



## Practice

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I  
Saturday evening I don  
my persona, focus my brain  
                                unplug the memory  
stick  
Swish of a puck, scraping of ice  
                                guttural cheers  
                                piles of beers  
                                entwined sleeping  
bleary eyed rising  
                                first coffee of the day

Transition while driving  
Review the last shift  
Relive all the highlights  
Akin to practice in training  
Goal –  
control amidst chaos,  
                                machines beeping,  
people moaning, rushing, in tears  
Threat –  
the unknown, subconscious  
anxiety, persistently undermining counter  
poise, years  
of training

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Fluorescent waiting room  
Familiar territory, scrubs, white coat  
Signature stethoscope  
Natural terrain, part of the tribe  
Confidence returns  
On guard for the unexpected

## II

ER is packed, mayhem tonight  
First, chest pain, heart attack  
Young man, too young  
Frightened wife  
Develop a plan – make time to explain  
Lacerations sutured, fractures splinted  
Drunken youth, shouting, oblivious to all  
By morning, wonder what hit them  
With insight contrite, anger without

Next an overdose, dead on arrival  
Listen - no heartbeat, warmth departing  
Glance at his face – my heart skips a beat  
Memories flood, young boys playing,  
Carefree, future just dreams awaiting  
Classmate from school, now departed  
I connect with his spirit, farewell young friend  
I linger, still dazed in the moment

## III

Crash, front doors fly open  
Voices shout, tension high  
'Abdominal pain, no BP, call a code'  
My brain finds another level  
Time slows right down, senses focus  
Observe all and orchestrate the players  
Connecting leads, pumping the chest,  
Fluids flowing, saline, "Get blood",  
"Check rhythm, stand clear"  
"Shock", limbs jolt,  
"No rhythm, pump again"  
"Call the time", 'three minutes'  
"Epinephrine, calcium, bicarb"  
"Check rhythm, stand clear"  
"Shock, no rhythm, pump again"  
Surgeons arrive, standby expectant  
Uncertain, will they be needed  
"Check, no rhythm, shock"  
"No rhythm, no output"

“Call the code – cease pumping”  
Surgeons disappear, soon the patient.  
My brain floats back down  
Take a breath, collect my thoughts  
Seek out the family

IV

‘Doc can you see this one, he’s asking for you’  
Waiting quietly in this maelstrom,  
Familiar, a veteran of many visits  
Young boy having chemo  
I’ve not seen him so bad  
His eyes grip me, I willingly attend  
A thin voice, certain yet calm  
‘I won’t leave here this time,  
Please help my parents, they don’t think I know  
Tell them it’s OK, they can talk to me  
You’re the one who can help them’  
Assenting in silence, I place my hand on his  
Connect with his ravaged shell  
Sadness envelopes us

V

Light overtakes darkness,  
outside and in,  
Remove the costume of this persona,  
in transit  
Review plans for Sunday  
Akin to practice in training  
Sleep, chores, BBQ,  
laughter with friends  
immersed in familiar  
surroundings  
At the driveway to my other  
life  
Before alighting,  
I look down  
A tear has stained my shirt

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