

Cut

Tell yourself it is for the best. You want this. It is best to do this now anyways. Right? The drive down to Milwaukee is slow. Your mind is all over the place. Your mom will tell you she is so proud of you. Your dad says you're brave. You have read and reread the papers millions of times. The understanding of what will happen is clear to you. The need to vomit is overwhelming. You tell yourself over and over again that this must happen, it is for the best.

The hotel is nice. You like those little soaps in the shape of shells and fish. You better unpack quickly and eat. It will be the last time you eat for a week. At the restaurant, nothing looks good. Eventually your parents make you eat. You leave for the bathroom, but really you need to cry. The thought of what is about to happen still lingers. It is a black tar in your mind.

The night before the big day. The doctors gave you special soap to kill off germs. Make sure you really scrub the sides of your chest. That is the surgeon's entry point. Wiping the steam from the mirror, you view your chest. The indentation that craters the center stands out to you. You will ask God why He gave you a chest like that. Hate your sternum. Add some scars.

Forget all the thoughts before entering the hospital. There is no time to turn back now. You will walk down the hallways and hear that heartbeat tap away. Heaviness sets in. It gets real with every gulp of disinfected hospital air. They will tell you it will be fine. You won't believe them. Anger sets in. What do they know? They don't have a dent in their chests. Sadness sets in.

Waiting in the room will be one of the worst parts. You flip through reruns of *I Love Lucy* and *Happy Days*. You will not be having happy days for weeks. The water you use to

swallow the white pill, leaves a bitter taste. They tell you it will make you calm. Calm did not drive down with you on the trip.

You will be compared to deli meat. The number of your room is called and squeaky wheels float you to a bright lit room. The main doctor will ask you how you are. Fine will be the lie that escapes your lips. Climbing up and laying down on the surgical bed will be the last movements you do. You are their science experiment now. Frankenstein's monster isn't all too bad. You will learn to like the scars. They will be a nice shade of pink.

The medicine injected into you warms your arm. You tell yourself it is not so bad. Then it strikes your heart and the burn sets in like a thousand fires. Going under scares you. Tell yourself it is like the great bears in their winter slumber. Bears don't need a gas mask. Bears don't need to have their chest worked on. You will like the fuzziness that warms your eyes. Yet fear will still play in your mind. Will you come out of it? A question unanswered for darkness is pulled over like a heavy blanket.

Your eyes adjust to the dark room. There is a PlayStation and television. You like PlayStation. A great thirst takes over. You will wait a couple of hours before you examine your chest. That medicine you don't believe in is doing its job now. Learn to love it. Don't get addicted.

Nurses and doctors visit like annoying pigeons. You would rather have the pigeons there, more relatable. Being lifted from bed for X-rays will hurt you. The fear leaves you. Pain replaces it. Your chest, how flat it looks, puts a smile on the face of pain. Your inner soul says it's worth it. Doctors tell you it all went well. You don't feel well. That won't happen for a

long time. Hatred fills the heart. The room is a stupid shade of olive. Tell yourself it is for the best.