

# VERITAS

Spring 2014 Volume 26





# VERITAS

Spring 2014 Volume 26

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cover photo by Long Vinh

page 2-3 photo by Jeremiah Garrison

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## Red Sail - Boxiang Jiang

1

The sea charges its green waves towards the shore,  
Upon the blade of rocks, they shatter into a thousand pieces of crystals,  
Grey sky strikes down with spears of wind,  
Thundering to meet the charge of the sea.

A Red Sail emerges from the horizon

Slid on the raging wave,

Behind it, a stream of light slashes through the curtain of the weaving clouds

White seagulls soar alongside, announcing the storm's end.

(Continued on page 3)

Veritas is the UVA School of Medicine's literary and visual arts publication. Veritas has been student edited since 2000 and published annually since 1994. We print poetry, prose, essays, photography, illustrations and more, all submitted by UVA medical students.

In addition, Veritas hosts a visual arts exhibition in the fall semester.

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[medicine.virginia.edu/community-service/centers/biomedical-ethics-and-humanities/publications](http://medicine.virginia.edu/community-service/centers/biomedical-ethics-and-humanities/publications)

Jeremiah Garrison



**(Continued from Page 3)**

“Not exactly as I imagine it” she mutters,  
 Struggling to rise up from the massive  
 white pillow,  
 Which sucks her back in, like an unrelent-  
 ing swamp.  
 Cancer and chemo exhausts her last  
 strength,  
 That buzzing monitor screams at the  
 silence of the ward.  
 An eternity has passed before she grasps  
 another wind.  
 A sparkle flickers in her gentle eyes,  
 A suffering sigh ushers in her story of the  
 Red Sail:

“Autumn leaves fall into a little stream,  
 Carrying them to a small harbor hidden by  
 the sea.  
 They swirl in the water and huddle around  
 the abandoned dock.  
 Listening to my prayer, they repeat with  
 ever-lasting murmur:  
 ‘No ship would ever come like the retreat-  
 ing tide never seeing the morning light.’  
 But when its white hull silently parts the  
 water  
 Pushing the leaves into a waltz,  
 That Red Sail flapping softly in the au-  
 tumn wind,  
 I know it is here to take me away,  
 Beyond the sea and my dream.”

2  
 “How I love the taste of the sea!”  
 An old man drinks the sea air like tasting a  
 well-aged wine.  
 With each breath, he is soaked in joy.  
 This is the favorite moment of his day,  
 Sitting tight in his wheelchair  
 When I slowly wheel him through the sea-  
 walk by the hospital.

A couple sails are gliding upon the waves  
 Several large cruisers dot the horizon.  
 His amputated legs wrapped in a scarlet  
 blanket,  
 Its loose corner flows in the wind like a red  
 sail,  
 We cruise on the beach,  
 Stirring the water of sand,  
 Leaving behind two golden tail waves.  
 He will recite his words:  
 “Join me on my ship, old friend.  
 A cup of mulled wine to warm your belly,  
 The Red Sail shall bring us upon the open  
 sea  
 Where the waves strike the string of time,  
 The stars light up the eternal ocean above.  
 Countless stories in that sandbox  
 Surely worth some good laugh.”

3  
 A three-legged dog is licking my hand  
 While I strike the fur under his neck.  
 “He is healing you!” she smiles.  
 I am healed already.

Lavender scent lingering on me is your  
 elegant shadow,  
 Tremor of my heart resonant with your  
 voice that echoes still.  
 Red Sail brings me to the nameless harbor,  
 To withstand the storm roaming the sea,  
 To taste the ecstasy of discovery,  
 To seek compassion and peace within.  
 Tomorrow,  
 I will raise sail to catch the early wave,  
 Carrying the gift of your healing touch,  
 Bearing the memory of your lavender  
 sweet.  
 Perhaps we may never meet again,  
 Perhaps we will sail together on the next  
 voyage.  
 May you be well,  
 May I be well.

Always look to the horizon  
 For that Red Sail.  
 It’s coming.



Thi Khuc



## Two Hands - David L Richards



David L Richards

The hands were the most mechanically fascinating structures we dissected, but they were also the most human of the structures. It seemed somehow more invasive than all the previous dissections, possibly because hands are so personal and integral to our interaction with the world. Our donor's hands were very large and covered with age spots. You could see an indentation where his wedding band used to be. He greeted people with them, used them to groom and feed himself, and countless other daily activities. And within a day, we had quickly reduced these hands to their component parts, with exposed tendons pulling at different joints and nerve wiring and arteries appearing at different levels.

I also sketched what I dissected; I have always been a visual learner and my notebooks are filled with Netter's style illustrations to help me understand the relationship between all the different tissues. It was quite natural for me, then, to combine my discomfort with the dissection of hands and my study habits to create a life-size diptych collage of two hands. One contains just the bones and the other is overlaid with tendons, nerves, muscles, and arteries made of embroidery string. Together they emphasize the organo-mechanical complexity of our hands. Surrounding both hands is a red-ochre stencil reminiscent of the hand prints often found in neolithic cave art. Those ancient hand prints served as signatures, and connect us to the humans who created that art. For me, this project helped me to process both the beautiful complexity of our hands, but also the life that my donor's hands experienced.



David L Richards



Long Vinh



Leah Jones



The last few weeks in Argentina, the world intensified, as if I had finally bitten into the concentrated core of the place and the juice, thick as the nectar of the fresh mangos we picked drizzled slowly down my chin. The second time I stayed the overnight shift, deep into the quiet velvet hours of the hospital, I watched a surgeon peel back layers of blackened decaying skin from the back of a shrunken man. The bed was his entire world, his body slowly melting into the sheets. An hour later, we rapidly opened the abdomen of a prisoner with a firearm wound. The bullet had not punctured the peritoneum, so we pulled his layers back together, and I closed the skin on my own. The surgeries at night came like the fat raindrops that fall in El Chaco - quick and close together just before a tropical downpour. They hit us with the same smacking force that they hit my tin roof as I tried to sleep on stormy nights.

Without the daylight bustle, under the guidance of the anesthesiologists I began to see the full circle of a surgery. The moments before the patients slept and the ones after we closed their holes no longer fell at the far edges of my vision. I breathed in the tension, as each one emerged from anesthesia. The minuscule twitch beneath an eyelid brought my gaze to the oxygen bag that eerily began to inflate on its own. We floated dangerously in the space below consciousness yet only a few eyes flickered to feel it. The weight of the moment went unnoticed by most in the room, who bustled and snipped and counted gauze. With awareness, we can begin to imagine the disasters that may come to pass before they befall us. We cannot evade catastrophe or error. But as disasters strike, our imaginations expand, we move to prevent a plethora of new possible problems, and our power grows.

When we got back to home base, another raindrop fell. The fourth year resident came in and asked me if I wanted to see a Caesarean section. I hopped with glee. Having spent a great deal of time plunging my hands into abdomens filled with feces and fluids, I felt eager to uncover something more: life in place of waste. I always imagined natural birth as an excruciating, revolting, bloody process that through the course of abundant screaming, occasional shitting, and mottled red face scrunching, eventually can lead to the slithering and squeezing and eking out of a beautiful baby. The miracle of life. In my own completely misguided mind, I envisioned that a C-section would be a neat incision and a clean extraction - all the order and simple beauty of surgery brought to the chaos of childbirth. False.

When I arrived at OB, they told me that it was a surgery for twins. Hippity hop. The room was smaller and isolated from our own ORs, but the tools, the gown, and the gloves were all the same. The incision had a distinct shape but the methodical steps were similar. The electric scalpel seared back layers one by one until the uterus was exposed. I set out the gauze across the surgical field, and handed the two forceps to grasp the wall before they even asked. I had gained an ease in these proceedings that I could never have anticipated. Envisioned reels play in my mind, guiding my hands to the instruments. Scalpel at the ready. Slice. And then pop. A tsunami of thick, clouded fluid gushed out of the cavity followed soon by surges of blood. Gone was any sense of ease.

I timidly queried if this quantity of blood is normal. The chief resident grinned behind her mask and told me that a typical C-section has twice the blood loss of a natural birth. In the midst of digesting this and frantically passing more gauze, I watched them tug on a pale solid structure insistently. In the instants that it took me to identify this as the arm of the baby, they pulled the squalling creature out into the air. It was so slippery and

I could not fathom how they did not drop it. The grayish baby, that at this point, in no way resembled the pink cherub that I had anticipated, was twirled around in the view of the mother and whisked away. Before I inhaled again, the surgeons were delving deeper, breaking through the second sac, and another tsunami of milky fluid soaked the front of my gown. The blood bubbled over, too fast to aspirate and then the second squaller slipped and slid out, was whisked around in the same strange dance and we were left to receive the bloody placenta, stop the bleeding, and sew our empty mother back up.

Sufficed to say, there is nothing simple or clean about a C-section. It might more quiet or quick, but it is just as messy. When all was over, and I peeled off my sopping wet scrubs, I felt the wave of my own energy rush out of me. In surgery, hours can fly by and it is not until after, when you bend your knees and wince and crack your neck and hear the rumble in your stomach, that the time takes its toll and the exhaustion sets in. There is a certain ecstasy in that utter depletion of everything within yourself alongside the restoration of those things within others.

Over time, the surgeries acquired a new sharpness, biting into me and permeating most of my dreams at night. I entered now with legitimacy. I filled a purpose. No longer did guilt creep up my spine as I shrugged on a gown that felt strange still. I set up the instrument table. I painted the patient with iodine. I burned to stop bleeding, and sutured, and even tied my first surgical knot. My body hung in suspended tension as I lowered my finger down to tighten and another resident snipped through the blood vessel. No bleeding and breath washed through me again.

Then early one Wednesday morning, when I walked out of my first surgery discussing whether we would put the laparoscopic cholecystectomy in OR2 or OR3, the earth shifted a little bit.

*A call comes in. There has been an accident. The traumas are coming. In the next fifteen minutes, frenzies of movement multiply. All the patients are removed. The operating rooms are emptied. Bits of information float in like sea glass on the froth of a tide. But then things slow, and we wait and watch in stiff silence. Until a door bangs, an explosion at the entrance, and the patient is there. She looks like a blanched and perfect china doll. 15 years old. I expected blood and guts and god knows what else. But the white is even more terrifying against her silky dark hair. Skin without blood and the whites of rolled back eyes.*

*The silence is long gone. Every surgeon and nurse and able body is running and yelling and helping and surgical sheets are tossed and the second year resident grabs an un-mounted scalpel blade and opens her from chest to pelvis, roughly and intuitively, no steps, no searing. They tear her open and the white is a vague memory. Red blots all out. The bright red blood of opened arteries. Her liver split in two. Thickened globular hematomas are thrown by slick gloves onto the floor. My feet dance on their own around the urgent figures. Keeping out of the way. Water. Gauze. Shouts echo down the hall. And more sea glass washes up. Traumas are coming. We are only at the beginning.*

*More explosions at the entrance. Her mother is sprinted down the hall on another stretcher. Liver lesion. Her father rolls into our first room. Head trauma. I catch the sea glass of the two babies in the pediatric hospital. Their parents two rooms down with the orthopedic surgeons. Femur Fractures. For a second I spin in circles, unsure. I don't volunteer to put on scrubs. My inexperience is too iffy. Finally I stop spinning and*



*move in a single direction. I stand on the outskirts of the mother's room, waiting to fetch whatever might be called out to me. Veronica and another surgeon are elbow deep in her abdomen. Her liver is in slightly better shape. I am following her through the surgery when some time later, I sense the absence of sea glass. There is strange silence. So I slip out of the room and into the OR next door and stop still. The china doll child has the AED attached to her delicate chest and the technician shouts "clear", a zing of electricity shooting through her body. A hush hangs. It is clearly not the first time. They call it. The time, out loud, like I remember seeing in some stupid show. The head surgeon takes off his gloves and turns to the resident.*

*"Sew her up. Do it well."*

Standing there staring at the first body that I watched move from life to death in front of my eyes and beating heart, everything in the whole world seemed strange. Insensible. Nonsensical. The surgeons turned to sew and I spun in circles again, landing back to watch the swift sutures of her mother. She was alive. But the next day she would die. In all, eight were unable to be saved. Afterwards, the nurses hovered in humming clouds, and the sea glass washed up all around. A truck and a small bus collided horrifically on route 11. Was it a horse that ran across the road? Or did the driver doze? The father would be fine. The babies were lost in other operating rooms that must be gathering our glass between their own nurses.

So many small bits of broken glass.

It is easy to get caught up. We covet our knowledge, feeling our power to predict problems. We revel in the ecstasy and intensity of acting to preserve order, to restore health. And then trauma strikes. A bomb goes off in Boston. A horse canters across the road. Order becomes an illusion. Life and death are reduced to a flat line. And we must feel for some other sense. Not then, in that moment. Then, we are transiently numb. Our feet move only with automaticity. The brain disengages. Only later, on the walk home, staring at clouds, hearing a note in the breeze, or seeing a child sitting on strong shoulders, will we wake up again and regain small shreds of sense. The sense we can find is not our own power. It is instead our privilege to preserve rare pieces of life to people.

*"But to look at the stars always makes me dream, as simply as I dream over the black dots of a map representing towns and villages. Why, I ask myself, should the shining dots of the sky not be as accessible as the black dots on the map of France? If we take the train to get to Tarascon or Rouen, we take death to reach a star. One thing undoubtedly true in his reasoning is this: that while we are alive we cannot get to a star, any more than when we are dead we can take the train.*

*So it doesn't seem impossible to me that cholera, gravel, pleurisy & cancer are the means of celestial locomotion, just as steam-boats, omnibuses and railways are the terrestrial means. To die quietly of old age would be to go there on foot."*

*-Vincent Van Gogh*



Long Vinh



Valentina Grajales



## Charlottesville, late June - Laura Kolbe

I've learned the bird names that sound like work or problems.  
*Thrush the floors. Landlady's been acting veery. My ex, Junco.*  
 I've spent nights at the deaf bar watching wiles and shouts  
 in different-fingered flights like city birds and country birds.

I have no gift for languages – what is this, their birthday? –  
 but summer keeps offering new tongues in bright shards  
 to consider: at the community garden, the barechested ex-con  
 who calls me a “female” like it’s another kind of plant;

past the final tomato stakes, pale brushstroke of a girl sunbathing  
 in the cemetery, her back the white slice of a French manicure.  
 After an hour of berry picking, one’s hands itch from invisible causes.  
 These are the silent letters, the unwritable rules we thank for hiding

our speech in plain type. Green-boxed phrases in *Medical Spanish*:  
 thirty-two-year-old man. How many children have you. Your cough  
 is dry or wet. How long ago was that. I’m thumbing through for ways to thank,  
 weep, drape what must not be naked-spoken. *Very humbly. Not certain.*

*I can't imagine.* At the free clinic, a woman’s scarf telescopes her hair  
 up like soft ice cream. It’s crazy: even now her coiffure’s pointing at some star,  
 the day-hid kind, not to enact some hideous platitude but to say, I know it’s there.  
 You haven’t offered me the real wild stuff yet, but I know it’s there.



Daniel Matson

## Love in the Eyes of a Masochist - Jaime Miller

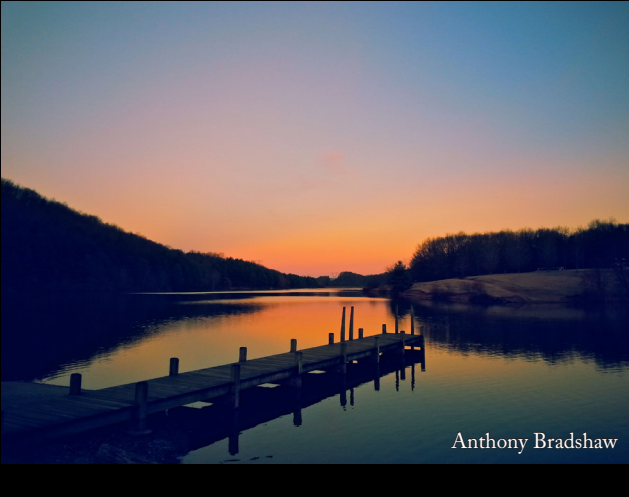
Each one fell through the voids of my flesh  
 Not like slithering grains of sands pushing to tell of time passed  
 To start, a solid medium sitting in my grasping palm too perfectly  
 Only to liquefy upon the closing of my fingers  
 Each melts and oozes over the canvas of my skin  
 I watch as the next slips on the remnants of the others  
 It is I who must cleanse my hands of the slippery messes  
 Without creating layers of sedimentation upon saponification;  
 I must chisel, learn, and forget the soilings of yesterday  
 And live in the gift of the present  
 My fingers afforded the grip of friction by  
 The canyons of fingerprints and lines that produced permanent scars  
 Used to catch a puzzle piece made to fit  
 Between the voids of flesh destroyed in the womb

This one is made to fit  
 Unchanging  
 Unweilding  
 We hold hands  
 This is love!



Jaime Miller





Anthony Bradshaw



Michelle Lynch



Solomon Dawson



Michael Hadeed



Rochelle Zarzar

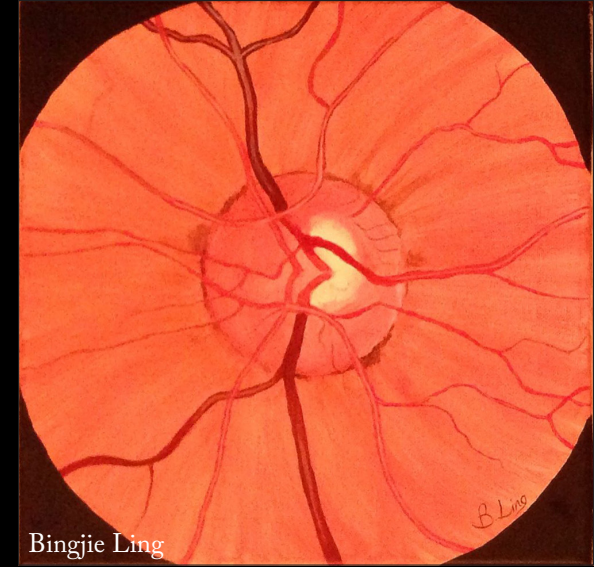




Jessica Wang *Jessica Wang*



Lauren Mahoney



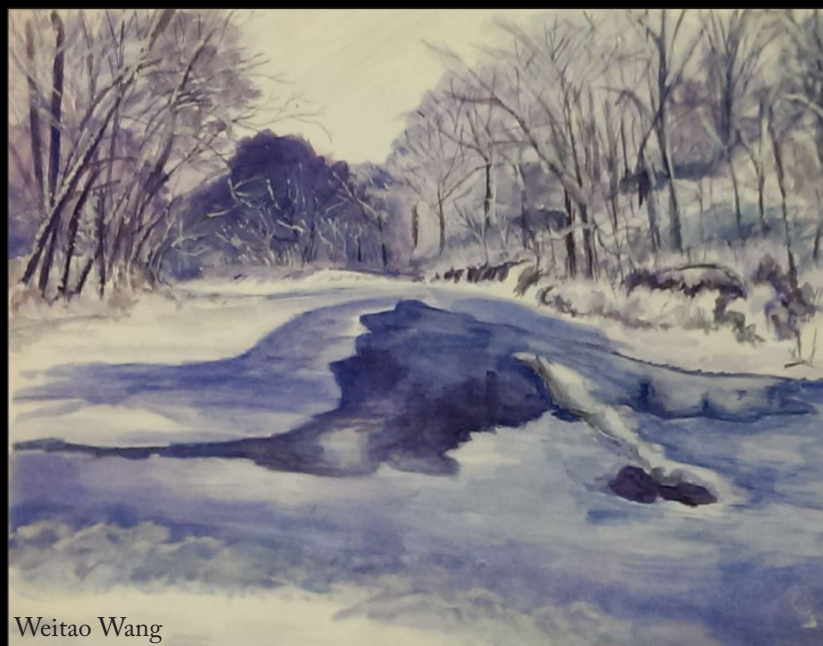
Bingjie Ling *B. Ling*



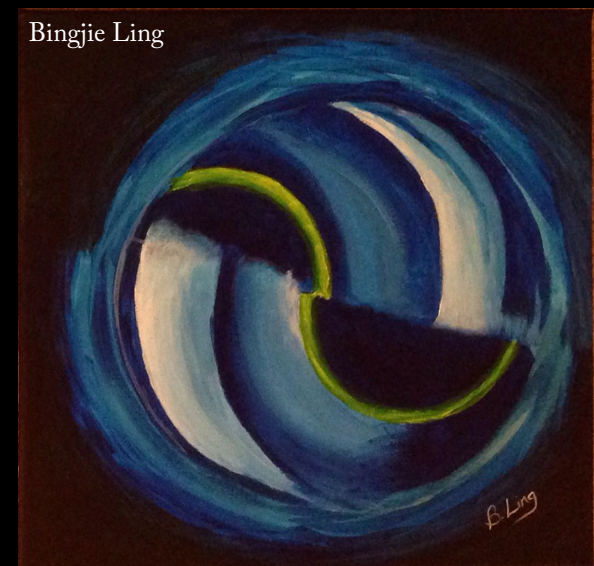
Bingjie Ling *B. Ling*



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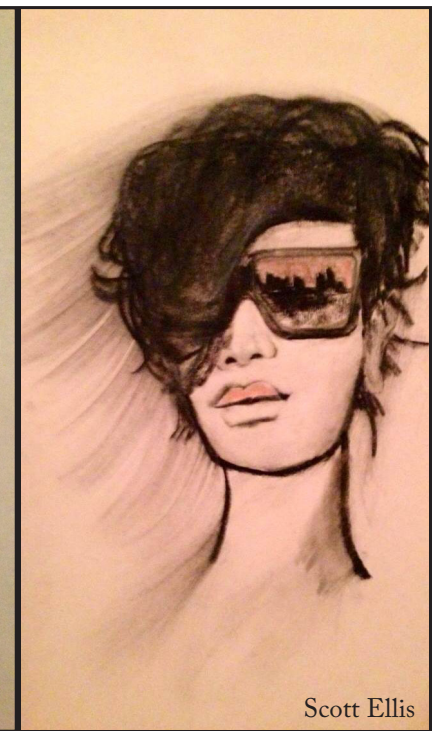
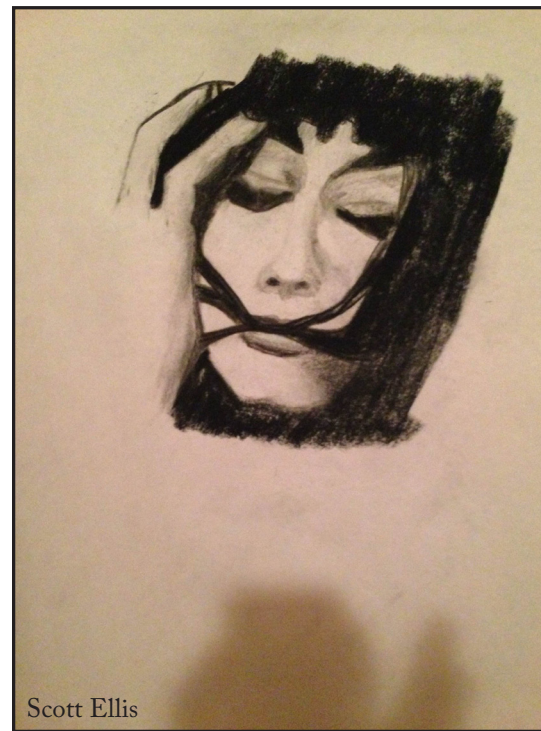
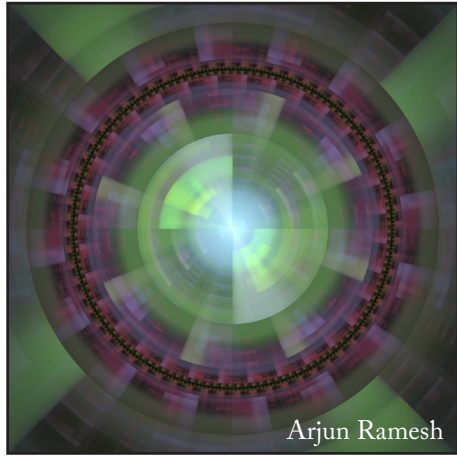
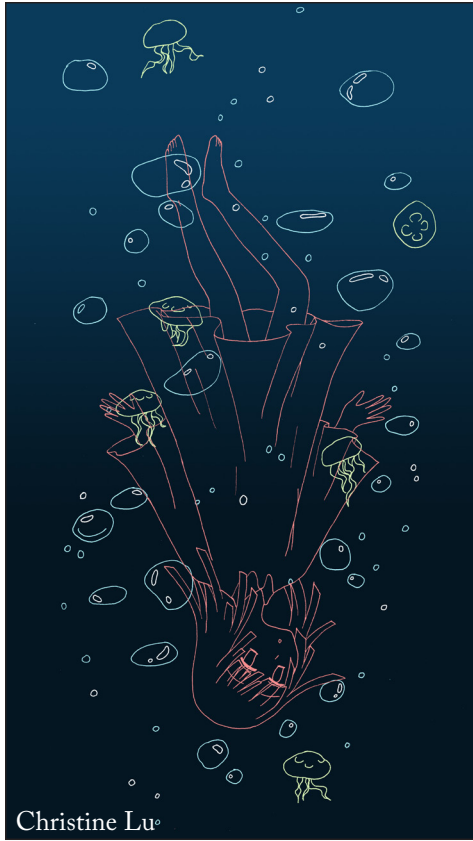


Weitao Wang



Bingjie Ling *B. Ling*









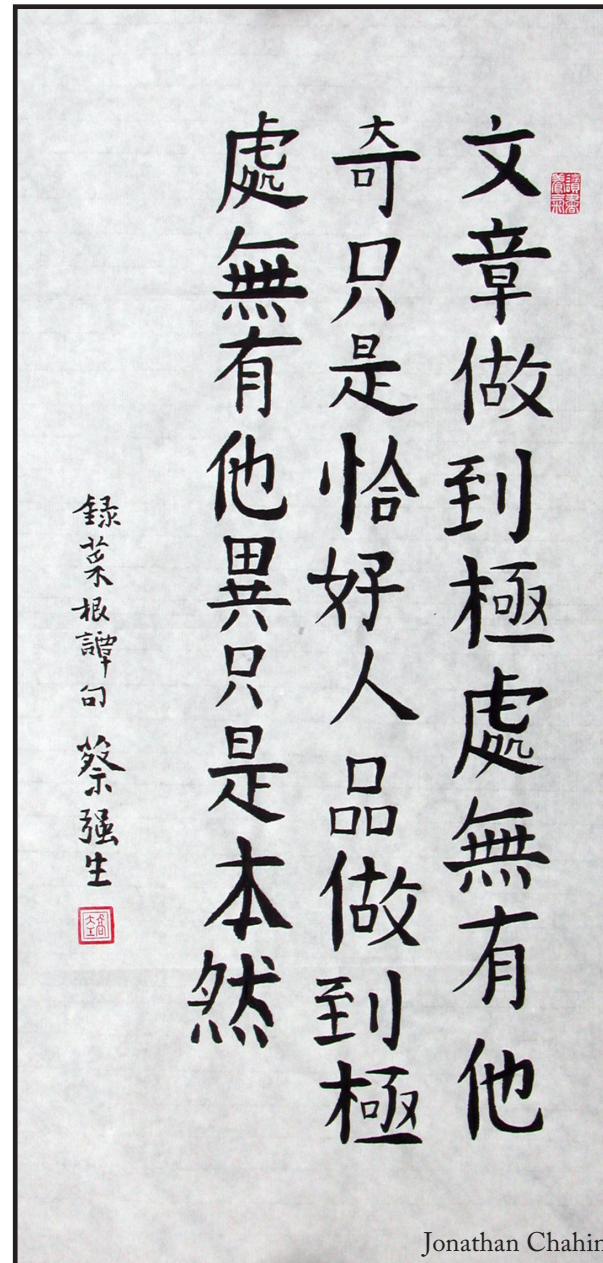
Jennifer Sokolowski



Jeffrey Goodsell



Molly Davis



Jonathan Chahin

**Code-** Thomas Albert

A system of symbols (as letters or numbers) used to represent assigned and often secret meanings.

From Middle English, Middle French, and the Latin caudex or codex, meaning trunk of tree.

Meaning a document formed originally on wooden tablets. Meaning your 6 broken ribs, my

human hands, meaning your face like a sidewalk in winter.



Zachary Theroux

**So Small a Thing-** Thomas Albert

She is so small a thing, still just a rumor in the world.

Tiny hat, tiny blanket, tiny fingers, toes,

tiny nasal cannula pushing the slow stream of oxygen

into her two tiny nostrils. Her new father sits straight up,

Rubs his eyes, responds quickly and earnestly. He loves his daughter

and she can't breathe.



## Saturday Night Lab with Carl - Kenny Borecky

I spend my Saturday nights in the lab with Carl, where he teaches me to open my eyes. He tells me, "Life goes by in an instant, try to appreciate every moment of each day and month." But if I work hard now, I will be happy in the future, when I have the time to stop and realize. "Remember to live life while you can, as life goes on with or without you, and you only get to try it once."

I spend my Saturday nights with Carl, where he teaches me to let go of the past. He tells me, "Learn from yesterday, live for today, and hope for tomorrow." But my mistakes are my life, for life is just a mound of unforgettable memories that last. "You're forgetting that life also includes the present moment, and you're letting it slip by with your sorrow."

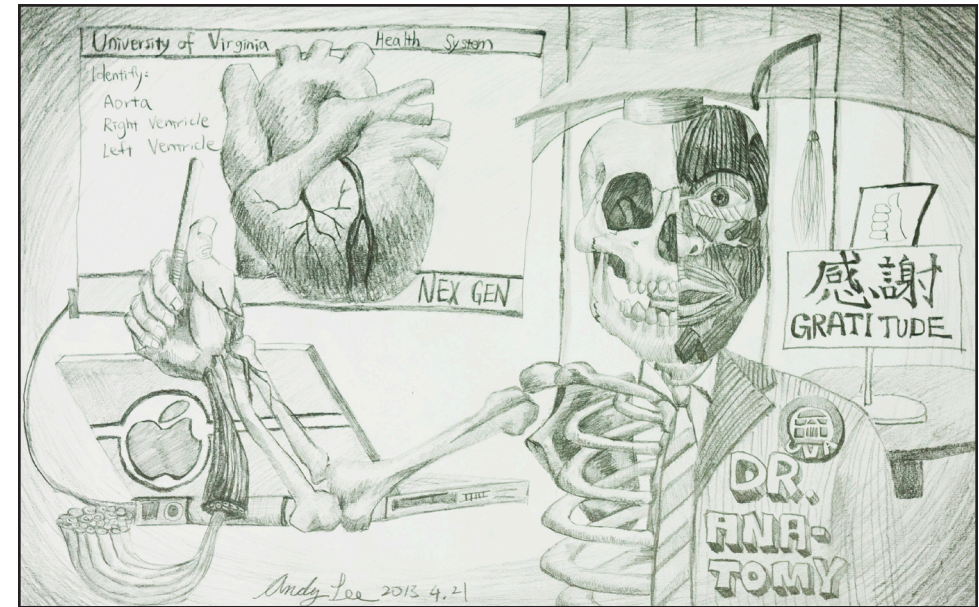
I spend my Saturday nights in the lab with Carl, where he teaches me to open my heart. He tells me, "Time is cruel; never miss the opportunity to tell loved ones how much they mean to you." But everyone is busy, stuck in the daily routine of life, and I have little to offer, nowhere to start. "The most important gifts you can give are your love, time and attention, trust that this is true."

I spend my Saturday nights in the lab with Carl, where he teaches me to use my brain. He tells me, "You're alive, so you have infinite potential to change the world and its beings." But I'm just a man, living from exam to exam, what more is there to entertain? "Never stop questioning. Find the magic and wonder that the world has to offer, instead of fleeing."

I spend my Saturday nights with Carl, and he lets me ask him anything. I asked him how to really live life, but rather than a reply, I got silence, instead. That's when I put all of his pieces of wisdom together, and learned my biggest lesson under his wing. Carl has instilled the wisdom enabling me to answer my own question, though he now lies here, dead.

Now I spend less time with Carl, and more time spreading his messages to live by: Make peace now with the fact that life is hard, and then it kills you somehow. Love frees us of all the weight and pain of life; go ahead and give it a try. And live every day like it's your first and your last, for when you're dead you will realize that you were alive now.

Thank you, Carl.



Andy Lee

## Medical School in 176 Words- Michelle Knoll

### First Year

Awed at being here, making it this far. Ready to heal, cure, learn all the things. Winter comes, and it's all amino acids, bacteria, cutting the once-living. Overwhelmed by work. Spring brings systems of mind and gut. Finally, the last summer break.

### Second Year

Back to the grunge. Looming ahead, a massive hurdle. Months spent learning normal, abnormal, and everything in between. Eight, ten, twelve hours everyday. The big moment: eight hours staring at a computer, making sense of overly complicated scenarios. Then, tropical destinations await.

### Third Year

Finally, the purpose of our study: the people. Now, shifting focus, learning new systems, learning through experience now, working in books during those golden moments of free time. Back to the No. 2 pencil and paper exams. Precious weekend off. Rinse. Repeat.

### Fourth Year

Done with exams! An important decision: which specialty? Must impress, then smooth sailing and fun. Weeks spent traveling, analyzed by prospective employers. A computer decides your fate. Weekend of celebration, then frantic plans. The bittersweet end, with 'MD' now behind your name.



If I ever develop Type II Diabetes, the fault will rest solely on my mother.

Each day that my school bus trundled to a stop at Lindy Lane, my mom would be there to greet little 7-year-old me, swinging me around by my arms after I sprinted to her from the bottom of the bus steps, little red backpack bouncing haphazardly. Hand-in-hand, I would relate to her everything I learned that day while we took the short walk up our steep—and brilliantly green, thanks to the meticulous efforts of my father—lawn, through our fire engine red front door (that I will surely duplicate on my house as soon as I get one) and to the kitchen where my mother would have a plate of her special cookies and tea set out for my four siblings and me. My lifelong obsession with these cookies will be the reason my islet cells eventually destroy themselves:

#### My Mother's Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies Recipe

(which she may have plagiarized from the family of her 8th grade boyfriend, but then personalized by adding more sugar)

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| •2 cups flour            | •1 box light brown sugar  |
| •1 tsp baking soda       | •1 tbl milk               |
| •2 tsp baking powder     | •1 tbl vanilla extract    |
| •½ tsp salt              | •2 eggs                   |
| •1 cup butter (2 sticks) | •2 cups oatmeal           |
| •1 box light brown sugar | •1 bag of chocolate chips |
| •1 tbl milk              |                           |

1. Preheat oven to 350°F
2. In stand mixer, mix butter, then add box of light brown sugar until combined
3. Add milk, vanilla extract, and eggs and mix until combined
4. Combine flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt, then add to mixer and combine
5. Mix in oats and chocolate chips by hand
6. Drop onto cookie sheets and bake for ~12minutes

My mother loved to bake for us. In addition to our almost daily cookie intake, our blood sugar capacities were assaulted by diets rich in hot brownies with ice cream, numerous pies, cakes of all flavors, scones, more ice cream, whipped cream-doused pound bread with sugar-coated fruits, and finally the occasional home-made bread loaf (served with peanut butter, of course). With this sort of influence on the diets of five children, she could have single-handedly increased the childhood obesity statistics a few decimal places, but my mother is also a fiercely active woman and ensured each of us was, too. She would chalk off 50m on the street outside our house and host sibling-on-sibling races (loser had to do the dishes) or take us with her on her daily 2mi walk, always pausing to let us roll down the massive grass hill at the turnaround point. In the summer, upon finding us lazing around the house, she would stand in the foyer and proclaim that any child left in the house by the count of 30sec would spend the next 6hrs doing laundry and vacuuming. This had the intended effect of evacuating five half-dressed children onto the back deck, free to engage themselves in various calorie-burning activities in the great unknown for hours; though, in turn, this freedom combined with our penchant for speed and clumsiness had the unintended effect of producing a number of trips to the hospital. My interest in medicine sparked sometime between my 5th and 6th bleeding head wound (current total is 11).

Like my mother, I enjoy baking trays of cupcakes and cookies, much to the delight of whomever happens to be lucky enough to be around when I realize I cannot physically ingest 36 cupcakes/cookies by myself and must share. But unlike my mother, I have no influence over the lifestyles of the consumers of my baked-goods beyond supplying them with a potently addicting combination of sugar and butter. Their exercise habits and diets are out of my locus of control. In Walter White fashion, I simply provide the fix and go back to cooking/baking the next batch of meth/cookies in my garage/kitchen. As a future health professional constantly confronted with bleak health statistics, I cannot help but feel complicit in the increasing sugar consumption of Americans. However, in a textbook example of compartmentalization defense mechanism, I continue to bake freely while decrying the evils wrecked by sucrose. When I hear people blame their weight gain on the “pinterest-inspired office baker,” I wonder what burden of guilt we community bakers rightfully carry for the rising obesity, heart disease, and diabetes epidemics in America. Considering how much butter, cholesterol, and sugar is contained in this delicious Lemon Merengue Pie that I willfully fed to my friends recently, it is likely a hefty burden indeed:

#### Grandma Bev's Lemon Merengue Pie Recipe

##### For the filling and merengue:

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| •2 ½cups sugar      | •8 tbsp cornstarch    |
| •1 tsp salt         | •2 cups boiling water |
| •4-8 lemon rinds    | •1 cup lemon juice    |
| •8 eggs - separated | •4 tbsp butter        |

##### For the crust:

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| •1½ cup sifted flour  | •½ tsp salt          |
| •½cup cold shortening | •4-5 tbsp cold water |

##### Crust

1. In bowl, add flour and salt. Cut in the shortening until mixture resembles peas.
2. Add water until moistened, but just enough so that the dough just starts to clump.
3. Form into ball and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Then roll it out, put it in the pie pan, pierce with fork to prevent bubbles, and bake at 350°F for ~12minutes.

##### Filling

1. Combine cornstarch, 1 cup sugar, and boiling water in saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until it thickens. Add salt, lemon juice, and rind. Continue cooking and stirring until blended.
2. In bowl, beat egg yolks then add to saucepan and combine completely. Cook 4 min.
3. Add butter, stirring until it is melted. Your filling should now resemble pie filling. Let cool, then pour into cooked pie crust.

##### Merengue

1. In mixer, beat 8 egg whites until stiff, adding ½ cup sugar as you mix.
2. Spoon on top of lemon mixture in pie crust. Make it look pretty so you can snapchat it to your friends.
3. Bake at 325°F for ~15 minutes



My mother's children love this pie. Whenever any of the five of us return home from our lemon-meringue pie-bereft diaspora, we call ahead days in advance and place an order for one of these to be waiting for us when we arrive. My brother was away from home at USMC Recruit Training at Parris Island for three months, but communicated via frequent letters home, all of which had two consistent themes: 1) Marines are awesome and 2) There better be Lemon-Merengue Pie waiting for me when I come back.

My baking skills did not take off until I moved into my own apartment with a kitchen. I was working for the Office of Student Affairs at a university, and they provided me an apartment in the basement of a campus building. A group of wonderful ladies worked in the office just above me, and I spent many hours in their company sharing work horror stories about misguidedly-entitled students and demanding parents. These ladies, knowing I had an interest in medicine, would often speak to me about the diets they were on and how difficult it was to "stay clean." Listening intently, I would nod my head, expound upon the nutritious virtues of spinach, wish them luck, and then return 2 hours later with a plate of chocolate strawberry cream cheese cupcakes, because apparently supplying baked goods is the only way I know how to encourage those in hardship, regardless of how inappropriate baked goods are for the occasion. The hypocrisy was deafening, but I continued to bake cupcakes by the dozen every week and ply them to the unsuspecting ladies upstairs, always seeming to walk in with my newest creation just as they finished their meager lunches and convinced themselves they were satiated. Guinness cupcakes with Bailey's icing, pumpkin apple cupcakes with cream cheese icing, blueberry cupcakes with lemon icing. Each new creation simply inspired another, ultimately culminating with:

#### **S'more Cupcakes Recipe: (next page)**

During a month-long camping and hiking trip, I ate s'mores for dinners four nights in a row. I tried to convince my companions that s'mores were nutritious, but they are not even remotely good for you; the Nutritional Content label on the bag of marshmallows literally just gives up and lists all the vitamins and minerals under "Not a Significant Source of..." Regardless of nutritional value, these are the best cupcakes I have ever eaten, from my kitchen or my mother's.

In an attempt to overcome my Baker's Guilt, I began substituting healthier options into my products: avocados or applesauce for butter, whole wheat flour, black beans for chocolate (this is a terrible idea), or fruits for sugar, but, to the surprise of no one, none of them truly substituted for that delicious artery-clogging taste. Now that I am in medical school, I often bake a batch or two of baked goods for my classmates. As I add stick after stick of butter into each batch of icing (and then pile a mound of confectioners' sugar in with it), I tell myself that all these medical students definitely know cupcakes were never made to be nutritious nor is icing-consumption an acceptable path to weight loss. Still though, I just might start putting warning labels ("Not to be Considered Healthy") on the baked goods I subtly place in the student lounge each Friday morning. At least then they cannot claim ignorance when those cupcakes give them insulin resistance. But until my doctor starts handing me scripts for Metformin (and, to be honest, likely a long time after that), I'll continue churning out sugary concoctions to the delight of my classmates... and to the detriment of their Hemoglobin A1C.

#### **S'more Cupcakes Recipe:**

##### **Cupcakes:**

- 2 ¼ cups + 2 Tbsp sugar
- 1 ¾ cups flour
- ¾ cup + 1 Tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs (20 squares)
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 8 oz bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped

##### **Marshmallow Frosting:**

- 8 large egg whites
- 2 cups sugar
- ½ tsp cream of tartar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract

##### **Cupcakes**

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Line cupcake pans with cupcake liners; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together sugar (2 cups + 2 tbsp), flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. In mixer, mix together eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla
3. Add flour mixture and beat on medium speed for 30 seconds. Scrape down sides of bowl and continue mixing for 2 minutes. Add boiling water and stir to combine; set batter aside.
4. Smash graham crackers and combine the crumbs, remaining 1/4 cup sugar, and melted butter in a medium bowl. Stir until well combined. Evenly place graham cracker mixture into muffin cups. Pack crumbs into cupcake liners using the bottom of a small glass. Sprinkle a small amount of chocolate bits over the crumb layer and bake until graham cracker mixture is golden, about 5 minutes.
5. Remove from oven and fill muffin cups ¾ full with batter. Sprinkle each with remaining chocolate. Return to oven and bake 18-20 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. As they are baking, work on the frosting. Cupcakes are done when toothpick inserted in center of cupcake comes out clean. Place pans on wire racks for cooling. Keep in pans for next step.

##### **Frosting:**

6. In a metal bowl, combine egg whites, sugar, and cream of tartar. Set over a saucepan with simmering water. Whisk constantly until sugar is dissolved and mixture is warm to touch (3-4 min). Transfer mixture to electric mixer fitted with whisk attachment. Beat, starting on low speed and gradually increase to high, about 5-7 minutes until stiff, glossy peaks form. Add vanilla, and mix until combined. Pile this homemade marshmallow frosting on top of the cupcakes still in their pans. Arrange a rack in the middle of your oven, turn the broiler on low, and place the cupcakes + frosting under the broiler until the tips of the marshmallow get toasted. This will not take long. Just like around a campfire, remove these from the oven before the marshmallow burns.



