

Medicine

Anesthesia

A Poetic Journey through Silence and Science

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BENEATH the lights of silver hue,
 Where voices soften, fading too,
 A breath is drawn, a mask is near—
 “Just count to ten, there’s naught to fear.”
 The world begins to twist and slide,
 As reason slips beneath the tide.
 A hush descends, the soul is free—
 Welcome now to anesthesia.

First comes the hush, so gently placed,
 A drifting veil across the face.
 No pain, no fear, just letting go,
 A slide into the world below.
 The sterile room begins to blur,
 The senses quiet, thoughts defer.
 Through IV lines, the agents stream,
 As neurons dim and cease to dream.

Propofol’s kiss, with milky grace,
 Wipes the slate of time and place.
 Sevoflurane dances in the breath,
 A lullaby that mimics death.
 Fentanyl floats on silent wings,
 And silence folds in layered rings.

The mind recedes to realms unknown,
 Detached from flesh, and bone, and tone.
 A stillness vast, serene and wide—
 As if the self had stepped aside.

But in this sleep, you’re not alone—
 A watchful eye, a steady tone.
 The anesthetist stands near your bed,

To guard the path your mind has fled.
With hands precise and senses keen,
They chart the course through twilight's sheen.

Their craft is quiet, sharp, and deep,
To safely navigate your sleep.
They balance gases, titrate pain,
They modulate the nervous chain.
They know the heart's unspoken beats,
And tune the lungs in rhythmic feats.

Each breath you take, though unaware,
Is measured with attentive care.
They mark the depths of neural flight,
To keep your soul within the light.
A thousand things they do and know,
So you may rest and never know.

Their job, not glamorous, nor loud,
Yet vital as the surgeon proud.
For all that cuts or mends the bone
Would falter if they stood alone.

And so the hour of silence grows,
While hands above you come and go.
The scalpel dances on the skin,
While you drift far from where you've been.
You do not wince, you do not cry—
You float beneath an ethered sky.

No memory forms, no words are stored,
No pain recorded, soul ignored.
Yet somewhere in the darkened night,
The body speaks in nerves and fright.
And so, the drugs keep shadows out,
Suppress the screams, remove the doubt.

The autonomic storms subdued,
The ache unwritten, misconstrued.
What science bends, it does with grace—
A fragile truce in silent space.

What strange alchemy is this art?
That steals the mind but keeps the heart?
A switch that breaks the conscious thread,
Yet leaves the soul not truly dead?

Ether once, with chloroform,
A crude and dangerous reform.
Then came halothane's gentler tide,
And safer paths were qualified.
Today, we wield a subtler blade,
In gases mixed and dosings weighed.

We target channels, block the flow,
Of sodium gates and voltage so.
We mute the thalamus' domain,
And drown ascending tracks of pain.

GABA's rise and glutamate's fall—
A pharmacologic curtain call.

Yet still we do not wholly know
The bounds where sleep and silence go.
For though the agents do their part,
The mystery remains an art.
What is the self, when self is gone?
And who are we when lights turn on?

For in that space between two shores—
Where waking ends and sleep restores—
There is a place both dark and still,
Where thought and time bend to will.

The patient dreams, or does not dream,
Adrift upon a current stream.
The body stilled, the mind released,
A temporary, wordless peace.

No clock exists in such a land,
No grasp of time, no sense of hand.
A minute gone, or hours passed—
The mind returns, rebuilt, recast.
Awakening as if anew,
With memory dimmed and senses few.

“You're done,” they say, and you believe,
Though time itself you can't retrieve.
You grasp a thought, then let it fly—
A face, a word, a puzzled sigh.

Yet not without its solemn weight,
This gift of sleep, this altered state.
For rare the case, but not unknown,
When waking doesn't call you home.
The breaths may fail, the heart may slow,
A dose too much, a brain laid low.

And some may stir before the close,
Yet trapped in stillness none suppose.
Aware, yet mute—an awful curse,
A conscious mind in frozen verse.
But rarer still, and closely watched,
Each sign and signal finely notched.
Still, fears remain in every bed,
Of what may come when thought has fled.

Will I return the way I came?
Or will some piece be not the same?
Will dreams invade or darkness win?
Will I wake changed within my skin?
These thoughts are whispered in the heart,
Though trust is there in those who start.
For science walks with care and skill,
And safety reigns by studied will.

And then, the tide begins to turn,

The circuits stir, the neurons burn.
A twitch of toe, a breath grown deep,
The climb from artificial sleep.

The tube is pulled, the eyes may blink,
The mind returns, but slow to think.
Confusion comes like ocean mist,
With edges vague and moments missed.
“You’re fine,” they say, “it’s over now,”
A cloth wipes gently o’er your brow.

You sense the room, the voice, the name,
Yet feel not quite the same, the same.
The body aches, the head is light,
Yet safe you are within the night.

The drugs withdraw like receding waves,
And leave behind what healing craves.
You made the crossing, passed the gate,
And now you sit, regenerate.

And strange it is, when all is told,
That you recall no grip, no hold.
No glimpse of blade, no feel of seam,
As though it all had been a dream.
Yet somewhere deep, your body knew—
The cuts, the clamps, the needle through.

But none remains for you to tell,
No pain remains where silence fell.
And so you rise, perhaps in thanks,
For science ranks among the ranks
Of arts divine, and mortal craft—
A miracle, and yet a draft.
You signed the line, you took the leap,
And laid your soul in borrowed sleep.
You trusted hands you’ve never known
To guide you through the great unknown.

And in that trust, a sacred thread—
That you may wake, when thought has fled.

So let us praise the silent crew
Who hold the breath and carry you.
The ones who never seek the fame,
But stand between the flame and name.

Anesthesiologists, whose role
Is keeping still the body’s soul.
Their hands behind the sterile screen
Ensure your passage stays unseen.

A measured dose, a whispered word,
A world of sounds you never heard.
Yet all was done with utmost grace—
A silent guardian held your place.

And when you woke and saw the sky,

You never paused to ask them why.
But in your veins, the truth does lie—
They were the wings on which you fly. ■

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