

# The anatomist

On the cold metal table, wrapped in a sheet,  
Lifeless I lie, training you to save lives.  
Ribs cracked from CPR, lungs doused in formalin,  
My gaze fixed; your pupils dilated,  
Some exhilarated, others terrified,  
Curious and eager nonetheless.

White coats, forceps, pickups,  
Sharp glistening scalpels ready to make the cut.  
The formalin that burns your eyes  
Makes me seem tolerable;  
The vapours that tickle your nose  
Shield you from my reeking flesh,  
Preserving what's left of me.

I tell you my secrets,  
Every inch of my body you know  
More than anyone can ever reveal;  
Yet you know nothing about me,  
What made me human, my mind,  
My thoughts, my emotions,  
My life, my sorrows, and my fears.

Maybe that's why it's easy for you  
To saw through my sternum, chisel my knee,  
Twist my muscles, crack open my ribs,  
Tear my abdomen, tug my nerves,  
Trace my veins, remove my organs,  
And save a specimen  
You were skilled enough to salvage.

If you'd known the person I was,  
Your heart would ache to dissect me,  
Your hands would shake to wield the blade,  
Your eyes wouldn't be able to witness  
My body all mangled up and marred;  
Your mind wouldn't grasp the intricacies  
As slowly my insides are revealed to you.

Or probably you'd respect the sacrifice I made,  
Bearing in mind that for you  
I did bequeath my physical remains;  
And bereave them of my presence yet again.  
Being someone's somebody,  
A child, a partner, a parent,  
And now, your teacher.

The dead teach the living, so remember,  
The layers you now dissect once housed my soul.  
I renounced my identity the very moment  
You entered these halls,  
So you could make yours one day,  
Building upon the knowledge I am here to bestow  
Upon the willing mind.

You might remember me sometimes,  
It's hard to forget the lifeless face  
You owe the knowledge of mankind to.  
That face, old and shriveled,  
That stood the test of time beyond death.  
Eventually, disposed in pieces I shall be,  
Ingrained in your mind, in entirety.

The Anatomist they call me.

—Arundhati V Subramani