

I. Here

I hold my father's hospital records.
They're worn, like my memory
of his clothes.

He wore a tan coat
with black buttons.

That I remember.

The pages are filled
with black type. Before

I read the words, I know
what they mean.

Here

is what happened.

Here is what

you didn't know.

For a year, I can't
read the file. Twice, I open it.

But my fingers won't
turn the pages

heavy with grief.

Why must I read

the words, anyway? Because my father loved
animals: turtles, Dalmatians, birds.

Because he held me
in the crook of his arm

when I was born. Because I

am of his body and he
is of mine. Because he was lost

to me. Maybe

in these records I'll find him. The third time, I open
the file.

Here.

II. Riverside County Regional Medical Center, February 17, 2000

Clinic Note:

*A 56-year-old-male with psychiatric
features.* The doctors

don't write that he was a father
of a son, Jeremy,

and a daughter, Dara. *Psychiatry wants
dementia work up.*

*Patient refuses to answer any questions,
stating "information*

*is in the chart" and nothing
more.* Before my father

was a patient, he was a psychologist,
who tried to heal people.

He could not heal himself.

Medications: Neurontin 400 mg,

Paxil 30 mg, Megace

400 mg, Colace 100 q day.

He could not heal our grief.

Patient is unkempt. Once, he carried

a black plastic comb
for his beard. *Sitting*

*with hands crossed, no eye contact. Non-
communicative.* Once, he read hundreds

of books: Shakespeare,
Winnicott, Freud.

Combative. Once, he saved a moth
from the windshield of our car.

III. Los Alamitos Medical Center, February 26, 2000

Internal Medicine Consultation:

*Patient does not smoke or use
alcohol.* My father smoked

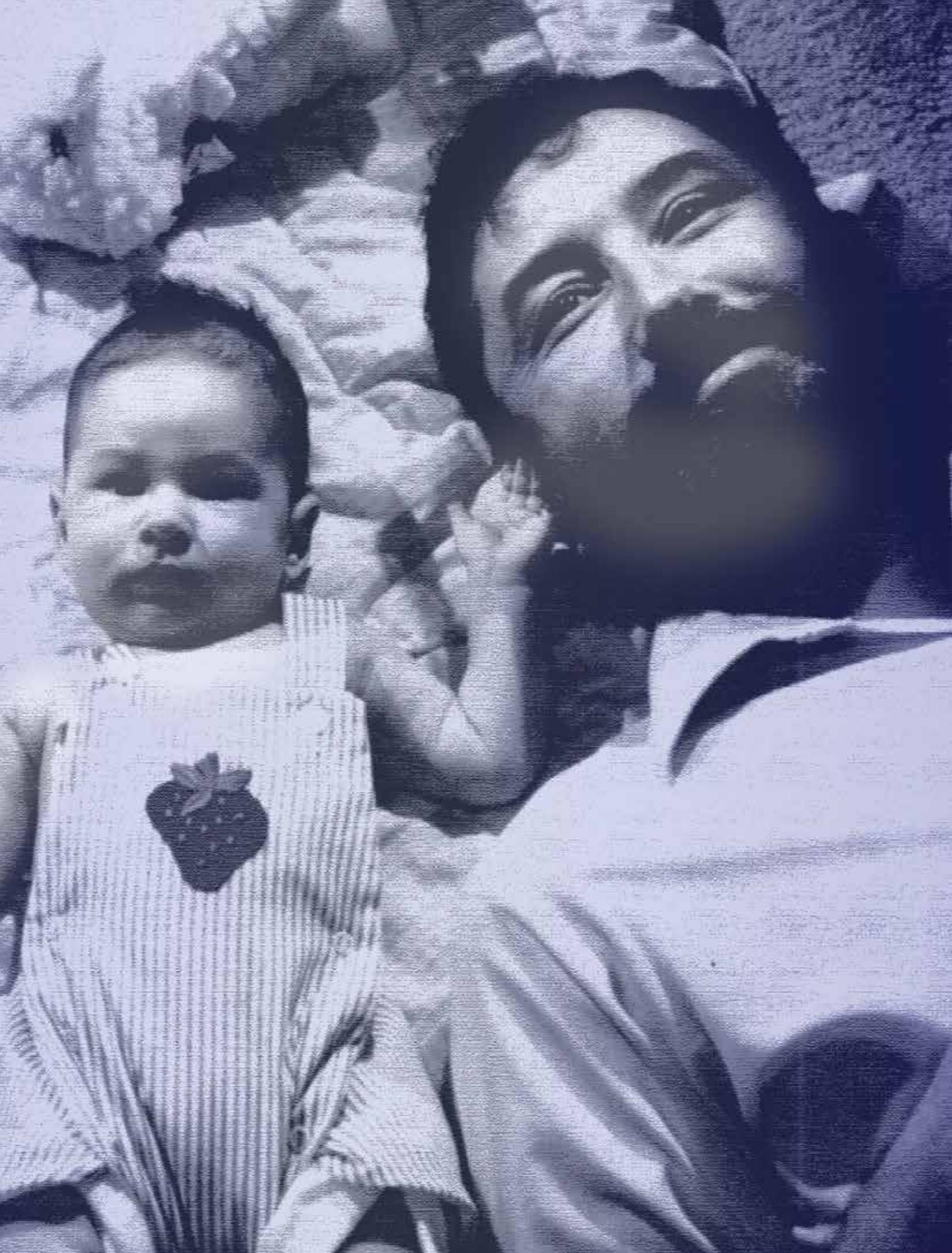
a pipe twice a year and drank
one glass of wine

a day for his heart. *The chief complaint:
the patient hit another*

resident very hard in the face. This doctor
doesn't know the patient

Records





sat in a rocking chair
with his month-old daughter
on his lap. *He is resistant to care and verbally
abusive, using obscene
language.* My father didn't
let us swear, though
he liked to say goddammit.
*On the day of admission,
the patient assaulted another
resident in the room.*
He began getting angry
over small things,
like leaving his reading glasses
at an apple orchard.
He will not say a single word. He
began to believe
he was being pursued by creditors,
landlords, my
mother. *The patient won't take
a deep breath.* Take
a deep breath, Dad. *Signed,
A.L.N., MD*

IV. Los Alamitos Medical Center, March 1, 2000

Neurologic Consultation:
*The patient is a 56-year-old Caucasian
man with a long history
of psychiatric disorder. Per chart,
he was admitted because he was chasing
and hitting people and this has been
a recurrent behavioral problem
for him.* My father used to play
a game where he chased us
through the house, roaring
like a lion. *Seems there is a component
of depression in the patient's
behavior.* Then he stopped
playing games. He moved
his clothes and books
into a room of our house. *Per chart...
patient has an education
of 11th grade.* My father
had a PhD. *Patient persists
to have his eyes closed.* Surely to escape.
I would have
wanted to escape. *Impressions
and recommendations: patient
can benefit from dopamine
antagonists i.e. Haldol as well as SSRI
for movement disorder as well as
his dysthymic/depressive mood.*
My father never drank more
than one glass of wine a day
for his heart.

V. Los Alamitos Medical Center, March 16, 2000

Discharge Summary:
*Date of admission: 2/26/00
Date of discharge: 3/16/00*
Mr. Barnat is a 56-year-old white male.
Never do they write
that he was a father, who said prayers
on Friday nights
and learned Spanish. *Reason for admission:
assaultiveness, refusal
to take medications and being resistant
to care.* Mainly,
I was ashamed of him. *Patient
was uncooperative and remained
so throughout his hospitalization.*
But no longer.
*There was an indication
that he has had many prior
hospitalizations.* This patient
was my father. *Mental status
examination: at the time of admission,
the patient seemed
to be about his stated age.* He was
young, not yet
60. *He was unkempt.* He couldn't
help that he stopped caring
for himself. *Attempts were made
to draw the patient out
of isolation, this was partially
successful.* If I could have,
I'd have sat with him, read Whitman,
Dickinson, Frost.
*Mood was mildly
depressed. Gait was steady.*
*Insight and judgment were
fair.* I'd have asked him
a question. What would he
have answered?

VI. County of Orange Certificate of Death, February 4, 2003

I didn't know the last
time I spoke to my father
would be the last time I spoke
to my father.
What I have is a certificate:
*PhD Psychology, Divorced
Pneumonia, Dementia
Anaheim General Hospital
State of California*
What I have are pages
of who he became, reminding me
who he was.
*Place of final disposition: At sea off the coast
of Orange County.*
Here.

Dara Barnat, PhD