

# Walking Each Other Home

Category: Poems

written by Allie Gips | January 5, 2018

**Allie Gips ~**

Winter in New England and  
night replaces afternoon, darkness wraps the streets while we are all still  
inside.

There are no windows in the Emergency Department anyway  
except of course the window into this city—the stream of women with bruised  
arms

and orbits that they will not explain, the revolving door of opiate addicts  
nodding off, crying out, praying for forgiveness, the chronic-pain patients  
who rip

apart all of your idealism and ambition, trade it in for a one-time hit of  
oxy.

Walking home after a shift

I pass the men wrapped in Goodwill coats and cardboard sipping covertly  
on the stairwells, and though one hour ago I would have asked them

*How are you what do you need how can I help you*

here I am just another woman on the sidewalk and I keep my eyes down,  
my mouth shut, my dreams of a better world bottled.

Daylight savings but no one can cash in on sunshine, all this progress and  
still

I can't prescribe a warm meal, a June park picnic, a devoted family.

Things I love in this world: coffee in the morning, the cat greeting me  
at the front door, the way sheets feel against bare skin, clean fingernails.

There is a picture in my parents' home

me at age six on career day in kindergarten

red headband, men's white T-shirt with a felt red cross, toy stethoscope

big smile. I stare at this girl, try to bring her with me when I trudge to  
work

in darkness, home in darkness, and in between the light is artificial at best  
unreachable at worst. Winter in New England with all its sludge

and introspection. With latex gloves I peel back layers

of odor-drenched sweat-stained work shirts, coats,

listen to crackling lungs and labored breathing,

brush my fingers over cold wrists and toes.

Things I love in this world: coffee, the cat greeting me,

heat that I can pay for, a family that loves me,

a safe pillow beneath me, the promise that I

will make it to spring.

**About the poet:**

Allie Gips, a third-year resident in emergency medicine at Boston Medical  
Center, was the 2013 winner of the William Carlos Williams Poetry  
Competition. This is her third poem to appear in [Pulse](#). Her work is also  
featured in the "EMergence" section of [Boston City EM](#).

**About the poem:**

“There are two quotes that I think of as my guiding principles in medicine. One is from Rudolf Virchow: ‘Medicine is a social science, and politics is nothing else but medicine on a large scale.’ The other is by Ram Dass: ‘We are all just walking each other home.’ This poem is inspired by both (and also, of course, by Boston winters).”

**Poetry editors:**

Johanna Shapiro and Judy Schaefer