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POETRY | FALL 2019

## The List

By Thomas Mampalam

Before breakfast, I print the list.  
For rounds, six patients to visit.  
With a knife, I split three ripe figs  
and two vein dark plums.

In the cheerful orange and blue  
Talavera ceramic bowl,  
purple juice bleeds on false flowers.  
On the stove, the teapot hums.

Framed photographs on the wall  
recount what remains after all.  
Grandchildren, college commencements,  
family home for Thanksgiving or Christmas.

The house is quiet as a sepulcher.  
Last week, our youngest daughter  
flew to Budapest for the fall semester.  
My wife is out, at the farmers market.

The tea pot whistles.  
The list will shorten tomorrow.  
Three will leave but three with cancer  
linger long in the hospital.

There should be serenity with useful work  
and safe family but, unsettled thoughts simmer.  
Soon, we may join a list of those who  
linger long in the hospital.

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Thomas Mampalam is a neurosurgeon in private practice in Northern California. Dr. Mampalam writes poetry informed by his medical, immigration, and family experiences. His poems have been published or are forthcoming in the Journal of the American Medical Association, the journal Neurology, The Healing Muse, The Avalon Literary Review, California Quarterly, and The Cortland Review.

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