

Relationship Surgery

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Patients usually ask why we begin the operation on the hands,
so I tell them: “well, that’s where the disease usually starts”.

Most people think it dawns in the atriums of the heart,

the wrinklings of the brain,
or the lobes of the liver;

but really, the hands are the first to go.

Too often, people forget that their hands hold much more than car keys and cell phones; they hold memories.

Like the way he massaged my shoulder blades during candlelit baths.

They hold more than vanilla-scented ChapSticks and crumpled up receipts.

Like the time we stayed up all night tracing freckles until we found our favorite.

They hold more than dinner utensils and door handles.

Like my fingertips caressing the small of his back when we made love on the floor.

They hold memories composed of everything (and everyone)

that you’ve ever touched;

ones that seep into the skin,

filling the crevices of every cuticle,

finding a home underneath the innermost recesses of

your fingernail beds.
This is where they live.
It's only when a healthy heart suddenly becomes a
broken one,
that they start their inevitable decay.
They start their dissolution, a corruption of the soul
at the cellular level.
Once cherished, now discarded memories start to
ooze and bleed, they instigate infection—
An infection of the spirit, one that remains unlinked
to bodily funguses or disease.
But when either affliction is left untreated,
they fester all the same.
I tell patients about these tangible records, these
lingering moments that
have become trapped beneath the fingernails
of every person who has touched,
or been touched,
by another human's existence in this world.
“This is why we start with the hands”, I say.
They hold more than car keys.