

CELEBRITY

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I met you one time,
Johnny Cash.
I was the one in the robin's-egg blue mask
threading a line
to the left anterior descending
of your heart.

Your drummer told us
how your chest was caught in a giant vise,
van hurtling down an Interstate,
how that booming baritone of yours
could barely croak out "hospital."

Did you hear
every mask and gown in the room
let out a cheer,
when the plugged-up pipe
deep in your heart
flowed free?
That wasn't applause for a top-ten vocalist,
nor for the fingers
that coiled the snake so expertly.
No, that was a cheer for life.

You sent us each a country ham.
Other days we weren't so lucky.