

Checking Out, Going Home

Category: A Turn for the Better

written by Mary Janicke | August 9, 2024

I learned it takes a sense of humor to survive a hospital stay. Lined up on gurneys, flat on our backs, the three of us wait to be put through our paces on some testing machine or other. Riffing off each other, I say aloud that I feel as if I'm in a used car lot. A second person says they want our parts. The third says, "Parts, I ain't got no parts."

We laugh together, and then they wheel me into a small room where an electrocardiogram trainee tries to choke me to death by pressing down as hard as she can on my jugular notch, listening intently. To my great relief her instructor took over and saved me.

Somehow I was no longer in heart failure from pulmonary thrombosis and soon would be free to go home. But not before the nurses checked my oxygen level and decided it was low enough so I could go home with a tank of oxygen—just in case—compliments of the insurance company. A finer parting gift from the staff than a teddy bear.

A scare, a treatment, recovery, and back home. Sucking on the oxygen all night but fine and dandy the next day.

My energy returned, the trauma receded in my memory, but those fellow patients and their humor stays with me to this day.

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