

Reflection by Zelda Blair

As doctors-in-training we learn: nosce te ipsum. Know thyself. But I give up on ever knowing myself the way I know the donor. I don't know his name, but I know him somehow. We're told, the donor is your first patient — and that's true. I think of this in terms of the way someone's name changes its sound when you love them. I imagine someone's name gains some deeper meaning in the same way, when they're your patient. I don't know the donor's name, but this acquaintance is as intimate as anything I've experienced with another person. And it's something closer to pure humanity. I experience it as embodied transcendence, an empirical transcendence — the appreciation and love of which is exactly the reason I'm here learning to do medicine. This experience brings it back to me more than anything else, especially this year when we are all more isolated than ever. For the donor, in life, in gratitude, I would want to share a cigarette, a chat, a meal; to cook something. For him and the people whose lives he continues to influence, as he does mine. I will never forget this experience. It has taught me a lot more than anatomical science.

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