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## for Galen

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The crevices in my hands are too shallow to hold  
all the life that moved between your synapses,  
and yet, in the basement labs of my medical school  
I am holding every part of who you were;  
a culmination of billions of years of motion  
resting motionless on these blue nitrile gloves.

I imagine what experiences may have  
pulsed under these fixed hills and valleys,  
the differences and similarities, in that  
you had your own family, your own mother  
father sister brother grandparent cousin, etc.  
with their own names and personalities,  
the way you existed for them, and they existed for you,  
the things you felt for them, and they felt for you,  
is that not all somewhere in these three pounds?

And what else? I do not ask permission  
to raid your tomb, to  
peel away the swathed linen  
your heart was left in, because  
I need to know for myself.



What was life like? What made you  
laugh  
cry  
feel love?  
Did you live the life you wanted to?  
And what was the last of it like?  
A swarm of coloured scrubs  
running into your room, squeezing  
your heart under broken ribs, your  
pale body splayed under monitor lights and sounds  
that recede to silence? Or maybe it wasn't so dramatic.

...then again, who am I to think about  
what your life might have been like?  
I'm just trying to learn the  
arteries in the Circle of Willis,  
the function of each cranial nerve,  
how to place names to small grey lily pads  
floating in ponds of white matter.

And that's all. I'll get my marks and move on.

But, if you ask me one day, was it hard to have  
held the weight of a universe  
in your cupped hands? I'll say, yes, but only  
for a moment.

And if you then ask why? I'll say, I never fully anticipated  
how routine it would all become.

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