

# We Were Both New That Day

Category: Poems

written by Bernadine Han | September 13, 2013

**Bernadine Han**

We were both new that day.

He had come for a new knee.

\_\_\_I was doing my first admission.

Suddenly he was short of breath.

He'd had a cough for a long time, yes,

\_\_\_with blood in it.

He decompensated,

\_\_\_and I watched him.

\_\_\_I learned about acute respiratory distress,

\_\_\_ARDSNET protocol in the ICU.

I left the service,

\_\_\_and so did he, eventually.

\_\_\_The discharge note was written weeks later.

\_\_\_I read it at home.

\_\_\_"The patient expired."

Penultimately, he had asked,

\_\_\_\_\_Do you think I'll get better soon?

The last thing I heard him say:

\_\_\_I would die

\_\_\_\_\_for some watermelon.

Another team watched him die

\_\_\_\_\_without watermelon,

having never heard his voice.

## **About the poet:**

Bernadine Han graduated from the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program and is now a resident physician in psychiatry at the Payne Whitney Clinic of New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

**About the poem:**

“Poetry is not my native tongue. I was trying to write about how—despite the collision of the provider’s and the patient’s worlds, and despite the intensive presence of the provider—so much of a person remains unknown to us at some of life’s profoundest and most intimate moments.”

**Poetry editors:**

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