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POETRY | SPRING 2017

## Ocean Bloom Across the Operating Table

By Shabnam Shehan

Called to identify  
The body of your own child  
Contorted by the views of the world  
Now some semblance of peace found  
On the operating table  
You taught him to tie a Windsor knot  
Never thinking it would  
Be the way he'd seal himself  
In all his handsomeness  
Two decades later

Gangrene seeps across the beds  
Like the ocean bloom  
Of coral reefs  
Untouchable turquoise blues  
In all shades of grief  
I stood motionless in the background  
Like the extra on a movie set  
And watched your undiagnosed trauma.

I can't remember attending lectures  
On how to comfort distraught parents  
But over the years,  
I learned to cry on the inside  
Much like your son.

So now I'll wait in the coffee queue  
And have my fingers drift over autopsy reports  
The way his mother's fingers would have felt  
A fever  
Both of us barely awake only separated by  
Different points in time  
A scattering of pills flushing  
The moments between us

All the colours of his life

Are now destroyed in an  
Incineration machine  
Bloodied sheets  
cannot always be inherited.  
How terrible to think  
That you know that now  
The way I do.

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**Shabnam Shehan is a 19-year-old university student. By the time she graduated high school, she had four Royal Commonwealth Society Essay Competition awards (2 golds, 1 silver, 1 bronze), two world prizes in IGCSE English Literature and English Language, and 98% in her final A level English Literature exams. Her poetry manuscript *Notes of a Finifugal Mind* was shortlisted for the RædLeaf Poetry Award in 2016. If she's not studying medical textbooks or reading medical novels excessively, she's often found listening to Boys II Men whilst writing fiction.**

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