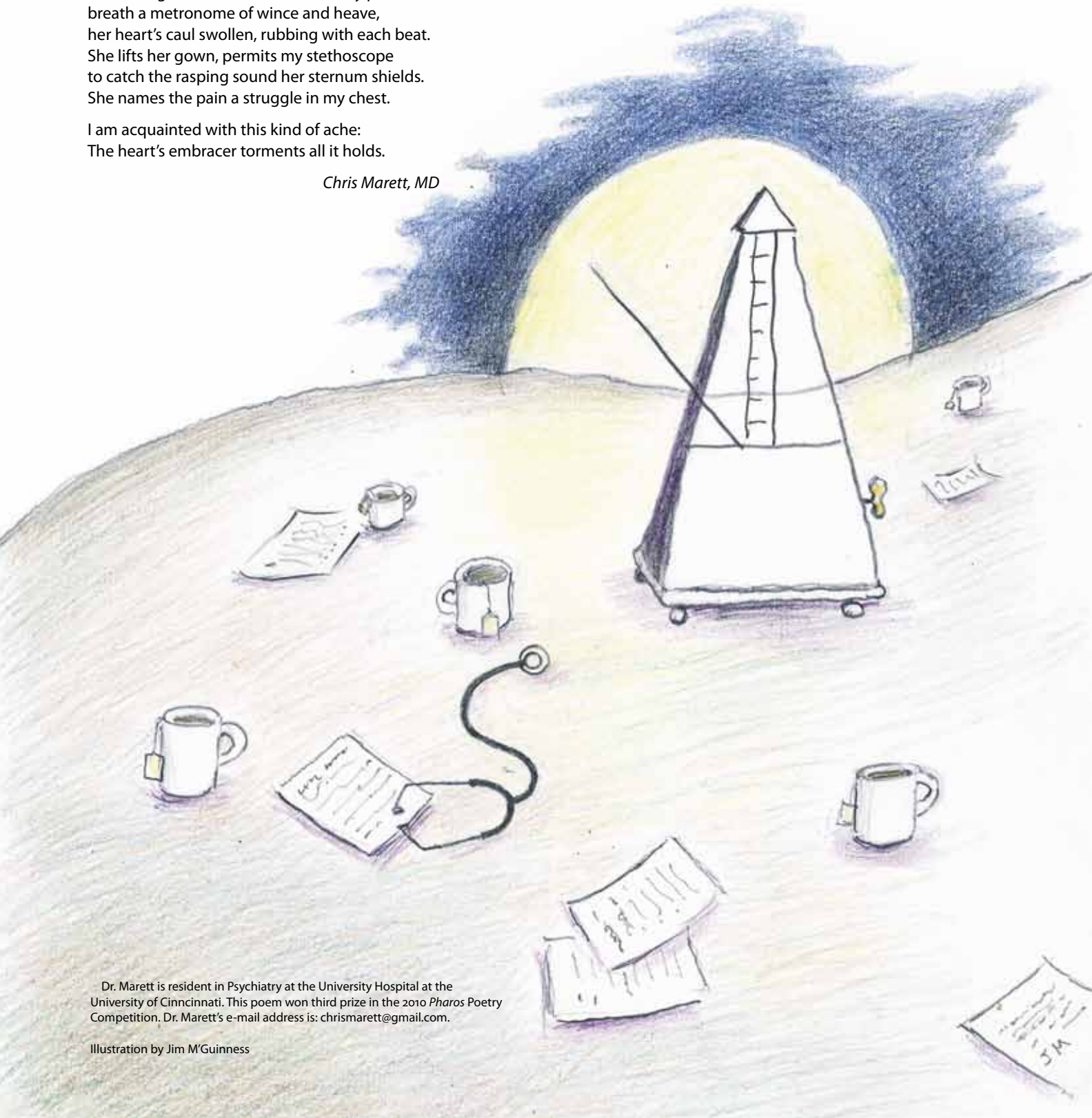


# Pericarditis

Rising with the moon, I rinse the night  
from eyes and mouth and clavicles and ribs  
that vibrate with my heart's familiar call:  
Diastole—a parable of hunger,  
and systole—that sleepless score of loss.  
The pulse of work has now become my peace.  
White mugs of tea, a stack of notes, my patient's  
breath a metronome of wince and heave,  
her heart's caul swollen, rubbing with each beat.  
She lifts her gown, permits my stethoscope  
to catch the rasping sound her sternum shields.  
She names the pain a struggle in my chest.

I am acquainted with this kind of ache:  
The heart's embracer torments all it holds.

*Chris Marett, MD*



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Illustration by Jim M'Guinness