


# HEART FULL OF FEARS

## Description

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Forty-five days seemed too short a span that could conveniently wipe out a heavy dose of anxious narrative â?? not allowing the spell of flashback to fade â?? the timid beats I felt when trolleyed into the operation theater in the early hours of that day.

The events proceeded like this.


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A week before, I visited a cardiologist for my regular check-up appointment, and I never guessed the outcome would shock me. He looked at my reports and declared, â??Itâ??s like your arteries got into a habit of causing trouble.â?? Unlike the two earlier instances related to your heart issues, â??what I see now, I think, a bit too critical and too urgent not to be ignored.â??

The revelation was not what I expected to hear from the doctor I had known for over two decades. It was a casual visit, as if I had just dropped into a friendâ??s place. I was unprepared, not so collected, to listen to such a heartstopping announcement as he slowly pronounced, â??You require a Coronary bypass surgery.â??

Just too stunned at what I heard, I stared at his face; it took a few seconds for the serious bluntness of that inference to reach my unsuspecting, so far carefree nerves.

â??Admit tomorrow, Iâ??ll give all the needed instructions, and fix the date for the surgery.â?• the agenda sounded casual and so nonchalantly given with a hint, â??You can go now.â?? I attempted to say something, but the words remained too stunned in the throat. My breath faltered. When I left the grand consultation room, frightful scenarios set off a rush of chaos in my fear-frozen brain.

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For over a decade, my body had compiled a troubled medical history. Now, at fragile sixty-four, I had agonizingly endured multiple surgical dissections â?? two heart attacks saved by a whisker. At regular frequencies, kidney stones led to convulsions of pain followed by brief hospitalizations. The torment of Covid demon followed by Black fungus that almost hauled me to the closer limits of death. I was carted to the many operation facilities of multiple surgeons with their well-known specialties, picked up their scalpels, and punctured my body in whichever way it felt medically appropriate to keep me safe and healthy. The good gracious luck led me to the right doctor at the right time, and though the chronicles of the troubled events had me traumatized, though briefly, my family and friends helped me regain the muscle of my health quickly.

â??Can I face one more surgery? It looks like a major procedure?â?? a silent submission was the answer to what my fears got in return.

About the looming surgery, I have read the aspects of the invasive scenario where the surgeon will tamper around the heart. Further, I came across the scariest revelation that during the six hours or about when I lie on the operation table, a huge dose of anaesthetics induces a temporary lifeless state, and some special machines take over the functions of the heart and lungs â?? circulating blood and oxygen. Which meant, matter-of-factly, could be termed clinically â??deadâ?? for a while.

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A whiff of wistfulness tempted me to forge a line of avoidance â?? choosing a shelter as if nothing had ever happened.

No one would scrutinize or quiz me if I defer or defy the doctorâ??s stringent evaluation. What if I seek to bury the whole report from my familyâ??s watchful eyes? Iâ??m sure itâ??s unlikely that any immediate medical alarm would come up to stump causing any threatening harm.  Here comes the pull of dark luck, my fits of fearfullness playing its dirty horror acts. Iâ??m prone to wild imaginations in the form of self-conscious scrutiny, trying to reason, â??Is anything going wrong in me.â?• These spurts of eccentric lows usually pops up at any hour of the night, and I go into a panic mode with the slightest discomfort I feel. In the next quickest moment, I find myself rushed to the hospital, any time of the day, thus scaring my children, living elsewhere, to unwanted turmoil.

After hard persuasion by some of my doctor friends and well-wishers, I conceded. An undefined fear still clung somewhere, floating inside and making wrong noises. Four days before the date for the surgery, I settled in the hospital bed, and it was not such a comfortable account: besieged by nurses, doctorsâ?? specialists of all kinds, and at odd times, shoved around for myriad tests, scans, and consultations.

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All the demons of nervousness returned on the fourth day, like a scramble of bees you see after its nest is disturbed, a jittery twelve hours before the scheduled date to the hall of surgical action.


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Itâ??s about ten at night; the hospital ward seemed to shut off from the overwhelming din of the day â?? the screeching of trollies, the bleak beeps of life-saving machines, coaxing nurses, censuring doctors, the announcements calling for attendees, the low collective wails and heaves of the patients wriggling in their beds in various phases of suffering or recovery depending on their prevailing ailments. All cues in tandem travelled through my closed door and crashed on the green partition drapes pulled behind the bed. In silence, I lay ruminating, however hard I tried to pump up my built-in self-confidence or helpful auto-suggestions; I couldnâ??t help the diffusing fear sweating all over me.

There was a knock on the door. At this hour, I wasnâ??t expecting any visitors. Two medium-sized gents entered, looking at their identical uniforms, I presumed as staff assigned to some odd duty. I noticed their faces fixed in a severe frame. Once inside, they let out a short order: â??Everyone out.â?? Besides the hovering disquiet at the moment troubling me, I wondered that any kidnap plan, by any chance, was being conspired.

â??We are here to shave,â?• said one, a pre-surgical protocol, and placed a kit on the table. The first guy pulled out a trimmer and held it tightly. Looking at it, I imagined how many bodies the blades possibly had worked upon earlier and slithered, fleecing the unwanted mops of hair.

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The screens pulled around me, and I was asked to stand and disrobe. No, I couldnâ??t comply. I have never done it before, never stood naked in front of strangers. But my retire-aged commonsense prevailed and obliged.


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For the next thirty minutes, I let my manhood and twisting embarrassment disabled and submitted my stripped-down body to the whirring clippers. As the purring blades crawled all over, I felt an odd, hurting feeling of someone piercing the needles with revengeful precision.

All through, I was staring at the second character, who stood a little away from me as if admiring my undraped bulk. I wasnâ??t sure of his role in this peeling process until he revealed his wares â?? two bottles of antiseptic liquid.

â??I have to paint you,â?? his terse order.

He emptied the two bottles into a bowl and, holding a brush, started smearing the pungent-smelling potion back and front as if I were a wall. The rushed burning sensation it caused felt like an intense flare of fire rubbed against me like a rough swab.

Never had my body been through and abused in such a weird manner. Green sheets pulled around, and in that luminescent glow, I reluctantly peered at my body. Had someone suddenly barged in, they might have grasped me as if I were an apparition: heaving, shining, and simmering like a big descaled fish â?? suspended in the middle of the room.

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A fortnight after the surgery, I recovered fast and quickly. A month and a half later, when I switched my computer back to life, unable to focus on any serious reading, I dug into dozens of files â?? the visual images â?? themes of my passion â?? the result of my long years of pursuit in photography.

I donâ??t know why, but some strange familiarity with the travails of my recovery prompted me to select a dozen portraits I had clicked when I visited a local flower market a year ago.

All the profiles of the working class I had seen that day represented many humbled emotional contours. To whomever I angled my camera at, everyone seemed busy, stayed busy, and kept their eyes silent and focused. The intense wrinkles on their faces spoke about years of struggles, and they understood the burden of survival yet retained the inner goodness to look pleased when I requested permission to look at my camera.

Pouring over those portraits, I found a relatable metaphor: For the past decade, I made myself liable and tied up by many health issues, wheeled in and out of hospitals. Closeted in lonely wards, I had endured and fought the obscure, distorted, irrational delusions. Come darkness, taut on the bed, some unreasonable melancholic fears would haunt me. A little later, when wide awake, when I reasoned for myself, all the indistinct worries add up to one of my core concerns â?? my future, my childrenâ??s well-being.

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The portraits I re-edited now helped me realize that every person in the uplifting portraits was struggling for survival, for something, their family, and their future. Despite this, their resolve to move forward seemed as challenging and practical as the profound fatigue I was going through today. What I had perceived through my camera on the faces of flower vendors seemed in many ways similar to how I have trained my optimistic outlook â?? being in control, being mindful â?? to understand the power of choice to protect the rhythm of health and cheerfulness.

Overall, my attitude reflects how I surrounded myself with hope and goodwill to bypass the struggles to defeat all my medical setbacks â?? to survive, stay fit, and let my children savour a happy future.

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