

POETRY

On standby

In the parking elevator, only three flights.
 You know which one.
 It creaks, it's silent,
 not sure if it's actually moving,
 gears frozen, or smoothly gliding.
 I could be lost in free fall.
 The doors will open,
 where will I be?
 Have I moved?

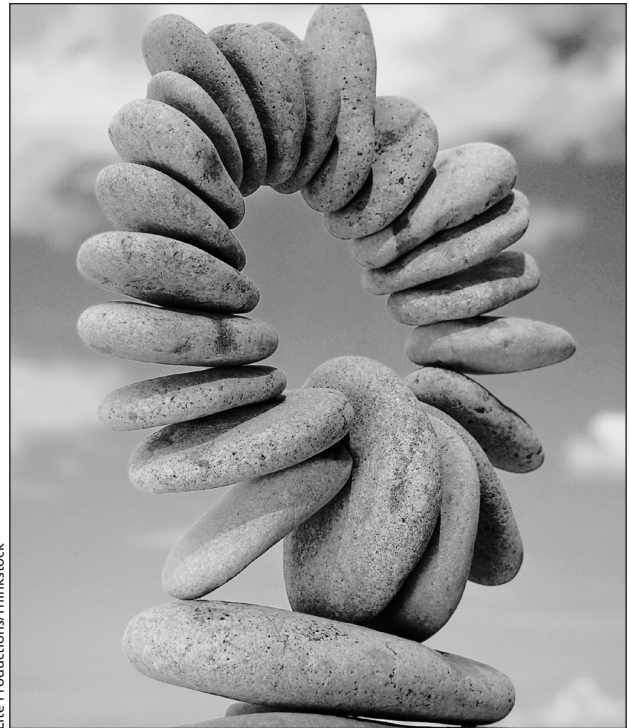
What will they bring me today?
 A broken heart,
 a broken mind.
 An interwoven complexity of problems
 whose meaning is about floating away
 as we tug back.
 We are uncertain,
 but we can think and do little
 as they pass through.
 It's OK, because we are there.

They don't know that this uncertainty
 is a welcomed beast, a calming ritual.
 A puzzle that we may solve, or not.
 But they move on, and they say "Thanks,"
 and we have learned.

Not so at home,
 my night shift.
 No scans, no CBC, BNP, A1C, CRP, ANA
 to confirm or refute our hypotheses.
 Only checklists that change on a whim,
 the instincts of an impromptu mother,
 the skill of a well-trained physician,
 the partner who supports the teetering beam,
 and the daily, minute-by-minute wait
 for the code to be called.

It has no colour, but I will recognize it, I always do.
 I am the one to know the code when it is called,
 the one to know how to run it, chart it,
 keep it running, to never call it quits.
 And to debrief; can we do better next time?
 The pulse was never lost to me.

No training for this.
 I don't know where I learned the algorithm, the protocol.
 It comes.
 There is only one outcome.
 He is too brilliant for rote school,
 yet too impaled to cope with the senses
 and the shower they bring over him.
 He'll make it.



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I leave by the same lift that dares not tell me
 if it will descend on command.
 Yet it does so reliably each day,
 while I wade through the uncertainty of his ascent
 through this day's journey.

The door opens at the end of my cranky journey
 to the underground.

It's where I expected to land.

I was not called,
 today

But there is tomorrow.
 I rest awake.
 Ready to soothe him
 whose condition eludes us.
 On standby.

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