



Illustration by Steve Derrick

# To Dr. Lorna Breen

Dr. Lorna Breen places a delicate gloved hand over mine,  
a shield of indigo, like a backdrop, with cumulus clouds  
laced over.  
The heaviness of the tiny embrace tells me,  
this is not her first time.  
She makes a promise to me behind a mask.  
Another shield protecting her from me,  
or me from her?  
A cacophony of conflicting tributaries decides terms.  
Are they protective orders,  
or death sentences?  
The promise Dr. Breen makes tangos, strong and pointed,  
through the noise.

Who makes a promise to Dr. Breen?

Over two decades ago,  
she embraced a career of quick timing,  
fast feet,  
and lives saved.  
The health care system did not tell her this success  
could be a probability distribution  
of a six-sided die,  
rolled for who lives and who dies.  
Medical students and residents  
dig through books like they dig trenches.  
Trying to survive,  
one of the highest suicide rates of any profession.

Who makes a promise to Dr. Breen?

Piles of white, light blue, and yellow,  
hoarded in a basement crevice  
instead of on the frontlines.  
A faulty health care system, wired to capitalize on  
coins and dollars,  
not the heaviness of the tiny embrace Dr. Breen offered me.  
The promise of safety  
is cracked completely.  
Is the broken promise to match the ruination of my alveoli,  
or the very synapses that hold together Dr. Breen's spirit?

Time is a promise,  
an extension of an axis speckled with more data points.  
Time may heal the conflicting terms,  
lend itself to more successes,  
and balance the faulty system in my favor.  
Heal my alveoli.  
But the burgeoning designations on the dotted lines,  
did not promise time to Dr. Breen.  
I open my phone  
to the solemn news of a heroine lost.

—Jenna Davison