

Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine

Volume 9
Issue 2 *Poetry Issue*

Article 6

January 2024

"Told and Untold: Two Poems"

Margaret D. Stetz
University of Delaware

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/survive_thrive

Recommended Citation

Stetz, Margaret D. (2024) ""Told and Untold: Two Poems"," *Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine*: Vol. 9: Iss. 2, Article 6.

Available at: https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/survive_thrive/vol9/iss2/6

This Poem is brought to you for free and open access by The Repository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Survive & Thrive: A Journal for Medical Humanities and Narrative as Medicine* by an authorized editor of The Repository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact tdsteman@stcloudstate.edu.

“Told and Untold: Two Poems”

I. “Freshman Essay”

When you wrote that he used to “put you up on a peddle stool”
did you mean *pedestal*?
When you wrote that his anger “sometimes lead him get carried away”
did you mean *sometimes let*?
When you wrote that he “first threw a pot of camelmile tea”
did you mean *chamomile*?
When you wrote that he “later had chocked” you
did you mean *choked*?
When you wrote that you “had loosed conscience”
did you mean *lost consciousness*?

Despite
a significant number of errors
in spelling and syntax
your prose was clear and persuasive
and easily earned
a B-minus
I’m returning your essay by email
because
you’ve been gone for two weeks from class
and I don’t remember
you showing a note in advance
to excuse
this long absence.
Was there something you failed
to tell me?

II. “Contracture”

They should close the coffin
she said
but his aged sisters
trembling
fragile as glass candelabra
cried “It’s our tradition!”
So he lay
on display.
The discount suit
that didn’t fit before
now even bigger

strands of hair
he raked across his baldness
pasted there forever
cheeks hollowed by disease
rouged
like a crayon drawing
of a clown.

 She stares and gasps:
his fingers
all fractured
bones woven peacefully
into the shape of prayer—
fingers that for decades
clawlike
turned inwards
to the palms
Dupuytren's
(a name he could never pronounce)
hands
she has not seen like this
straight, flat
since
she was small
and they were large
since
they struck her
over and over
since
she had gone
unbreakably rigid
contracted
curled into
herself.