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Finalist, Secondary Division

2020 CFUW Writing Contest

Charlotte

“*When did it all go wrong?*” the doctor thought to himself staring down at the body lying open on the operating table in front of him. He had been working on the patient for hours using the intricate methods he had recently learned in medical school, but nothing seemed to be working. The patient continued to bleed despite the numerous solutions the doctor tried to apply to the gunshot wound. It was a surgical perfect storm, where everything seemed to go wrong.

His hope slowly dying, the doctor whispered to himself *please work* as he applied his final idea to fix the situation. The operating room was silent, filled with suspense as the doctor tied the last suture and closed his eyes, waiting for what could possibly happen next.

The silence of the room was interrupted with the heart breaking sound the EKG monitor was emitting. The long beep signalling that there was no longer a heartbeat echoed throughout the room and suddenly everyone jumped into action.

Deep in the doctor’s heart he knew the little girl wasn’t going to make it. Try as he might, the girl’s chances of pulling through were getting slimmer, fading to non-existent.

The ear-piercing *beep* continued and the doctor knew the inevitable had arrived. Accepting defeat, he ripped his gown and mask off.

“Time of death, 02:13,” he called as he left the operating room before anyone could stop him.

How was he supposed to bear staying in that morbid room any longer, the bright lights shining down occasionally blinding his eyes. The smell of burnt flesh, the feeling of cold instruments between his fingers... he shuddered at the thought of ever being in that room again.

His first solo surgery at a new hospital, gone horribly wrong.

They had trusted him with the life of the little girl yet he failed her; he failed her family and friends.

The doctor couldn't handle this and collapsed under the pressure of his emotions, falling to the floor, his back against the wall and head between his knees.

“Get up!” He heard his superiors voice booming through the hallway.

The doctor lifted his head to see the woman who had been supervising him during the surgery.

“You-” he choked.

This woman had watched him perform every move during the surgery. Watched him struggle under the immense pressure that comes with literally having someone's life in your hands. Yet she had never once criticized him, never stopped him to correct methods that were obviously wrong.

Using his hands to lift himself from the ground, the doctor rose connecting his eyes with the female doctor.

With all the thoughts running through the doctor's head he finally erupted in a whirlwind of words. "How could you let me do that? Why didn't you stop me? That little girl could still be alive!"

"Doctor, you need to calm down. There's nothing that could have been done for her."

The young doctor was paralyzed with emotion, paralyzed with fear that what she was saying about his abilities was not true. He did not know whether to believe in his superior and the relief her words bestowed upon him or to return to his self hatred.

"Who's going to tell the family?" he mumbled.

"Follow me," she instructed walking down the dimly lit hallway to the set of double doors that waited at the end.

She extended her finger to gesture through the small section of glass, pointing at a man with his back facing the door.

"You know what you have to do," she whispered, barely audibly.

"How am I supposed to go out there and tell him I'm the reason he no longer has a daughter?" the doctor exclaimed.

"This is something not easy, but difficult. Something you must do. You must go," she said in a monotone voice.

The doctor started through the door, the squeak reflecting off his shoe as the rubber hit the floor with each step.

“Excuse me sir.” The doctor spoke solemnly tapping the father of the child on the shoulder, motioning for the man to turn around.

Upon seeing who the man really was, the doctor's jaw dropped, every ounce of colour draining from his face. The last speck of self-courage he had... just gone.

“Where’s Charlotte?”

“What happened?” the doctor murmured, regretting it as soon as he asked. How could he explain to his best friend that *he* was the reason his daughter was no longer alive?