*Palliative and Supportive Care*

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# Awakening

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## Poetry

**Cite this article:** Xu CL (2021). Awakening. *Palliative and Supportive Care* **19**, 391–392. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951521000420

Received: 14 February 2021
Revised: 24 February 2021
Accepted: 5 April 2021

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Ill-fitting scrubs
hung loosely
around my shoulders,
I follow my classmates,
a sea
of blue-clad ducklings
bobbing behind
anatomy teachers
wearing pressed
white
coats.

We enter
the cadaver lab,
unzip
blue body bags on
cold metal surfaces,
let out
waves
of formaldehyde fumes
and final wishes
of the deceased.

Let us not
forget
the woman
laying before us
is not
a Madame Tussaud
wax figure,
she lived
a full
life, she probably
loved
dark chocolate,
strolled
in the park,
fell
in love,
annoyed
her siblings, and
tanned
under the sun
like
you and me.

Step one, use
bone saw
to open
thoracic cavity.

But I am
lost
unsettled
confused

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because saw —
is a word used
with wood-working or
construction or
carpentry,
not human or
thorax or
body.

Moments pass, and
in a daze, I find
myself
running gloved hands
along fibrous muscles,
plucking the long
thoracic nerve
as if
it was the thick
C string
on my cello.

I balance a lung
in my right hand,
airy,
light,
sponge-like,
a heart
in my left,
dull,
dense,
brick-red.

I expected
this
to be different,
blood spurting
out of gored
bodies, and
wrestled
out of body
cavities.

Instead, there is
beauty
melancholy
awe
in having to face
and touch
death
for the first
time.

I bow
my head
look down
at her face,
at her eyes
closed shut
forever.

Amidst
the buzzing
of the overheating
fluorescent light bulbs,
the buzzing
of my classmates'
chatter,
the buzzing of my
own body and frayed
nerves,
I gently
touch
her alabaster
forehead,
close
my eyes
and whisper,
"thank you."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951521000420 Published online by Cambridge University Press