

me off all them milligrams.”<sup>4p8</sup> And a large, jowly woman on page 6 peers from above her glasses and confidentially informs the reader, “I figured it out: / I’m 329 pounds, / and at my weight / I should be 8 feet 7 inches tall. / So I’m not fat, I’m short.”

*Gentle Men* and *Ladies in Waiting* remind the reader of the visual richness of medical practice and, at least in Alan Blum’s case, the deep connection between sketching and empathic understanding. Blum consciously prolongs medical encounters by sketching his patients, arguing that by doing so he becomes a better listener, sees his patients more clearly, and “narrows the gap between physician and patient.”<sup>3p219</sup> While such careful observation undoubtedly benefits patients, the practice of reflective sketching also benefits the physician-artist, as Dr. Blum confirms in his very brief (single sentence!) introduction to *Ladies in Waiting*, “I awaken each day with the wonderful faces of patients in my mind and the simple but funny, poignant and wise stories I’ve been privileged to hear.” Those of us who feel that way—and I believe there are many—should greatly enjoy Alan Blum’s *Gentle Men* and *Ladies in Waiting*.

#### References

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## A Private Place

The young couple stands alone  
at the elevator marked “Down to Parking.”  
They regard each other joylessly.  
Their bearing probes something measureless.  
Others queue up behind them,  
fall into their spell, and uneasily  
stand back . . . transfixed.

She, in early pregnancy, appears near tears,  
yet offers him a fleeting smile  
as if to lighten a weight they share.  
And he returns it like a blessing.

In this medical complex, this floor attracts pregnant women.  
The others waiting are also patients, and faces somehow soon betray  
a suspicion that this baby . . .  
is dead.

Doors open to an empty elevator, and the couple enters.  
No one follows.

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