Finger-nose test

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MORE ONLINE

Audio

Listen to Dr. Nair read this poem.

[NPub.org/06lfs1](https://www.npub.org/06lfs1)

Somewhere between my finger and her nose,
She failed, she lost her track.
The diagnostic algorithm kicked in.

Strapped to the cold MRI table
She was sucked into the dark cavern.
Bottomless pit
Light at the end of the tunnel?

In bursts of 2-T magnet, hydrogen ions fall in line
The scanner whirled around
Looking for signs of indiscipline.
The T2-weighted white matter lit up in black
Revealing the rogue mass.
Verdict: doubtful resectability
But optimism blurs chasms of risk.

Scalp-flap, burr hole, crimson blood flood,
Mosquitos catch the bleeders;
Vampires of plastic tube suck blood.
The tumor is scooped out
The stench of cautery masks the sigh of relief.

Comforting hiss of the ventilator
Regular blip of the ECG monitor
Quiet ripple of the oximeter waves
But her pupils fail to react.

I wish she had not failed the finger-nose test.

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