  
they glowed and flickered warm and soft from pedestals on high  
And soon I felt the tug of earth- twas time to say goodbye.  
gently, softly, light as air, I traveled through the night  
and found the lake and sleepy glen as morning broke its light

A joyful chorus, tiny feet, rushing to and fro  
and one thing on the children's mind, "oh mama look! it SNOWED!!"  
Little boys and girls threw their snowballs back and forth  
while baby Kayla, bundled warm just squatted on the porch.  
Fear and worry, frightened eyes- from where did all this come?  
Is it safe? Or will it hurt or make my fingers numb?

She squatted there and looked around, hoping mom would come.  
But chose to copy what she saw and wiggled out her tongue  
And toddled out to where it fell, so soft and fluffy white  
with tongue exposed and racing heart, she screwed her eyelids tight  
until a sparkling shining star did land and melt away  
And worries? fears? they melted too. Her smile though, would stay.



**Xavier Bledsoe** is a 3rd year medical student from St. Louis, Missouri with interests in pediatrics and psychiatry. In his spare time, he enjoys artwork, gardening, and going for runs around Nashville.

