

A TALE OF MEETINGS

Thomas Shakar, Class of 2017

The first time we met, I did not know. There is no question as to why you were so anxious; it was obvious you had never seen a patient like me. Yet, you would get to know me very well. God did not intend for man to witness such things, yet everyone was given a choice and everyone chose to stay. I lay there while you acted like things were “par for the course,” but I was an “albatross.” That was the beginning of a formidable journey; I was never going to be the same.

I met you again, this time I was aware. You seemed so out of place next to the mature healer who has seen it all. Even he would learn something from me in the time to come. Moving from bed to floor and from floor to window, my goal was to get back to a normal life. You came to understand my world when you met my wife, my sister, my nephew and my daughter. Her occupation became something of a game. We all played and it kept spirits up. I was nearly there, as if the seasons changing in the window was a foreshadowing for my imminent discharge. Then, seemingly in an instant, I found myself moving from the window to the bed. I already knew by looking at his face; I could see what was coming next. Your face was neutral because you did not know.

We met again without me knowing. It did not seem much different from the first time. I am sure you were probably thinking, “It couldn’t get any worse.” I already explained this: “You have never seen a patient like me.” His experienced hands worked magic again although things were not perfect. This time, there was a different room with a different window. What had been “goals,” changed to “hopes” and “prayers.” I was no longer focused on the window; I just hoped that I did not have to leave the room again. You came to say “goodbye” every night and I prayed I would live to see the morning. The most advanced contraption on the planet and I will be damned if a little fluid is going to take it down – “over my dead body!” The events to come would put this to the test. You were not there this time. What happened to me does not seem possible; what a story this will be! I just have to get out of this bed first.

You made your first of multiple visits for the day. It had been many weeks since we first met and you were different. You did



FOUNTAINS

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not flinch when you saw what they had done. Though you would say later, “Something like that should not exist outside of the operating room. I cannot believe it.” He would tell you, “Bottom line, this doesn’t happen every day.” We hoped something would change, but it did not.

I remember thinking, “Please tell me this is the last time we will meet like this.” If there was any reason to hope, it was lost on me. At least this one was quick. Gas exchange is important to keep things in balance, especially in such an advanced piece of machinery like this. It seems odd that this little piece of plastic is all I needed. There was improvement, but something was still missing. In my core, it felt as if there was a gaping void that would never close. There were other machines to fix that.

The sun feels so good. I have not seen it since before we first met. It is hard to explain my appreciation for this bright heat. Though, I gather that after such an ordeal, my appreciation for many things will be difficult to explain. You have changed and so have I, so has my entire world. I am on the other side of the window now, but I will have to return to my room. I am sure I will see you one last time. You have undoubtedly learned something from me; that is my gift to you. God, if I did not learn how lucky I am to be alive. ■