

NSCLC

By Sydney Sheltz

Launching an operation
requires years of training
infinite hours of charting and calculating
recalculating
recalculating
recalculating
because one error dominos into a
mitosis of mistakes.

We know this.
He is my partner in the field.
We've gone on many missions together
because his strengths fit with my weaknesses
like entwined fingers.

They suggest
Platinol and Taxotere
as code names for an uncharted solo mission
I've been assigned –
without you.
As if I've had the proper training –
without you.

I don't know this.

I hold my partner's hand to watch
as the drips hover on the tip of the tube
before trickling down, calculating
recalculating
recalculating
recalculating
like a computer measuring
exactly how many milligrams are needed
to stop the enemy.

Now I know.

Because the metronome stopped ticking.
Because the charts have flat-lined.
Because he can't breathe.

And now
neither
can I.

Sydney Sheltz-Kempf is a Medical Technologist at Covance Central Laboratory Services where she performs genotyping assays and companion diagnostic testing. Her previous work in Literary Darwinist criticism as applied to "The Count of Monte Cristo" was published in Purdue University's Journal of Undergraduate Research in 2015. An aspiring PhD student, she has presented her research on Segregation Distortion's role in spermatogenesis in *Drosophila melanogaster* at Butler University's Undergraduate Research Conference in 2016. A previous poetry chapbook (which also serves as her memoir) is scheduled to be published by *The Poet's Haven* in Spring 2018.

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