

Dear Jonas

by [Donna Pucciani](#) in the [September 2022](#) issue

How clearly I remember
the friend encased in metal,
her head sticking out of the iron lung
with row on row of other tubed children
staring at the ceiling, wondering
why their limbs were withering
as they lay there inert, waiting
for visitors or death.

I still know folks who recovered,
limping a bit into adulthood
or walking with a crutch
that made me think they'd broken a leg
on the ski slopes. Some have trouble
swallowing, an echo of what happened
years ago. And I remember how

the nuns lined us up in second grade,
for the miracle-puncture, no scar,
but a second's worth of pain. Nobody cried.
Later, in adolescence, a sugar-cubed booster
infused with a pink potion, handed out in
a small white-paper cup, tasted of unripe
strawberries, designed to keep us walking
into the future.

Half a century later, I thought to thank you for this.
But too late. Now, my knees wobble,
hips are stiff from age as I traipse through the forest,
stopping only to gaze at a deer with liquid eyes,
or watch a blue heron standing on one leg
at the edge of the lake, balanced, still.