

# Petrified

"It's nice to meet you, I'm Julia," I say.  
I smile, overeager, as you look away.  
"I'd like to examine you, if that's okay."  
No response. I continue my ballet.  
Your eyes adhere to my right arm.  
Your eyebrows quiver with alarm.  
I know it's time to issue commands:  
"Follow my finger, squeeze my hands."

But I am petrified, just like you are.  
Catatonic they say, an emotional scar  
or maybe an infection in your brain.  
What's worse, a fractured soul or corporeal pain?  
I contemplate your eyes, I'm unable to speak.  
You're supposed to start college next week.  
I make an awkward joke about a boy band.  
You smile then glare at your marionette hand.

Why should I keep playing doctor today?  
More hanging questions won't make you okay.  
Suddenly I am also only eighteen,  
and caught up in what your eclipsed expressions mean.  
We talk for an hour, but only I speak.  
You blush when your mom tells me you're a geek.  
It's psychiatric they say, the outlook, bleak.  
But you played soccer and went on a date last week!  
I refuse to see you through physician's eyes.  
Talk of neurotransmitters feels like a misplaced disguise  
when your dad asks me, "What kind of puppeteer  
would make my son's spirit disappear?"

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