

# Travel Warning

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## Artist's Statement

This piece is about a psychiatrist trying to communicate their empathy for a patient's reservations about psychotherapy, while also admitting that there is still much to be learned about the human brain. It was inspired by perspectives within Cognitive Science that particularly resonated with the author (specifically neurobiology and philosophy), as well as personal reflections on what it means to be entrusted with the responsibility of helping a patient along their journey in mental health. The author hopes that this piece conveys the optimism and humility that medical practitioners strive to bring to their patients, as well as the outlook that she would like to bring to her own work one day as a psychiatrist.

You come into my office,  
sitting rigidly across from me.  
Your demeanor polite,  
and trust yet to be earned.

I wonder how I can convince you  
that once we dive into the nebulas of your mind,  
we will be able to come back.

I have made this trek before,  
but the nature of terra incognita  
is that no matter how many times one scales it,  
the landscape will always be new.

Explorers before us have traversed  
the expansive canyons of synapses,  
navigated the stalactites of boutons,  
and climbed branches of dendritic spine.

But for all that has been discovered,  
Neurobiology offers only a primitive map—  
and the map they have drawn is not of you.

Do not be afraid.  
You too are full of synapses,  
of everything charted and uncharted,  
of what we know and do not know.

The map I was given, however,  
will not, cannot be enough.  
Understanding the terrain of your brain  
is only one part of navigating your mind.

Armed with an arsenal of pharmacology,  
identifying the landscape  
will allow the power of prescription,  
but not the ability of complete description.

For it is not just the physicality of your brain  
that I need to understand,  
but the intangible which arises from the physical.  
The consciousness, the sensations  
not yet documented by neurological cartography,  
but those which we have always felt.

Your intentionality is not a faint wind  
whispering through fissures of sulci or gyri,  
but a resounding force within.  
This you know—  
you have inhabited this place all your life.

I understand why you are wary—  
how can I understand what it is to be you?  
Medicine only goes so far, after all.  
But perhaps, we can help each other unearth  
that which the other takes for granted.

If there is one thing of which I am certain,  
this voyage is not one that can be made alone,  
but—it is one that can be made.

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**Electronic supplementary material** The online version of this article (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40596-017-0825-y>) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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