

CREATIVE WORKS

Grey

He came in on a stretcher. Grey. From down the hallway even I, the novice student, could tell something was wrong. We wheeled him through the double-barrelled doors to trauma, drawing the flowery yellow curtain across the door as if such a thin sheet could contain the chaos of the room. Everything seemed wrong from the get-go. Nobody said anything. Or maybe nobody said anything to me. I mean, wasn't I just a student? But what exactly was I supposed to learn from watching a man slowly die before my eyes? I went near his face. His pupils were miotic, but fixed. Hands grabbed mine, guiding the tube down his throat. He gagged, ever so slightly. Or perhaps that was just a reflex.

I squeezed the bag. With every hollow rush of air into his chest I saw it draw up. Fill like an air balloon, ready to sail away beyond the curtain. All around me there was noise, movement. His chest no longer rose with air. Instead it sank under the firm, unyielding, bone crushing sternal pressure. It was dysrhythmic. An ugly sight. As the hands shifted back and forth across his chest it bent at acute angles. One side going down, the other coming up like some twisted see-saw. Time passed like this. The hands changed colour. The grey spread down from his face across his body like a cold wind sweeping the plain. His hands changed colour.

People sat when they tired. I stood, huddled over his face as if through sheer proximity I could share my life-force with him. I breathed the same rate. I sucked in the same air. His pupils widened as if to take one last good look. At one point I noticed he no longer shuddered with the force of blows. I looked up. Everyone else had stopped. I wanted to say something, to shout. Perhaps to question. I followed their gaze. The clock. Hands enveloped mine. They became wrapped in blue nitrile like a sterile cocoon. We stayed



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there for a moment, squeezing together. "Stop." I did. And surely, he died.

Maybe he was already dead. I guess that was the point of stopping — that he was dead. I heard later he was a druggie, a washout, a nobody. As if that justified his end. I had expected to be distraught, to weep for him. But I don't remember his face or his name. I

feel nothing, just a vast emptiness amidst a field of grey.

Alim Nagji BHSc
Class of 2012
Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alta.

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