

POETRY

First time

They say you never forget your first time and I've learned
that this is true.
Once in a while, my mind wanders back to a night, now
years away,
The memory triggered by something ever so slight,
A sound, a scent, a voice.
And I remember clearly.
I see his lovely body, the chest exposed, sweat trickling
down the well-formed chest.
I see his hands. A working man's hands,
Encrusted with the remains of a day on the construction site.
His arms, tattooed, declaring unflinching love for an old
girlfriend.
I smell his breath, tinged with beer and cigarettes and the
bar from which he had been
brought.
I hear that breath, rasping, desperate. And pleading.
I hear panic in the voice of the anesthetist resident,
A difficult intubation.
I see, the blood-stained drool that oozes down his
unshaved jaw.
I hear, the crack of the defibrillator on that lovely chest.
Crack. Quiet. Again. Again. AGAIN FOR GOD'S SAKE.
And then I hear what we all hear sooner or later.
The silence.
The Team stands still, in respect or shame, I am not sure
which.
I hear the rubbery sound of gloves being removed.
And that, more than anything else, signals that it is finished.

This memory, not unpleasant, is one I hold on to.
My first death.
I was there to watch this young man die. So it's okay that I
am visited from time to time
in this way.

As always, the memory fades quickly.
I am comforted though, knowing that in weeks, months,
years, it will return to me.
Triggered by something ever so slight.

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