Reflections for September

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BEQUEST

The neuropathologist's hands, her gloves
the purple of thyme in flower, lift
from the bin of white plastic, something that
might have held
bird seed or daffodil bulbs, your brain:
Unrecognizable, although
Unique as was your face or voice.
You wanted us to see it,
and so I feel you ask us, as if
in your presence, to point out what you would
point out,
as students gather around, as the knife
lays out the patterning.
of tightly-packed gyri:
The caudate nuclei, bulging
into the walls of the ventricles, not
shriveled flat, as in Huntington's, which you
had studied,
but quite robust, and then the midbrain
in which the moustache shape of darkness
remains unfaded. The hippocampus:
its plump curls feathered into
tesselated memory. But it is

vain to sift the synapses.
No stain, no archeology
of molecules, no microscope
has resolution to reveal
grief's cellar-hole, thought's spiral stair,
the hearth of kindness, humor's wink
like a gleam through curtains.

Now we admire
the cerebellum's symmetry
like branches espaliered for fruitful
use of sun. But with the blade's
next fall, we suddenly can see
the old blood burst that wrenched askew
the pleasure of eating, clearness of speaking,
ease of balance walking. You diagnosed
dysdiadochokinesia
trying the pivot of your own wrist. You had
examined so many patients. Now
each of us, watching, understands
it's our turn to learn, to teach, to care,
we who remain in repair, tucked into
our vaults, streaming through our foramina, nonstop
trajectories racing through junctions of dew,
electricity dancing. You leave yourself in our hands.

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