

POETRY | FALL 2018

It Was the Second Patient of the Day

By Cortney Davis

It was the second patient of the day
whose arm reminded me of my daughter's arm,

and so I wanted to touch the firm flesh
along the ulnar ridge and the soft skin in the elbow's bend

and press my lips to the few freckles,
to the sweet and salt taste of my daughter.

Then it was the nape of a young man's neck,
how, when he turned away, a twin ridge of muscle

rose to create a hollow where the close-cut hairs lie,
and so I wanted to kiss the nape of my son's neck

and inhale the scent of him,
the memory of autumn air and rivers.

Later it was the hands of the girl with the injured wrist,
how shiny her fingernails, how the tendons moved

over her metacarpals like violin strings,
reminding me of my granddaughters' hands,

and so I wanted to twine my fingers
with theirs, to savor the tiny pulse in the thumb's web.

The last patient of the day had my grandson's gaze,
patient as a quiet sea—

and so I wanted to hold my grandson's face to mine,
to see, reflected in his green eyes, all these images

repeating themselves into infinity.

Cortney Davis, a Nurse Practitioner, is the author of *Taking Care of Time*, winner of the Wheelbarrow Poetry Prize (Michigan State University Press, 2018). Her other poetry collections include *Leopold's Maneuvers*, winner of the Prairie Schooner Poetry Prize, and *Details of Flesh* (Calyx Books). Her non-fiction publications include *When the Nurse Becomes a Patient: A Story in Words and Images* and *The Heart's Truth: Essays on the Art of Nursing*. Davis is co-editor of *Learning To Heal: Reflections on Nursing School in Poetry and Prose* (Kent State University Press 2018). She has received an NEA Poetry Fellowship, three CT Commission on the Arts Poetry Grants, and is an annotator for the NYU Literature and Medicine Database. www.cortneydavis.com

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