

**what and how and why we do:  
a short pondering on the coalescence of the medical and the natural**

I do not have a car.

At first thought, this is rather inconvenient, one might say, and I am inclined to agree.

I bus for hours to hospital placements, jobs, and classes that are all fittingly located on the other side of the city (we are told to travel more, after all), I walk my siblings to their after school activities (much to their dismay, a car would be so simple), and I wait at the bus stop for periods that stretch longer than the bus ride itself (I am wasting time, time is running out, the clock is ticking).

However, and the 'however' in this small story is grand and remarkable and important, this is a good thing. Yes! It really is! It truly is the most momentous and delightful and peaceful thing, this thing, this fact that I do not have a car.

*Although I will admit, very quietly, every so often (rarely), while I am on the bus, I find myself scrolling, looking (searching) for a car because I know I will eventually have to soften up and find a clunky one that was also born in 2002 and also likes the color green and also collects things that are a bit broken, but not terribly so, and I will have to call this car my own.*

But not yet!

For, while I am able, and I will try to be able for as long as possible, I will bus and then I will walk. Because when I walk, I see. And when I see, I feel, and when I feel I sometimes almost fall, but I also catch - I catch myself, I catch myself stopping to look at a ladybug that is stuck between two concrete slabs on an industrial sideway. I catch myself stopping to look at how the sun is shining (it is 4:42 p.m., and this showtime is my most favorite box office hit). I catch myself catching my breath and I catch a break and I catch a couple of other things. I catch a silver trinket falling from a magpie's nest (I pretend she gifted it to me on purpose). I catch glances at the houses built in 1953, stares from those who think I have been catching for too long, good afternoons and good mornings from people going in and out, in and out, in and out of their homes, their cars, the daycare, the coffee shop, the library, the recovery center, the school, the pizzeria, their cars, their homes.

This is confusing, I know, but try to listen for a second more.

*Listen? Read. Listen. Yes, please, listen.*

We are far too quick and we are far too distraught and we are far too far removed - I know this because a super small, obsolete, unnecessary detail I left out before is that I sometimes (always) walk fast, trying to get from where I am coming to where I am going. Clinic to class to work to home to class to work to work to work to clinic to home. Thoughts ablaze, carrying the day's efforts and failures in each heavy, quick stride. Sometimes (always), I forget to stop and I forget to see and feel and fall and catch. Sometimes (always), we forget to stop and we forget to see one another, to see our difficulties and our happinesses, and we forget that we are all caregivers in one way or another, and everyone ought to care and be cared for. And this failure to recall, this ostensible priority that we place on our fragile and frail agility, is something that we need to come to terms with, without conditions, without fineprint.

Conditions. The human condition is one that is founded on a search of sorts. People are constantly searching, whether it be for their next big break, a break, or simply a way not to break. They search for other people, for themselves, for something to tell them that the path they are on is a good one, that it is a path that is useful and kind and that will lead them to where they need to go. People search and seek and look for answers, textbook proclamations of the feelings we feel and hard and fast notions pertaining to what and how and why we do. In medicine, these attempts at reconciling our assurances with our uncertainties are often for the benefit of our usefulness, our dedication to the betterment of others in a physical, emotional, and mental sense. Yet, they also sculpt the path for our detriment and it does not have to be so. We do not have to see so concretely to see truly.

I am nearsighted, this is a fact, but searching and understanding what exactly it is I am looking for has always been a struggle of mine, even when my eyes were bright and bubbly and capable of seeing (I was four and on a flight I did not know was labeled 'one-way'). Now, I have stopped wondering why I see better without glasses, for I finally know that this is when things start to blur a bit and all of these lines that we keep drawing between gray and green and black and blue and everything in between, well, these lines do not exist anymore. The lines between me and you and you and them and me and that ladybug and us and our future, they do not exist and they do not wear away at our line of vision. These lines do not exist when I take my scuffed up glasses off, nor when I take the bus, and definitely not when I walk.

*It is during these moments, around 4:42 p.m. (right before the show is about to begin), when I can stop searching and realize that the magpies that collect trinkets for their nest are just like me, collecting wrappers and flowers and pieces of thread from my very first scrub cap to put in a journal and hold for years. It is with these birds that we might make some semblance of sense of what and how and why we do. It is when the sun dips, and so do my eyes, that I realize that the ladybug between those two slabs of industrial concrete may have also seen sorrow and death and sadness for the first time that day, and is trying to come to terms with it, too.*

Terms. Conditions. The human condition is one that is founded on a search of sorts. I do wonder if we are searching in all the wrong places. As medical humans, and as humans without our medical suffix, we search within ourselves when we should be searching elsewhere and we search elsewhere when we ought to be searching within. Yet, I think it is neat to think that if we might stop for a moment, to see and feel and fall and catch, we may find someone else, a magpie, a ladybug, a squirrel, a person, who is also trying to take their glasses off and see a bit better. We are so earnestly desperate to be useful humans, useful medical humans, to the point where we forget what and how and why we do. As soon as we are able to stop for just a moment, and let the lines blur a bit, things become clearer. When the lines between me and you and you and them and us and nature and the ladybug and the magpie and the bus (my bus) and the car (my car) disappear a bit, so do the impossibilities of our circumstances: the impossibilities of the rapid-fire, never-ending, useful dedication that our human and medical human existence begs of us; the impossibilities of the things we see and the things we never get to, those that we accomplish and those that we only remember between quick and heavy strides from place to place.

When we turn to nature, it is clear that we must not be so isolated, so quick, so determined and fixed in our journeys, regardless of what side of a consultation room we are on, regardless of how many examinations stand between us and our (seemingly) final destination, regardless of what and how and why we do that which we do. In this grand feat of embracing the natural world as it moves around us, unapologetic, all-encompassing, and wholly ubiquitous in what and how and why it does, we might also find peace and those textbook answers we seek to our most unsolvable, innate medical (emotional) questions. In this grand feat, we might also find that the ladybug was not truly stuck between those two industrial concrete slabs, she was simply finding her way on foot.

And so, sincerely, for now at least,  
I still do not have a car.