

# Capillaries

**Journal of Medical Humanities**



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## A Note to the Reader

The following pieces may contain themes relating to sexual assault, suicide, disordered eating, mental health, and other sensitive topics.

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## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *Capillaries Journal of Medical Humanities* at the University of Washington.

We are grateful to have been able to continue publishing your stories during a year affected by not only the pandemic, but also by tumultuous political and social change.

Many of us are looking forward to a future in which we are once again able to work, attend school, and meet our friends and loved ones in person without the need for masks or physical distancing. And yet, most of the pieces in this issue revolve around the past; they explore memories of loved ones lost to COVID-19, of strangers who made a connection and never met again, of past versions of the authors themselves. As important as it is to plan for the future, and as exciting as it is to contemplate what that future could look like in a few months, we hope these pieces encourage our readers to reflect on the important people and moments in their lives that they have held dear in the last year.

As always, we would like to thank our submitters for sharing their work, and acknowledge that it often comes from a place of great vulnerability. We are humbled to be able to publish their stories, and promise that we will strive to do so no matter the state of the world.

The Capillaries Editorial Team

Miriam Mayhle

Nikki Talebi

Chelsea Ng

Isabelle Chang

Haley Pang

Andy Chia

Neva Crnkovic Hahn

Varuna Ravi

**do not come out to your mother in a psych  
ward when you are thirteen years old**

*By Anonymous*

Even if the therapist tells you that you should

Even if you are certain that you are bisexual

(you are gay)

Even if it may be the source of the anguish

And sadness

And needless self-loathing

(this will not leave now)

That may have landed you here

(you suspect it will be lifelong)

Even if you have fallen in love with your roommate

Who you even now still remember the name of

Even if you feel that you have nothing left to lose

And especially do not

If she has convictions against it

If she is not quite ready for this

Because her youngest child is in the hospital

And she cannot do anything about it

And you feel like you have caused her enough pain already

But especially

Especially

If she loves you

And only wants what is best for you

And is operating the best that she knows how

We never mean to hurt each other

But sometimes,

In the pursuit of \_\_\_\_\_,

We do

And we must

I cannot promise it will all make sense one day

But in time,

It will begin to clarify.

## **Tumor**

*By Nathan Hoston*

Special Education Graduate Student

The scar doesn't hurt.  
Gnarly, keloidal.  
It looks like a worm  
crawling behind my right ankle.

I couldn't run for a while, and  
it's been six years, and  
it's still a little tender, and

I wanted to keep it —  
In a jar, possibly.

I didn't ask, so,  
I imagine  
they threw it away.

But you already know that.

I just like living in this daydream  
where I can show it to people -  
That painful, bony tumor...

## **He Was Prepared for His Passing**

*By Stephen D'Abreau*

MS3 at Ohio University Heritage College of  
Osteopathic Medicine (OUHCOM)

His life a memorial to the love he'd shown,  
But his death a memorial to being alone,  
Plague had forced each of us, the loved ones, away,  
Our deep wish to surround him in his final hospital stay,

He told us all he would face death without fears,  
He told us all with our faces full of our tears,  
For he was prepared for his passing,

Though he had prayed for me all my days,  
From his prayers for the departed I was far away,  
Funeral rites to be had in the near empty hall,  
Yet the man to be buried dearly missed by us all,

His heart was beating no more,  
As it stopped our hearts left only sore,  
For he was prepared for his passing,

The machines halted from pushing their air,  
How this life thus ended can only seem unfair,  
A man who stood tall in life felled so quickly in death,  
His echo forever etched upon we who are left,

Amen, his soul upon Eagles' wing,  
Amen, the welcoming Angels shall sing,  
He was prepared for his passing,  
I was not.

*Dedicated to Howard J. Eagle, my beloved and dearly departed  
grandfather.*

## Teeth

By Rebecca Hollman

Majors: English and Sociology

He comes home and  
One corner of his mouth sags  
Like a smoker's, dragged down  
From years of cigarettes. In his case  
It's just Novocain.

He smiles and the curve of his lip  
Makes him look older than he is,  
Like a boy wearing his father's tie.  
He pokes at his numbed cheek curiously  
And says, "I can't feel it."

I smile back at him. "Cool," I reply,  
And then ask, "Can I see them?"  
He proudly opens his mouth:  
A chest of precious stones.  
His teeth gleam in the hollow space.

We both remember together  
When he held my hand from  
That too-big chair and the dentist said,  
"Nine cavities" as pictures of his bones  
glowed on the wall.

The teeth were warped like toothpicks  
Prodded in soft wax, blackened spots  
Bloomed like bruises, and craters curved  
Like caves weathered from languorous limestone.  
The plaque was sandpaper on his reddened gums.

He looked so small then,  
His lanky arms lifted above his shoulders,  
Stretching to reach the grown-up armrests.  
I felt small too, Displaced really,  
Standing where a parent should.

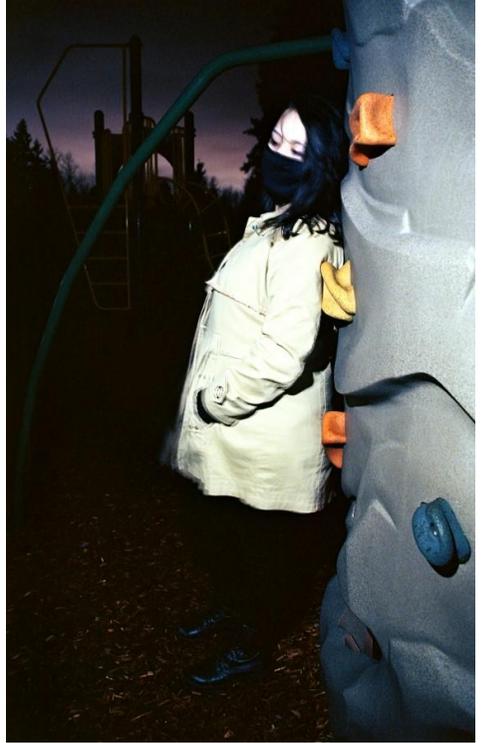
But here now with cavities filled,  
And a lasting ache eased,  
We pause our pain, and take turns  
Gently poking the side of his numb face  
And laughing. Both a little less broken.



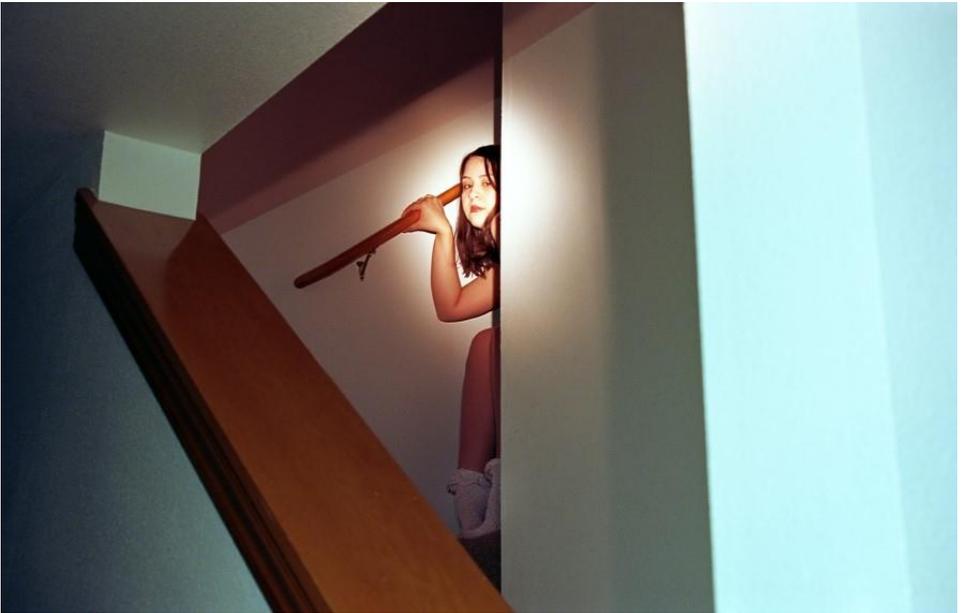
## **Photographic Relationships**

*By Gage Lamberson  
(Art: Photo/Media  
Concentration Major)  
& Heavenly Sisneros*











## Artist Statement

### Photographic Relationships

In these photographs, I introduce the image of my girlfriend, Heavenly, into the barren landscapes of my night photography. These diptychs are a meditation on what it means to wholeheartedly embrace someone else into your life, and how my past and present collide in the juxtapositions we create.

Before I met Heavenly I had thoroughly researched the night landscape, but since she entered my life I've begun to use my photography to reflect on our relationship. Therefore this body of work is collaborative. Heavenly not only assists me and acts as my model, but she also comes up with ideas for locations, scenes, and poses. These photographs are about us, so it's important that she is able to express herself in her own way. My feelings are expressed through the juxtaposition, hers are expressed with how she represents herself in the photos. Yet we often find that these feelings are shared. Each photo contains elements of both of us, seeing them in pairs unifies our feelings into one whole.

## **Generations of Mary**

By Makena Kathleen Billington

Creative Writing Major,  
Education, Learning, & Societies Minor

The hurdle my leg used to carry me over  
Is weighing me down today  
You visit in memories memorialized  
Life has been heavy since you passed away

The sun shone on the curtains  
And I cannot seem to look away  
There is nothing new on the *news*  
But they always have something to say

Whisper wonders in my ear, I'm yours to trace  
You dance with me  
In lover's embrace  
In heaven you're finally free

Why did you have to leave me?

I don't like to think about you anymore

Wished weddings, dead birthdays, the day you left  
The calendar collects time  
Occupied only by my loneliness  
And the occasional visit from the kids

I don't like to think about you anymore

It partly pains me to say

I've been more forgetful than usual

Since you went away

Cancerous claimer

Roughly ripping years off the calendar

I used to think nothing could keep us apart

In a way it couldn't

Even in death I still think of you

I don't like to think about you anymore

You barely brushed past her when you slipped away

Now they only know you through sentimental stories

And the way we pray

He came continuously to visit

Carrying Generations of Robert to share

We gather round the table

But in your rocking chair

I see you there

Blowing breezily with the wind

Gusts of death and time and heartbreak are cold, unforgiving

Your laughter lifts the room  
It echoes in *Generations of Mary*  
When I look at them all I see is you

Why did God bring you home so soon?  
I don't like to think about you anymore

I focus firmly on this moment  
You dancing delicately  
With me merrily  
When I used to dance and smile  
And remember  
And forget

I'm fragile  
Grieving

Mary  
Handle me with care  
I don't care  
What they tell you  
I haven't moved on I'm stuck  
In the memories memorialized  
In the new of the news  
In the cancerous claimer  
Who stole your life but also mine

I don't like to think about you anymore

Not thinking of you

Is as

Painful

As remembering

As crying

As grieving all over again

As forgetting

As remembering to forget

As they say another has left us

Are they with you there?

I wish you were here

They tell me

You're still near

They pity past pains

Wedding vows vie for my attention

Until death do us part

We are part

Oh, Mary

Hold me comfortably close

Why does it feel like a sin to forget you again?

You said on your deathbed that you wanted me to be happy

You left but you want me to be happy?

You open the door with your angelic breeze

Oh, Mary please

Forgive me for forgetting

She's sitting in your rocking chair

I wish you were still sitting there

Cancerous claimer

Roughly ripping years off the calendar

I used to think nothing could keep us apart

Whisper wonders in my ear, I'm yours to trace

You can't dance with me

Anymore in lovers embrace

Why did you

Leave me

I don't think about you anymore

I haven't moved on I'm stuck

Why did God bring you home?

When I look at her all I see is you  
The calendar collects time  
You went away  
It feels like a sin to forget you again  
Weighing me down  
I don't like to think about you anymore  
Forgive me

## **Dental Drama**

*By Meena Shanmugam*

Microbiology Major

If I could give myself a punny nickname that perfectly sums up my experience with braces, it would be "Metal Mouth Meena".

I first got braces on Martin Luther King Junior Day in 2013. I was missing six permanent teeth. Later, I came to know that I had a condition called hypodontia, which meant I had congenitally missing teeth. Because of my unfortunate circumstance, I would have to get six extractions and then braces to close as many gaps as possible. When I turned eighteen, I would have dental implants in place of any remaining gaps.

The idea of braces did not faze me at first. All my friends had braces at the time and they did not seem to complain. So, I went through with it. After a four hour procedure and a chocolate milkshake to relieve the newfound pressure in my mouth, I was numb to feeling different. At school the next day, I smiled broadly to show off my shiny contraptions. The collective response was staring and squinting. I would constantly think to myself: Well, that's great. Why didn't I have poor vision? Glasses are always in style.

A few months later, I was invited to a cousin's house for dinner. Bored, I sought her bookshelf for anything I could read. Immediately, I noticed a yellow smiley face with braces. Smile by Raina Telgemeier was a sign. The author severely injured her two front teeth as a teenager, and she, like me, had to deal with "dental drama". There was nothing else like that book that could have comforted me. From having freshly tightened braces and not being able to eat anything, to getting cuts in my cheeks from sharp, protruding wires, all of my experiences were thoroughly described with vivid graphics and capturing diction.

I would be dishonest in saying that having braces was a cakewalk. I quickly learned to hate them, and after six years of having braces, I can confidently say that I did until the moment I got them off in February of 2019. But, I learned to accept my ordeal. Braces did not only alter my physical appearance (which was ever changing throughout the trials and tribulations of puberty), but they manifested in my mentality as well. To me, having had braces was a badge of perseverance and courage. The long wait taught me patience, and now that my journey is over, I understand that it was worth it. The gaps in my mouth disappeared eventually, and I am now able to speak and smile comfortably again. I guess you can say that I am now able to emBRACE myself.

## **Come Back Next Time**

*By Sudiptho R. Paul*

B.A., M.S.

“Alright, I have my recruitment materials. What room is the patient in? Ok I know where I am going. I wonder if he’ll decide to enroll today. Let’s see. Here we go.”

Such thoughts were typical as I prepared for the walk from my office to the Harborview Medical Center, which is a few blocks away, to recruit patients for a research study. Though I am in medical school now, and with death and dying increasingly visible to the public eye from the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice movements, I look back to that time to reflect on my relationship with death and dying.

At the time it was fall 2018, and I was an end-of-life care research coordinator with the ambition and trajectory of becoming a physician. I had been working on a particular study for a couple years with less than 10 or so patients—it was tough to enroll patients. This study was a randomized control trial focused on testing a communication framework—informed assent for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Patients who were eligible for the study were generally very sick and had any number of serious illnesses. This was a challenging study to recruit for since talking with patients about decisions related to whether or not they would want the option of resuscitation if they were to die—while they were hospitalized for an acute exacerbation of their current illnesses—was understandably an unappealing thing for patients to volunteer for. Nonetheless, asking patients and their families for their participation in these types of studies was how I paid rent and bought groceries, so I continued my recruitment routine day in and day out. I got used to the “no”, the “no thanks” and the variable iterations of rejections from patients.

One patient— Mr. P—was particularly memorable because he never answered with a “no” but more often a “maybe” or a “that’s interesting, come back next time.” He said these with sincerity. After I first explained the study to Mr. P, whenever I stopped by his room it would be unpredictable as to whether he would remember me or the study. I was just another hospital staff member who spoke too

much and too fast with an expectation that patients should understand what I was saying and agree to it. What's not to agree with or understand? I am here to help, right? He has metastatic cancer, heart failure, and other comorbidities. His prognosis was poor. This study can help him receive care that aligns with his values, I would think to myself and convey to him. Hm, things are not so straightforward.

Each time I saw him—about once or twice every other week or so for about five weeks—I would come into his hospital room and see that he was talking with his family. Most often it was the adults in his life: partner, siblings, cousins, neighbors. Each time their mood would vary. Happy. Sad. Frustrated. Apathetic. Angry. Annoyed. Lost. As the weeks went by, I started wondering why he kept on asking me to return. I always emphasized he could say no as this was voluntary. Every visit I thought it was finally going to be the time that he would agree to join the study, when in reality it was a “come back next time.” I stayed optimistic about his interest, though as the weeks went by, I began to think I was wasting time—both his and mine. I could tell he was in a lot of pain. Lines and machines connected to him. His history in the medical record was too long to read in its entirety.

The last time I saw him, I was determined to enroll him into the study or elicit a true “no thanks” from him. No “come back next time.” I walked in and he recognized me. “Hey Mr. P,” I said, and continued with my usual speech about the study. He was paying attention to about 50% of what I was saying. The other 50% of his focus was on the three kids on the side— his grandkids, no one more than five or six years old. He would go back and forth between listening to me and appreciating the little ones. At one point I stopped trying to redirect his attention towards me and just let him be uninterrupted in the moment with his grandkids, engaging with them and laughing with joy and playful banter, tethered to his bed by various tubes while his grandkids scuttled in circles around his hospital bed and me. The hospital buzz—the beeping machines, the sterility of the decor, the medical teams talking down the hallway, the medications dripping in the IV line—all faded into the background. In that moment, I did not think about the study or that

I was working or really anything outside of witnessing Mr. P. Time did not exist in those moments. I did not want to recruit him anymore. I was curious about who he is and his journey. Alas, I was just another hospital employee coming and going. “Maybe the timing isn’t right for this study,” I said respectfully. “Thanks for listening to me and considering.”

“Yeah, the timing isn’t right. I appreciate you, though,” he remarked.

I waved, turned around, and started walking away, still experiencing a reverence for his being. He did not stop me. I did not want to put him in a position to say “no thanks, goodbye.” There are fewer, if any, situations for “come back next time” at the end of life, when death is near or here. Life is profound, and it is hard to say goodbye.

I never knew what happened to Mr. P. There were so many other patients to recruit— all of their records too long to fully read.

## **Crash and Burn into My Mind (*leave my dreams behind*)**

*By Makena Kathleen Billington*  
Creative Writing Major,  
Education, Learning & Societies Minor

Before I board the plane again, I know it will crash

You manifest in my mind and throb

Until my eyes nose

D

I

V

E

Into my spine

And tension seeps out of my breast

There are no emergency exits

My heartbeat quickens as

My nervous system twirls on my stability

Mocking it with a light dance

I consume you and am left wanting more

Just one more

Your sugar coating melts off

And underneath

Bitter release

I'm weakened in my walk  
We're flying so fast so high  
I've lost control of my mind and it hurts too badly  
To ask for it back again  
Nicely

You win  
I take a seat

Stuck on autopilot  
When I need to fight or fly  
I freeze

Burning sensations curl my toes  
You tell me on the intercom to ignore the turbulence  
Buckle up for a long ride  
I'm drunk on this wasted time  
And your delusional clock warms my body

It feels so good to vomit  
Yet so wrong  
I can't stop

Read that poem again  
And pretend I am normal  
I'm sick

And afraid to fly and I'm tired

Of silencing your screams with mine

Throbbing to the beat of their pulse

How much do I need to feel numb again?

I close my window and stay in my seat

Soaking my fears in your reassurance

My window is cracked just enough to feel the wind beat me down

This is your sweet release

Is this normal? Am I normal?

Is this pain

Normal?

Obsessively riding on the coattails of my midnight lovers

Rizatriptan and ibuprofen

I am a passenger in the plane of my own mind

I can't control it

We're going

D

O

W

N

And the air pressure keeps building  
I can't find my oxygen mask  
The plane's nose hits the water and  
I'm drowning  
In this pain filled plane

Until I close my eyes

And

Stop

Thinking

If I move

I know my lungs will fill with water

So I lay there near collapse

Curled up into a ball of weakness

Cradled in crash position

Feeling my spine resurface and meet my eyes

So I can open them again blindly

I only walk when I sleep

So, give me the gift of dream

And I'll escape this pain in my eyes

I'll imagine better days

Where I'm in control  
And I pull the plane out of the water  
And I beat and bruise the pilot  
Until he gets out of my seat  
And I take my life back again

I throw out the pills and my hands stop shaking  
For a moment all that exists is me and this silence

Then I'll wake up  
That's just a dream  
I tell myself  
As my head expands and contracts again

Let me dream

No

You tell me real life is a nightmare I can't wake myself up from  
And just for a moment  
I believe you

## Musings of a Rambling Caregiver

By Nikolaus J.H. Bautista

English Major

Where to begin? Caring for your loved ones, caring for yourself, caring, caring, and caring some more. How much care can one have, until it feels like they *don't* care anymore? How far can one stretch themselves, before “enough” is said, shouted, or screamed? Somehow, you keep on...

\* \* \* \* \*

Number Eight; will eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) time be the last? How can anyone go through eight back surgeries, the last just a few weeks before writing, and a different surgery just five months before that. She waited almost three years for this last surgery to happen. So much pain, so many struggles, and so much will to live and be independent again. If anything, that is admirable. A pillar of faith, strength and will. That's a Mother- a Woman who loves her family so much that she will endure pains beyond imagination, beyond heartache of bearing witness. How? She puts stock in her Faith, and is a living testament as such. She's thankful for three things: God, Family, and another day towards fully rejoining life.

\* \* \* \* \*

It's just another Sunday, but it's not. It's Mother's Day. The second hunkered down in the bunker. You lovingly craft cards on the computer, give your mother a bone-china bell, you got off Ebay from a steam locomotive society in Portland, Oregon- when you buy a book for yourself, and you think of the sad state of the world. To carry “clean” papers to worship. To be threatened with *jail* or outright *barred* from returning to where you made your home- from where you were born. Being told to *accept*, (without question) the murky edicts from *on-high* as “truth,” as research emerges from top institutions- stating otherwise. Seeing the balance between self and societal responsibilities erased- replaced with a monolith of madness, that you're told to follow or perish. Do or be shunned. Nothing made sense before, and now it is worse.

To be at the front of caring for family is a heavy burden, and I've discussed this before. The fear of what happens if you're taken ill, haunts you. You're told to do something “for the greater good,” but social altruism never leads to anything worthwhile. You're

concerned with matters of home, self, and your loved ones; those are your primary responsibilities. So what do you do? You do what's best for you and your primary life; here's an example:

*You wake-up feeling woeful- tired, cramped, with aches and headaches; that is your normal state- despite taking care of yourself. You've already got problems, but constantly hear you need to take something "...for the greater good...". If it goes wrong inside you though, and symptoms are no different than your normal state of things, how do you know- that if you take it, what your fate will be by day's end: seeing the sunset and next sunrise? Or, slipping these surly bonds, to touch the face of God? You must be responsible for yourself- make your own calls- as you and only you know your body. No-one lives in a bubble, but what matters more: altruism demanded by society? Or you and those immediately around you. It's not to say others shouldn't; that's their own decision. That's responsibility- to ourselves and those personally around us, first-and-foremost- to know ourselves.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Looking out the window, as the seasons pass, it's only a matter of time before the cycle starts again. Nearly a year has gone since my Grandpa left, and I miss caring for him, helping him, and his reassurance- about life; his advice was the best. There is a season for everything- but late at night, you wish that some seasons lasted longer, to enjoy life with those you love. Peanut Butter and Hawaiian Rolls on the ready, for footsteps down the hall-never to be heard again.

Late at night, you turn, peering into the darkness- hoping, but it's not to be. You turn again- to the little dog in the chair next to you at the kitchen counter. She misses what you're hoping for as well, but she looks at you too- for the same snack. You make the snacks, and share them with your friend. It eases the hurt, but doesn't erase it.

\* \* \* \* \*

When you're not considered *neuro-typical*, the world becomes a struggle to understand- both to yourself, and the world to understand you. When you see chaos, confusion, collusion and convolution taking grip, you're left bewildered, stranded in sorrow, muddling in malaise, and held-back in hopelessness. Seeing the

struggles of your fellow men, women, and children, as things drag-on, erodes your soul.

When you're not considered *neuro-typical*, the world is a struggle to understand. Building and rebuilding your "self," your life, and your identity- your autonomy, is never easy (harder-still with being on the Autism spectrum). Navigating this absurd environment, the surly bonds of this mortal coil, this island- Earth, where everything is not always what it seems- becomes heavy as the burdens you personally carry. It's already hard for the *neuro-typical*, to carry on. How am I still stayin' alive? I guess through living by grace, faith, and getting-up each morning- putting your pants on, one leg at a time. Just keep-on keeping-on.

Being an outsider looking in, even as you're in the middle of things, leads to as many questions as answers; each replacing themselves as you go. Having never been fully a part of anything beyond close family, and certainly not being *neuro-typical*, I have some understanding others don't, and maybe the intuition to ask what others won't. Call it impertinence, precociousness, an inquisitive mind, overactive imagination, or silliness (whatever). Sometimes, skepticism of an outsider, the wonder of minds, the distance you are removed from something, offers new perspectives, insights, and maybe- answers.

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This strange world we all live on, has plenty of opinion, facts, fallacies and folly for all to spare. Still, to fully-understand, to comprehend- is what's missing. Questions, Answers, Knowledge, Information... Are all nothing without Wisdom and Insight; that's where Understanding and Meaning are created. Purpose and Motivation is fueled from there, making just and sound action-possible.

In this ever-changing world, in which we live in, change is our constant, but change should be just and tempered. Outlets of Expression, of Creativity, must be allowed to mostly-grow organically (with a little help/nudge here and there). Outlets like *Capillaries*, are important and necessary- more for personal healing and record for others tomorrow, than public expression in the here-and-now today. Strange as it sounds- this journal has helped many already. I'm grateful to count myself among those given shelter, outlet, healing, aid, and most-importantly, *voice*. Thank you

so much, for publishing my works, over the last two years, *Capillaries*. You're a truly unique and special journal, and a publication I pray is in print for years-upon-years to come. Thank you so much; I'm eternally grateful.

This run I've had, writing on Caregiving- of a Millennial or Gen Z Youth to their Elders (never sure what I am- seeing as I was born to Boomers). It's been a good run on writing on Autism, too. I've had a good run. Maybe someday, I'll write again, for *Capillaries*- if the staff decides to have me back in some capacity in the future, maybe to help cultivate the next generation of narrative-medicine writers, even. The tough part is, not wanting to bid *farewell*. So I shall say "*Until the next time. Until we meet, some sunny day...*"

## **Pieces of a Woman**

*By Shira Lanyi*

B.S.

Labor and delivery nights were a difficult experience for me, as I struggled to stay awake into the wee hours of the night, attempting to demonstrate my enthusiasm and ability as a student and future doctor, and not allowing my emotions to get the best of me. My patient interactions were always very positive, as I felt that I could become close to these women, often similar in age to myself, who were going through the incredible experience of bringing life into this world- an experience that I ache for myself. On my third night, a 20-year-old primigravid woman arrived into triage for painful contractions. I went through the motions of reading through her chart, learning about her life, her medical history, and understanding more about her as a patient before I met her in person. As I read through the various histories in her chart, there was a familiarity in the story. Depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation that had led her to self-harm in the not-too-distant past were just small pieces of the puzzle of this woman's life. However, the life of the baby growing inside her belly was enough to pull her out of this darkness, and help her feel that she was a part of something bigger in this world.

I entered the patient's room, and I saw her big beautiful eyes above her mask, obviously scared and concerned over what her body was experiencing. In just a mere matter of minutes, this patient and myself became very close as we discussed her fears and worked through what she was going through. I performed a brief physical exam, and ran my hand over her wrist, and felt the raised, linear scars- familiar, because I have my own. I felt a sense of loyalty, compassion, and empathy towards this woman, unlike any experience I had before with a patient. She and I became friends overnight, and after we admitted her for labor and it was time for my shift to end, she told me the baby would wait until I came back before he would make his debut.

I followed her chart from home, ensuring that her labor was going smoothly, and that she and the baby were progressing well. When I returned for my evening shift, I immediately went to her room, and her eyes lit up when she saw me. She said, "he was waiting for you to come back." All night, I advocated for this brave woman, as her contractions became increasingly painful, and she cried tearfully in pain, begging for help. I watched the monitor, noticing the baby going into distress at first with variable decelerations, and in time this turned into late decelerations. Her labor had arrested, and I held her hand and told her we would get through this. I disregarded my concerns over being the bothersome medical student, as I asked the residents on the team if we should take steps towards a c-section. Protocol was followed by our amazing resident team, and they instead advocated for a vaginal delivery unless a C-section was absolutely necessary. However, by 4 in the morning, the baby's tracing had not improved, and the patient's labor had not progressed- it was time to take her to the OR.

I stayed by her side in the room, talked her through what was going to happen, and told her I would be with her every step of the way. I kept my promise. Baby Gabriel arrived safely with a loud cry, a big head of black hair, and beautiful pink, silky skin. He was placed in his mommy's arms, and suddenly you could see the perfect and pure love in that frozen moment. Her fears, concerns, anxiety, depression, and thoughts of self-harm, all vanished as she was wheeled back to her room with her new baby boy.

This year has been one of the hardest I have been through in my 34 years of life. My own experience with depression and suicidal ideation had led me to a darkness that I felt I would never be able to escape. What I experienced with this patient, who had been through her own similar struggles, helped me to understand that there is so much in this life that is beautiful and miraculous- and if you just open your heart enough, you can swim back to the top. I will always remember this woman, her bravery, and her impact on me. "If I am not for myself, who is for me? And being for my own self, what am 'I'? And if not now, when?" - Hillel (Pirke Avot 1:14)

## Team Bios

**Miriam Mayhle** is a junior studying biology and plans to pursue a career in medicine after she graduates. Some of her favorite things include drawing, reading, cooking, and making her friends watch *Derry Girls*.

**Nikki Talebi** is a junior studying English and political science. She is considering pursuing a pre-law track or a career in publishing. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing poetry, listening to music, exploring Seattle, and attending as many concerts as she can.

**Chelsea Ng** is a sophomore studying biochemistry and is planning to study medicine in the future. When she's not studying or working, you'll find her nose buried in an (e)book, spending quality time with friends and family, and searching for what to eat next.

**Haley Pang** is a junior majoring MCD biology and hopes to become a physician in the future. When she is not doing school-related activities, she enjoys baking, reading, playing basketball, longboarding, and doing crafts.

**Andy Chia** is a senior majoring in chemistry and microbiology who hopes to continue studying human aging in graduate school. When he isn't teaching or writing, he enjoys experimenting with cooking and baking. He hopes to one day open a bakery.

**Michelle Li** is a junior studying physiology and is working towards a career in medicine. As a PR officer for *Capillaries*, she loves designing creative advertisements and social media posts. Outside of the journal, she enjoys playing tennis, coordinating bomb fits, trying to become TikTok famous, and drinking milk-based beverages.

**Isabelle Chang** is a junior with the intended major of MCD biology. She plans on pursuing a career as a physician assistant. Aside from college, she loves to cook, food blog, hike, and assemble charcuterie boards.

**Neva Crnkovic Hahn** is a junior studying comparative literature and biology. In the future, she hopes to pursue a career in medicine overseas in Croatia. In her free time, she enjoys writing, reading and watching horror movies!

**Varuna Ravi** is a sophomore studying public health and pursuing a career in medicine. Outside of school, she loves painting, listening to music, and eating deep-dish pizza (her favorite topping is jalapeños).