

# The Soullessness of a Catastrophe

i see her soul seeping out of her body  
i widen my hands to push it back in  
but it does not rejoin.

Uterotonic medication, laceration repair, balloon.  
Intubation, chest compressions, more.  
Her soul escapes through her blanching skin  
on which petechiae & ecchymoses bloom.  
Blood enters by the infuser  
and exits via the balloon—  
a fruitless filtration as her angry soul flees  
for i have not maintained the beat of her heart  
the breath of her lungs  
& the rhythm of her life.

my vision is tunneled on her departing soul  
and i cannot see anyone or anything else  
in the moment she Codes & Desists.  
Chest compressions pound in my ears.  
Blood balloons hang heavy in my hands.  
i haven't repaired her 4th degree tear  
& yet i call her time of death.

The scrutiny follows  
with her partner sharing her kindness  
& her parents wishing for a homeland delivery.  
Peer review interrogates my order of events  
while anesthesia accuses my methergine multiples.  
The soul however has no inquiries or blame.  
She knows that I did not do it.

Autopsy reveals exsanguinated blood  
in the pleura, peritoneum, & brain.  
It was the histamines that made her soul flee,  
it was not me.

i would have made her heart beat  
her lungs breathe  
& her soul rejoin her body.  
Trophoblastic deportation the pathologist writes.  
It was an AFE.

All i can do now is let go of her soul  
in a field of wildflowers  
after the downpour  
that marked the birth of her child.  
There her soul can be free  
of her body ravaged by the AFE.  
i do not have to push it back in  
i need to let it go  
amongst the brilliant poppies & dew drops.  
Can i?  
Can you?  
Can they?

—Samantha Fernandes, MD

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