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poems
by
doctors

The Adjudicator of Pain

Ron Charach

"Forget what you know about pain," says the specialist
from the mansion across the false creek,
"think nociceptive verses neuropathic
and you're never far away from the truth."

He assesses for insurance companies;
it's lucrative work paying three times the government-funded rate.
He boasts a two-million-dollar fund
he can access for the most desperate cases,

but he lets slip that it's the *minor* accidents
with the greatest *apparent* disability
that he has no patience with,
the "chronic-fatigue/fibromyalgia types."

"They're intent on defeating
any helpful suggestion;
they embrace their pain
rather than fight it, you know?"

I don't think I do.
How many just claims does he
unfairly dismiss
for those premium-collecting firms?

How many souls are left
outside the gates of mercy? Suffering
and wondering themselves how they ended up
where every sentence that begins with
Forget what you know about pain
end up – far away from the truth.

Ron Charach took his medical degree at the University of Manitoba, Canada. He trained in psychiatry in Toronto and New York, and has lived in Toronto since 1980. Dr Charach is the author of nine books of poetry and the non-fiction book *Cowboys and Bleeding Hearts: Essays on Violence, Health and Identity*. This poem is from his new volume of poetry *Forgetting the Holocaust*, published in Calgary, Alberta, by Frontenac House (2011). © Ron Charach.

Chosen by Femi Oyeboode.

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