

ODYSSEY OF A PHYSICIAN SCIENTIST

From a very early age
released from the fatality
of a mysterious childhood illness.
Unexpectedly diagnosed in medical school
and told that my life would be short.

Working in a liquor store at age twelve.
Learning judo to avenge a wrong at age thirteen.
Hitchhiking at midnight, surviving a mortal encounter
with an evil man along the way.

Unsolicited and caring guidance in high school,
a blue collar kid now private college bound
traveling between worlds on a daily bus.
Boxing in the Fillmore to contain
the anger of my roots

To become a physician in training
and a scientist in the wee hours,
probing the most basic secrets of cellular life.
Hundred-hour work weeks since.

Not tiring in the quest to understand
what life is saying
and more often than not,
hearing deafening sounds of silence
when the road taken leads to darkness.

A street lamp in a darkened city.
The stars shining brightly.
Hard realities seen for what they are
the *bête noire* of life detoured.

But on occasion... illumination
Revelation, expectations, dreams
The wolves become as tame as lambs.

Then translating to humankind to
men and women with hearts and souls,
goodness and evil, ambition, greed and generosity
that challenges the interpretations of our testing.

But when discovery and healing gets it right,
We
... we doctors can seem like gods.

A poignant glance back to 1977.
My first month as an attending, my third patient
a teenage girl from Snowflake, Arizona
who has lost her unborn baby
to the ravages of melanoma exploding.

She will never know that I think of her often.
She pierced my bulletproof vest
and led me on to roads not taken
and the existential loneliness of that journey.

by Frank L. Meyskens, Jr.
June 30, 2106