

Anatomical Donor Convocation of Gratitude 2023

UVA School of Medicine



A Patient and Professor

I hope your body served you well in life.
I wonder who your arms embraced and whose hands have held yours.
Imagine all the places your legs took you.
I hope your face saw many smiles.

Abundant gratitude for this gift which was so dear to you and your family.
I am humbled to learn from your worldly vessel.
Your selflessness and vulnerability carry your legacy beyond your time.
I will treasure this experience so that your impact on the world will persist.

My first patient taught me more than I had hoped, just as I will allow my future
patients to be my teachers as well.
Beyond finite knowledge, I am inspired by your generosity.
To thank you enough is beyond my ability to articulate.



The Greatest Gift

With profound gratitude, we gather here,
To honor a gift so selfless and sincere,
A family's grace, a noble embrace,
For in the name of learning, a life's legacy we trace.

As anatomy is revealed, mysteries unfold,
In their sacred vessel, a story is told.
For their gracious gift, we're forever in debt,
Their selflessness a lesson we'll never forget.

In lectures, labs, and moments still,
Your loved one's presence guides my skill,
With gratefulness, my heart does swell,
For this generous act, I'm bound to tell.

So here I stand, a student true,
Forever thankful, ever due,
To family's love, a debt I owe,
For in their sacrifice, we all have grown.



Art: Sean Crites

Untitled

By Aaron Terrasa

As you are now,
it's hard to imagine you once laughed
to know you once smiled,
and wept, worried, cared.
It's difficult picturing your stride,
your countenance, the way your hair hit your shoulders.
Sometimes reality rushes in,
and a million questions pass before me,
I cannot answer any of them.
You cannot tell me, and I would not listen.
I have only ever known you like this: cold, unfeeling, gone.
But you are still present with me, as I am.
Our conversations have been full of life.
When we meet, I always ask you how you've been.
I know you won't answer, but still,
it seems kinder to treat you as a friend.
Specimen seems too distant. Donor feels too formal.
I know you in a different way than that.
You have taught me. I hope you know.
You have tested me, perplexed me, shaped me.
I can only hope that if we had met earlier,
we would have been as kind to each other then
as we are now.

Into the Immortal World

Learning is never easy. Even the “simple” topics are daunting. But you showed me a different way. Despite my laziness in going to the laboratory and hesitation to go outside of our assigned times, I knew there was no better way to learn. You showed me a new path, a better path. Looking through the many layers and your cold flesh I discovered an immortal world. Something no textbook could truly help me understand nor a professor lecture me about. I felt free, free to explore and build on everything I had done before, and free to venture into the unknown. Throughout my time with you, I also discovered things about myself. I realized I could take risks and not be afraid of what I found. Thank you, for showing me there will always be new discoveries and new frontiers for me to push. I sometimes wonder what I would say if I could talk to you but one can only dream. I remember the day I held your hand and in that moment I wished to talk to you. I hope you understand that you have been a great help in my education and your family was blessed to have you with them.

Thank you,
Andres Cestti

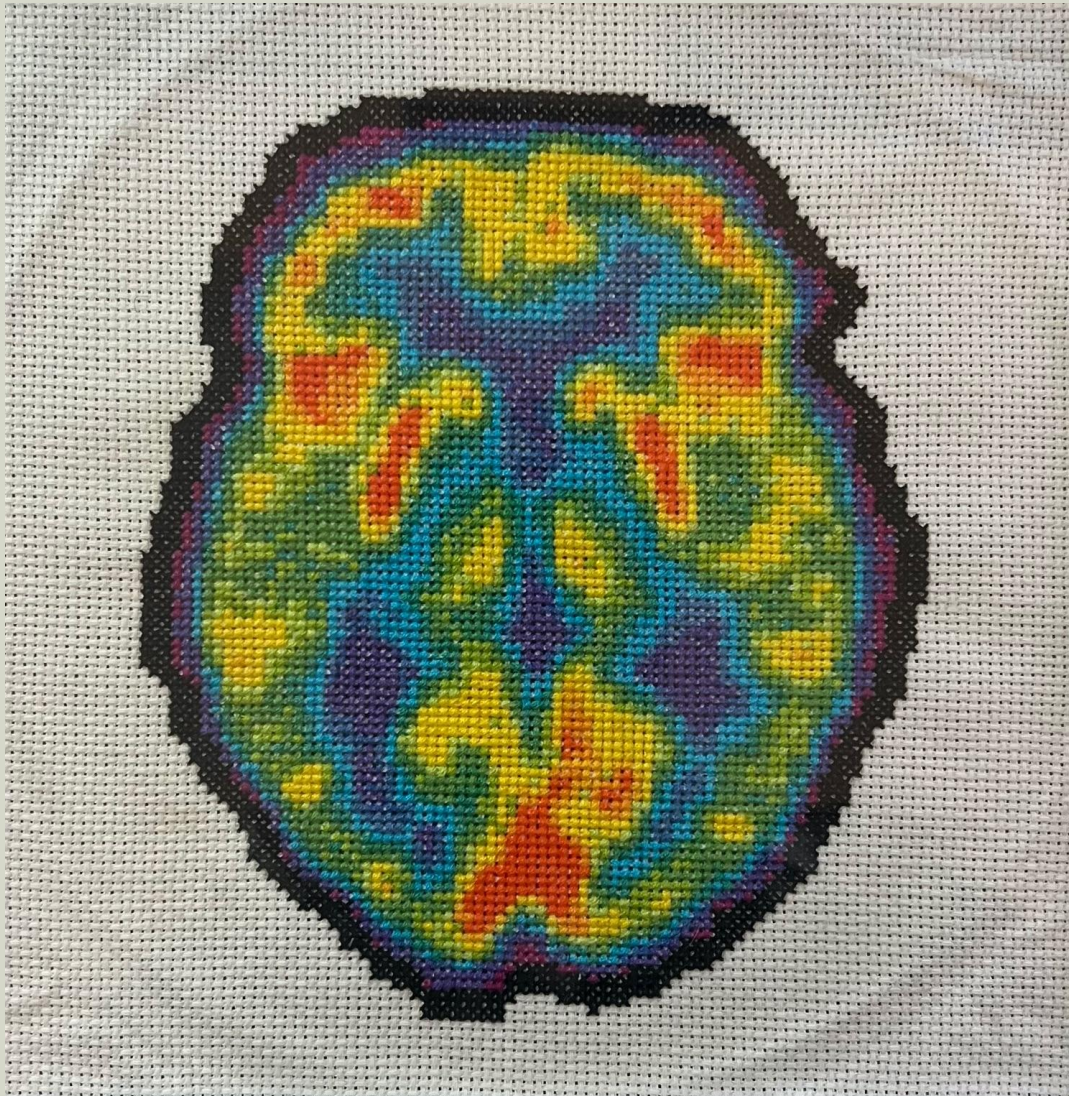


Art: Britney He

First day of anatomy lab, I stood,
A whole body ahead, woefully misunderstood,
Frustration with dissection, I frequently complain,
Soon to find each vessel's path, through every plane.

Arteries and veins, life's roads,
A complicated network, carrying bloody loads,
Intimate knowledge, a treasure to hold,
Grateful forever, truth be told.

Alongside the arteries' beat,
Walking the roads of life, no small feat,
Discovering the body's sacred song,
A privilege I'll hold, all practice long.





...times believed that
...ly was the

Cycling Forward

The sound of water falling fills the scene. Trees stand tall around the waterfall, providing shade for animals seeking respite from the summer sun. Hikers edge their way around steep rocks, escaping even further from the heat as they trek towards the cool waterfall. Despite the noise, there is serenity. It's an awe-inspiring sight.

If I could observe the scene before me for a hundred years, what changes would I see? What about a thousand years? Would it hold on to its beauty?

The young sprouts next to me would rise, spreading its roots and canopy until it eventually topples. A temporary loss, but as its body sinks into the ground, new sprouts would emerge. Loss brings new life, forming a cycle.

The animals resting would come and go in the same fashion. Yet the cycle is even more observable in them. Young cubs learn to hunt from their mother. Expert hikers guide novices through the trails. Elders teaching others to walk the paths they walked.

Would the scene regress? Each subsequent sprout struggling more and more until none could sprout anymore. Would there be stagnation? The same lessons taught over and over with no new knowledge passed on. Or would there be progress? The efforts of past life create a safer, more welcoming environment for the generations to come. I hope for the latter, but progress isn't guaranteed. No cycle can move forward without a decision to give more than one received. But, with enough making such a decision, perhaps the scene in front of me would be even more breathtaking than it already was.

Departing the world
Thankful, he reflected and
Gave to the future.

GE MEDICAL SYSTEMS
SNUH Neuro Angio / IG5 630

FOV: 20x20 cm
RAO: 0.2 deg
CRA: 11.4 deg
L: 0.0 deg
Tilt: 0 deg



The Privilege of Knowledge

Before last century men of science stole from the graves of the less fortunate
Families could not find their loved ones
Students were forced to explore the souls of unknowing participants
I am fortunate enough to have matured at a different time
To have the honor of receiving the most precious gift
The earthly flesh of an individual that desired to be a teacher past their last breath
To examine the human body in its most fragile state
This gift has reminded me to pursue the knowledge of medicine vigorously each day
To recognize that it is an honor to be a healer and learn this art
I cannot thank my instructor enough for their contribution to my life



Art: Emily Golden

They say that Death is the ultimate end. He comes for us all both young, old, happy, sad, fulfilled, empty, loved, and forgotten, simply leaving behind a husk for the living to remember. However, I've come to appreciate this feared specter differently through my time in anatomical instruction.

Entering that dark basement for the first time, the smell of human preservatives attacked my senses. My nose burned and my eyes filled with tears as I approached the table of a nameless cadaver: someone that I would get to know intimately over the course of the next year. Staring at the lifeless corpse, I realized Death wasn't foreign to me. I've seen his countless works in the hospital, at funerals, and on the morning news. His greatest talent was taking from humanity. His presence was felt daily, striking fear into humanity. However, the year of work changed that perspective.

My peers and I agreed to name our cadaver Chad to fill the ominous aura of Death with awkward humor, recalling the popular joke of the ideal male in both body and personality. We knew nothing of Chad: not who he was, not how he died, nor even if anyone missed him. All that we could possibly know was what lay before us.

Initially, I noticed that we frequently steeled ourselves around Death, making the odd activity of cutting up the dead tolerable by shutting our emotions down and letting the pursuit of knowledge guide our actions. It was almost clinical. As such, Chad simply was a thing for us to use in learning the miraculous, intricate, and wondrous organization and functions of the human anatomy. Not much different from the plastic models that surrounded the lecture hall or even the diagrams in our textbooks. He was an educational tool to facilitate the transfer of knowledge.

We opened Chad up like a textbook, hoping to just absorb whatever information we could in our short meetings. For months, I sliced, separated, and sectioned his body, and as we excavated his body, we stumbled across several surprises: arterial pathways winding wildly, signs of surgeries gone wrong, and widespread destructive disease. However, with each piece of fascia removed, muscled reflected, and organ explored, I couldn't help but wonder about our donor's life: did he have a family; what did he do for a living; what did he find joy in? All questions at the forefront of an archeologist's mind. However, unlike archeologists, dissection achieves what many would consider a bizarre level of intimacy, where anatomical secrets are shared from beyond the veil of Death between two strangers. It was a unique relationship that no one else in the world could intrude on, and those secrets shared a story.

That tale told of a life full of extreme pain and discomfort. A life that modern medicine would inevitably fail over and over and over, leading to our donor's death. The end as many in the profession of medicine who tirelessly fight Death daily would argue. The story ends with Death.

But does it really?

This is where I think medicine gets it wrong. Death takes a lot: loved ones from across the spectrum of our beautiful society, some before their time, and some way beyond what anyone would expect, leaving despair, sadness, and longing. However, in that pain, there's an opportunity, a gift. This man so graciously gave away his body to complete strangers. People, he will never meet or know, to be prodded and torn apart. In spite of death or maybe because of Death, this person gave a truly and completely selfless gift to better the future lives of innumerable strangers both young, old, sad, happy, empty, fulfilled, forgotten, and cherished.

So, to the stranger whose internal secrets are known only to God and me, I thank you on behalf of myself, on behalf of my future patients. With your gift of death, I'm confident many others will live.





To Give of Oneself

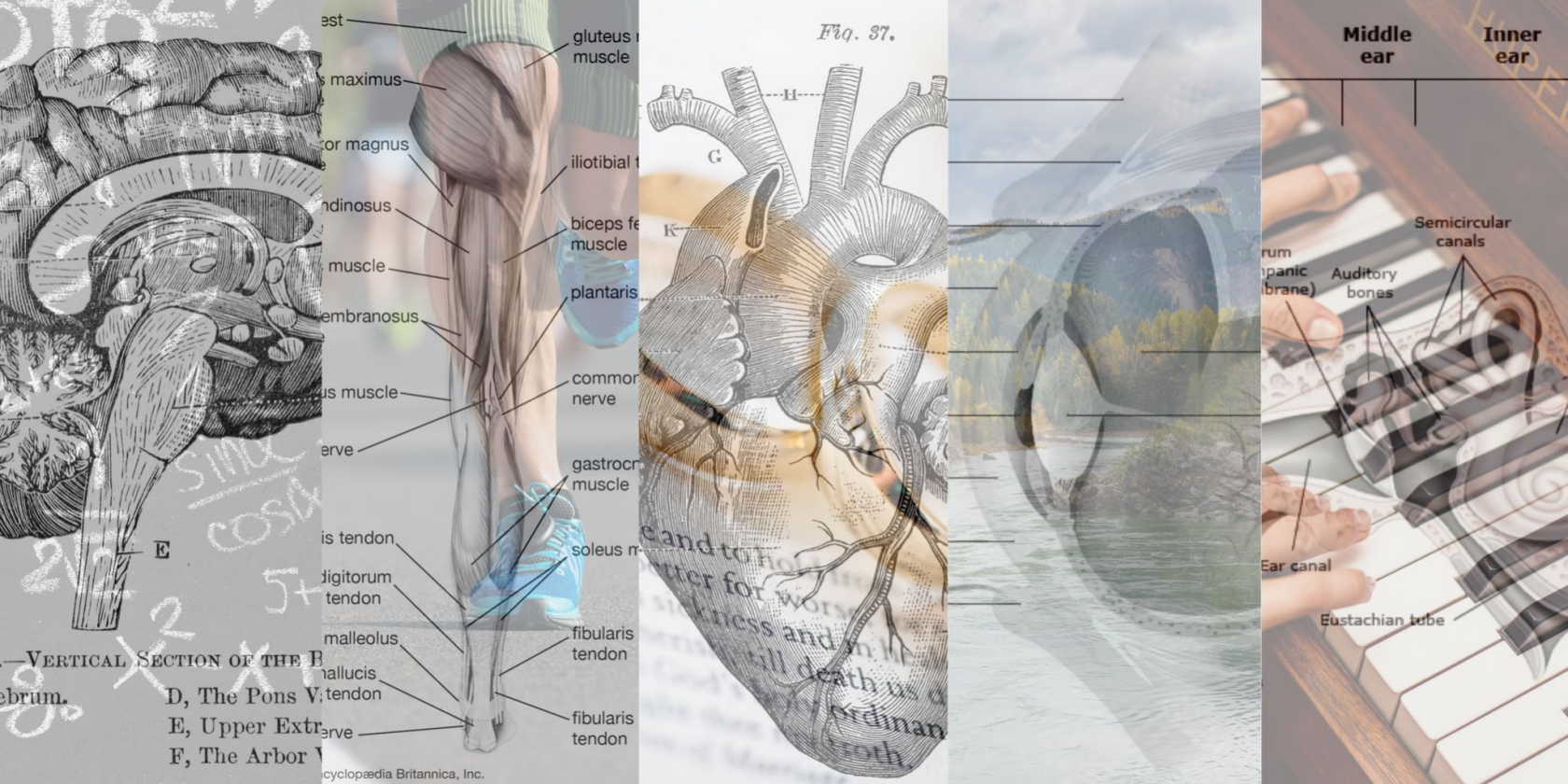
In the quiet surrender of flesh and bone,
Anatomical donors, your grace is shown.
You merged with dust, a selfless plea,
Gifted your vessels for us to see.

Bodies once lived, now offer anew,
Knowledge and healing, to minds in pursuit.
Each fiber, each vessel, a tale untold,
In laboratories of discovery, they unfold.

Flesh merged with blade, in dissection's quest,
Revealing truths that nature had impressed,
You whispered secrets of the human form,
To eager minds, you weathered each storm.

Their sacrifice, a beacon of light,
Guiding surgeons' hands, day and night.
For in their selflessness, a lesson so grand,
To give of oneself, a touch of divine hand.

In your sacrifice, love's essence unfurls,
A dance with science, where wisdom whirls.
So here we honor, with gratitude deep,
Anatomic donors, in eternal, peaceful sleep.



In halls of Pinn Hall, we gather near,
 To understand life, and its essence clear.
 Anatomy's art, a guiding light,
 In the anatomy lab we toil, day and night.

With hands-on dissection, we explore,
 The human body, its secrets pour.
 Families' gift, a cherished grace,
 Helps us learn, at a steady pace.

In curiosity, we trace the lines,
 Of muscles, nerves, where life entwines.
 Donors' legacy, a silent song,
 Guiding us as we learn and throng.

To families true, we raise our voice,
 For this precious gift, we deeply rejoice.
 In gratitude, we'll always stand,
 Honoring anatomy, hand in hand.

the Wounded Heart

Ishaan Rischie

Knowledge lies waiting in a quiet room,
Cold, devoid of life. The sharp edge of a scalpel
Poised carefully in a hesitant hand
With uncertainty brimming in my eyes.

I know what I am expected to do:
Discover the teacher that is a body unknown
Discern lessons of life from his story untold.

But a heart once fierce, now rests in my hands
Stilled by the years, concealed by the tapestry
Woven by skilled surgeons' threads.
A map of resilience, a symphony of memories, a canvas of scars
Painted in shades of red. In shades of bloodshed.

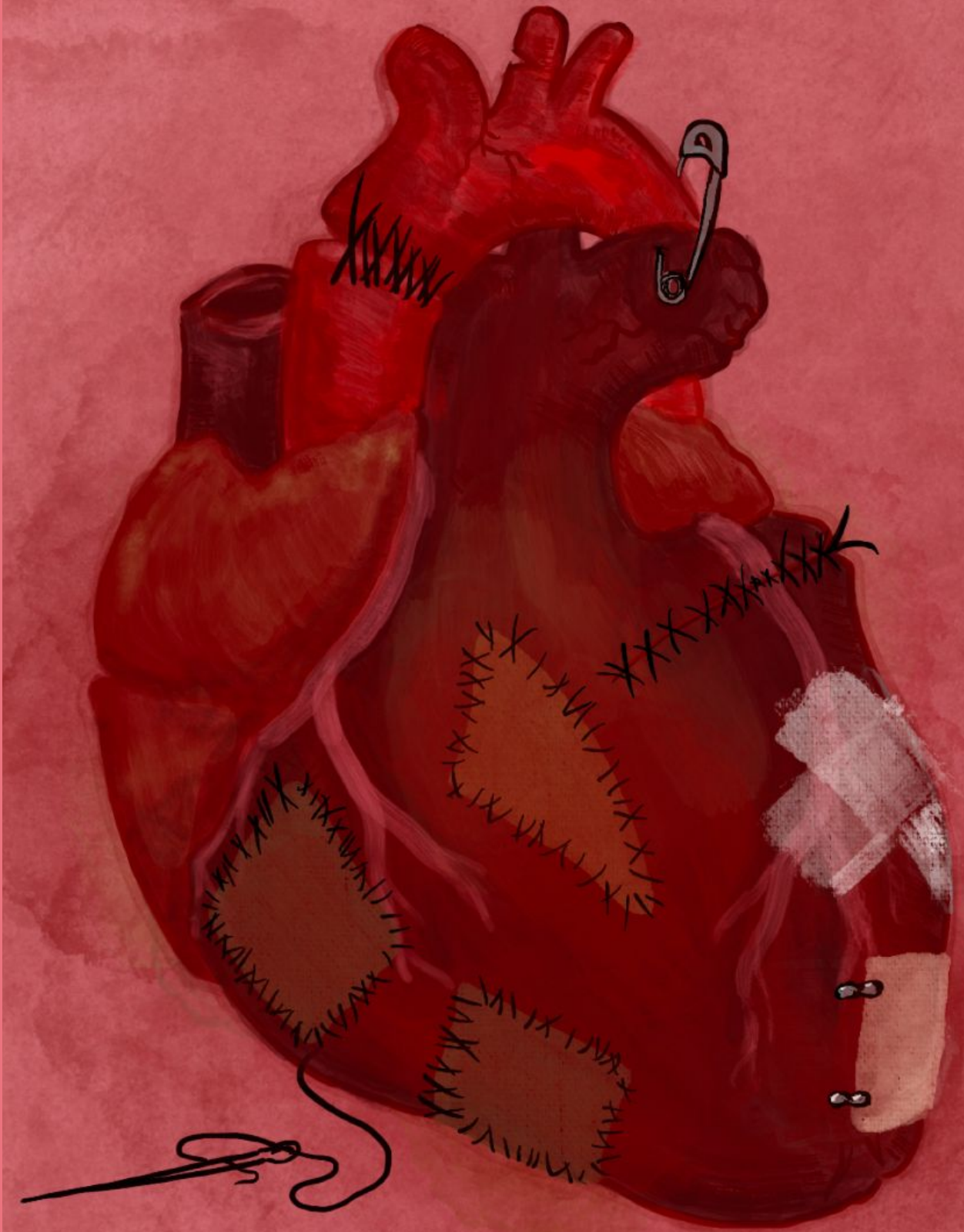
Each incision reveals a life put to test.
Each delicate thread, a witness to the fragility of death.

With arteries and veins, stitches and grafts,
The old man's history lies etched on the heart,
A saga of triumphs, of loss, of healing, and of pain.
Yet, through his heart's silent echoes, our purpose, in each pulse,
Defined. That is how we can learn from the wounded,
From the moving, once beating and emotional heart

Together, we unravel the puzzle of death's door,
Learning the secrets of life from where it took its toll.
Pausing to reflect, I realize that beauty still remains
In the remnants of the old man's heart where hope had once bled,

For each thread held it together with the utmost of care.
After all, healing is nothing, if not a promise to care.

So, with gratitude profound, I wish to send
A tribute to the donor, who in giving did impart
A noble gift from his wounded, beautiful heart.



In life, truly selfless acts are hard to find
Gifts are given but may expect return with time.
But what about giving all of you that remains
To a group of students that will never know your name?

My respect and admiration are impossible to share
With the man whose body before me laid bare.
From our first meeting the question I've asked:
How can I thank this man from the past?

It would seem to me, the best I can say,
That I give thanks by remembering these sacred days.
Of all the patients I'll know with the passage of time,
None of them I'll know like this first patient of mine.

So quiet and still in his repose,
An enigma of stories that only he knows.
I'll cherish forever the lessons he teaches,
That can't be conveyed through writing or speeches.

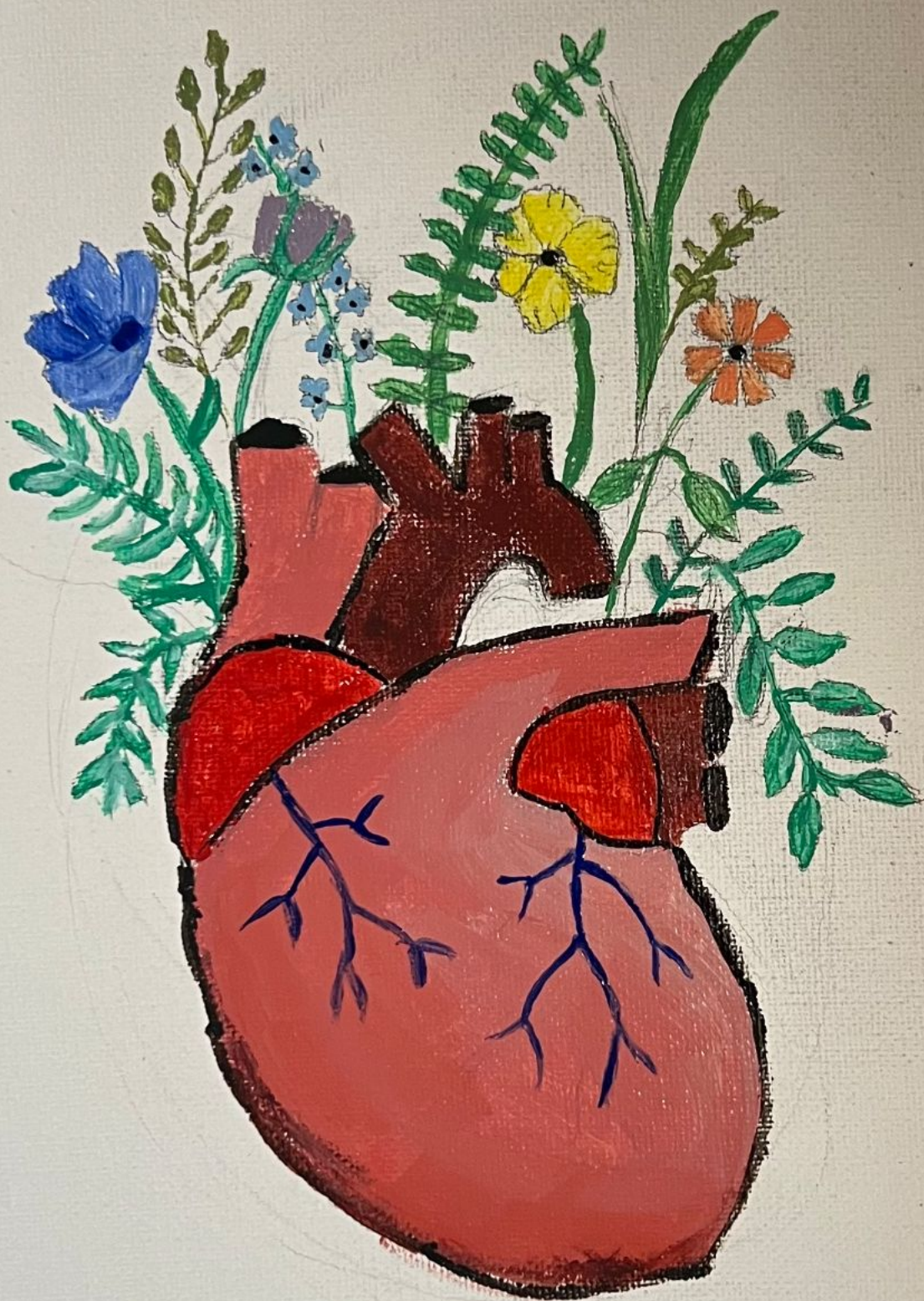
Had these muscles fought or had they danced?
Was there someone for whom this heart had romanced?
Feeling the depth of his memories untold
Has shown me the value in the stories we hold.

What made this mouth smile or made these eyes tear?
Who had held this hand to comfort his fears?
All of his features, both subtle and grand
Teach me to embrace the uniqueness of every strand.

With every lesson learned, I can't help but wonder,
What chapters are in his story - what triumphs, what blunders?
Regardless of the story, he has made the case
To cherish the people behind every face.

For even without words, he teaches me well,
To be attentive, engaged - in each story to dwell.
He instilled in me a sense of respect -
A reverence for life's tales I'll never neglect.

For our journey together where learning ensued,
Now and forever, I express my gratitude.



Art: Ashley Chipoletti, Sanjana Challa, Katherine Byrnes

Dear Red,

I remember a fear
They said, “You will love it, you will learn so much”
But what if I failed? Failed to learn? Failed to enjoy it?
But still,
The scarier thing,
What if I failed the person who gave
The very last thing you could
To us, for us?
In this you taught me
Selflessness.

This fear I felt,
Only a fraction of the fear you felt:
The day you decided to donate your body to us
The day your body was donated to us.
In this you taught me
Bravery in the face of fear.

The first time I saw you
Your body in all its vulnerability,
Just the same as it was left in the hands of your
physicians,
On the day your body was donated to us.
The trust you had in them
Now handed over to us.
In this you (my very first patient) taught me
To trust.

The first cut I made,
Terrified to hurt you,
to make a mistake.
A reminder: “He gave himself
For you to make mistakes
For you to learn here
So you don’t make these mistakes
When it matters”
In this you taught me
Sacrifice. Forgiveness.

The first mistake I did make,
“Moyer, we cut the muscle”
“Moyer, we cut the artery”
And he would come
And he would push our mistakes away
To show us the powerful nerve we had unveiled
underneath
Through our mistakes,
You taught me
Perseverance.

Each day,
We came into lab,
Thinking we understood,
Thinking we could identify each
Organ,
Nerve,
Fiber,
Of your being.
Only to learn
Everything looks different in practice.
Only to learn that the only way to learn
Is from you,
Our first patient.

Red,
You taught me the organs, nerves, veins, arteries,
muscles, cells;
You taught me all the things I thought I needed to
learn.

But Red,
You taught me
Selflessness,
Bravery in the face of fear,
Trust,
Sacrifice,
Forgiveness,
Perseverance.
You taught me all the things I did not know I
needed to learn.
You taught me all the things my patients need me
to know.



Candle: Margaret Holstege

There's very little that makes sense in medical school.

Lab values, cytokines, Starling curves, and more – they try and try and try my patience, every skill I've ever developed dedicated to memorizing and understanding these little bits of information. At some point, you start to ask yourself, is this all medicine is?

But it's not.

Medicine is the apprehension you feel in a novel situation. It's the feeling when you first step into anatomy lab and meet your donor, unsure and nervous and praying you can get through this.

Medicine is the helping hand we lend each other even in the most mundane ways. It's when we can't put on our green gowns by ourselves and need a helping hand to tie that elusive white string, or fasten the button on our necks.

Medicine is overcoming the messy parts of learning. It's how we learn to adapt to the formaldehyde permeating the air after the first headache it induces, sharing strategies to relieve its effects both in and out of the lab.

Medicine is the camaraderie we share with those around us. It's looking up at the people working around you, and trusting that even if one person is uncertain about a concept or nervous about making a cut, the rest of your team is there to back you up.

Medicine is having the wisdom of mentors to guide us. It's the moment when we can't make sense of a nerve or muscle, and a professor or TA comes over, happy to lend the knowledge they've accumulated from mentors of their own.

Medicine is understanding that learning never ends. It's the way every structural anomaly is a revelation, every miniscule finding is a discovery, and that no one ever has all the answers if you keep asking questions.

Medicine is the trust people have in you. It's how a stranger who I've never known or met donated their most prized worldly possession – the body that they spent their entire life in – so that I may learn.

So that I may better serve the patients who come after this very first patient of mine.

There's very little that makes sense in medical school.

But if medicine can be all of these other things – apprehension, helping hands, wisdom, and trust – then maybe it doesn't need to make much more sense than that.



A chilling basement room
Filled with stench thick like a perfume
Nervous students stand and shift
Waiting to receive a person's very last gift.

Her skin, once warm, now ghostly pale,
Frail muscles, life's delicate trail,
We pierce each layer gently,
Thinking of family who missed her immensely.

Arteries, veins, nerves, we trace,
Each detail, a delicate embrace,
Organs, intricate worlds to behold,
In the story of life, a tale untold.

Over months and weeks of learning
To her final contribution we keep returning
With gratitude, we soar on wings,
Her selfless act, the light it brings.

Dear Ruth,

I always thought it was the soul that makes us human, not the body. Sure, the lungs expand and deflate, the ventricles squeeze, and neurons fire. But the individual organs do not a human make. So, once the soul has left its vessel, we must be human no more. Right?

You taught me otherwise.

On the first day I stared at your untouched skin. The unbreathing chest. The eternally still face. No wrinkles though – formaldehyde sure is a cure for that. Maybe they ought to sell it on QVC.

I took in the contour of your muscles and the flat plane of your back. A distinctly human shape – undeniably a former vessel. It was unsettling – a little scary – and it felt wrong. I asked myself why I felt so guilty. It's not like I had caused your demise. I hadn't manipulated you into consenting to this – you had given yourself willingly – one final act of service to the next generation.

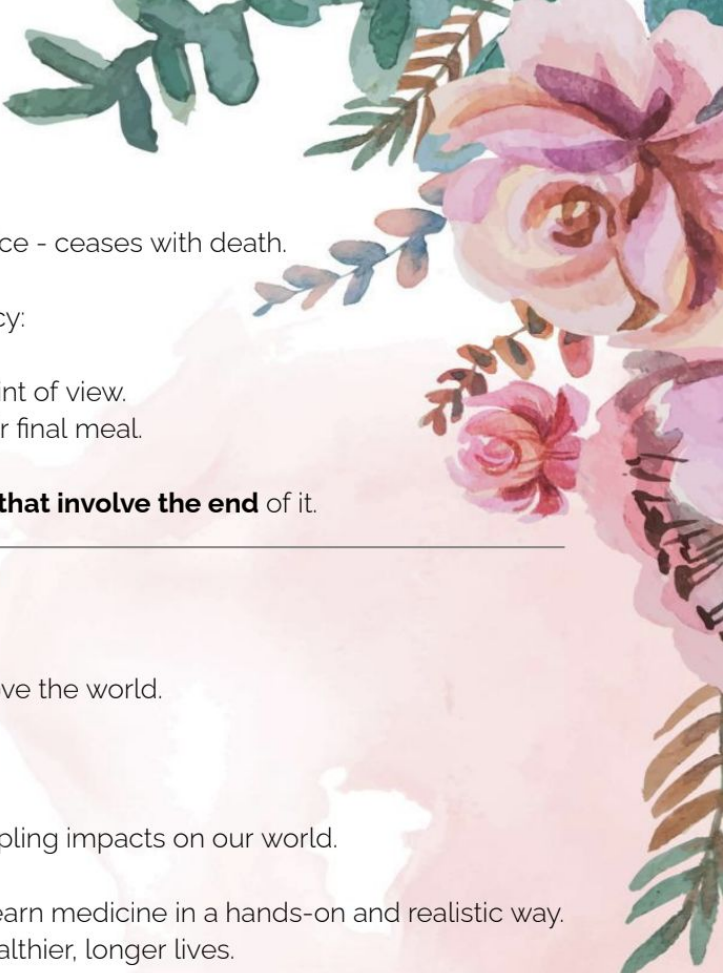
And then I realized – death may part the soul from the body, but it leaves behind a remnant. A reflection of the life lived. There are scars from childhood injuries and artsy tattoos full of hope and meaning. There are ports from end of life care, and surgical incision sites from years of fighting to stay alive. But beyond that, there is the knowledge that a soul occupied this body for decades – thousands of days – and they made it their own. It almost feels intrusive... to stand and stare so intently at a piece of art left behind.

I was slow at first – hesitant to make a cut. Nervous that you would come and revisit your vessel, and find it ruined by clumsy first year med student hands. As the year went on, you looked less and less like yourself. It was my fault. But I asked myself what you would tell me, knowing that you had given me this gift so freely. And the answer came quickly and simply; learn. I did.

I learned that the sciatic nerve was thicker than a piece of yarn, and that there is a whole lot of fascia that is usually not as important as you think it is. I learned just how long the intestines are, and how they twist and where they go. I held the heart in the palm of my hand and marveled at its power: something so small can go 80 years without ever taking a sick day, supplying essential oxygen to the far reaches of the body. And the brain – the ever enigmatic encephalon! What a wonder she was. But it was not only the anatomy that you taught me.

I learned the importance of precision. Cut here, NOT there, or you will sever the ansa cervicalis. Better practice preserving the brachial plexus, or your future patients will lose all innervations to the arm. I learned the value of teamwork, an essential skill for a medical team. I learned to be prepared, ask for help, and have confidence, just not arrogance (I guess it's safe to say I won't be going into ortho). And every day, as I hung up my soiled lab coat and scrubbed the formaldehyde smell from my fingers, I relearned gratitude.

Your soul may have left your body, but your essence remains. And I will carry it with me for the rest of my career. Thank you.



Death and agency often go hand-and-hand.
While there are many beliefs on what occurs *after* death,
Most will agree that absolute agency - the ability to make a choice - ceases with death.

And thus we place high-value on the fleeting moments of agency:
Families strive to honor the last wishes of a dying loved one.
Doctors try their best to understand an unconscious patient's point of view.
Even a prisoner on death row is given the respect to choose their final meal.

In many ways, the **most important choices in life are the ones that involve the end** of it.

So, to all of our donors and their families, thank you.

You navigated these last choices selflessly, intending to improve the world.
A world that you knew you were leaving.
A world that you may have considered, no longer matters.

But even though your time has passed, you continue to have rippling impacts on our world.

Because of your sacrifice, we have had the unique privilege to learn medicine in a hands-on and realistic way.
So that we will be better trained to guide our patients to lead healthier, longer lives.
And so they may have a happier quality of life and create more memories with loved ones.

It is through the lives of the people we'll treat, that you and your donation will live on.
And for all that is to come, once again, thank you sincerely.



An Overture of our Oath

It is true that nothing fully prepares you—
the nauseating smell of trenchant taboo
that clings to your hair and follows you home,
the shocking sheen of pink-polished nails
still glinting under ice-cold lights,
the sight of our loved ones passed,
pale and motionless, in every face and body.

It is also true that—
in discovering their tenderly-penned stories
inscribed within surgical scars, pacemakers, and
unyielding masses,
in marveling at how vessels of newfound knowledge
anastomose with our textbook studies,
in feeling our thoughts temporarily ossify
under the pressure to make the most of our donor's
precious gift...

We somehow forget the smell, the shock, the sights.

But in the quiet of the night, we hear—
the black tide of loss drumming,
against the teetering tower of rocks we had stacked
around ourselves,
the first hiss of water seeping,
crescendoing through cracks of uncertainty and fissures
of fear,
then the inevitable tremble, tilt, and crash.

Soon, the torrent of questions pulls us out and under;
the air sucked from our lungs.

How am I supposed to feel? How do I swim on?

We heave, we struggle.

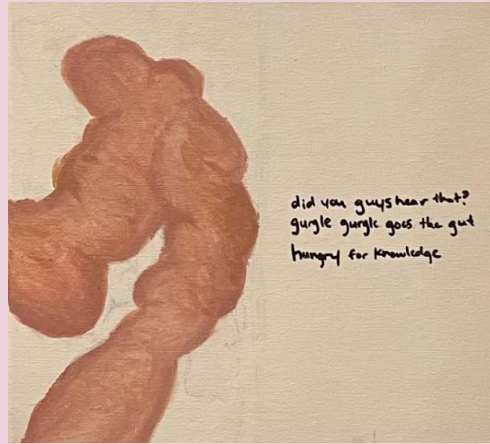
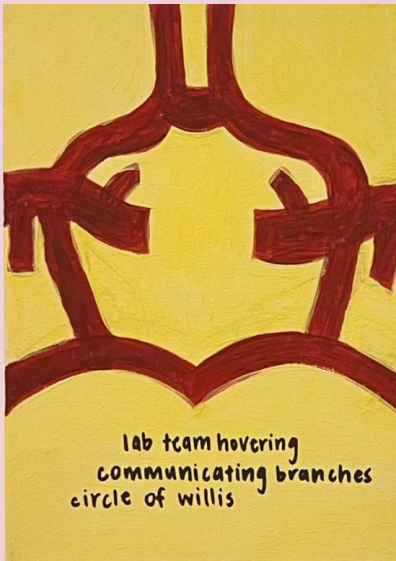
We grasp onto each other tightly, pull each other
ashore.

Wide-eyed and shaken, w(e)ary yet strengthened,
we forge onwards, singing boldly this overture of our
oath.

Perhaps this is the anatomy, the story, of loss and
medicine.

Perhaps this is a flicker of what's to come.

As we outgrow our short coats, we'll choose to
remember
the pink-polished nails—someone's final act of love,
our first patient—a grandmother, a daughter,
someone's everything—
who gave and gave and continued to give beyond life.
And when the coils of grief wind too tight and snap,
we'll hold each other, we'll stay afloat.



Ode to Hope: An Anatomical Symphony

In the realm where scalpel meets the flesh,
A dance of learning, a cadaver's gift we bless.
Hope, our silent guide through the anatomical maze,
A vessel of knowledge, in her quiet grace she stays.

With hands that trembled, we ventured forth,
To unravel mysteries, to witness life's core.
Hope, a name we bestowed, a beacon in the dark,
A bond of unity ignited, like a spark.

Together we gathered around her form,
A symphony of curiosity, a shared norm.
Through thorax and vessels, we traced our way,
Discovering the secrets Hope held at bay.

She taught us of rhythm, the Cardiovascular song,
Each vessel a note, a melody strong.
In the chambers of her heart, we found our beat,
A rhythm of connection, a journey sweet.

In the orbit's sacred realm, I found my call,
A fascination for eyes, to understand them all.
Hope's eye, once veiled, now laid bare,
A window to the soul, a tender stare.

As scalpel met tissue, revealing layers so fine,
A passion ignited, a love that's truly mine.
In Hope's gaze, I glimpsed a world anew,
A path to follow, a dream to pursue.

Reflecting on the journey, the bonds we've formed,
With cadaver named Hope, our hearts were warmed.
In her silent presence, we found our kin,
A testament to learning, from deep within.

So here's my ode to Hope, our guide and friend,
In her embrace, our knowledge did ascend.
Through her, we learned, we laughed, we grew,
Anatomy's tapestry woven, in hues so true.

As Monday's sun approaches, my project takes its flight,
A tribute to cadaver and the lessons of the light.
Hope's legacy lives on, in each discovery,
An everlasting tribute to anatomy's symphony.

Words

We all try to pack life into simple sayings,
Be present
Live life to the fullest,
Look on the bright side,
Life is like a box of chocolates,
But sometimes it seems useless,
How can we pack in all of life's lessons,
Into these little aphorisms?
Words are powerful,
The words we choose matter,
Words are our most inexhaustible source of magic,
It's one of my favorite quotes,

So what makes some words powerful and some frivolous?
One of my favorite words is sonder,
It describes the intense realization that everyone,
From your best friend to a stranger on the street,
Has a life as rich and colorful as your own,
Whether you're aware of it or not.
Everyone is a walking library of stories,
Full of life, hopes, and dreams,
And we barely ever make it through the door.
Listening brings the library to life,
Lets the stories be shared,
Rather than collecting dust on the shelves.





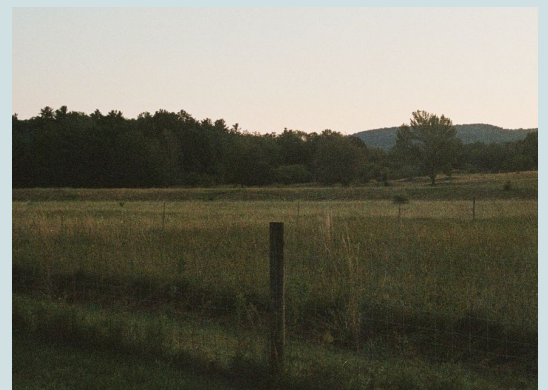
Haikus to my Donor

Life's gift from the past
Many stories held within
An honor for me



At first, I was scared
But countless nights one on one
Learned about me through you

I loved MBB
Your brachial plexus shined
Other ones, sorry



Seeking help in lab,
A dense and heavy fascia
Thank you all TAs



I Saw A Cardinal Today

I saw a cardinal on the way
Cadaver lab; first of many
Both made me think of you
It hits again as I enter the room
Goosebumps, sweaty hands, shivers

It's a gift but it's a loss
It's time to learn but it's time to grieve
Still. Always.
The offering before me serve as a reminder
You're still gone

I saw a cardinal today
Cadaver lab; wrapping up
Again, I thought of you
It's become an honor to serve in the way
You. Them.

It's the greatest gift of all
The opportunity to learn and grieve this way
Make mistakes. Grow. Heal.
I see you in all things now, reminding me
You were never really gone



Art: Jonah Lewis
Poem: Kendall Johnson



Connection

I am scared.
How will it be?
How will it feel?
How will I react?
The door opens and closes.

Mindless chatter fills the silence.
I must do this.
I have to do this.
This is what it takes to reach my goals.
A healer must traverse stormy waters.

One step, two steps, and I see a familiar face,
gown on, gloves on.
Finally,
a mask cloaks my face and goggles shield my eyes.
Maybe a disguise is good.

A zipper is all that stands between us now.
A voice clouds the air.
The windows to my soul remain centered,
anchored to the greyness in the atmosphere.

A hand motion dissipates the energy.
Now I am left,
staring at this new entity

A body to study.
Pathology to learn.

But this is not just learning.
This is growing
connecting me to a past life.
A prior era moves forward.

A student gains a new mentor
as the past is imbued with new horizons.

Here I am.
Connected
forever,
to you.

Art: Emmanuel Lee, Casey Little, and Brayden
Gatson
Poem: Matthew Oley

Cadaver #14

I'm 23. And she's 89.

I'm Caroline. And she's Cadaver #14.

I'm tanned from the beach. And she's colorless from the embalming

My hair is dark brown, pin straight. And hers is gray, slightly tangled

My muscles contract as I shift from foot to foot. And hers lie still on the steel.

I breathe the formaldehyde into my lungs and she lays immersed in it.

I take a deep breath and she holds hers.

Blood flows through my veins with every heartbeat. And hers stays stagnant.

I'm talking with my lab mates. She's lying silently by herself.

I grasp the handle of the scalpel and she accepts the blade.

This is painful.

For me.

But why?

I'm not getting cut and she's not living.

I'm not her and she's not me.

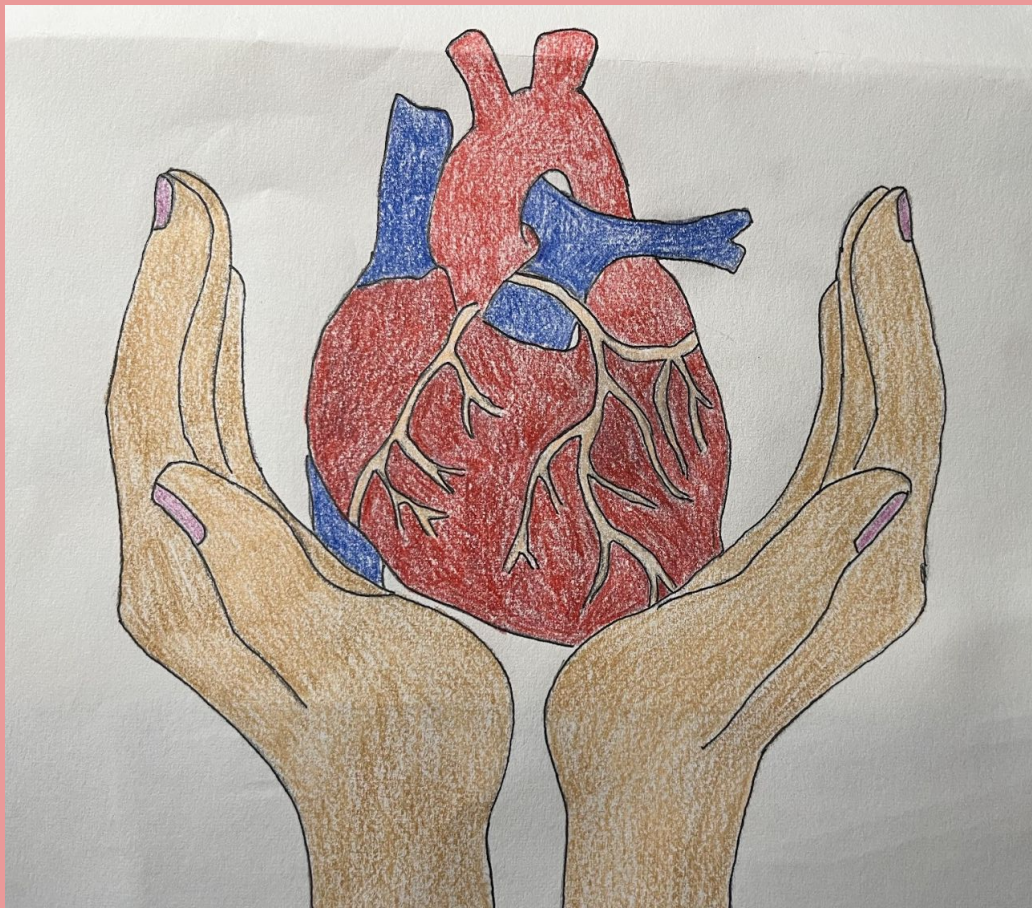
In fact, we couldn't be more different.

But in one defining way we are the same:

We made what feels like an unretractable commitment to medicine.

And because of her sacrifice, I get to fulfill that commitment.

I'm grateful. And she's the ultimate giver.



To Bea:

I've cried for you
seen the relics of your pain—
most of all, I've wondered about you:

You shine through at unpredictable times
A glimpse of your face;
eyelashes intact, even now;
had you lost your hair from
chemo?

When we open your chest,
Will we be confronted by the
mutinous masses that haunt humanity?

We looked inside your skull today,
Bea,
Saw four pieces of hardware overlying
healing bone
patchworked meninges
held your brain in our hands,
Felt the depth of the hole in your occipital.
And for a moment, my right field of vision
tunnels—light ringed in black,

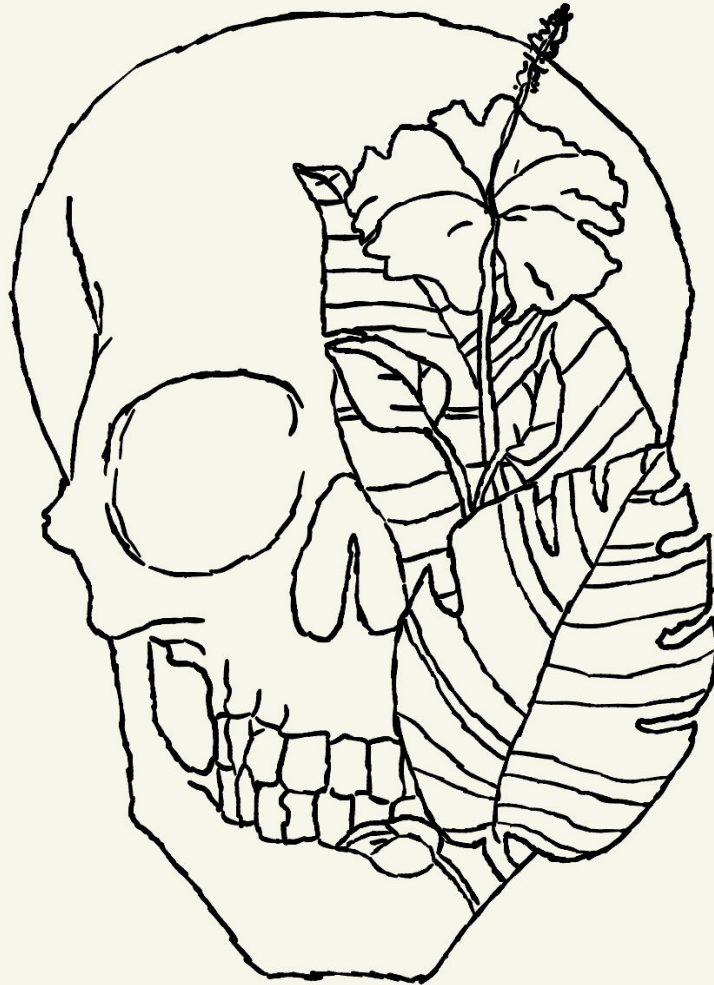
Were your final days spent in this
asymmetry?

And yet,
through whatever darkness you faced
You gave Us yourself.

The magnitude of this gift burns;
your character shines through,
and all I wish to do is cradle your body,
learn from it with the same gentleness and
care I hope you encountered through your
suffering.

I hold your memory, Bea, I will never forget
you and the trust you placed in us,
Abstract wise fools floundering in factoids
Sharp, dumb, and hungry:
may we honor You,
and your immortal intentions.

Poem: Morgan Richman
Art: Malinda Gong



Someday I hope to be generous like you.
You documented a lifetime of stories and gifted me the autobiography.

Someday I hope to be selfless like you.
You remind me that in giving me your body to learn, you give me permission to make mistakes.

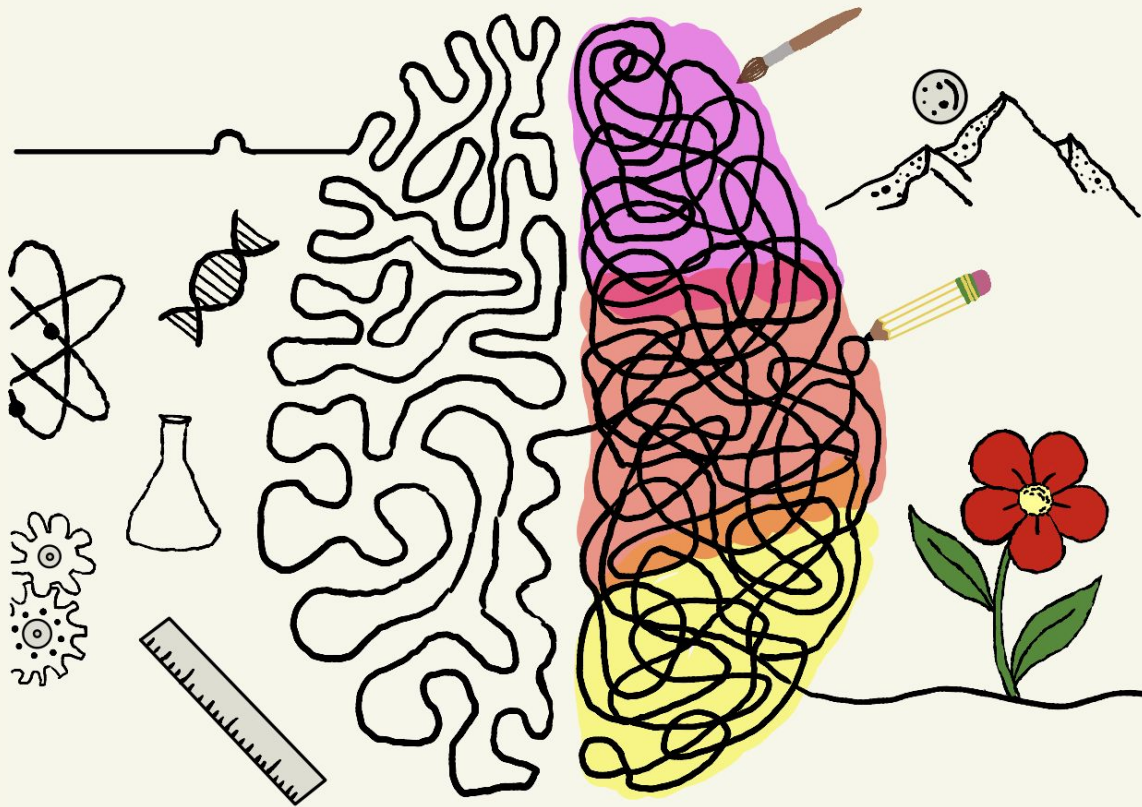
Someday I hope to be patient like you.
In the midst of the chaos of medical school, you are a constant in my life.
You wait with me in silence and allow me to catch my breath.

Someday I hope to be mysterious like you.
As I dive deeper and explore the gift you gave me, I discover just how unique you are.
How strange it feels to know a person so intimately, and somehow not know them at all.

Someday I hope to be a teacher like you.
You are always with me, even when I'm not standing by your side.
The most transformative part of my education, you are the blueprint for every lesson that I learn.

Someday I hope to be like you.
My very first patient. My gratitude can never be expressed with a simple "thank you."
Your gift is one I will never forget.

Someday I hope to be able to offer the same for another.



To You

Upon our first meeting I hardly knew
 what to say;
 With your arms full of presents, you
 silently lay.
 At your generosity I could only
 rejoice;
 But to repay you in silence was my
 only choice.
 Carefully undone were the ribbons
 and wrappings;
 Intricately woven with firm outer
 trappings.
 Their shackles undone, inner
 contents revealed;
 Our quickened breaths stolen at what
 was concealed.

Be still racing heart; be still troubled
 mind;
 To squander this gift would be too
 unrefined.
 And with each practiced motion, and
 each measured gaze;
 The more knowledge I glean, you never
 cease to amaze.
 To you, my friend, the unspoken giver;
 Who offered so much with nary a shiver.
 How best to describe them? My feelings
 for you;
 Awe and respect, and perhaps some fear,
 true.
 But as I look upon your expression, that
 so tranquil face;
 I can't help but imagine myself in your
 place.

WLL

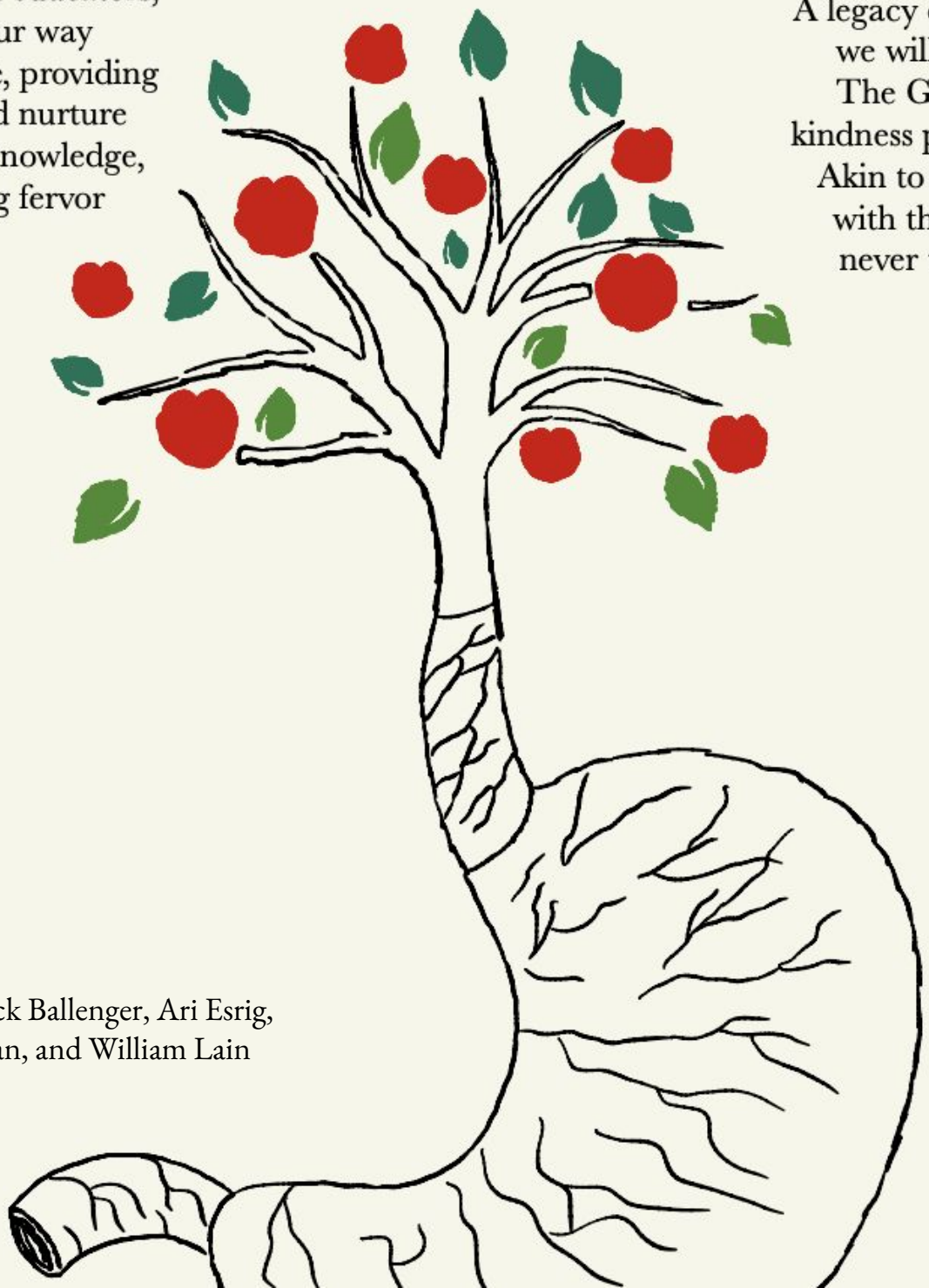
THE GIVING TREE

Many of us would agree,
Anatomy lab's akin to The
Giving Tree,
In lab, education's gift
blossoms anew,
Like the Tree, loving, selfless
and true

The Tree's altruism and gifts,
loving displays,
Cadavers and educators,
paving our way
Mentors alike, providing
support and nurture
Advancing knowledge,
promoting fervor

As we progress, down
this tumultuous path
Experiencing elevated
peaks, and medicine's
wrath,
Like the Giving Tree's
shelter and care,
Anatomy's wisdom we
always bear,

In hearts and minds,
their lessons thrive
A legacy of knowledge,
we will keep alive
The Giving Tree,
kindness paved the way,
Akin to cadaver lab,
with those we can
never truly repay



Poem & Art: Jack Ballenger, Ari Esrig,
Jacob Frenchman, and William Lain



Steadfast

Days once saw thee so selflessly in life,
Think not of the e'er known though far goodnight,
But of how thou yet still mayest best make rife,
The fruit long nurtured by thy gracious light.
In stillness there thou latest so deep in thought,
Light draped with chill, I stand with words a loss,
Knew not had I the story that thou brought,
Oh save the circumstance that our paths cross.
O'er months have we now come to journey on,
Through depths of knowledge vast we sail'd along.
In story seas I found my footing gone,
By thee I gained the courage to stay strong.
With thee words I do hope that others see,
Just truly what thy gift hath meant to me.

Out of Body

When we first met
You laid on your back
Frozen;
A relic of a life past.

Hands,
Cold and gray,
Like a piece of chiseled marble,
We flipped you over
So that your eyes
Saw only the Earth below.

Piece by piece,
Layer by layer,
We took apart
The columns and cords
That once carried the weight of a world.

A times old ritual,
A sacrilegious rite,
Tearing away
The fabric that makes us human.

Staring
At your exposed skin,
And aerated flesh,
Unknown tales of love and grief
Passed beneath my fingertips.

Two bodies fixed in place,
Two souls suspended in time,
Your life and mine
Became forever intertwined.





Forever Mentor

Presented with no opportunity to tell,
We stare anxiously wanting to enter the shell.
Respect and gratitude around,
Wish to share but no sound.
Time to honor a sacred trust and excel.

Bearing the weight of years before,
Even at the end, giving more.
Challenges everyday
To let others play.
It's my duty to now explore.

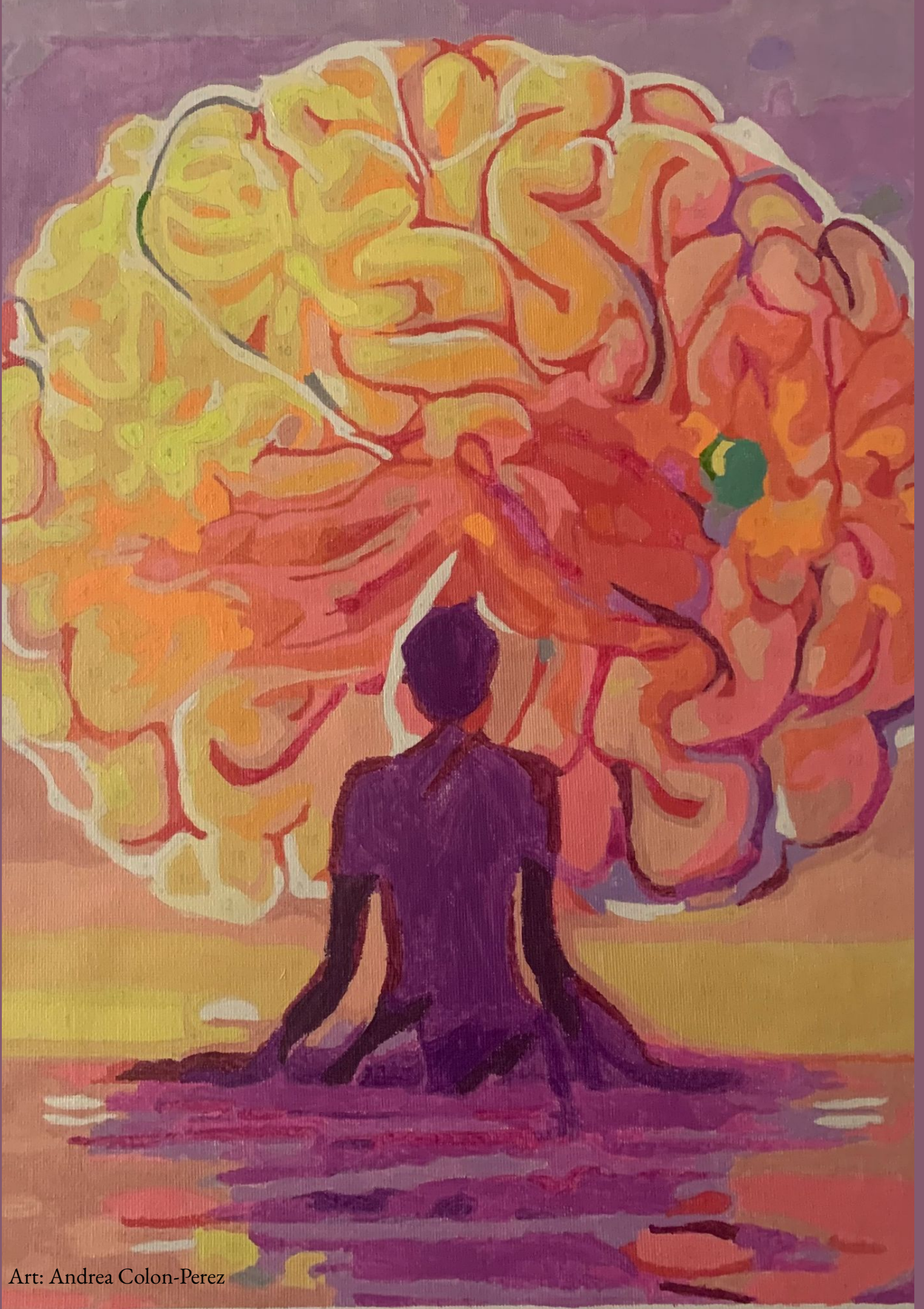
Legs traveled the shores of the world,
But I can't get my hand uncurled.
Difficult to begin,
Still have not pierced the skin.
My mind is twirled.

Years of memories and stories,
Buried inside maintaining their glories.
How do I start,
and ignore the ache in my heart?
My mind is filled with worries.

So, I push ahead,
Despite my dread.
Uncover the truth,
Hoping to be smooth,
And let my friend teach what must be said.

Months pass learning as a disciple,
Gaining knowledge of terms like subependymal.
Forever indebted to your decision,
Helping to treat patients you may have not envision.
This end will not be final.

A mentor for me to help those to come,
Some could be a dad or mum.
Always remember what I was taught,
From my mentor that gave me a lot.
Forever advancing medicine, and then some.



Art: Andrea Colon-Perez