

# Right Brain: You Are Gone

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## Correspondence

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## Abstract

This poem describes the author's experience performing her first brain death examination as a neurology resident. The author hopes this work may prompt readers to reflect on similar experiences. Physicians frequently deal with heavy diagnoses and grave situations. Introspection may inspire empathy and kindness to improve how one provides care for patients and interacts with families.

My light meets your eyes  
and I stare. *Please, please.*  
Your pupils—wide and dark.  
What was the last thing  
you saw? His little hair  
as blond as yours?  
The threads unraveling  
from her wrist splint?  
Two, three. Gone.

Eyelids held open, I sway  
your head left to right,  
left to right.  
Your eyes are unfazed.  
Did they trace him  
crawling  
before the morning  
you woke up cold?  
Three, four, six. Gone.

My string of cotton,  
wilted and apologetic,  
strokes your corneas.  
Not the slightest flicker.  
When did you last feel  
her kiss on your forehead?  
Did you get to smile one  
more time as you dreamt?  
Five, seven. Gone.

Water charges into your ears.  
Cold, wet.  
There's no give in your eyes.  
What was the last sound  
you heard?  
His crying in the quiet night?  
Not her painful weeping,  
I hope.  
Eight. Gone.

My tongue depressor  
brushes your pharynx.  
*Please gag.* You don't.  
The vacuum through  
your tube is violent.  
*Just a little cough.* Nothing.  
Did she have time to memorize  
the sound of your voice?  
Nine, ten. Gone.

My hammer leaves  
your nails pale.  
*I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.*  
In your stillness,  
I wade through the viscous  
space towards her.  
I don't need an interpreter  
to understand  
she is lost.

Ready or not,  
you are gone.  
Where did you go?  
Where will your wife  
and little boy find you?

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## Appendix Authors

| Name                        | Location                                    | Contribution  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Sojung Kara Park, DO</b> | Trinity Health St. Mary's, Grand Rapids, MI | Drafting/revision of the article for content, including medical writing for content |

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