



Polarity

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A lot of moments happen in one day at a family medicine clinic. As doctors—propelled by the multitude of needs of those we care for, always moving to the next room, having not fully recovered from the previous encounter—we rarely stop to appreciate the polarity of feelings that accompany us. This poem explores that juxtaposition of emotions.

Grief and Beauty

I learn—
her heart stopped
sometime
around
Five—
through a discharge note,
as I sift through a
multitude of papers
letting me know of
flare-ups,
and medication changes,
and placement of pacemakers
in those I am supposed to protect.
I have no time
to let it sink,
to let it
really sink.
Her name—
it still appears in a time slot
somewhere in the future of next week:
“Blood pressure follow-up.”
I have to let somebody know ...
somebody has to know.
And as my mind drifts back
to here
and now,
I rush next door
where young and bleary mother
glows.
In hands—
newly arrived and perfect being
so novel to the world.
And as I listen
to his heartbeat
so strong, so new, so willing:
I’m overwhelmed by all this Grief
and all this Beauty—
how all of it
can be so coexisting,
so concurrent.

Dr Zavalishina is a family physician practising in Toronto, Ont.

Competing interests
None declared

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