

# There Were Dogs on the Ceiling



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*his face contorts*

*nose scrunches like a wad of paper*

*filled with words that shouldn't be seen*

*his lungs fill*

*half with air half with puss*

*and he smiles a cheeky tooth-filled grin of*

*brotherhood*

We were comrades in pain  
surrounded by sunny-side-up-people  
painting a brighter than reality picture  
because they wished it wasn't so.

I was plummeting.  
I left to that place you invent  
when every square inch of your body  
is heavy with shackles  
and you're afraid.

My mama kept trying to pull me back.

I deferred her help

until she plopped

my faux lifeless body

into a wheelchair.

She nigga-rigged my IV to my seat

So she could steer my passenger and I in

tandem.

It was a happy looking place

filled with jovial lifeless little bodies.

Smiling children on the wall

mock me- none of them are in wheelchairs

It's like they think they're better than me.

I'm too old for this place.

My one friend here is six,  
he's running out of years.

And I'm lucky!

I grew into this.

I had roughly 6,205 days

to be ignorant.

I didn't know people tried to make

hospitals feel like amusement parks.

She pushed me into the gift shop.

She wanted to lease the space my dignity

occupied,

and fill it with a little retail therapy.

I said no to everything.

We went back

along the way

everyone told me how pretty I was.

We passed the “teen room”

There were video games and computers.

She tried to convince me to go inside.

There was no one there.

Who here is even strong enough to play

Guitar Hero?



Who cares if I'm pretty?

My friend held tight to his oxygen mask  
wheezed deeply and prepared to change my life  
He was dressed entirely as Yoda.  
I hadn't seen the Star Wars movies  
but I recognized him.  
He took another shallow breath  
And exclaimed "ooh-oooahhh"

He left and I felt pathetic  
A dying six year old  
was more positive than me  
I made myself feel better  
by reasoning that he in some ways had it  
*easier*  
"he doesn't even know what he's missing"  
I thought  
"if he did dressing up wouldn't be enough"

The next day the hospital's teacher came by  
She brought me Sudoku puzzles.  
To keep me from thinking about my life.

The night before

one of my many doctors showed up.

It was at 3 am,

my mom was conveniently asleep

I guess she wanted some alone time with her  
patient.

She asked me if I was lying about my symptoms.

She took the little I had left.

I said no.

I mused to myself, how could I be lying?

rectal bleeding isn't something you can very well

hide

I thought we resolved this like 3 exams ago.

What if I had of stuck something up my butt?

-I probably wouldn't have told them.

I don't blame her for asking

They talked to me about my upcoming  
procedures:

The upper endoscopy and colonoscopy.

This beautiful bald woman  
came and spoke to me.

She had deep brown eyes and warm caramel  
skin.

I hope I don't remember her fondly  
because they had just given me morphine  
it tasted like metal,  
but the flavor was better than my last vomit  
session.

Next I remember being pumped with anesthesia  
The assistant missed my vein and there was a  
puddle of my own blood on the floor.

I looked up and away  
and saw a dog on the ceiling.

He was an American bulldog dressed as a cowboy  
He had a lasso, hat, and general disapproving  
grimace.

And then I was asleep

I understand why that dog on the ceiling  
was so pissed.



I woke up on the operating table.

That sounds scary but I couldn't feel anything.

I saw a bright light and a nurse smile at me

kindly.

I heard them scrambling trying to move  
through my body faster.  
Then I was outside in a recovery room  
fading in and out of consciousness while my  
parents watched.  
I began to vomit blood because of the biopsies  
they took.  
I somehow managed to drunkenly tell my  
mother that she looked like one of the bears on  
my hospital gown

I was supposed to be asleep.  
The doctor came in and told my parents  
that I was screwed.  
He said that I would be in pain for the rest  
of my life.  
He told them “don’t waste your prayers  
there’s nothing you can do”  
“this is some of the worst I’ve seen”

I thought- cool.

I tried to control my hate for him.

who kicks

fallen people?

My eyes were shut.

My mom started to cry wildly

The way that people cry when they're aware  
of their surroundings but can't help but be  
loud.

My dad sat in silence, too shocked to feel anything.

I imagine he was thinking things like

“she was fine a few months ago”

Or “what does this all even mean”

That’s what I was thinking anyway.

I took that moment to “wake up”

I couldn't speak because of the tube  
that was down my throat but I smiled,  
and they turned off their sadness for  
me.

Like I hoped they would.







