HUMANITIES EMERGENCY

By

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This collection of poems is based on my experiences thus far during medical school. The title, ‘Humanities Emergency’, reflects that many of the poems were inspired from an elective I completed in the Emergency Department of the Halifax Infirmary. The title also points to the emergency of incorporating humanity into the practice of medicine, and more generally, into the practice of living in our world today.
Firsts
Bag Valve Mask

too little air and her lungs deflate
too much and they could collapse
so I slightly squeeze the bag
feeding her oxygen

with medical-student-anxiety
but also with consistency
timing it with my own breath
for 50 minutes

and then finally
she pitches in
beginning to breathe
and then I am the one pitching in
helping her breathe

pursuing harmony
until she no longer needs me

we reach regulation of
  inhalation
  exhalation

  respiration.
seven stitches later

luckily, my patient was understanding
of my taking extra long
to suture his wound
as he watched my every shaky move

yes, i responded, this is my first time
but don’t worry
i've practiced on a pig’s belly
on several occasions
i’m sure i’ll do just fine

seven stitches later
I receive one of those
‘sort-of-compliments’

“Well, you’re a lot better now
than when you started an hour ago”

i said thank you
and bought a home-practice-suture-kit
the next day
Mr. Cameron

scrubbed and gloved
i walk into the well-lit room
to observe my first surgery

Mr. Cameron is on the operating table
cocooned in surgical drapes
his insides protruding from his abdomen

a good portion
of his large intestine is being removed
along with its invading cancer

“Sarah, hold this bowel aside,”
the surgeon directs

out of nowhere comes the blood
seeping out of Mr. Jones
and onto my glove

progressing past my glove,
the blood follows the fold in the drape
until it falls
and meets my new white shoes

the surgeon stops the bleeding
using a ball of gauze
with a natural sense of where to place it

the flow slows
from a river
to a stream
to a trickle
to nothing

the next day I visit Mr. Cameron
in his hospital room
he is unaware that his
blood still stains my shoes

he is busy smiling and listening
to his granddaughter
retell her recent adventure

with delight, he admires the picture she drew for him
as though nothing has even happened
Just another magic medical student moment

It was week one of my surgery rotation and we were in the operating room. The nurse asked whether I wanted to insert the catheter before the procedure began.

“I’ve never done it before, but I’d like to try” I said. I had previously inserted a Foley catheter in a mannequin. A real person couldn’t be that much different, right?

In the operating room were four nurses, a nursing student, an anesthetist, an anesthesia resident, a general surgeon, a general surgery resident and the sleeping patient. A kind nurse guided me through the procedure while I pretended that none of these people were actually in the room.

Initially, I grabbed hold of the penis with a little too much enthusiasm and began to insert the catheter. I imagined the course of the catheter through the anterior, then posterior urethra. I slowly slid it through. When I felt some resistance, indicating I was in the bladder, I inflated the balloon and it was done. Incredible! I thought. Liquid gold was pouring out, which meant success.

“There,” I said with smirking satisfaction.

“Oh no!” said the nurse... “You need to put the plastic container under the catheter to catch the pee!”

I looked down and the liquid gold that I was so happy to see was now running out on the operating table and dripping down to the floor and on me.

“Oh right!” I said.

I slid the plastic container under the catheter to catch his urine. Minor hiccup.

Looking around the room reminded me that I had an audience. Nurses, doctors and students – everyone was staring while they waited for me to complete this glorious task. I expected them to start clapping slowly and sarcastically.

“Alright then,” said the surgeon “let’s get this show on the road.”

And that was it. My fleeting moment of glory was over. My pride was deflated as quickly as I had inflated the catheter balloon in this man’s bladder. It was just another magic medical student moment.
Dirty little dictation

Dirty little dictation (comma)
done at the nursing station
without even sitting down (period)

Words I whisper in the phone (comma)
summarizing Mrs. Brown’s
stint in the hospital
before she goes home (period)

My spoken words will be transcribed
and perhaps read by future eyes (hyphen)
or not (semi-colon)
regardless (comma)
I should get this one done fast
so I can catch up with my staff (period)

Dirty little dictation (comma)
done at the nursing station (period)

END DICTATION
reduction

we'll need to reduce this elbow
   the doctor said

I learned this meant
we would reposition the unbent, hanging arm
of a 15-year-old girl
back in its place

but 'reduce' seemed an unfitting word

enjoy the ride
   the nurse said

with one smooth injection of morphine
the utopic opiate graced her head
reclined her mind

and she drifted into a place
between pleasure and pain
in the right-side of her brain
she didn't speak
other than three half-hearted words...

a stop, stop, stop... that trailed off

and I kept pressure down on the humerus
and the doctor kept pulling the forearm

did it take?

the x-ray said yes
success
1 point for us each
and another for the girl

pain – reduced.
anxiety – reduced.
soccer season – reduced.
the gap between forearm and humerus – reduced.

 Reduction.
frame of reference

what is this?

a straight line that a drunk man must tandem walk

or

peering down on a poster board from above

or

the shortest distance between two points

or

the middle part of capital ‘H’

Normal EKG

now – what is this?

it all depends on your frame of reference.
grammar lessons

stroke is a verb
stroke is a noun

the word implies an action
or a thing
discussed like it's tangible,
but it's a deficit
a lack of blood
- insufficient funds to the brain

you can stroke
you can have a stroke
acute ischemic stroke
stroke out
he's stroking

shit – he's stroking!

aphasic
bradycardic
emesis
limp limbs from hemiparesis
unconscious
CT it
fibrinolytic checklists
inject the thrombolytic

stroke is a verb.
stroke is a noun.
This poem, entitled “Heart Failure vs. Spellcheck This,” was inspired by Lilly’s Pathophysiology of Heart Disease (5th edition) along with my love of the language of medicine. Below, on the right, are words from Chapter 9 of the aforementioned text on Heart Failure that Microsoft Word failed to recognize. However, Word promptly offered alternate spelling suggestions, which I rearranged in the form of a poem, on the left.
Frank Starling reign
pre-screen acting
carves idols
hyper-kill media

cat coalmines
nor epinephrine
is volumetric
in a tropic after loads of

ant diuretic
parasite urns
gang age nests and
cardamom medleys

tacky hemp plus
lap lace = juxtaposition
metropolis heptagon makes
spin on local tones

sever, dampen, add
cache ex-Lassic
plus his alternant
(merely B lines anyhow)

boomerang ode dispels
hypomanic genie.
nadir pitted -
is sordid denigrated?

no steroidal
loop of Hell
for shadiest tears -

Nitro presides.

Frank-Starling, renin
presacral, actin
Carvedilol
hyperkalemia
catecholamines
norepinephrine
isovolumetric
inotropic, afterload

antidiuretic
parasternal
angiogenesis
cardiomegaly
tachypnea, hemoptysis
Laplace, juxtacapillary
Metoprolol, hepatomegaly
Spironolactone

ESPVR, tamponade
cachexia, Lasix
pulsus alternans
Kerley B lines, azygous

Bumetanide, dyspnea,
hypomagnesia
Nesiritide
Isosorbide dinitrate

nonsteroidal
Loop of Henle
phosphodiesterase

Nitroprusside
In the Head
nightmares

she wants to lock up her dreams
nice and safe
in a box
under her bed
so they won't get too close to her head
symptoms of depression

the funeral in his head awoke him from sleep
interestingly, hundreds of people were there
guilty and mourning their loss
loss of what? he has no energy to know
a thousand concentration camps in the recesses of his brain
famished prisoners without appetite
innocently detained; psychomotor stagnation
is suicide his bliss?
PANIC!

something’s wrong
sweaty palms
heart hyped
constricted sight

upper self, arms and trunk
hovers over
clutches on to
lower self, lower limbs

epinephrine
loves me
it floods me
overcomes me

i am inflicted
with an unwanted
ancestral gift
remnant, protection from predators
where are the evolutionary editors?

meanwhile, i choke
while coaxing oxygen
to come to the lungs
please - just for one ride

and get the panic to subside
schizophrenia

voices in my head
voices in my head
i wish they would be dead -
these voices in my head

she said

as her eyes darted around the room
while her mesolimbic system
turned thoughts into dominos -
each one colliding with and toppling the next
down a path she never agreed to take

but she agreed to take the pills
(finally)
(reluctantly)

first line
second line
pills that tame the dopamine
atypical to typical

monitoring
to get the voices to subside
so with her brain she can abide
i hurt myself today

arms scarred
wrists slit
blood dripped
he's had another 'incident'
he does it every several days
to drain away his pain, he claims
one for his mind

he’s got a mind to feed
it’s hungry indeed
thirsty for bursts of catecholamines
through snorts of cocaine
that his library card neatly snow ploughs
into two straight lines

one for him
and one for his mind

there.

now everything will be fine.
Addiction

I. She doesn’t know what to do, so she goes for her phone. Things seem off so she goes for her phone. Awkward pause so she goes for her phone. No one else home so she goes for her phone. A technological reaction to dissatisfaction. And when it broke, for two whole days, she missed it and realized how in love she was.

II. I open the freezer to reach for my treat; my fix. Wrapped up in tin foil, this is something I have been saving for the right moment (now). It’s fresh from Columbia and I yearn for the hit. Like a lion with no teeth it is harsh but sweet. Couldn’t manage without it. Grinding it fine, just a little at a time, to be stimulated. Awake. Coffee is a friend of mine.

III. Just a drink with a friend, just to take the edge off. Relax from the day and let the mind run away. Okay, maybe two. It’s been a hard week. Just this last drink and I’ll be on my way. Three, four, five – well now I can’t drive. So I might as well… six, seven, eight, nine. What a hell of a time! We should go get some pizza and then go to the dome. Eleven, twenty, twenty – time to go back home. Back in my bed. Wake up to a foggy sunrise morning with armies in the head. Eye-opener time. Hair of the dog. Just one drink - just to take the edge off.

IV. My hand touches the doorknob of my home, which makes my mouth water. Thankfully, my husband and the kids aren’t yet home. I enter the house and throw my purse and jacket down fiercely. Magnetically I am drawn to the refrigerator. I grab and then inhale what is quickest, saltiest and tastiest, consuming while I stand. Sitting would take too much time. Twenty minutes later I turn to a full-length mirror and contemplate the enormous size of my thighs. I bet my jean size is up to 27 now. Damn. Toilet. Vomit. Vomit. I need it out of me. I see the kids running up the driveway from the school bus. Mouthwash. Quickly I come out of the bathroom. Later that night, when we are all eating dinner, my son William won’t eat his vegetables and I threaten that he won’t be permitted to go to hockey practice unless he eats them. He eats them. My husband says nothing.

V. His high-powered shower shoots water at him from all angles. The 22-foot sailboat he owns gets used on summer weekends. He has his own company along with a large, expensive home in the south end. It’s a stimulating, high-powered life. But he doesn’t really like his wife. And I heard him tell his daughter to shut up once. And he anxiously waits for Saturday nights when he takes one pill of ecstasy. His friend sends these to him in the mail from Vancouver, stowed away in the corners of a CD case. Anyway, he takes the pill and retreats to his recently refurbished basement away from his family. It’s 11pm. It’s Saturday night. He sits in front of his 50-inch flat screen and turns it on. The ecstasy distracts him from realizing what he is actually doing. In taking this break from who he has become, he closes his eyes and pictures
himself smothered in sunshine and surrounded by bees – ones that don’t sting. They live in nearby hives with honey bedrooms, syrup sleeping in the combs, gently hidden from the daylight, packed away by the working drones. Then he contemplated the people who keep bees and the mouths they feed. He continues reflecting on such matters for the next several hours, and has fun.

VI. Her Friday brain is churning for tonight. So are her bowels. Her body knows that it’s Friday. Payday. Cocaine day. She stares straight ahead, mindlessly adrift, pretending to work until her fluorescent shift ends and the party begins. Then she can be high up in Friday night – the place where her happiness lives.
expressions

i am sitting home
going in and out
of emotions

just as quickly as you were that day
in the emergency department
handcuffed and embedded in that stretcher

i am sitting home
going in and out
of those same emotions
but they stay within me
restrained in me

you are more forthcoming
and communicative
and expansive
you express your emotions
better than me

and so you go there
and so I stay here
Acceptance?
teenage apathy versus cervical adenopathy

the teenager’s adenopathy
blanketed one side of her neck

her drug list was long:
cigarettes, alcohol, special K, cocaine
marijuana, ecstasy and amphetamines

  when left to their own devices
  people try shit

while I was palpating her nodes
she requested to leave for a smoke

  the exam won’t last much longer
  her boyfriend encouraged

she would need to see ENT
but had skipped such appointments in the past

two months later on the street at night
she was begging for money with her boyfriend
i gave them five dollars
but they didn’t recognize me
or thank me –

  which I was ambivalent about.
  her adenopathy had grown significantly.
come back never

monster doctors
'palliative,' you say?
come back another day

are you telling me to die?
that it's my time?
there is terror on the inside
i just want to survive
for me
for them
slaying dragons until the end

monter hospital
come back another day
or even better - never.
long-term relationship

a twisted, mangled hanging limb
an arm alarmingly attached
dangling at a Dali angle

a single torn raw remnant alienated
and divorced from the body
but not separated

was then coerced
like a broken marriage
into a conjugal relationship

to begin the long (how long? until death do us part?)
slow process of bonding
and perhaps healing
waiting

emergency department
two hours
four hours

when is my turn?

my turn, my time, my chance to be seen
to have questions answered
to have…

waiting
the faint smell of alcohol
mixed with clinical, sterile hospital
fevered cries of babies
yawning faces…3 am

when I hear “Mr. Dylan please?”
it’s like an adrenalin rush
with the fear of missing my turn
i jump to my feet
and they lead me to another room

waiting

the sounds of sirens flood my ears
three teenagers; jaws of life
frantic mothers; outstretched arms

another 3 hours?
i understand.

waiting
Same

try to change
try to change
but end up staying same

habitual ways
and this endless maze
keep me in a foggy haze

my problem’s been identified in several ways
i haven’t slept in several days

skipped out
tripped out
pimped out
flipped out

now I’m reaching out
with a goal of being stable
willing but unable

try to change
try to change
but end up staying same
troubled waters

water
enters mouths
drains down esophaguses
into curly digestive tracts
typically received by blood
in a welcome celebration

but sometimes
bodies drink contamination
arsenic, lead and cyanide
leaching out from mining
ironically ingested out of necessity

in illness, Hondurans gather in protest chanting

“no á Canada
no á Canadienses”

their voices bridge anger, sadness, hope
patients

useless words leave my mouth
and tunnel through carpaths
sonic waves
meet tympanic membranes
sending signals
through nerves
reaching brains
heads nod
implying understanding

but I know what the patients are really going to do.
they’ll leave this place
and do what they want to do
my advice feels impotent

then it clicked that i was being paternalistic
people do what they want
i just need to be ok with it
would have done

teary-eyed and
should have
would have done

if only I had phoned you earlier
if only I could have dialed 9-1-1
three numbers; three seconds
could have bought us years

and now I’m almost done
because you’re almost done
because you are there
and I am here
letting you in

garden of grief
demystify me
something has come
I don’t want to believe

or else I’ll go on
thinking life is long-lived

   i’m ready
   i’m waiting
   i’m letting you in
A sort of procrastination

Work, eat, study, sleep
into knowledge
swimming deep

when I'm so submerged in it
i fail to notice grimaces on patients' faces
or else I notice them
subconsciously
storing their expressions
in the valleys of my brain
to deal with
another day

and if and when that day appears
i will react so properly
it's weird.

i remain immersed
in this abyss for now
it's bottomless
i need to be emotionless somehow
day off of medicine

and so I can relax a bit
and think of things
of which I like to think
a bit
and learn some things
i think i’d like to know, a bit
to grow,
a bit
Irony
brainstem scrutiny

i spent the afternoon
fondling and pondering brainstems
of donated corpses (generous persons)

admiring the perfect peaks
of the corpora quadrigemini
that were nestled up
to the midbrain

tracing my fingers over
the pregnant belly
of the pons
and the decussating
medulla oblongata

the cranial nerves poked out
penetrated through
stringy, inanimate
even desolate

afterward, at home
light candles
drink tea
let music in
my cranial nerves are functioning
excited and firing

i’d love to see them in action
words

Ted was diagnosed
with T-cell lymphoma
ten minutes ago.

this he knew
and this i knew.

i enter his room
and the first words i say, are:

hello, how are you?

i wish i could vacuum those words up
reverse time
or press
    edit - > undo

just fine, Ted replied, how are you?
misbehaviour

someday
all alone
when you lie in your grave

then,
only then,
will you finally decide to behave?
gun marks

skin populated with bullet holes
One, two, three four five

one pierced through his new tattoo, which read
live by the gun or die
Shock

Her blood pressure’s low
We’ve got fluid on the go
Pale, clammy hands
Diminished peripheral pulses
She’s got a bleed
And a need for more blood
To get to her tissues
She meets the definition of ‘shock.’
Hemorrhagic shock

Meanwhile
Her daughter cries
For fear that her mother won’t survive
“It’s not fair -
she’s barely 65”

The daughter meets the definition of shock also
mind herpes

the image of her herpes
resided in my brain
like occupy wall street
they wouldn’t go away

my mother said
I should picture something nice instead
so I imagined her herpes
transforming into beautiful flowers
sprouting from her vagina

for moments –
vibrant hybrid
red and white roses

but they suddenly disappear
reshaping into a garden of herpes
between her thighs
revisiting me
at inconvenient times

then I felt shallow.
after all, she was the one with extensive herpes.

then the irony hit me
i’m the one
carrying her infection

- in my mind
Communication

_Now I’ll examine you from behind_
(says resident)

But the patient wasn’t ready
for the finger sliding into her anus

_What are you doing that for?_
(asks surprised patient)

Accurate communication helps
(euphemisms don’t)
a cheeky one

doctors discussed the profits
of their botox clinic
each appointment
  is only five minutes
$200 a pop
nine to five each day
a nice and normal life
and you get to make people look and feel good
they need that too, you know
morning rounds

your mother is dying?
that’s so sad
now tell me again
how many bowel movements you’ve had

the lights are bright
but it’s 6 am, you know
that’s not so bad -
we’ve been up all night

now tell me
are you passing gas?
that’s all I ask
**Withheld**

“I’m sorry…
but there is no fetal heartbeat;
it’s fetal demise,“
said my supervisor to the patient

The would-be mother
held back her tears
glossy eyes
quivering lips

And I wanted to hug her
but held it back.
With my supervisor there,
it didn’t seem appropriate

But really –

Could there have been a more appropriate time?
A taste for surgery

He thoroughly enjoys surgery because of all the interesting complications: wound site infections, urosepsis, atelectasis, pulmonary embolus … so much medicine makes him crave surgery - his enthusiasm is infectious.
adherence

lady in the red dress
battled monsters all night long
so we could live
and this is the thanks she gets?

no, she doesn't want the pills
and fuck the needle too

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fuck the cop who brought me here} \\
\text{and fuck all of you!}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{assess me} \\
\text{assess you} \\
\text{assess me} \\
\text{until we don't know who to be}
\end{align*}
\]

but she will receive
an involuntary injection
if she does not comply

after three blinks
and a swift grasp
then a gulp
she swallowed the pill.

adherence?
**Humanities Emergency**

sailing through your disease and you
through thousands of people
all filled with disease

doctors can’t
compact all of these diseases into
one bad ball
we can’t hurl them into the ocean.
-not at all-

but what we *can* do
is be present and truly loving
at bedsides

being present and truly loving
is more important
than curing anything
than knowing anything
and it seems more feasible…

but is it?
Grace
Casey’s slope

Stage I

name: Casey Jones
age: 61
witty, independent
good-spirited and fun
inspired with visions of pending retirement
35 years of good will at the steel mill coming to a close
and opening - precious time with
precious grandkids, children
Marjorie, his wife
absent of impairment
a nice and simple life

Stage II

set for enjoying the golden years
for Casey, everything is in place
except his watch – which lately has been hiding its face
where did it go?
the good one - you know?

friends assure him that memory declines with time
don’t worry; everything is fine
although impractical
forgetfulness with ageing is quite natural

Stage III

a visit to the doctor
at Marjorie’s request
was a battle
but only partially against his will
Doctor,
other than the odd botched word
everything is fine
– don’t you concur?
count backwards, you ask?
on scan back - 75 74 73
an easy task - 75, 74, 71...
no - 72, 73...
that’s not right...

his facial muscles tight
and in prolonged contraction

burn with lactic acid
as the doctor leaves the room
Casey waits for a reaction

back in with a firm breath

Alzheimer’s disease? progressive degeneration?
that’s an oxymoronic sort of way to say
i’ll drive myself insane
through self-mutilation; desecration of my own brain

Stage IV

his head loses weight
as alpha helices turn to pleated beta sheets
and as they build
pills endeavor to conceal what is real –
dense, plaque deposits
deterioration of cognition
something is choking the living daylights out of him
he wonders
would ignorance be bliss?
forgetting to fret would be a kiss on my face
where is that fecking...woof, anyway?

his reason wilts and exudes on him a guilt
that he will be a burden
on society
his family tree
Marjorie

as scientists search for a cure
a magic little vial
from in vitro to clinical trials
it looks like this may take a while

Stage V

a need for assistance with the mundane
periodic feelings that he’s verging on insane
periodic feelings that he's verging on insane
his mind a myriad of dysfunctional molecules

wear ess that...what's it called?

the missing watch becomes a wrong name
becomes an unfamiliar face

Casey, she's your daughter

her name is Grace

the MRI says his brain will die
it's shrinking in size
Moderately severe cognitive decline

I'd say my brain works 25% of the time

aggregated amyloids gain armloads of power in numbers
daggers to neurons
acetylcholine – minimal.
memory and cognition – low.
but there still exists a familiar glow
relationships hold strong and grow

Stage VI

with pajamas over clothes
and shoes on wrong feet
Casey wandered down the street
Marjorie had no clue
what she would do
is he safe? Is he alive?

five miles away
found hours later by police
in the park, at night
feeding ducks on the lake
with a smile on his face.
same person, different life
different day? Same wife.

needing care for 24 hours(more or less)
powerlessness
absence, apathy, happiness,
cureless, careless, carless, sick
making love has taken on new meaning –
caring for incontinence and spoon-feeding

who is bathing me?

she looks familiar – could she be my wife?
she looks familiar - could she be my wife?
i don't know, but she is very nice.

Stage VII

age: 75
not entirely alive

monosyllabic, senseless
but not useless words

    i krenk kawfe mer jew

leaves his mouth
enters down a knowing carpath
communication in emotions of the face
smiling deep eyes, worried lips
recognition of expression
as a thrilling level of cognition
meaning in moments

in death,
an avalanche of memories of
love, flesh, colour, sin
collide, collapse and conquer him
rise over run
to the end
of Casey's slope
grace

an old man in old clothes
in a mall food court
with closed eyes
sits with his head drooping
hunched over his Burger King meal

i ascend the escalator
concerned and staring down at him
questioning his:

➤ mental status
➤ drug and alcohol use
➤ level of consciousness
➤ socioeconomic status
➤ family history

i almost tripped at the top
when he blessed himself
and began to eat
Anatomical Position

During the first two years of medical school many hours are spent in the anatomy lab. A protective coping mechanism when learning from cadavers is to become detached. Forgetting that they were once living humans may seem twisted – somehow it can make things easier though.

The exam on the musculoskeletal system was fast approaching. It was the final anatomy test of my second year of medical school. Alone in the lab, I was getting some late night studying in. In particular, my eyes were following the path of the flexor digitorum profundus up to the distal interpharyngeal joints of the fingers. But it was difficult to get a good view. So I contorted my head for a better glance and spread apart the digits to fully appreciate the pathways of these tendons.

Suddenly I realized I was holding the hand of this person. Each of my fingers nestled between each of hers. Our nails were painted the same colour. Palms gripped together – it was as if I were holding the hand of any living being. A wave of energy flooded over my body. More like an electric shock from my hand to my feet, actually. Face flushed and breathless, I abruptly let go of my grasp and jumped to a stance.

Scanning the room I saw at least a hundred zipped-up bagged corpses. Each was waiting patiently for its turn to teach. A cluster of 20 completely assembled skeletons was on display standing; each person was positioned slightly differently. One had her jaw wide open, as in disbelief of what her friend was saying. Another with his head slightly tilted to the right, as if he was admiring a cute kitten. Another positioned separate from the rest of the group was pensive and looking out the window, wondering what would be coming next.

I looked back at down at the person whose hand I was just accidentally holding, stepped closer, and held it again.

*Thank you for reminding me what I was doing.*
melodious

what is his diagnosis?
we need to know this
as he screams in the ambulance port
handcuffed and threatening the officers, the doctors.
us.

-them-

embedded and immobilized in a stretcher
squeezing shut eyes that i'm happy
i don't have to look into

sobbing

“what would i like to do?” he asked
- rhetorically
“go to the Public Gardens.
or how about jail?”
- facetiously

the officer offered that this wasn’t possible
no imminent threat to himself or others
not psychotic
and not on narcotics
why is he even here?

raw and sad
personality and disordered
the patient began to sing
everyone static
police, nurses, doctors, students
we were lost in voice’s beauty
armed with ambulance port acoustics
frozen
unconsciously in awe
hypnotized
and
and
paused

who is helping whom?

last birthday

isn’t it nice
that I died in your arms tonight?
after turning 95
i felt so alive

the guests were all there
and the songs they did sing

i could hardly hear a thing
but held my bladder
for the whole damn thing

and then isn’t it nice
that I died in your arms like that?