
POETRY | FALL 2020

How the emergency shift will go

By Yara Abou-Hamde

You will shake your head no when I ask if this feels
like your other pregnancies. The ultrasound report
will have four or five number sign symbols
on either side of the words *unexpected result*
because an exclamation point in red font is not an option.
All nine urgent care rooms will be occupied by greater
or lesser emergencies, so we will stand in the hallway
next to the cart with the yellow isolation gowns.
For a brief second, I will forget a pandemic has fractured our sense
of normalcy and I will touch your shoulder with my ungloved hand.
I will tell you the pregnancy is ectopic and later,
searching for synonyms, I will read *displaced* and think of refugees—forsaken.
Your mask will make me acutely aware of your eyes, the sadness
magnified so many folds, it will swallow me whole.
When I give her the consult, something in the gynecology resident’s
voice will tell me she is all too familiar with this ache.
I will leave you in a chair and move on to the next greater
or lesser emergency. But at the end of my shift,
it’s your eyes I will see when I finally close mine.

The poem’s form is inspired by Leila Chatti’s *What Will Happen*

Yara Abou-Hamde is a resident physician in family medicine at the University of Ottawa. She is passionate about stories and finds in poetry a particular connectedness. Her poem “How the Emergency Shift Will Go” appears in the Fall 2020 Intima.

© 2020 *Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*