He grimaces as if suddenly stabbed, when he recounts how he just somehow knew the car coming up beside him was going to explode. He rammed the gas pedal to the floor and, like a Pamplona bull that’s been goaded to gore, shot into the Salt Lake City traffic.

After that wreck he stayed at home mainly, struggling to be by his wife and child as they unwittingly wrapped wire around his brain, until it was so tight he had to retreat to his silent and dimly lit room.

That’s where he remained for the majority of the next several hundred days, in the company of no one, with quietness burdened by the task of keeping the mortar fire and screams away.

Then today, after she found that he had somehow made his way to the store to see about a gun, his teary-eyed wife coaxed him into their minivan and delivered him here.

He now hangs his head, drained from having his story extracted. His long, dark brown hair gives in to gravity and reaches for the floor.

Hot tears surface and travel downward, like blood from the bullet holes in his daughter’s body, after it dawned on him he was firing on his own little girl and not some fanatic asshole in his dreams last night.

Bryan Cheyne, MD

Mr. Cheyne is a first year resident in Internal Medicine at Saint Joseph Hospital in Denver, Colorado. This poem won first prize in the 2014 Pharos Student Poetry Competition. Mr. Cheyne’s e-mail address is: bryan.cheyne@hsc.utah.edu. Illustration by Erica Aitken.