MODEL SYSTEM
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On a day when I am very much convinced
I operate with the intelligence and impunity
of a god, I induce Parkinson's-like symptoms in a population
of agar-plated cells. They will all die,
swimming in rotenone and expressing genes
that scream “why?”

Upon learning what I do, the thin,
white-toothed, slightly intoxicated receptionist
exclaimed that her father had been diagnosed
with Parkinson's recently. Ingratiating.

Awe and admiration in
her voice and face,
as if what I did would save her father,
Or perhaps she just wanted to sleep with me.

White-tooth died before her father.
A clot in her right leg.
28 goddamn years old.
I learned about it through
the department newsletter,
which invited prayers and condolences
for her family and friends.

Molecular biologists
deny the existence of God.
Thus, rather than praying, I wish
her family well. Effective.

As I douse cells in rotenone,
I convince myself the concept
of God is irrational.
Mired in primal instinct and a need
for purpose. An ancient social
construct reinvented over and
over again. Recycled. Nonetheless,
for a moment God is real to me,
and we are his model system.
Alone at night, I cry for the cells
I have subjected to rotenone.