

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Imposter

I am a doctor, and my credentials prove it,
but my white coat feels false, I'm an actor.
As if the years of training were a dream, frost on windows
smiling on my childhood bed,
wild dreaming about what I will be when I grow up,
while scratching holes in the frost
with my fingernails.
White coat, white frost. White coats that show every error.
Do no harm. Do No harm. Do No HARM.
No harm to you, but to me?

If I am the child in bed next to lovely frost, then
who is white coat, doing no harm?
If I am the child, can I
be an imposter in another life? And where
has the real doctor gone to?
Who does no harm for them? What are harms?
I feel ice crystals fighting bleached white coat.
And my inner child present now
but mute and frozen
through the icy window.

Even if I could take up impostership in a chef,
would I smell the scent of spice and fruit, sift flour through

clean fingers, delight in the warmth of fresh steamed mussels,
taste rye crackers dressed in butter?

Ice hides under fingernails.

Do no harm. That rings true. The kitchen scents
and color tempt me

but does not ring true for me.

Then who am I meant to be now?

Or is this the wrong question?

Do no harm to whom? Do no harm to me? Hippocrates
cannot comment currently to guide me.

I feel the ice under my fingernails.

What is the child trying to tell me?

I strain to hear. Do no harm? I ask.

The answer dissolves in betadine fumes,

I see the stains. Do no harm. Do no harm.

I dismiss the child and ice on old windows,

There is no time, no space for dreaming here.

“Code Blue. Code Red. Green grass. Cee Eee. Two Three.”- me?

Get up. Do your job. Do no harm. Why?

Can't I just admire the frost?

One day, I remembered the spring.

The smell of cut grass and endless twilight, when I knew.

I knew I must savour the delicious parts

of caring, kindness, and care, and add the spice

of forests and frost for no harm to me.

There is hope.

Do no harm. That includes me. Is that possible?

I wonder what Hippocrates' choices were.

First check your own pulse. You aren't helpful dead.

Just a fact. Feels right. Count to ten. Breathe.

Demand permission to sleep.

If it's all or nothing then soon I will be nothing;

Ask the right questions first this time.

Take your own pulse, then drop and roll.

Feel frosts, feel fire, feel breath.

Remember joy.

Imposter tries

to erase me with alcohol, betadine.

But windy smells of pine and snow carry truth.

Do no harm. Check your own pulse.

Yes breathe and welcome the frost

that will arise with seasons of caring.

My left hand prone, pulse strong under right index finger,

always slow and steady. I am always thankful

my pulse is there (so far, so good).

Proof that I am here.

Doing my best awash in the daily flood of death and despair.

Do no harm. Frost and forest.

I give myself permission to enjoy

white coats, forests and frost, and ice under my fingernails.

And here I am
Fully grown

right here.