



# A tempest, in two hypoxic parts

## Part 1

Six minutes.  
It had been ok  
and then it wasn't.  
The air shifted  
like the green-grey sky  
before a thunderstorm.  
Skin prickled.  
Your mom howled.  
Code lights flashed.  
The delivery room filled with frantic  
people trying to get you out.

You were stuck for six minutes.  
Like a turtle your head greeted us  
with blue-grey cheeks.  
A storm of women  
tugging and pulling.  
Flashes of metal and blood.  
You didn't move.  
I held my breath from the corner  
cowering in a blue gown two sizes  
too big.  
You were stuck.

A storm of women  
trying to get you out  
evacuated to the operating room.  
In the hallway you sailed out  
riding a violent wave  
of amniotic fluid.

For six minutes you were stuck  
and the room filled with women  
trying to get you out.  
From your first cries,  
flowers.

## Part 2

Nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds.  
It had been ok,  
and then it wasn't.  
The air shifted  
like the green-grey sky  
before a thunderstorm.  
Skin prickled.  
They turned on their cell phones.  
Whirring blue lights flashed.  
The Cup Foods parking lot filled with frantic  
people pinning you to the pavement.

Your neck was under his knee for nine minutes and  
twenty-nine seconds.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe man, please.  
Can we get an EMS code 2? We have bleeding from the  
mouth.  
You begged for your mama.  
You didn't move.  
A seventeen-year-old caught it  
on video.  
They refused to check your pulse.

A storm of officers  
pinned you to the pavement.  
When they turned you over  
sea foam spilled from your mouth.  
We saw it on the news.

For nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds  
your neck was under his knee and the  
parking lot filled with officers  
pinning you to the pavement.  
From your last breath,  
a hurricane.

—Kathryn Crofton, MD

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A mural of George Floyd in his hometown  
of Houston, by Daniel Anguilu.

