

Halfway Home

Category: Miracles

written by Cynthia Stock | June 6, 2017

I met Terry the day after he sat in the back of a pick-up, joyriding on a busy interstate. A big rig whooshed by, sucked Terry out of the truck bed and slammed him into the side of the semi-trailer before he fell back into the truck. One scalp laceration and a few facial scrapes presented evidence of the accident. The damage occurred inside Terry's head.

It shames me to admit I practiced the defense mechanism of black humor. During shift change, we joked and wondered if Terry had MFB, or mush for brains. Countless days and doses of diuretics, rehydration, and more diuretics without a twitch, grimace or cough from Terry decimated my hope for his recovery. I bathed him with coarse wash cloths and repented by lavishing his skin with lotion. I talked about sports, music, even Tiger Beat magazine. I prayed for him to a god in which I didn't quite believe. I don't remember the day Terry fooled us all and started to recover.

"Terry. Wake up. Your dad's on his way." I whispered. Terry rolled over on his back. "He's bringing you what you asked for."

"McDonald's?" A grin. Teeth gummy from sleep, dried saliva starting at the corner of his mouth and heading for his chin.

"I thought we'd surprise him." I showed him the pajamas and slippers I bought.

Terry stood up. The pajamas draped his skeletal form.

"How are we gonna do this?"

"I'm gonna hold you by the back of your elbow and follow your lead. If you stop, I'll stop. Try and meet him half-way." If Terry failed, his psyche would be set back by days. But if he walked the distance, not only would he give his father a gift, Terry would see proof of his recovery. He looked down the hall. His chin quivered in the familiar pre-cry "tell" I had seen many times. "You can do this."

Terry took a step. "Just walk beside me. Don't hold my arm." His stride lengthened. Nearing the ICU doors, his knees buckled once, but he righted himself. After ten steps, he listed towards me and stopped. The ICU doors opened. Terry saw his dad. He took off, not in a sprint, but with purpose. I watched the McDonald's bag hit the floor.

Father and son embraced. Tears abounded. A hamburger lay abandoned. And I wept with joy.

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