

The Hospital

Tom Robinson

Here, the writer recalls an incident from his young adulthood when the distinctions between dream and reality seemed to blur. He was certainly very ill.

I thought that my throat had completely closed up. I was racked with fever and couldn't stop sweating. Thankfully, my housemates had realised that I was in a bad way and had encouraged me to go to the 'Drop In Centre'. It took the staff there about ten minutes to realise that I was seriously ill and, before I knew it, I was in the hospital.

The nurse, I remember, had a big quivering mole on the end of her cheek. It looked like a volcano and it made me squirm and shiver when she approached me. She attached a tube to my arm and I was surprised to see blood. I was on what is called a drip and it was basically pumping me full of the salts and minerals that I'd expelled from my body over the last two days.

You'd think I'd be happy to be in a safe place but I was two hundred miles from home and, to be honest, I could have done with my parents being there as I was struggling to breathe. I'd been diagnosed as having what is known as quinsy which sounds pretty medieval. It's a really severe infection of the throat. I'll spare you the finer details.

Thankfully, my friends were still keen to see me and two of the braver ones decided that they were going to set me free. I assume they were excited as it was Christmas and I think there was probably a party that night. There usually was. Anyway, in they came, like spies in the night, and whispered, 'we've come to get you, Robbo.' I think I thought it was a dream because I probably just grinned like an idiot (or a seal).

They grabbed hold of the drip and pulled it away from me. The tubes came sliding out of my arm and the blood started to flow. There was no way to stop it and I remember hearing my heart thump like a drum. With every beat, a jet of bright blood erupted onto the floor and splattered the carpet grotesquely. Everyone stopped in panic. Was I dying? How long did I have until I was empty?

And then the nurse came raging in, huge mole quivering. She roared at the intruders and ordered me back into the bed. They were sent packing, ears ringing with the admonishment. She turned her gimlet eyes on me: I wasn't going anywhere.

I probably dreamed of piling down the canal path, tubes trailing behind me, pursued by a mad nurse with an ever expanding facial growth. Maybe it was more of a nightmare...