



Tens(e)ion

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Finding the right words to inform a loved one of a patient's death is a formidable task. Even if the loved one knows the end is coming, delivering the final shock to someone is difficult for any physician. This poem describes a moment frozen in time where the desire to preserve the memory of the dead overlaps with the desire to move forward.

Past tense

How do I tell this mother
her son is gone
How do I turn
present tense to past

If I could pluck the remnants
of his final breaths from the air
I would bottle them
for her to breathe

If I could capture the echo
of his final beat
bouncing off these ER walls
I would tell her
to plug her ears
and drown out
the coming silence

If I could preserve
his scent
before limbs go stiff
I would ask her to save it
for the days, when memory fails

How do I turn
present tense to past
How do I tell this mother
her son is gone

I do not need to say a word
she has known
for some time

Dr Arora is a poet and family physician in Burnaby, BC.

Competing interests
None declared

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