



## Circus Man

His name was Daniel and he had  
no one but knife-throwing eyes  
pachyderm skin and tobacco tar hands  
to speak for him.

His legs were thin as wires having  
outrun lions pinned in the end  
by tumors trampling  
his heaving chest his airway  
closing like a fist.

He could not raise  
his voice had never  
learned to write could only  
nod

I understand,  
If you take the tube out—

or No  
I have no family  
or No  
I do not want a priest  
and Yes, goddamn  
I understand  
I understand  
I understand

We took it out—

And he never revealed how a man  
swallows flame, how to sleep  
among cats, how to fall  
from a train

He just shuttered his eyes leaving  
only his name, which  
was Daniel.

**By Gaetan Sgro**

Illustration by Taylor Hollingsworth

Reprinted from *The Healing Muse*  
(Vol. 13, No. 1)

*Gaetan Sgro, an MD (Res '13), was the Class of 2022's invited faculty speaker on Diploma Day. He is a clinical assistant professor of medicine, an academic hospitalist at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, a storyteller and a poet. He's a recipient of the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award, the Golden Apple Award and the Carl R. Fuhrman Clinical Educator Award. He serves as the site director of the My Life, My Story Program as well as associate program director for the UPMC internal medicine residency. Sgro also codirects Pitt Med's Area of Concentration in Medical Humanities and Ethics.*