

Spaghetti and Brainwalls (learning how to study)

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A teacher once challenged me to
“write about a difficult experience in medical school”
and I seriously considered just
handing in a diagram of the Krebs’s cycle,
printing out the Wikipedia pages for Cranial Nerves I - XII
Creating a powerpoint presentation consisting only of acronyms and unlabeled images.
Because, as a poet, I’ve been told to
 “show, not tell”
And what better way to show you my significant suffering than providing the primary source
material?

How can I begin to show you the crushing magnitude of my frustration when the knowledge in
my head can’t be formed into coherent images?

The closest idea I have is red static,
 A broken TV with anger issues,
 Receiving too much and giving too little

Studying feels like
My brain is a plaster wall
and medical knowledge is wet spaghetti
I pick it up in twisted lumps, throwing it against the wall hoping some part of it will stick.
But some, if not most, falls off
 (Failure sounds like the wet plops of forgetfulness)
And I have to keep picking up the noodles which I’ve thrown,
Figure out why they wouldn’t stick
(did I not throw hard enough? Should I let them stew for longer? am I running out of space?)
And I keep throwing it
and throwing it
Waking up each morning to find that it’s all sloughed off
Yet I repeat until class starts and I get a new pail of pasta.

Each exam feels like
Fingers running through damp noodles, trying to grip a particular one
But the harder I squeeze the more elusive the pasta proves to be
When I finally manage to wrangle one, I slap it to the exam with an inelegant squish

Which leaves me

Feeling like a child, unearthing worms,

Creating a crude collection of curiosities in the name of science

I have never felt less like a scientist

And more like a child,

Who by the cruel irony of karma,

Excitedly snuck onto a carnival ride he did not meet the height requirements for,

Only to discover

The bumper cars move much too fast

The cups spin upside down

There are no handlebars on the rollercoaster

And only when the coaster plunges perpendicular to the ground,

Into a black tunnel made darker still by doubt

Do I feel like I've made a terrible mistake

Yet I persist in the ink of uncertainty.

Able to write, but no longer able to see the wall,

My own consciousness

But I can hear the missed boluses of noodles as my wild tosses of spaghetti gloop to the ground
trying to relocate my brain

By luck

And by the echolocative powers of failure