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A Field of Trilliums

Lori-Anne Noyahr

At a glance
you might be sleeping
beneath the blue-striped
blanket, your chest heaving
though only to the whirr
of the ventilator,
delivering breath
without life.

Your mother kisses
the curls at your cheek,
releases your hand.
Take care of my baby
she says, although
she knows that
you are gone.

We transfer
from bed, to table,
gently unfolding coils
of adrenaline
at your neck,
gathering around
this vessel that once
contained you,
to whisper thanks.

And yet,
my heart is unaffected
while the oximeter
still counts heartbeats,
while the tube at your lips
mists, twelve times a minute
and the red hills of your pulse
grow steeper on the screen,
as I quicken the flow
of liquid from the
clicking pumps.

The surgeon's gloves
glow bright under hot lights,
fingers working deftly
as I await the metal grate
of the final clamp locking.

Only when
the off-switch thuds
and the respirator
bellows collapse
is the illusion,
broken.

I can do nothing to
reverse your slumber.

I cannot tap your arm
to wake you, nor can I
liberate a raspy voice
from your throat.

Instead, I search beyond
the white walls,
the halo lights,
calling your name only
in my head, my heart
suddenly filling

with the grief
of those who love you

and the relief
of those you rescue.

About the Poet

Lori-Anne Noyahr is an anesthesiologist in Toronto. Her poetry explores themes of medicine, family, and community. Email: dr.la.noyahr@gmail.com.