**Thursday Memo – March 8, 2018**

**The Car Ride Home** – by Zachary Michaels

**Preface:** "It is a poem I wrote about something a patient said to me during a clinical experience I had before medical school."

_When I was a care aide, I once asked a teenager that I took care of what it was like to live with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (which left him confined to a power chair unless I or someone else helped him out). I asked without expecting a clear answer. He responded with this short, powerful quote and it’s a moment I’ve remembered for years:_

"Living this way, is like spending your life in a car. I can’t really experience what’s outside unless I am lifted up and out."

_We often take our own realities for granted, without realizing that for others, it may be far different. This is especially relevant in disability. Take a moment to try to appreciate your own reality, whatever that may look like. It’s a concept I often come back to, and something that this young man often did as well._

Car wheels move on asphalt, dust kicking up from blackened tires.

Gravel shoots from black rubber like silent bullets without targets

Faint flecks of green fly past dirty windows, leaving hollow imprints on curious eyes

The outside air is brisk but would not be felt on skin

The ground is firm, but would not be felt beneath feet

The road stretches before him, but he remains in a metal box, unable to explore what silently stands before him

The reality outside moving glass is not his own, but he longs to give names to the shadows

That dance on the wall, echo in his ears, part of only one reality.

To break from chains, to see the fire behind him, he would just begin to see reflections

Of what he used to call shadow, in still water.

But the world outside is not his.
Until wheels on asphalt stop.

Silent bullets fire a final shot.

Flecks of green remain still, standing sturdy and tall, powerful trees in a sea of color

Metal doors open, to reveal the sun, and he is lifted, upwards, outwards, and carried

Into a reality,

That is not his own.

Not yet.