

Isaiah Thomas

2020 Marguerite Rush Lerner Creative Medical Writing and Art Contest

Anatomy Lab, a Ghost Story

A wise man once said that we are each

A mind in a body

A ghost in a machine

A house with a light on in the attic.

I have seen these haunted houses

Laid open, hearthstones bared,

Drops of heating oil drumming

Against metal tabletops,

Ghosts crinkling unseen

In the folds of white plastic robes.

I have seen bodies

Like stately manors,

Like beachside cottages, warped by sea salt,

Like the two-story colonial where I grew up.

When the lightning has left the circuits,

When the joints have creaked out

Their final sighs,

When the last window shade has been drawn,

We conjure the spirits with ritual,
With silver blades and ancient maps.

We enter each house
As thieves in the night
As welcomed guests
As students of architecture
To know its plumbing, its mosaics,
Its lives lived and lost
Painted as frescoes on its walls.

You might find wallpaper peeling,
Tile floors cracked.
Some tenants prefer to dim the lights
And sleep into the longest night.
Some residents leave in a hurry,
Kitchen faucet running,
Dinner growing cold on the table.

A person is a place.
These haunted houses bleed stories.
Ghost stories that we carry
To whisper, to whistle
When we're alone, in the dark,
In our own homes.