Eyes pull across glass landscaoses of hematoxylin & eosin:
hollow corridor of vessel within foreign sea of blood,
horizon of starry lymph node sky.
Just one cell with its small blue nuclear heart may go awry.

What glimpse did van Leeuwenhoek have with his golden glass eye?
We cannot pretend we saw the usual three-layered curve of the cerebellum folding over itself—a clean cloth.
Deeper the brave Purkinje cells with their pink eyes and long lashes are lost.

At day’s end the sky is understated, but familiar: Castor & Pollux at right, Auriga—invisible, but always there.
The dark holds the already gone and the yet to come.
Even Pleiades will fall into itself, the burning cell with its cytoplasm falling apart.

I once held a flask of cardiac myocytes, small stars in their wet pink plastic galaxy.
I used to think of the heart as one.
But that’s the thing: each one of these cells was beating.

Sarah Cross, MD, is a resident physician in obstetrics and gynecology at Yale-New Haven Hospital in Connecticut. She is the winner of Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine and Pharmacy’s William Carlos Williams Poetry Competition, among other awards, and is a member of the editorial board for the Journal of Medical Humanities. Her work has appeared in Chest, the Journal of Medical Humanities, The Pharos, and a number of other journals.

Copyright 2010 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.