

POETRY | SPRING 2015

Pathways

By Elizabeth Adler

I should know this pathway
Backwards forwards barefoot, the seaweed slimy in between your toes that summer when
you were twelve

I want to know it from you

When you open your mouth, it is unsteady
And the sound of newscasters and parade play-by-plays
Of scattered voices and kitchenware in the other room
Make word-finding a terrain of frustrated wishes

I want to know it from you
And before you can tell me what it was like
Before you can tell me about the secret passageways under the boardwalk and just how
those Coney Island hot dogs—
“—well, nothing is what it used to be. I can’t even eat those things anymore. It’s all
franchises.”
Grandma’s impatience an affront to your childhood memories, vividly there, buried
underneath sandy, coarse lesions

I want to know it from you
I want to give you time to unearth the words
But I’m afraid they aren’t intact anymore
Floods over pathways
Demyelinated circuits
Stuck
Waves crashing over crashing over and over any attempted advance—washing it all away,
just like when you were a child
But there is no freedom in this expedition

I should know this pathway
The demyelination leading to the classic deficits
I want to know it from you
And I shush the people in the next room and I try to drown Grandma’s nostalgia into
silence
So that I can hear you

I should know this pathway
I will go with you, as much as I am able
And sink my toes in between the muck and scoop out meaning from underneath my nails

Elie Adler is a 4th year medical student at Mount Sinai, currently taking a scholarly year at UCSF to do a fellowship in integrative medicine. Adler, who is interested in internal medicine and integrative approaches to health, writes as a way to process her clinical and personal experiences. She believes that emotions play a major role in health and healing, and strives to be a present, open, and empathic care provider—qualities she believes are strengthened by her writing practice.

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