

Rx:

STEMI aortic dissection C-spine fracture

I cross the threshold into the hub of pain

At the intersection of Moorpark and Bascom

A nauseating *crunch* of the staple gun, punctuating

An orchestra of spluttering heartbeats

Today, I met cerebral palsy

Hollow eyes but powerful, determined arms

Like spindly twigs, they tug at your yellowed feeding tube

“She’s my angel,” your mother whispers to no one

And I stroke your wings, sticky from those pancakes you used to love

Breast cancer was a beautiful Latina woman

Branded with radiation burns

You sobbed fiercely into my awkward embrace

Your tears mixing with the angry, crimson blisters

A rosy watercolor painting, seeping its way into my heart

Diabetes wheeled himself into the room next door

Here again, in the same hospital that took your legs forever

When I asked if you wanted anything,

Your laughter filled the hollow spaces in your tattered shorts

“Blankets. And a warm smile, please, while you’re at it”

I collect these candid Polaroids of vulnerability

Steeped in lifetimes of joy and sorrow

Half-moments saturated with

An unexplainable wholeness

“Madame volunteer,” a tech winks
Looking at my scrubs that just aren’t *blue* enough
A crisp, teal insignia of an in-between
In a land of egg sandwiches and heated blankets
And contagious, heartbreaking smiles

5150alteredwithahistoryofschizophrenia
Your story is a dose of humanity
And for a second
I forget
That unitchable itch of not knowing enough
Or not doing enough as the M.D.s and R.N.s and P.A.s
Flanked by two-lettered armies of omniscience and competence

For I have my own army now
And I always order my coffee with room
For I *am* the space in that unfilled cup
A glorious emptiness, full of the unlearned
I watch, mesmerized by the colors dancing
Along a vanishing horizon of the known and unknown
Of memories and dreams alike
Of journeys completed and steps waiting to be taken
Of half and whole

And so I walk in my teal scrubs
That are *just* the right shades of blue and green
For a resident storyteller, the patients’ keeper
Now
Let me hear your story
My stethoscope rests warm upon your heart