

Mrs. Nayback
Creative Writing/3rd hour
Describing a scene or setting
March 2010

The Waiting Room

The room tasted of alcohol and sadness. My nostrils burned. No, the place wasn't a bar. It did have some bar-rish qualities though. The sharp scent of urine was almost hidden beneath the covers. There was litter on the floor—tissues, lint, discarded plastic tops from the needles, and some gentle stains.

I strained to look out of the window so I wouldn't have to look at the bed anymore. I longed for the smell of springtime and damp earth. I already knew what was outside. A large round bale of hay hunched just outside the tree line. Does and fawns slept there each night and nibbled from the bits they could not rest on. It was crisp and cold out there, but the room baked my arms in here, even in a light blouse. It was supposed to be Easter: a time filled with resurrection, renewal, and green. I remembered how in the past the carpeting would be decorated with baby powdered footprints from the Easter bunny. I didn't see any silly baskets with blue or yellow plastic grass today. The jellybeans used to hide from my eager son's hands as he ran past the candy to find the eggs often hidden in Grandma's slippers or indoor plants.

I wondered what my own room might some day look like if I was ever drowning in chemotherapy for the third time in my own bedroom. What arsenal of pills would lurk on my end tables? The containers didn't stand at attention like an army of prescriptions. Instead the lukewarm orange containers were cascading from the nightstand. Some pill bottles were upright and some teetered on the edges as though drunk.

The bed squealed. The nurse had turned the covers down so crisply that I couldn't help but see the patient's large soft belly scrunched like a bloated raisin. Six children had once grown there and one had become my husband. Her body was a map of veins and stretch marks that traveled across the skin. It was fascinating and terrifying at the same time.

The day nurse from hospice beckoned me to help her roll the patient's body. My mother-in-law would normally have had many sharp instructions for any new nurse since Granny had once been one a nurse herself. Mom didn't speak any words I recognized. Her voice was like a kitten mewling and showing its pain. The bedsprings protested her feeble lurching and I struggled not to entangle my forearm in the IV tentacles hanging nearby. Her legs were absolutely smooth. The radiation had done a better job than any wax treatment ever could.

Who wants to see a person reduced to diapers that won't stay on? Diapers do look so cute on a newborn. Little babies prance around with rainbows of Mickey Mouse or Muppet Babies. The adult diapers are off white, bloated, and strangely flat. Like empty sandwiches.

She had given most everything valuable away. Auntie Clair now had the burgundy quilt on her bed that used to keep Grandma warm on icy winter evenings. Little Mike now drove Granny's four-wheeler up and down the path to his house, the muddy treads biting into the fresh dirt like smeary teeth marks. Even the decorations were gone. The sun-faded marks betrayed where Grandma's old artwork that once showed deer leaping farm fences, elk bugling into a Montana sky, or the old farm from an aerial view. I remember a photo she shoved in the corner of her dresser mirror. The photo was black and white. Her former strength and eager anticipation dared anyone to question her career as a young nurse. Now even the paint on the walls seemed lonely and patient. Simply waiting and waiting, like we all were waiting...