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# WHORL: 2000

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# Whorl 2000





# WH RL

## 2000

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*Cover photograph by Kenneth B. Stewart*

## Editors' Note

Welcome to the multimedia experience known as WHORL 2000! After a brief hiatus in 1999, WHORL is back and better than ever. This issue features a smaller size, more pages, a color cover, and a brand new staff. Each year WHORL strives to showcase the creativity, in all shapes and forms, of members of the BMC community. There is plenty to read and enjoy in this issue. We've got poems & fiction, photos & paintings, even music spans our pages. We hope you like the changes, and feel free to contact us with comments, suggestions, and of course – submissions. So jump in and enjoy the ride, WHORL is back!

Margaret S. Lee, MD

Laura Ngwenya

PS: With this new, fantastic issue, I am stepping down as a Co-Editor-in-Chief of Whorl. My deepest appreciation to all those who have joined me or provided support in this healing effort known as the Creative Arts Society. I am moving on to other projects and goals, knowing that Whorl is in excellent hands. I look forward to seeing many more quality issues in the years to come.

THANK YOU!

Margaret S. Lee

whorl (n.)

1. A small flywheel that regulates the speed of a spinning wheel
2. *Bot.* An arrangement of three or more parts, as leaves or petals, radiating from a single organ or node.
3. *Zool.* A small turn or volution of a spiral shell.
4. One of the circular ridges or convolutions of a finger print.
5. *Archit.* An ornamental device consisting of stylized vine leaves and tendrils.
6. A coil, curl, or convolution

- American Heritage Dictionary

## **Acknowledgements**

The Creative Arts Society and Whorl would like to extend our sincerest appreciation to:

**The Alumni Association of the Boston University School of Medicine**

Without their generous efforts and support, this publication would not be possible.

We would also like to thank the following people whose invaluable contributions allow us to stay sane:

**Domenic Screnci, Ed.D.** and **Danny Madigan** from the **Educational Media Center**  
**SCOMSA** and the **Office of Student Affairs**  
**Joseph Blaney** of **Allied Business Documents**

and Everyone who submitted their exceptional work,  
we couldn't do it without you!

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Godiva Chocolates  
Sculpted Working Hands  
    (the intense curve of your neck  
    over this month's magazine)  
Cracking Voice of Concern  
    Split Green Pea Soup  
    (the breadth of your shoulders  
    as we dance)  
Chemistry Genius  
    Sweats and T-shirts  
    (the arch of your foot)  
    Almond flavored eyes  
    No make-up  
Why I love you. 2000.

*-Grace Monis  
MD/PhD Student*

## **Naked Snow**

WINDSWINDSWINDS,  
cross-checking, furious,  
a cold, angry spiral,  
dry leaves adrift.  
What's before, after,  
the lighted wheel, the moon,  
returning constantly  
to the same spot,  
always seeing the same faces.  
LIGHTSLIGHTSLIGHTS,  
a hesitant exit from  
the speckled dark,  
gray shadows dying.  
Who's here, there  
on the bright, white stage,  
but two-bit actors  
in varying situations,  
all playing the same role.

*-Steve Persad  
Facilities Management*



Michael 3/97

*Black and White Photograph  
Michael K. Mansour  
MD/PhD Student*



**Off Kilter**

*Oil on Canvas 10"x 10"*

*Ashley Ackerman*

*Medical Student*

## Her Experiences

Mable gradually deteriorates, in spirit and in person.  
Her face still brightens briefly when she sees me  
but it is no longer spontaneous and effortless.  
A year ago, she always had her arms ready to hug me  
the moment I arrived;  
then her gentle lips kissed my cheek.  
Now, her dementia has embodied her whole being.  
Her quiet smile becomes more potent,  
more intense and more valuable to me.  
As I approach and sit next to her with  
a bundle of colored pencils in my hand and begin to draw,  
Mable looks at me steadily without much expression.  
She looks at me as if she wanted to place that gentle  
kiss on my cheek,  
as if she wanted to give me that smile;  
but her condition does not allow her that impulse.  
I somehow think my presence is necessary;  
it sends a wave of energy into her and that is enough.  
Mable keeps insisting on shielding herself  
from the clapping of hands and other activities at the center.  
She dwells in her solitude and seems to experience  
each moment as they come.  
For a moment, I cease to think about myself.  
I want to rescue her and bring back her spirit.  
But why?

*-Hao Nguyen  
MD/PhD Student*

## **middle school feel**

gum chewing harpooning  
innocence dressed as cars  
embracing  
walking humans

creamy consciousness  
astonishingly induced  
or rhythm  
guaranteed nervousness

under heels a swear  
hands pulse feeling  
warm life line  
and cookie fortunes

stupider games  
playing notes flirting  
time passing  
spat out four calicos

guns fake or real  
streetlights morphing  
targets basically  
old to hide and seek

*-Laura Ngwenya  
MD/PhD Student*



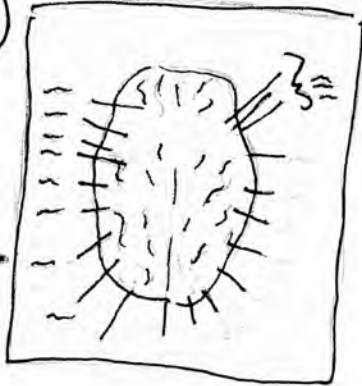
**Yazminda**

*Color Photograph (cover)*

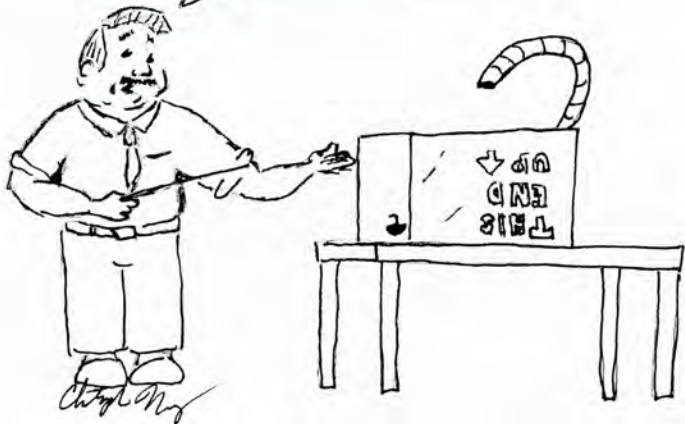
*Kenneth B. Stewart*

*Research Technician*

This is all review  
if you don't know this you're  
in Big trouble.



As you can see from this model,  
the human skull has 3 major  
compartments



Line Drawing  
Chris Nevarez  
Medical Student



**Ammonite**

*Black and White Photograph*

*Kenneth B. Stewart*

*Research Technician*



**Turning a Blind Eye**

*Oil on Canvas 18" x 36"*

*Ashley Ackerman*

*Medical Student*

## **I Went to Church That Day**

I went to church that day  
to have some time to think  
to regroup  
to center myself  
to get away from disease and dying  
to have a conversation with God.

I went to church that day  
and sat near the woman  
holding the baby with spindly arms  
and ragged breathing  
who died & was apologetically  
placed in my lap.

I went to church that day  
and had a conversation with God.

(Southern Ethiopia, 1999)

*-Patricia J. Burns  
School of Public Health*

## **Homelessness**

A caged wild animal  
with human eyes  
watching you  
ignore him  
a pet of the city, a trophy displayed  
among  
Frito Lay wrappers  
and Dunkin' Donuts styrofoam cups  
swaddled like a baby  
in yesteryear's fashions.  
The only warmth:  
The only music:  
    Buzzing steady street lamp  
Where's the audience?  
He wonders.

*-Grace Monis  
MD/PhD Student*



*Black and White Photograph  
Michael K. Mansour  
MD/PhD Student*

## Outbound

Trembling beneath  
me in cadence with rumble  
the inbound train whistles  
to stop.  
dirtied by rush

and rain i sit  
small  
in my body  
posture asking to be  
left alone

the color of hard.  
umbrellas and boots  
tangle by  
their gravity pulls  
my eyes

after, wondering  
into their  
worlds downtown of dirt  
and damp that line, litter  
my sidewalks, the back-

ground for my  
life's orchestrations.  
but these—just dramatics  
the smog leaps fearfully  
up before

the oncoming train  
wind slips over, behind  
and i drag filthy  
shoelaces over  
thresholds bound out.

*-Rebecca Wallace  
Medical student*

## New Member at the Y

The musical score is written for a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 2/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are printed below the staff, with some words appearing above the staff to align with the notes. The lyrics are: "They look at him with big brown eyes, pedaling his exercises. Scar six inches up his back, that was due to what attack? He says: 'It was my fault an inner stress that tore me from myself, aren't you impressed, oh yes?'" And they respond with yeahs and noes and clean the spaces 'tween their toes. And he says I'm gonna tell you a story. He says: 'I was making all the mistakes, ooh, of being alive, when would my heart break baby No one around to climb inside and look around, I'd lost my only friend,'" Heaven sent, settle in. I was spending life not touching cracks, I was looking back to cover my Tracks in sand last for an age, Heavy heels can't turn the page So I'd read it twenty times or more, head so sore, Then with a wallop I fell down, I was ground into powder and burned brown. I was sampled and set on a balance, I was titrated, filtered, and fractioned. I was analyzed with an eraser, responsible for a fish odor

They look at him with big brown eyes, pedaling his exercises.

Scar six inches up his back, that was due to what attack? He says:

"It was my fault an inner stress that tore me from myself, aren't you impressed, oh yes?"

And they respond with yeahs and noes and clean the spaces 'tween their toes.

And he says I'm gonna tell you a story. He says:

"I was making all the mistakes, ooh, of being alive, when would my heart break baby

No one around to climb inside and look around,

I'd lost my only friend," Heaven sent, settle in.

I was spending life not touching cracks, I was looking back to cover my

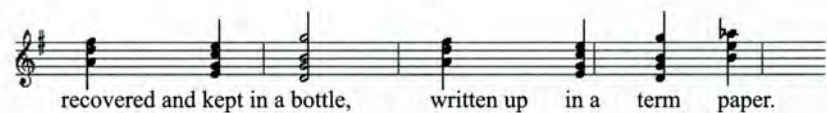
Tracks in sand last for an age, Heavy heels can't turn the page

So I'd read it twenty times or more, head so sore,

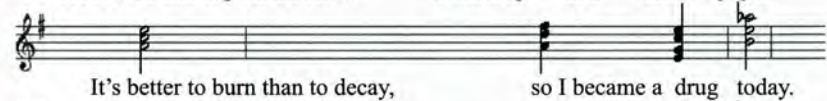
Then with a wallop I fell down, I was ground into powder and burned brown.

I was sampled and set on a balance, I was titrated, filtered, and fractioned.

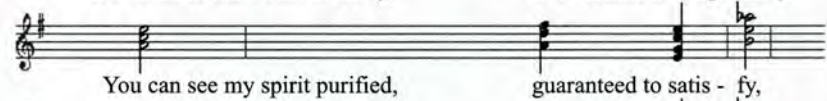
I was analyzed with an eraser, responsible for a fish odor



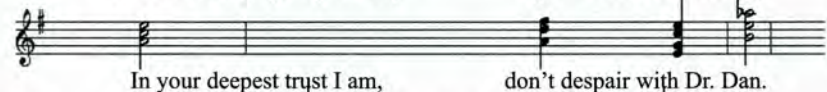
recovered and kept in a bottle, written up in a term paper.



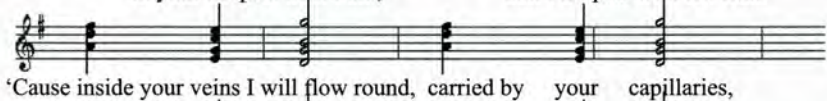
It's better to burn than to decay, so I became a drug today.



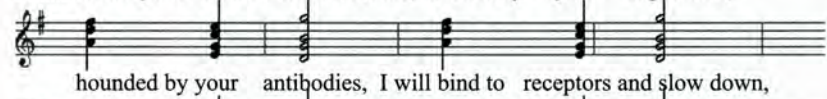
You can see my spirit purified, guaranteed to satisfy,



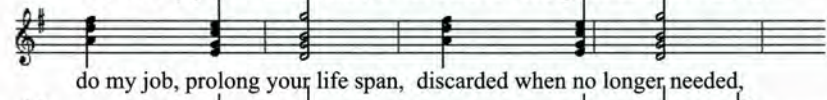
In your deepest trust I am, don't despair with Dr. Dan.



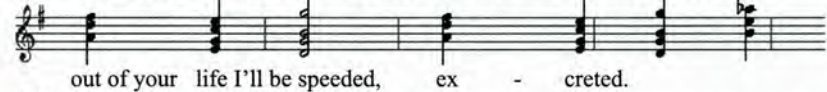
'Cause inside your veins I will flow round, carried by your capillaries,



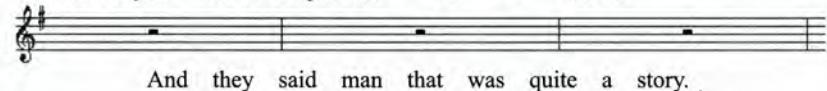
hounded by your antibodies, I will bind to receptors and slow down,



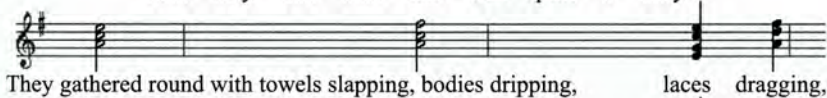
do my job, prolong your life span, discarded when no longer needed,



out of your life I'll be speeded, excreted.



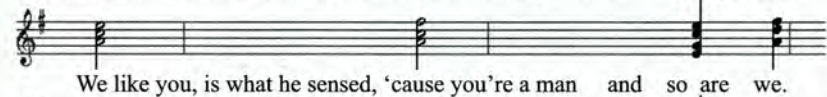
And they said man that was quite a story.



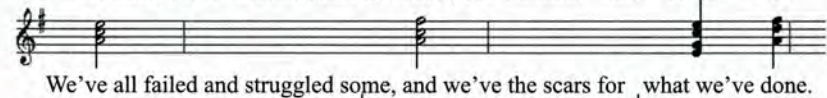
They gathered round with towels slapping, bodies dripping, laces dragging,



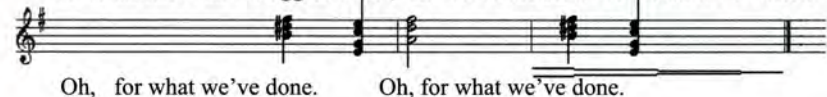
to view the new inclusion to their Christian club, their big boy's crew.



We like you, is what he sensed, 'cause you're a man and so are we.



We've all failed and struggled some, and we've the scars for what we've done.



Oh, for what we've done. Oh, for what we've done.

-Dan Rust (transcribed by Jason Fisher)  
Medical Student

## **A Runner's Trance**

Unrhythmic movement  
Aching, stiffness, red light  
Flat heavy footed  
Boredom

Pounding, panting, honking, screeching  
Thirst, hunger, dirty air  
Lethargy, tightness, frustration  
Drudgery

Mind loosens, street softens  
Body calms, legs elongate  
Crisp steady energy  
Smoothness

Rhythmic movement  
Flexing, loose muscles  
Synchronized breath  
Relaxation

Pace quickens, stride lengthens  
Silenced negative mind  
Body slicing through air  
Cruise control

Autonomic movement  
Lubricated joints  
Springs in feet  
Equilibrium

Lucid neutrality  
Fleeting images  
Empty space  
Gliding

Sweaty blurred tunnel vision  
Fearless, noiseless  
Numb existence  
Locked in a runner's trance

*-Eric Davidson  
Medical Student*



*Color Photograph  
Vatche Bezdikian  
Medical Student*

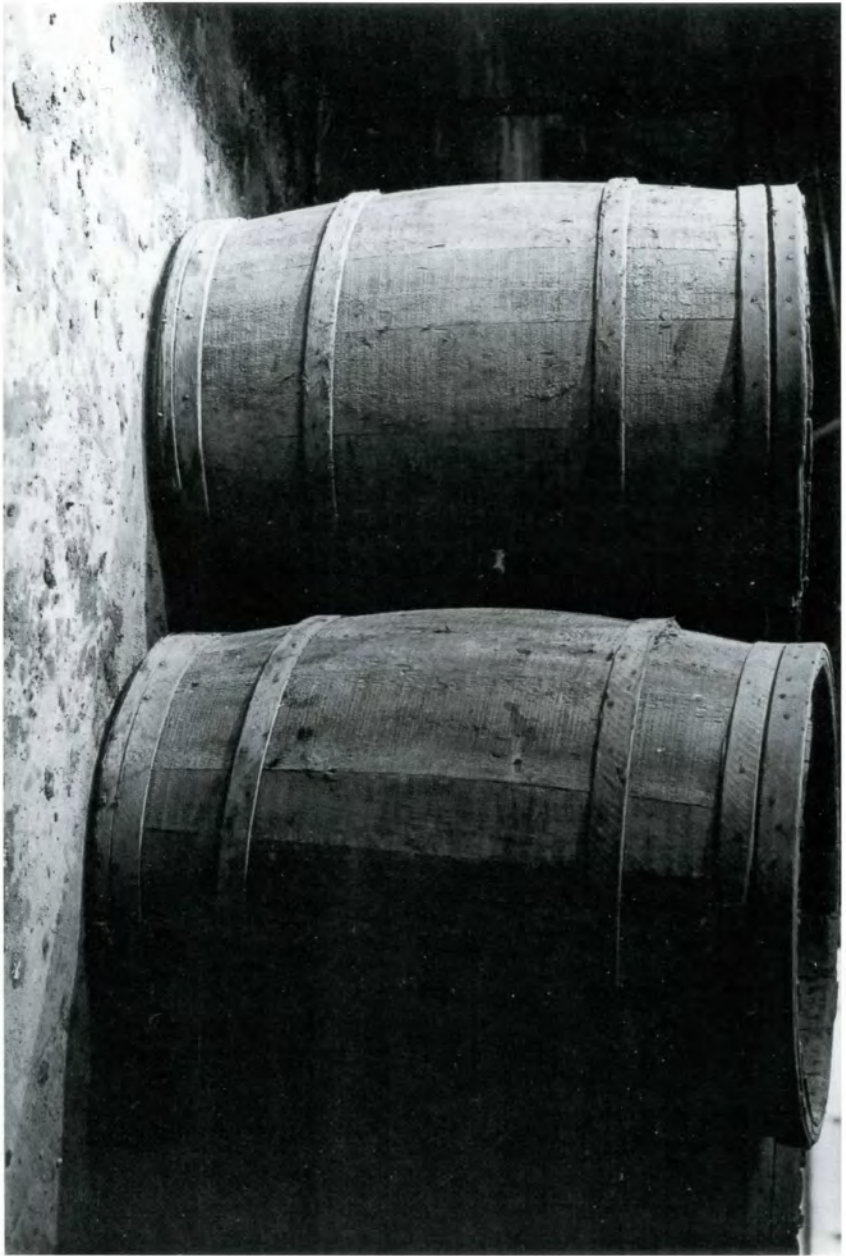


*Black and White Photograph*  
*Eric Hegedus*  
*Graduate Student*

## **New Orleans (for Donald)**

explosive  
rising dissolve me mist  
in your breath  
we mix  
with gasping  
music  
a large red  
man a trip-  
ping sax rhythm  
our spinning  
dance  
fog swirls  
off the Mississippi  
jazz  
and weather kiss  
expand in the heat  
your eyes  
i emit  
my own light.

*-Rebecca Wallace  
Medical Student*



*Black and White Photograph*  
*Michael K. Mansour*  
*MD/PhD Student*

## **Empty Nest Syndrome:**

“Who’s going to walk me down  
the aisle?”

was the first question on my mind.

(Ridiculously greedy,  
selfish, unrelated  
unhelpful. I know)

All my senses,  
bloating up like a  
big balloon  
never wanting to burst.

Roberto Somera Monis  
1946-1999

*-Grace Monis  
MD/PhD Student*



*Drawing*  
*Donny L.F. Chang*  
*MD/PhD Student*



*Black and White Photograph  
Zeina Dagher  
Graduate Student*

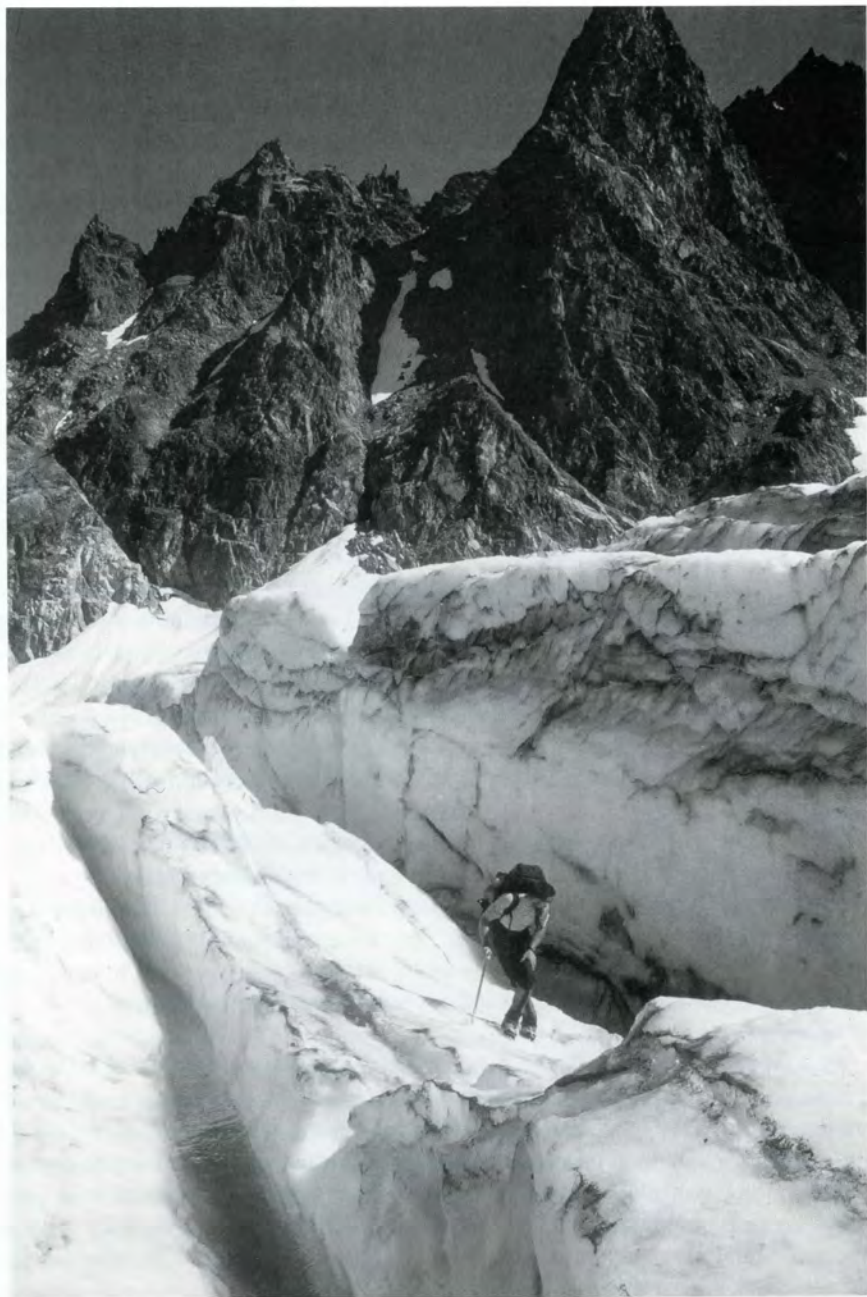
## The Fall

in autumn, my  
day shrinks  
shrivels  
til i can see  
evening's horizon  
from dawn.  
here to there  
i walk brown  
dry over crisp  
air floating against  
harder ground.

space cracks  
drains light to tired  
as sun creeps  
the earth rim,  
no higher for the noon.  
i imagine his weakness  
as though he has no tides  
his pull lost in expanse.

but at night  
the sky is too close  
and fragile  
a breath could shatter  
midnight  
plummeting moon  
to my feet.  
i crouch with cigarette  
let smoke blanket  
stars too old for wishing  
and listen to the rain, leaves  
striking ground  
hollow  
soothing in their terminal velocity.

*-Rebecca Wallace  
Medical Student*



*Color Photograph  
Vatche Bezdikian  
Medical Student*

## Pre-Op

I just want to be somebody else. Looking down on the parking lot from the hospital window I see the attendant dressed in a hooded sweatshirt and denim jacket pacing in the cold streets of Philadelphia. Considering the amount of money Dad paid to park there, multiplied times the number of cars in the lot...that guy ain't doin' too bad I figure. And he doesn't have to get an operation either. He's lucky. In fact, he just probably sees all kinds of *other* people go into the hospital for operations and just stands outside free as a bird thinking about how he doesn't have to have...uh...surgery. I wonder if he ever sees people go in for an operation...and...never mind.

I glance over at Dad hoping our eyes won't meet. He sits hunched over with his hands folded staring straight at the wall. He isn't sitting back in his chair with his legs crossed holding a pen and seven star diary in his hands taking notes and asking questions and thinking quietly looking like he just got a degree from Princeton Theological seminary like he did in the doctor's office; he just stares and clenches his hands tight.

I look at one of the anatomy posters they have on the wall in the waiting room. Everything seems so interesting now that I don't want to think about my operation. Sort of like when you have a big test to study for and you just look at all the stuff on your desk that you never noticed much before. The poster's got this big eye ball cut right in half so you can see all the parts inside it and try to read the Latin names on the side. Some of the names are really long and difficult to read so I lean forward and squint to get a better view, as if I'm really gonna remember the names.

I stop and rub my eyes. I rest my head in my hands on my lap and look down at the floor. It's a hospital kind of floor with the big tiles that are always getting mopped clean. I guess Dad's probably looking at me now that I rubbed my eyes, so I keep looking down at the floor. I know he loves me and that, but I just want to get in there and get it over with. Well, not really. I don't want another eye operation, but they say it's got to be done so I might as well get it over with.

I close my eyes. This is my fifth operation. I *think* it's my fifth. Three years ago I had the first operation to move the muscle back, except some of the metal came out then unexpectedly. Then there was the second one to move the muscle back *again*, then that other doctor took out the *rest* of the umbrella tip and *then* they took out the muscle altogether. That's four. Now they have to move the outside muscle back – *recess* it – so I won't stare off to the side because I don't have any muscle on the inside. I sure hope this is the last one. Of course, it's *always* the last one.

"Mr. Stewart, sorry to keep you waiting. A nurse will be in to see you shortly."

I sit up quickly. The door had just opened and some hospital person came in to talk to us again. My heart starts pounding. This is it for sure. Dad

turns around and looks up. He was caught off guard too. We both stare at the man. He's not a doctor, but he's one of those other people in the operation. He looks towards me.

"She'll have a gown and gown for you. We should be able to start in about five minutes."

Five minutes. That's what they said five minutes ago. And ten minutes before that.

I look at Dad and he looks back at me real serious. Then he tries to smile a little and I know he's saying "I love you." I smile weakly back at him and then look at the floor again.

I hate operations. I know I'm going to be sick for hours after this one. It always happens! Just a tiny sip of crushed ice to wet my mouth that's dry from the anaesthesia and sure enough, a minute later back up it comes. Every time.

"I've got something for you to put on."

The nurse is already here holding a hospital gown. I hate hospital gowns. They're stupid. They don't cover nothin'. They just probably make you wear them so you won't try to run away out in the street.

Dad puts his hands on my shoulder, gives it a squeeze, and then walks out the door. He had said something before that but I missed it. Too late. He's gone now. I'm on my own again.

I start to take off my clothes and put on the stupid gown.

"Hope you're not too cool in that," the nurse smiles.

I pause, sigh, and then continue putting on the gown again. She's trying to be funny. Only stupid nurses try to be funny. I'm trying not to think about how fast my heart is beating as I get on the gurney. She'll probably say something about how neat it is to have a bed with wheels.

"I'll bet you've never had a bed with wheels before."

I choose to ignore her, hoping that she'll catch on that I'm familiar with operations and then she'll be quiet. I gather up some of the sheets behind me a little to cover what the gown doesn't. I could lie down to cover up a little more, but I want to be sitting up when I face them.

The tiled walls look unnervingly clean as we glide down the hallways through the big double doors. Time slows down as we enter the zone restricted for surgery. My heart is really working overtime as we head towards what looks like the final pair of doors. I close my eyes for a second.

There are five or more doctors and nurses in gowns with masks over their mouth and nose, wearing those fluffy shower caps on their heads, walking back and forth across the room getting ready. Some machine is beeping. Nobody says anything to me or even recognizes me. They love to talk to you and act nice when you're nine years old and look smaller. I'm twelve now and growing past the stage when I can be called "cute." The doctors and nurses are talking to each other about their plans for the weekend. What about my plans for the weekend?

And then I see the big bright lights and the table. All of this happened because of playing with an old umbrella when I was only six. I wonder if any

other kids have accidents like that. It's not fair.

They've already moved me over to the table and started to put the stickers on my chest for the machine that watches my heart. The big bright lights hover down from the ceiling over the table like an alien space ship.

...It wasn't my fault, honest. It just happened. I found this stupid umbrella outside and brought it home and pretended I was Mary Poppins and, actually I didn't get hurt then, you'd think it would have happened then but...

Then I see the nurse holding the mask. Oh great. She's getting close to me and she's holding the mask and I can hear that little sound of air coming through it. Hands help me lie down on the table and the big bright lights make it difficult for me to see the mask, but I can still hear it coming at me.

...I was right in front of my house and my friend went back to his house and Mom called me in for dinner and...

The mask is already over my face and – that smell! That smell is in my nose and in my mouth! I try not to breathe heavy even though my heart is pounding. Oh well. Here I go again. I should be out pretty soon. I hope.

But, wait a minute. Something's wrong. I'm not going out. I look up and see that stupid nurse holding the mask just *partially* over my face; enough to smell that terrible sweet stink, but not enough to go to sleep. What's her problem anyway? She's talking about something stupid to some stupid doctor.

...I pushed the umbrella away and turned to go inside. But the umbrella hit the bushes and came back at me and it was too late...

Their voices are starting to echo like they do when the anaesthesia takes effect. It's just too late for the kid who got hit in the eye with an umbrella tip.

Time slows down and I start to sink away from the room with the beeping machine and the lighted x-rays and the shiny green tiles on the walls that are starting to move and the doctors and the nurses and the table and the mask and the big bright lights.

...I just pushed the umbrella away and let go.

-Kenneth B. Stewart  
Research Technician

## The Final Question

A young woman was riding a plane across the country. It was her first vacation in many months. She was going back to a place that had once been her home, but was now a vague memory. She wondered if her new experiences had changed her view of the past or if her leaving home had given her a new perspective on what the past had really been. In her hand she held a letter from her younger brother:

I have been thinking about something I can't shake off. Some people live their lives as a self-fulfilling prophecy. They believe in the system of rules. They only like what others around them like. They accept the things which have always been accepted, and do not question them. After all, can so many generations and cultures be wrong? Others live their lives as a prophecy waiting to be discovered. They know the world is not as it should be, but their actions and beliefs are guided by the world they wish they could live in. Which one are we, Evelyn? What about mom and dad?

Her brother Christopher was sixteen years old. He was very smart for his age. In all her twenty-five years, she had never met anyone she loved or admired as much. She thought back to the day he had been born. Everyone had been surprised because he had not uttered a single cry. His face appeared on the doctor's hands, blue-tinged and glowing, and his large brown eyes looked serenely at everything around him. "He must know something we don't know," said one of the doctors. That was still the case, thought Evelyn to herself.

It was the first hour of a six-hour flight. She had a lot of time to think.

She came from a family of scientists. Her parents had gone to all the right schools and had published and lectured all over the world. So far, she was on the same route. Her father had told all the family that his daughter Evelyn would be the most successful of them all. She would lead the next generation of their bloodline. Evelyn began coughing. She couldn't stop.

"Drink your water, dear," said the woman next to her.

"Umm, yes, thank you," replied Evelyn, while sipping.

From the time she was ten, whenever her father talked about her, good or bad, she began to cough. She couldn't believe the trigger still worked. She could almost hear his voice - and feel her chest tighten with his every word. She never had this problem when she was away at school. Not even three thousand miles can heal some wounds, she laughed to herself.

Evelyn's parents had been her heroes growing up. They were as different from one another as two people could be. She thought back to her high school graduation. All the students were to disclose their one wish for the future on stage. Hers had been "to one day have the heart of my mother and the mind

of my father.”

“Why is that your wish?” Christopher had asked her on their way home.

Evelyn asked him what he would have wished for.

“To be loved without expectations and conditions,” he answered.

“Well mother loves us that way,” Evelyn interrupted.

“But father never will,” he said with a sigh.

Evelyn’s father had always been a mystery to her. His great object in life was to impress his friends. With all his personal advantages of family and education, as well as his sharp tongue and wit, he considered it his duty. Although he liberally criticized his family members at home, he exaggerated their accomplishments to others as often as possible.

On the other hand, he had moments of great kindness and warmth, some of which she could not recollect without pain and anguish. On one of her trips home from college, they had quarreled. He told her that when it came to her own ambitions, she did not care about the family and that if something were to happen to any of them, she would probably not even come home. The words had cut through her like a knife.

“No, I would not come home,” she had responded in anger, “because then you would have nothing to brag about to your friends.” As soon as she had said it, she wished she had not.

She cried herself to sleep that night with guilt. The next day, he brought her a gift. He left the box on her dresser and said on his way out, “You know how difficult it is for me to say I’m sorry.” The gift was a gold bracelet. She had never taken it off.

She looked at the bracelet on her wrist. She knew she would always feel a bond with her father, no matter what he did. Their drive to keep pushing themselves was one and the same. It estranged and pained them often, but they could not do away with it. In the end, it defined them. It was the same between Christopher and their mother. They too had a special bond. Their mother had been just as successful as their father, but she had never sacrificed her integrity or sense of self in the process. She did not fear change and uncertainty. She adapted to it. She embraced and conquered it. So did Christopher. Evelyn wondered why she herself was not that way. She had grown up under its influence yet had never been able to conquer the fear and uncertainty in her own life. She was always waiting for that one project, that one obstacle that would ultimately defeat her and show everyone that she was not what they had thought.

There was now only one hour of the flight left. Evelyn felt an uneasiness in her muscles. Was she ready for this? She closed her eyes and tried to remember the last time she had been home.

Her heart welled with all the emotions tied to that memory. She remembered her family at a restaurant. Her brother had announced to her parents that he would not be pursuing a science track. He had cleared his throat and said calmly that he was going to be a writer. She did not remember everything her father said in response but she did remember that it was very bad. She

remembered the pounding in her head and the confusion of whether he was yelling at Christopher or her, whether he was disappointed in Christopher or her for all the ways in which they had failed him. In the end, he had gotten up, looked directly at both of them, and said that fathers were not like mothers. They could not love children they were not proud of. Then he was gone. For hours, their mother had tried to comfort them. She had said over and over again that it was his own failings and not theirs to which he was referring.

"Please prepare for landing, miss" said a stewardess. "We will be on the ground in ten minutes."

Evelyn's thoughts were interrupted. She fastened her seat belt and raised her window shade. Her bracelet jingled as she moved her arm. She picked up her brother's letter again. She looked over the question that had taken a flight across the country to answer:

Some people live their lives as a self-fulfilling prophecy. They believe in the system of rules. They only like what others around them like. They accept the things which have always been accepted, and do not question them. After all, can so many generations and cultures be wrong? Others live their lives as a prophecy waiting to be discovered. They know the world is not as it should be, but their actions and beliefs are guided by the world they wish they could live in.

Evelyn closed her eyes and worded her answer to her brother slowly in her head:

"Father is in the first group. You and mother are in the second group." She paused. "And I am still struggling in between."

*-Nicole Davarpanah  
Medical Student*

# *The Creative Arts Society*

Boston Medical Center

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