

Life and Death in My Hands

Category: COVID Redux

written by Nivedita Gunturi | June 27, 2024

My hands that are so accustomed to resting on the wrinkled skin of my aging patients, often in the last moments of their lives, have once again become restless in these times. I reach for a hand, only to remember with a start that we live in a sterile world now. There was a respite, a few bright months here and there where my patients' confused minds clouded by Alzheimer's could see my whole face. They met me for the first time over and over again, always recognizing the humanity of my smile.

Stay away, my brain warns me.

Don't. Touch. Anything.

I shrink away from my patient, mumbling behind layers of masks, my eyes unreadable behind a plastic shield. I struggle to connect.

I come home, I avoid my children, and I run straight to the shower attempting to wash the fear and the isolation in the hot water. My clothes go straight into the washing machine.

Sanitize. Don't. Touch. Anything.

And then, I search the windowsill plants eagerly for new growth. New roots reaching for stability, nourishment and life. New leaves unfurling, their tender surfaces thirsty for light and hope. I hold them, caress them and drink in their energy, brimming with potential. I relish the feeling of life on my skin.

Tomorrow will come.

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