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A Refrain for Jane Doe

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Her skin steals the heat from mine, and I
surrender it willingly. My hands pump
stale blood from her heart by way of her
chest with each staccato of her ribs before it
sucks back into its chambers.

Cacophony ensues. Then we listen in rest for the
harmony of a regular rhythm, breaths held.

Stay cool and calm. Don't show weakness.

But it never comes together in major chord.

Our twenty-minute *goodbye* has

my sweat and her blood
oozing uselessly to the floor. It
drips down and pools with my
emotions. They don't belong.

How could I have saved her? I think

about how I will tell her family
her heart is wholly in asystole, but theirs is
beating while broken.

They want to see your humanity.

I reach out for their hands and end up
collecting their heat—incidental payment for the
twenty-minute recital. Sans encore.

Cold hands, warm heart, I'm told.

Unless the hands are cold because the heart is.

"She was fine yesterday," they reason. But the sun

sets and resets, a metronome, and sometimes that
step toward stepping down becomes
a free-falling trill without reason.

They just want answers.

My fingers played through her whole range of
skin temperatures with practiced memory, but her name is
barely familiar. My intimacy was with her
problems – the plan. And while I try
to pluck her name from
the puddle on the floor, I hear their hearts
belt out a cry. But my eyes cannot stand
to look because these hearts do not need
my help to strum their beat.

She was more than just a patient.

Discordant echoes follow me home. They become
mine—a crescendo waiting to be released
to nothing.

Cardiac arrest.

And there ends her refrain. But the
reverberations miss their cue
to cease.

You cannot share her life story.

So, instead, I whisper anonymous death by
measures – confining each complete minuet
to digest its theory. *Strong, but humanistic.*
Fed pieces until the whole is
lost. Nameless because her name sticks
to my lips while the melody escapes. Instead I
bleed my own name in debt onto each
death certificate.
Silently scripting their notes
to sound until I have given
my whole self away.

Dr. Jane Doe.

About the Poet

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