

Protocols of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

By Zamina Mithani

NICU/ Nick You/ sounds like a hopscotch game in a schoolyard/ the rules/
nick each other with syringes of Midazolam/ I say/ I'm here/ Marco/Polo/ close/ your eyes/ count to
10/ you don't respond

in time/ to learn the other rules/ names of syringes and kilograms of
waiting and/ ECMO (eck-mo)/ like the puppet/ Elmo (el-mo)/
a metaphor for blood is

burping in a fancy restaurant/ pomegranate Ring Pops/ Minute Maid and/ Perrier from your lungs/
spinning into OPEN on the barber shop sign/ icing on velvet cupcakes with fondant pacifiers/ 2012
magazines of Jennifer Aniston/ "Pregnant and Alone?" except

for now/ they call it Oxygenation/ I call it the you're so/ strong/ falsetto
/ we are all counting day 5/ week 2/ hour 6/ breath 1/ only half of

the details matter/ maybe the hissing is part of the orchestra/ sputtering like peek-a-boo/
on 2x speed/ I'm learning the crescendo of your stomach fat/ the vibrato of your fingernails/ the way
your tubes scream at me/ I don't like compressions either

I am told/ it will pass/ when I make up more rules/ I am not told/ how
many times/ I can spin/ until I become dizzy/ until slides and swings to
fade into/ morse-code beeps/ you/ don't/ respond/

Zamina Mithani (she/her) is a second year medical student at the University of British Columbia. Before medical school, she completed her masters of bioethics at Harvard Medical School where her love for narrative ethics melded with her love for poetry, comedy, and our ways of understanding our identities in the world. Mithani believes that narrative medicine can be a tool patients and providers can use to work through medical dilemmas and has given workshops on Sufi Poetry and Bioethics to physicians and ethicists at the American Bioethics and Humanities Conference