THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

Winter 2013 Part 1

Heal

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature

The HEAL Mission

HEAL is a place for medical students to share their growth and development, for faculty and staff to impart their knowledge gained from experience, and for members of the community to express how health and healing have impacted their lives.

We hope this work increases your appreciation for the art of medicine.

Thank you,

HEAL Newsletter team

In This Issue:

Prose

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Adopted Parents

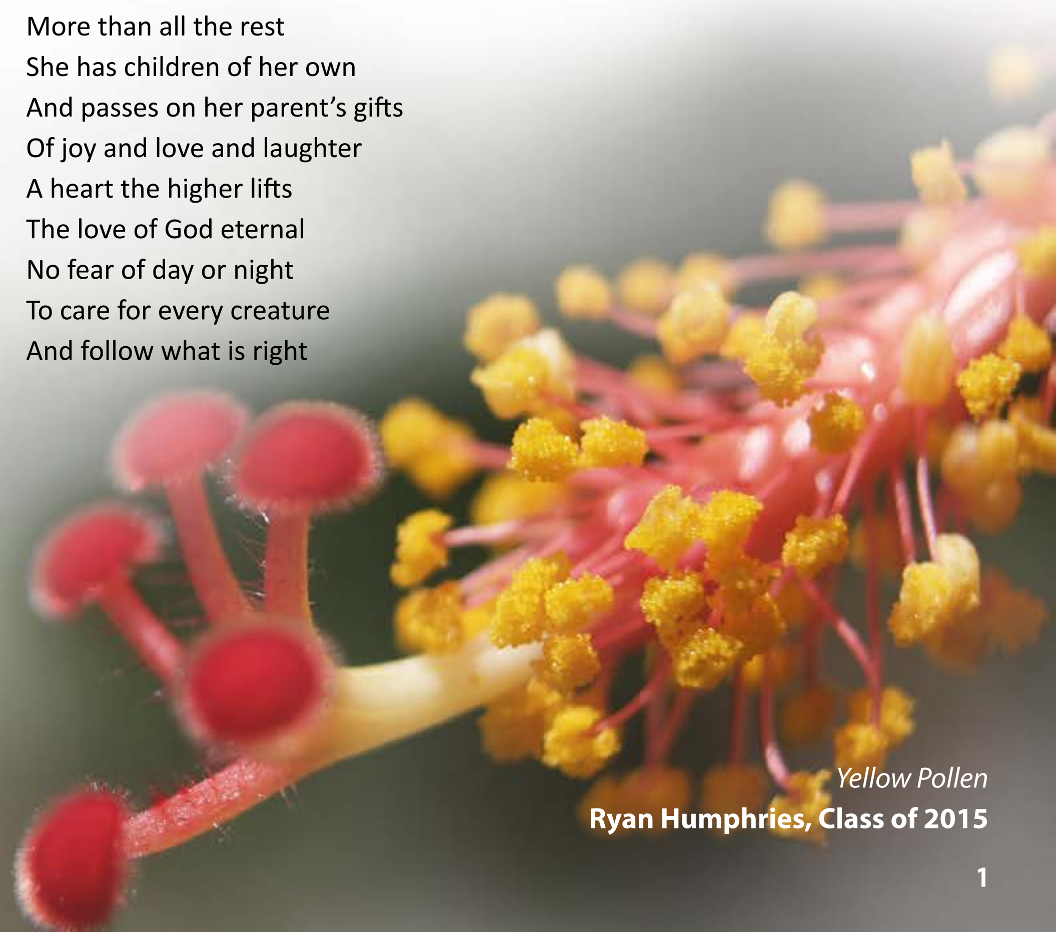
Carol Faith Warren, Circulations

Carol for the music
Faith for answered prayer
Love a set of parents
To nurture and to care
Christmas brought her home
A child that was not theirs
They claimed a little daughter
Their home they chose to share
She grew in love and comfort
With beauty round her soul
She was always their reflection
Her happiness their goal
They loved her oh so deeply
Gave her all the best
She grew and loved them dearly
More than all the rest
She has children of her own
And passes on her parent's gifts
Of joy and love and laughter
A heart the higher lifts
The love of God eternal
No fear of day or night
To care for every creature
And follow what is right

Let it Snow!

Alexandra Mannix, Class of 2014

Better, best
In a race I cannot win.
Everything must shine
Like that sparkling pressed carbon
You so desperately want me to wear.
You miss the leaves
And the first perfectly original snow flake.
You miss the sunrise
In your tired haze of alarm clocks.
As the first snow flake falls
On the autumn colored leaves at dawn,
I'll hit the snooze button
And sleep in.



Yellow Pollen
Ryan Humphries, Class of 2015

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Submit to HEAL

at journals.fcla.edu/HEAL

Register as an "Author" and click "New Submission"

Thank you and we look forward to your excellent submissions.

Dimple Kiran Patel, Class of 2015

Sensational India

Saritha Tirumalasetty, Class of 2015

Sitting with the fan at its highest speed, I absorb how different life is here. At my place in the United States, I live a very comfortable life. Any little annoyance is immediately resolved by the turn of a switch. More light? Got it. Too hot? AC equals on. Bored? TV is now in operation. I have definitely taken for granted everything I have there. Now, being in India, I realize I have never sweated so much in my life—and I'm just sitting around! Not to mention I'm in the city; the village weather must be much worse. I feel so completely dirty right now. However, when I bathe, I have never felt more clean. Maybe it's the idea of cleansing all the impurities I've accumulated. Or maybe it's the sensation of being freshly clean, yet still surrounded by so much dirt.

I don't mind the accumulation during the day though. I feel like I've melted into the earth. I have blended into the dirt, water, and air and have now become one with the earth. It feels very natural. I would probably hate feeling like this in the U.S. Over there, sitting and sleeping in a pool of your own sweat is not ideal and can be easily remedied. In India, I appreciate each drop of water I get whether it's for drinking or bathing. Each gust of wind whether hot or cold is a relief to my perpetually moist body.

My senses seem to be heightened. India is full of smells. A whiff of curry, smoke, dung, and dirt fill the air at different levels. Usually I would pray that any foul smelling odor not linger on my person as it passed by. Now being a part of this earth, I realize that doesn't matter. The smell passes, and I undertake the scent of the next gust that comes along.

The noise pollution is severely different, but it surprisingly doesn't give me a headache. I'm learning to listen differently. Each word that I want to hear is more difficult to understand through the noise. So each word that I am able to grasp becomes more precious even if the idea being expressed has no meaningful value.

My palate has some growing to do. I thought I could handle spicy food with ease. I was wrong. On the upside, I'm doing much better than expected. I have made it through most of a meal without grabbing a glass of water, a sweet, or yogurt to satiate my burning tongue. Granted, most of the meal consists of me sniffling and tearing up a little. Each bite is packed full of flavors some sweet and spicy, salty and spicy, sour and spicy, bitter and spicy, warm and spicy, cool and spicy, and just plain spicy.

The lighting here is altered also. Instead of the bright lights I'm used to, the natural lighting brings forth earthy hues. My surroundings look more natural, more real. It makes everything seem as though it has sprouted from the earth, including people, clothes, buildings, even cars. It's like there's a place for everything and everything has its place, though anything can move about and still appear as if it has always belonged there.

Encore of a Ballerina

Kathleen Wood, Class of 2016

Today, I am celebrating. The field spreads before me, a sea of vast green, blowing slightly in the wind, rolling over the contour of the land. Flowers sway, causing different colors to twinkle in and out of existence as I stare out. In the middle of the meadow, massive ancient oaks tower silently, like sentinel guardians. As I turn my head, a leaf drifts near my face, gliding slowly across the field. The wind stirs it and the different colors of green and yellow flicker as it turns in the air. It reminds me of my past—of times when I floated across the stage like a flower in the wind.

Five years ago, I was studying at Julliard, working day in and out towards my dream of being a dancer at a prestigious ballet company. I loved to feel the power in my legs, knowing my movements looked effortless. I prided myself in making my burning muscles, sweat, and ripped toe nails look beautiful and elegant. I danced daily with my class and then spent additional hours practicing in front of the mirror. I was one of the top dancers at my school, chasing my wildest dream.

Things came to a crashing halt. With one misstep my dreams shattered. I was on pointe and doing a jump that should have been easy, but it wasn't. It took all my strength and I came down wrong. Everyone heard the pop. Then, flashing lights. I found myself in the ER. Things happened in a blur, one after another, people filed in—registration, nurse, doctor, x-ray tech—then hours of waiting. I was counting the seconds, terrified of the coming news. Would this change everything? Finally, the doctor came in to speak to me. He explained that I had a common fracture that dancers get and

Things came to a crashing halt. With one misstep my dreams shattered.

Round Marsh **Ryan Humphries, Class of 2015**

that it would heal pretty quickly. Relief was palpable, but only lasted minutes. His eyes locked onto my arm and I had no idea why. I self-consciously cradled it; it had no bruises or breaks, only an annoying rash that my dance instructor had given me cream for. Why was he looking at it? I thought my biggest problem was the few weeks I would have to stay off my ankle, but the look in his eyes caused me to be filled with dread. I could tell that he suspected something much worse.

The clues quickly fell into place—the fatigue, the “rash” on my arm, they all fit. I had advanced stage skin cancer. I was forced to drop out of my dance program and move back home with my parents. I had surgery, and then was started on aggressive chemo and radiation. I lived on the couch, languid and weak. I spent too much time crouched over a toilet, my head spinning, my stomach rejecting all sustenance. My mom was there with me through it all, holding my hair, delicately stroking my back. I was in a dark place; my once strong body seemed to cave in. I had always been thin, but the pounds fell away and I looked sickly. My beautiful hair thinned. And through it all I felt the hole in my chest ache as I thought of my classmates gliding across wooden floorboards, floating on stage. How I yearned to be with them, how I ached for my dream.

Once I finished my chemo treatments, I started volunteering at a local dance studio, helping with the beginner’s classes. It was encouraging to feel my strength building back up. Slowly but surely, I even felt strong enough to enroll in some classes of my own. It was like finding my old best friend again, to be going back through my familiar movements. I continued to help with the beginners classes and was swiftly offered a paid position to teach. A new passion began to emerge as I spent my evenings helping five-year-olds with their pirouettes. I felt their joy for dance grow with each class. I also finally had time for things other than chasing perfection and found that I quite liked it.

I met him in a coffee shop. Michael. We bumped into each other in line, and with our simple conversation, began to fall for each other. He had big blue eyes and a shy smile. We sat together and ended up talking for hours. The next day we went for lunch. And then, almost every day afterwards, we saw each other. It was my first time having a real boyfriend. Before, I was too wrapped up in chasing my dreams, sacrificing all other areas of my life. Experiencing love for the first time was such an unimaginable treat. I found myself going to the movies, or visiting museums, with Michael, when before I would have spent this time dancing for hours, alone, in front of a mirror. Sunny afternoons with sundrenched kisses and lazy picnics thawed out a consuming competitive core I’d had all my life. We stayed up all night, talking and enjoying each other. All of it was new for me, and I wanted more. As time progressed, I realized that I did not want to let go of my new life, my new love. I was not ready to move back to Julliard and resume the competitive, cut throat life I had always imagined. So I stayed in my hometown, lived life, and loved it.

Watercolor Eye- Age 25 **Jodi Slade, Medical Education**

I am a survivor. I am cancer free. And I have my whole life in front of me.

Today, five years later, I am still cancer free. Five years cancer free. I love the sound of it in my ears, it feels like victory. The path was long and hard, and today my life is so far removed from where I thought I’d be, I could never have imagined it possible. I remember the start of the difficult journey, when I learned that I, a normal young person, had cancer and could possibly die. I remember the dread, the struggle, the pain.

But, now, standing in this field, I am a survivor. Spinning across this stage of wild grasses and flowers, with the wind blowing around me, I understand what has brought me to this new and amazing place. In the leaves, I see my mother who rubbed my back when I was sick from chemo. My newfound strength is the wind, pushing me onward, gathering everything around me. My evenings teaching children ballet—something I never thought I would do—is my hair, wild and free, flowing down my back, finally grown back. The petals that adorn my skin are the soft caresses of my newfound love. As I extend my arm and leap forward, all the painful memories like my feverish raking nights and my broken dream of being a star dancer in a company roll off my back. The wild grass I land on is my future, cushioned with my friends and family. I am a survivor. I am cancer free. And I have my whole life in front of me. This is my encore, this is my ultimate applaud to myself. And in this meadow, I hear a standing ovation.

This story is not based on personal experience, rather it is a creative work of art hoping to reflect the spirit of survivorship and victory.

Country Road **Erin Bascom, Class of 2013**

Memories

Raquel Olavarrieta, Class of 2013

I softly knocked on her door just to find her sound asleep. She looked so peaceful; her sheets covering her all the way to her neck, hiding the numerous IVs that were placed when she was rushed in to the ER. Her teddy bear was next to her pillow, and her daughter was sitting by her side, avidly reading Kathleen Negri's *Mom Are You There? Finding a Path to Peace through Alzheimer's*. To me it was Sunday all over again, I was sixteen and it was that day of the week when I got to visit my grandfather. There he was, sleeping comfortably on his stretcher, surrounded by IVs and unable to open his eyes for more than two seconds. Those remarkable two seconds when he might have been able to remember my name.

It was through her daughter that I got to know more about Mrs. J. My assignment was to assess the patient's mental status, perform a depression screening, complete a thorough medication review and report back to my psychiatry attending. I was unaware that my visit would become so much more meaningful than just determining my patient's Folstein Mini Mental score.

I learned that Mrs. J was not the luckiest child growing up. Coming back home from school was the most dreadful time of her day. As she walked in, she would immediately check on her mother to make sure she did not have new bruises, and then quickly hide from her father as she realized that the scotch bottle sitting on the night table was again empty. As soon as she turned 18, she found her escape in marriage and quickly enough became a mother herself; she swore her children would not have to see the things she saw. Mrs. J. had a family and she was amazed to realize that this could be the first time in her life she was happy.

However, she was unable to put behind the ghosts of her traumatic childhood, so she made sure she remembered to take that pill her psychiatrist had prescribed. Some days she would take one too many, just to stop reliving such dreadful episodes, just to find solace in her dreams. She thought she had found the antidote to her bad memories, until one day she woke up to check her infant's cradle only to find him lying on his chest, lifeless. It was uncertain how she would be able to put her guilt in the past, but she knew she still needed to be a mother to the rest of her children, and she did the best she could. Even though she strongly relied on therapy, the death of her child was a chapter of her life she could not escape from.

Now, 60 years later, she lives with her husband who, at 92 years of age, is still her pillar of strength. Only now she is unable to call him by his name. On occasion, she tries to hide from him and when he is close she begs him not to hurt her. She reminds him how good she has been this week and repeats, “Daddy not today, please not today.” She does not understand why those two ladies dressed in white have to be at her house so often, and why they make her take those pills every day. She sometimes sits on the couch and wonders what these women are putting in her pills, and maybe next time they come close she will push them away. I am now able to understand why my grandfather would not let me give him his medications and kept referring to them as venom. To him, I was that lady who kept trying to poison him.

Later, during the evenings, Mrs. J. is visited by her daughter and for that time it seems as if she is a different person; almost completely healthy. They can sit and talk about the grandchildren and upcoming birthdays. She has always wanted to be the favorite grandmother. However, these lucid periods are short-lived and she soon returns to her childhood. Tears run down her cheeks and she is again under her bed, hiding because she knows Daddy is mad. She cries inconsolably and repeats over and over again how badly she wants to go home—but she is home. On occasion, she is found holding her pillow very close to her chest saying, “Please breathe again, please take just one more breath.” Isn't Alzheimer's disease supposed to cause memory impairment? Why is it that she is able to remember those episodes that hurt her so much, but she is unable to recognize those who care about her the most?

I am back in Mrs. J's room talking to her daughter as she explains, in tears, how her mother's condition has slowly declined to the point where her lucid moments are almost completely extinct. She has become increasingly disoriented, weak, and aggressive toward her caretakers and family members. She spends most of her time sitting on her couch at home crying inconsolably; trying to escape from the memories of a cruel past, but unable to recover those that would give her hope for happiness. As I carefully listen to her story I realize that for me it is Sunday again, and even though grandpa has been gone for almost 12 years now, I am here in his room, visiting him one more time.

Farewell My Heart

Aruna S. Khan, Class of 2016

As sunflowers long for incessant sunlight
And darkness yearns for sparkling starlight,
I trek mountain tops to catch a glimpse of my knight
Whose radiance exceeds this incandescent candlelight.

You traverse the contours of my mind each day
From dawn to dusk you gallop in fine display.
No rest in sight for you at night
As you invest my dreams while I sleep tight.

We contrast as starkly as a plebeian and patrician
Yet you captivate me like a magnetic magician.
Though crossing paths was beautifully blissful
I bid you adieu wailfully wistful.

I See Myself Alone and No Goodbyes

Marielys Figueroa-Sierra, Class of 2016

I see myself alone and no goodbyes
I thought that life could hold on to my dear
I walk and try to figure where time flies

I see no reason for him to have died
The solemn sky is blue and crying tears
I see myself alone and no goodbyes

He told me things that carried such great lies
But things that always brought upon some cheer
I walk and try to figure where time flies

I saw one day a thing that said a sigh
I walked towards the night and in my fear
I see myself alone and no goodbyes

Why do you live among those that are dry?
If you could live one day, what day is clear?
I walk and try to figure where time flies

It seems that day is one I can't deny
I held him close to me but through that year
I saw myself alone and no goodbyes
I walked and tried to figure where time flies

Date Night **José Rodríguez, M.D.**

Shell

Eva Bellon, Class of 2013

There are moments
In almost every day
Where I allow myself to forget
All that I am
When I first wake
With the specks of morning
Shining on my face
And I smile because I can forget
My mind will leave behind
The shell that encases me
Ignore its creaks and groans
A storm battered house
Still standing because of infrastructure
And when I laugh
I don't think of the place
From which that laugh escapes
The tiny tubes and tunnels
Miniature balloons of life
That can cause so much pain
When ruptured
I speak of it all from a distance
I dissociate from the things
That define what I am
I rationalize it as my purpose
In the world I have chosen
Merely an interesting fact
On my path to healing
But sometimes I can forget
Allow myself to be a past
That no longer exists
I push myself to hide away from this
Inside the Id
It never forgets
She screams what I am to the interior
Deafening roars of protest
War my forgetfulness
Then there is my shell
Tattered and young
Confused by the violence
Never forgetting
Where I have been

She Smiled

Cathaley Nobles

All I saw at first glance
Was a time long since passed.
It felt surreal—
Then she smiled.

A small thin charcoal face
Etched by the lines of time,
Reflecting the life she's lived—
Then she smiled.

Eyes so round and clear,
Revealing all the love she's yet to give
To all the world that passes her by—
Then she smiled.

Her hugs not yet weak and feeble;
Her mind unclouded by memories
Of those who had to leave her behind—
Then she smiled.

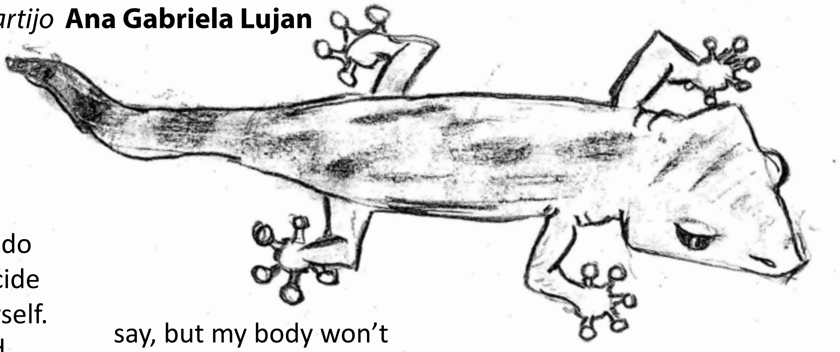
Nearly a century she's lived,
Her days no longer measured in hours.
Unattended by those she once attended to;
No calls or visits to express love or concern.
All she's ever owned decaying around her,
To this fast world she's unattached and unnoticed—
Yet she smiled.

We need to save her
Before her smile is lost.
Not only to validate her life
But to serve as a reminder
Of all we have to smile about.

On 2-13-12 God called her home
And she was smiling!

Sarah

Nicole De Jesus-Brugman, Class of 2013

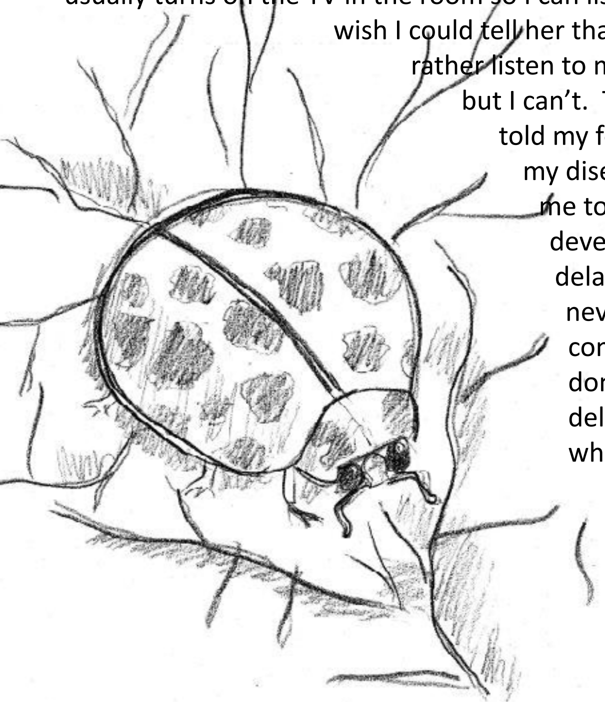


Lagartijo **Ana Gabriela Lujan**

I have pictured this moment—finally getting the opportunity to let those around me know what I am thinking and feeling—I have pictured this moment in my head millions of times. Now that I have a chance to do so there are so many things I want to say, but I can't decide where to start. I guess I should begin by introducing myself. My name is Sarah and I am seven-years-old. I have lived with the same foster family in Sarasota for the past three years since my brother and I were taken away from my mom because someone was worried we weren't being taken care of properly. I don't know much about her, but I've heard my foster mom say that my mom had a problem with taking too many pills. I guess she must have been really sick, I hope she's ok. I haven't seen my brother since we were taken away that day, but I hope that he is in a nice house like I am. My foster mom takes really good care of me and I'll be the first to admit it's not easy. I have Schizencephaly, which not a lot of people know about. The doctors in Sarasota had to send me to another hospital in Tampa called All Children's because they didn't know what was wrong with me when I was born. Schizencephaly is a rare disease and it means that there's something wrong with my brain and because of it I have a lot of seizures and I am partially blind. I have machines that help me breath and I get my food through a tube in my stomach. I heard that my foster mom had to take classes in order to learn how to use the machines and what to do if something bad happened to me, like if I stopped breathing. I spend most of my days sitting in my special chair or laying in bed because I cannot move my body. My foster mom usually turns on the TV in the room so I can listen to it. I wish I could tell her that I would rather listen to music instead, but I can't. The doctors told my foster mom that my disease caused me to be severely developmentally delayed so I will never be able to communicate. I don't think I'm delayed, I know what I want to say, but my body won't cooperate. I get upset when I can't tell her what I want, but I would say that the most frustrating part is when I can't tell her that I don't feel well or that something hurts. By the time she realizes that something is wrong I'm usually very sick and end up in the hospital. I've gotten used to going to the hospital by now, though. I've been there more times than I can count. Sometimes I have to spend the night alone because my foster mom needs to go home and get some rest; I don't like it when that happens.

My foster mom takes really good care of me and I'll be the first to admit it's not easy.

I have Schizencephaly, which not a lot of people know about.



The Lady **Ana Gabriela Lujan**

The scariest part of my day is when I get the seizures. My body tenses up and I start shaking, but I can't control it. They used to only happen once or twice a day, now they happen a lot more. My doctors have had to change the medicine for the seizures a lot of times, but nothing seems to make them go away.

I really don't know why this happened to me, but I have come to accept that this is the way things are. I know that I will never be able to ride a bike, climb a tree, or go to school like other children my age. I will never be able to dress myself, walk on my own, or even hug my foster mom. I don't know if things are going to get better, but I can tell that my body is getting tired. I've been getting sick more often and my foster my mom has had to take me to the hospital a lot. My seizures have also been happening a lot more often and the medicines the doctor gave don't seem to be working anymore. I can tell things around me are changing, too. My foster mom seems more tired and she cries a lot, especially when we're at the doctor's office. I've been hearing her talk about getting something called a DNR for me, I don't know what it means but I know that it's really hard to get because she spends a lot of time on the phone fighting with somebody. Maybe that DNR will fix everything. I wish I could hug her and tell her that everything is going to be ok, but unfortunately I can't. I'm a hostage in my own body. Maybe the next time you see her you could tell her that I am thankful for everything she has done for me and that I love her.