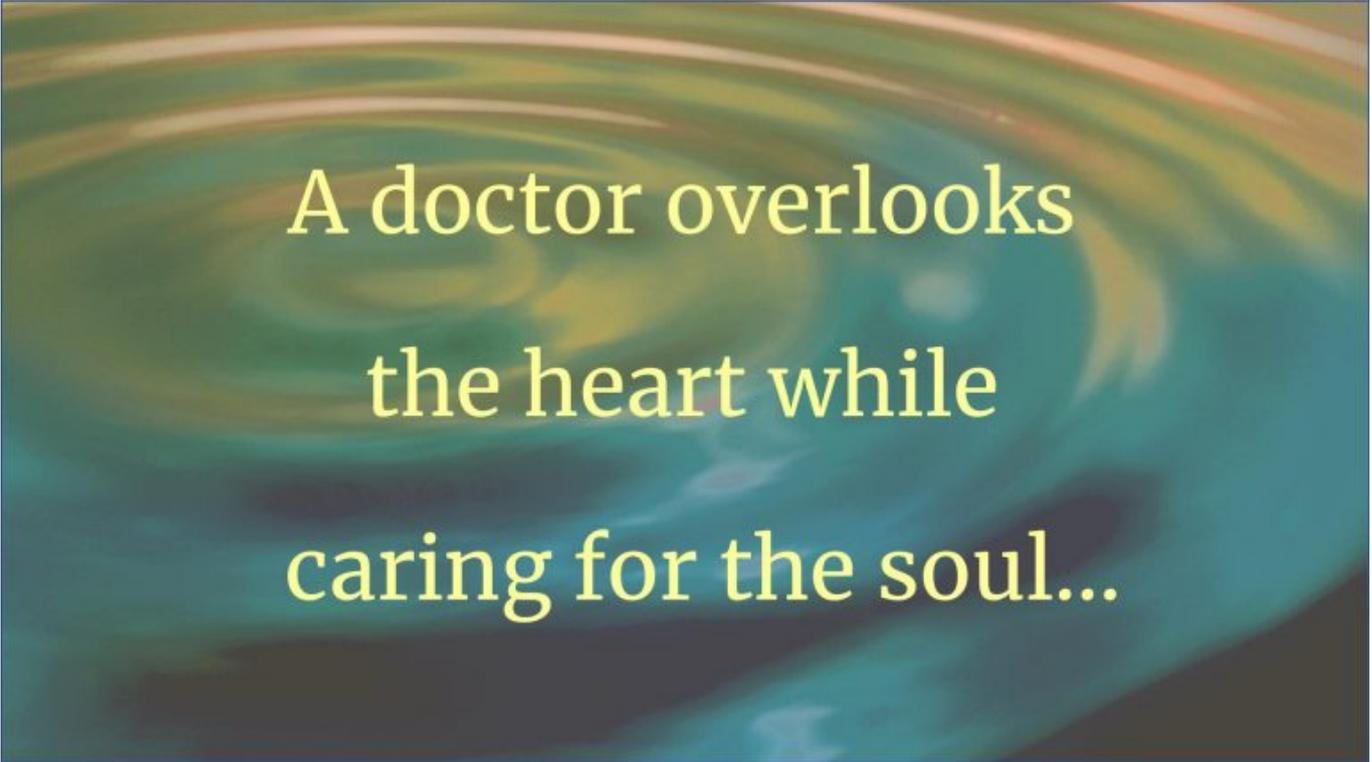


Whatever Else

Category: Poems

written by Jack Coulehan | April 3, 2020



A doctor overlooks
the heart while
caring for the soul...

Of course, I wanted to save you
from all this—from machines
and plastic tubes, from the shooters
with their dyes, from the guys
who scan your organs
for the truth, from waits in cold rooms
whose lights illuminate your life
and make it...nothing. I respected
the darkness in you—your son
dead in a senseless crash, the stroke
itself, your husband's absence.

Of course, I wanted to save you
from being a broken machine
or a body of evidence
and, therefore, meaningless.
Which is why I said, *Your pain
is the great chameleon, my friend,
depression*, and why I sketched
in your heaviness the darkness
of circumstance. Nonetheless,
I was wrong. A badly broken heart
was choking you, its faulty part
was murmuring in my ear.
Of course, I wanted so much
to reach into your sad life

and pull you out, I lost sight
of your body, especially
the turbulent whisper
of your heart. Which is why
when you reached the hospital
they called me to say, *Whatever else
she's got, her aortic valve
is tightly shut. It's critical.*