

POETRY

Hubris*For Charles Bailey*

I saw your picture in the paper the other day —
you, who held my heart in your hands.
Overworked, beat by beat, it pumped
my blood through a narrowing passage

ravaged by rheumatic fever,
sending its strident cry that students came to hear.
Then you proposed a cure
to spread open my chest,

place a finger inside my beating heart,
break through the damaged valve.
You had practised on dogs, you said,
but didn't say none survived.

I've heard you booked two cases
same day, in different places;
had a taxi waiting
to take you cross town, try again,

should you at first not succeed.
I can see you running through the hallways,
your white coat over bloodied scrubs,
slamming the door of the waiting cab.

Then you were off, racing
through back streets of Philadelphia,
toward Episcopal Hospital, where I lay waiting —
innocent of that death and full of hope.

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CMAJ 2011. DOI:10.1503/cmaj.101392



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