

Petrified

"It's nice to meet you, I'm Julia," I say.
I smile, overeager, as you look away.
"I'd like to examine you, if that's okay."
No response. I continue my ballet.
Your eyes adhere to my right arm.
Your eyebrows quiver with alarm.
I know it's time to issue commands:
"Follow my finger, squeeze my hands."

But I am petrified, just like you are.
Catatonic they say, an emotional scar
or maybe an infection in your brain.
What's worse, a fractured soul or corporeal pain?
I contemplate your eyes, I'm unable to speak.
You're supposed to start college next week.
I make an awkward joke about a boy band.
You smile then glare at your marionette hand.

Why should I keep playing doctor today?
More hanging questions won't make you okay.
Suddenly I am also only eighteen,
and caught up in what your eclipsed expressions mean.
We talk for an hour, but only I speak.
You blush when your mom tells me you're a geek.
It's psychiatric they say, the outlook, bleak.
But you played soccer and went on a date last week!
I refuse to see you through physician's eyes.
Talk of neurotransmitters feels like a misplaced disguise
when your dad asks me, "What kind of puppeteer
would make my son's spirit disappear?"

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