

Clinical work

By Samantha Olivia Norin

Laboratory

The smell of cleaning alcohol and sterilized steel has always been soothing to me, they feel like home. They had been my constant companion since college after all. I have spent more time in a hospital laboratory than anywhere else, or so it certainly felt anyways. The smell of fresh blood had long stopped disturbing me, as has the sensation I got the first few times blood was drawn to be tested.



The sting of needles, and the application of antibacterial liquids is one that has become part of my daily routine. I rarely stopped to think that these processes could be seen as strange, scary or out of the ordinary. I rarely thought of the absurdity of my situation anymore, about the blurred existence my lot in life had brought me to.

It was strange to be allowed to wander relatively freely for the first time. It was peculiar to be able to walk these halls that most would never see, or if they did, it would only be for a very short while. There is indubitably a certain calm in such spaces, where few ever venture, and those that do

only do so for a very good reason. My mind was often drawn to the imagery of sacred groves, temples and foreboding juridical halls, areas where only two sets of people went, those that went there to practice, and those that went to be practiced upon.

A normal person would never be able to see past the first few layers of such sacred halls. Most would never get further than the outer rooms and ritual chambers, while some would be moved or redirected to the smaller, more intimate areas of specialty care and attention. In both healing, law and faith, there is a distinct definition between those on the outside, and those on the inside.

I am in a special situation where I have, partly due to experience, and partly due to my own studies in my free time, acquired some semblance of an inside perspective to these hallowed halls of healing. I know the routines, the language and the codes. I have seen the inside of more specialty wards than most practicing physicians. Yet, my situation as a patient still makes me as a perpetual outsider and other.



My symptoms are as bewildering now as they were when I first set foot in a hospital as a seven year old. Nothing much has changed by then, other than the faces that look with worried brows at my test results. Everyone is in agreement that whatever I have, it is Bad. Other than that, there is no true consensus. Who am I to argue with this, I am after all, just another outsider, another patient.

One day I wish to step over that threshold, to become one of them, to be a subject, rather than an object. One day, if my body is willing, and my mind is strong, I would like to truly belong here. Just as some of those that were confined to the temples and abbeys of old for long periods of time, I wish to take up the mantle of my handles and supervisors. I want to belong, I want to become a healer.

Becoming two

You never know what you will choose, until you are in that situation yourself. Sure, you may speculate, hope and plan. The truth remains, that it is only in that specific moment, that you could decide who, or what you will be.

She had never considered herself as a potential mother, she was not the right person for it. She was too lazy, too selfish, too wrapped in her plans, at least, so she told herself. She had so many other things she wanted to do, and besides, the way the world was going, who in their right mind would like to bring a child into the world, not now, and definitely not here.

Then there was of course the small matter of her inability to conceive a child. She had fought hard for the body she had today, for one that she felt fully and truly herself in, but this part still eluded her. Science had so far not been able to make up for this lack in herself, because it was a lack, was it not?

When strangers would ask why she, a woman in her prime, had not considered getting a child, she simply answered that she was born without a functioning uterus. That tended to end the conversation quite quickly, and it was also, technically true. She had been born without many things she now had,

but still she lacked this one thing. This one miracle of nature.

She knew very well that she did not need to give birth, or even be able to give birth to be considered a woman. Many women could not, or did not have children, and none of them had their womanhood challenged for it. Regardless, it was pointless to consider these things, to fret over futures that could never be.

This all changed one day. There had been a discovery, a so far untested procedure, to transplant a bit of the self from one woman to another. If the donor was willing, after their untimely death, and the part was still intact, it could be moved to another, to one like her. Furthermore, they already had a perfect donor for her, if she too was willing.



The operation would bring with it pain, uncertainty and fear and potential death.

Time lost to recovery, and potentially, the rest of her time lost, to the void. The body after all, does not differentiate between a cut made to heal, and a cut made to hurt. But, if she wished, she could go down this path, and if she did. her one-ness could become two. She needed to decide soon, it was uncertain if such a chance would ever come her way again.

You never know how you will react, what you will decide when you are confronted with what you assumed to be impossible. She did not know now either, she only knew that she was shaking . . .

Apothecary

Drugs, the words have so many connotations, so many meanings for many people. Pharmaceuticals, psychedelics, legal and illegal, controlled and uncontrolled substances, all of them are placed within this one word. Healing, pain, suffering and euphoria, drugs can do all this and more.



The uses of these drugs vary greatly from area to area, from time to time, and are most often not as straightforward in their categorization as we would like them to be. The things that are designed to heal, can more often than not be used to harm, and quite a few harmful things have come to help us heal.



Then there is ofcourse the difficult question of where you even draw the line between what is harm and what is healing.

What is healing, and what is hurting, is something that has troubled me for a long time. There are many that would see my practice as immoral. The way I use certain reagents in my care for myself and others is often seen as dangerous or wrong. I would argue that not doing so would be the true dangerous path, that not acting is far more dangerous. I have for several years taken pills and salves that have better aligned my body with that of my mind, and I have helped others do the same. Despite the good my cures do, some only wish to see imagined ills.

I have been a subject to many a cure and supplements during my life, but this one cure seems to be the one that causes my surroundings the most distress. I can not say that I am shocked or surprised by this development. Despite the fact that I expected reactions from those around me, they still hurt, and they still hurt to this day.

The power of healing has always laid with the few and the learned, from the priests of ancient Messopotamia to the modern Doctor and pharmacist. The followers of alternative medicine likewise have their experts and chosen ones that prescribe potions and cures. Each of them follow their own schools and practices. I am also one of those healers, and I use my medical and medicinal knowledge to help in any way I can.

Be it from magic, faith or science, all have been used for sharing, developing and performing healing. This is ofcourse true of any profession, all of them have their secrets, their masters and their hidden truths. Regardless, few have so much power over the self as healing does, so intrinsically tied to what we are and the self.

One of the curses of mortality is to be unable to be knowledgeable about everything. The price for furthering knowledge comes from forcing us to specialize and not learn everything, medicine, more than anything forces us to face this fact. I have chosen to commit some of my life to try and heal myself and others. This means there will be so many things I will never be able to know. Regardless, we never stop trying, it is in our nature to try and understand everything.