



Volume 12  
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## *Anastomosis / carcinoma in situ*

*Ashna Asim*

### Anastomosis

he placed a heart in my hands  
and asked me to name each blood vessel

when I couldn't find the words, he said:  
    "clearly, you don't understand the heart"  
and I thought there must be a metaphor in there somewhere

he lined a row of hearts on the table  
and told me I couldn't leave until I could map  
the coronary arteries

so I held each heart  
one by one

traced the borders and grooves  
held the dead weight in my hand  
and felt nothing  
but my steady pulse against its waxy surface

felt waves rising to my carotids  
felt my head pulse with each ebb and flow  
pictured myself plunging into circulation  
following the tides of each vessel  
like a stone smoothed by the ocean  
letting myself wash away



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*carcinoma in situ*

I.  
we wait  
because we are taught to be patient



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2.  
with the invention of the microscope  
came new ways of seeing

new lenses  
new findings

zoom in  
deeper  
and deeper

push past each layer of tissue

look at how cells divide  
and how we grow

marvel

be raptured

new lens  
shift focus

sometimes cell division goes wrong  
uncontrolled

a mass forms  
(we don't say the c-word  
we're waiting on lab results  
to say it for us)



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3.  
something feels off  
but you wait because your kids have basketball practice  
and your husband needs dinner

you can feel the mass in your breast  
too big to ignore

your own doctor berates you,  
*how didn't you notice this sooner?*



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4.  
who gets to decide when a woman should leave him?

when his handprint  
blossoms into purple remnants  
of burst vessels and bad blood

when the family says she is better off without him

when he takes off at night  
and stays on the couch all day

when he tells her she's let herself go

when  
his words  
make  
her  
shrink

when he tells her she has nowhere to go  
no job  
no prospects

so she stays

who's to tell her she should have left?  
who's to judge?



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5.  
we wait because we are taught to be patient

we wait because things could be worse

we are stuck  
waiting to be told  
it's okay to leave

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