

THE GOOD DOCTOR

Tim saw it all in front of his bloody hands, the guts and brains of his mark, mentor and patron in front of his sweat-soaked eyes. He could here his mother's voice telling him, 'Timothy', do your job, like the nice boy and good man that I worked so hard for you to become. From his father, 'any man who does an ordinary job without making an extra-ordinary impact in the world is no man, and certainly no son of mine, 'Timmy'''. From Jennifer, the nurse whose hot tongue could resuscitate any man killed of boredom, disuse or disease back to life, "Doctor Tim, the patient is prepped, and we're ready to go."

Tim wiggled his nose under his surgical mask and looked at the face of the man whose life was now in his hands. Lance Rabinowitz had been a success story from day one. A 'cool kid' from the playground days when it was all about whose baseball cards were most valuable to being professional adults. Lance was a natural actor, showman and had one of those bodies that said 'winner' in every endeavor possible for a boy, man and everything in between. Tim...aside from working his way up the ladder to become Neurosurgeon at Bellingham General, he was always B plus material at best. And smart enough to know that not being number one was being number nothing. Maybe if he was C plus material, he would have been happy being a commoner. Or if C minus, ecstatic. The kind of guy who lived for bowling with his buds, porking his wife at home, and reaping the grand reward of a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving for busting his ass for the company every other day of the year on the factory line.

Nurse Jennifer handed Tim the scalpel. Her eyes looked squarely at the line dotted out on the skin overlying Lance's left parietal lobe.

"Guess Mister 'don't touch my cool hair, you uncool loser' let the razor slip a bit when he was shaving last night," Tim commented as he made the first incision into the scalp, consecrating the events to happen with a snide grin.

"Your orders were to shave his WHOLE head, Doc," Jennifer threw back at him. "Are you sure this operation will get rid of those seizures, and those hallucinations and delusions?"

"That he's the most innovative, reliable, sensitive, cutthroat, sexy, gentlemanly stud in Hollywood or the 'cool to be cruel and manipulative' Sundance festival?" Doctor Tim continued,

relishing in the moment. Realizing that the witicism was both colorful and right, and if it got to the right publisher, insightful for generations to come.

No comment from Nurse Jennifer, the other handmaidens, or even the residents. Nothing from their mouths, or even their eyes. All just kept doing their job, as assigned. With the occupational hazard that comes to those who dare to play God. To take power over life and death, and divert disease from its designated victims.

“Smells like DOV in the airducts today,” Doctor Tim commented as he lifted the skull off the dura matter under it. “DOV...know what that is?” he asked his residents, whose stare remained on the monitors connected to the cameras filming the operation rather than the real life tissue itself. “Dull out virus attacks brains, and souls, that are under-expressive, overly-submissive and/or under-utilized,” Tim continued as he cut a slit in the dura matter, exposing a lumpy cerebral cortex that seemed pathological under the surface. Said surface having to be cut into to verify his intuition on the matter. “If affects this area here most.”

“The supra-visual/musical association cortex?” first year resident Patel commented on the region of Hollywood legend and New York role model Lance Rabinowitz’s parietal lobe. “Wasn’t it identified as a seat of multi-modality creativity in Brain Research last month?” the East Indian wonderchild on his way to being top dog in still very White Bellingham commented.

“Depends on how you look at the data, and if your ocular portholes are driven by hot curry or rose colored glasses, or ” Tim knew the joke would not get a laugh, and if it did, it was forced. Flattery for the man who could make or break a career for any intern, resident or, after a few phone calls, nurse.

Sensing the escalation of embarrassment, Doctor Tim did what he did best, or what the world said he did best. Once again he channeled his brains into his fingers, his emotions into the tips of those appendages, and felt inside the ‘lump’ that was either a tumor, region of infarction or perhaps an overdeveloped region of highly functional neuronal tissue. Some said that Doctor Tim could ‘feel’ brains think with his fingers. The legend seemed to be true, as his fingers were always proved correct by the EEG monitors, deoxy-glucose CAT scans and even the most ‘impersonal’ of MRIs.

But this time, Tim's medical knowledge was hampered by something else. The lump was just a lump. It didn't speak to him.

"You okay, Doctor Tim?" Jennifer asked with her Southern twanged voice, emanating the respect and sincerity of that combined title.

"Yeah, sure." Tim replied, feeling something very coarse and crude emerging from a place in his Soul he never acknowledged, a nucleus in his brain he never studied or read about.

"You and HIM okay?" Jennifer inquired delivering the solution straight between the eyes, bypassing all thalamic and pre-cortical filtering systems in Tim's troubled mind.

"Yeah...sure. He's my patient. I'm his doctor," Doctor Tim replied with assertiveness and sincerity. "The Hippocratic oath. Above all do no harm," he continued.

Under his surgical mask, another dialogue was taking place between the angels and demons who were playing high stakes poker with Tim's soul. "Above all things do no harm. Be a healer to your patient, place his life above your own," he recalled from vows he privately and publicly took when becoming a Healer of flesh, big H. A pledge that made his mother feel proud of him, despite the fact that she died of cancer a year later. Then from another part of his Mind, and Soul, "Make an impact in the world. Make your Mark. Make a difference, for the Global Good, goddamn you!" from his father. He remembered a discourse he had with his father once about if he were Hitler's doctor in WWII. Young Tim claimed that it was a doctor's duty to care for his patient, no matter who that patient was. His father's rebuttal was "a brave doctor would have killed Old Adolf with strychnine. A smarter one would have injected him with estrogen and turned him into an even bigger fag than he was so that he'd be laughed out of power."

Tim contemplated the matter at hand now. To most of the world, Lance Rabinowitz was a Hollywood success story. Producer and director extradenaire. But producer and director of WHAT? Movies that made money, and that became popular. But popular for the wrong reasons. No, not smut of the body or of the mind, but smut of the Soul. Every one of Lance's movies championed the 'cool to be cruel' credo, and his ever-so-fashionable anti-war films did more to recruit young men into becoming soldiers with urges to kill people than they did to stop or explain any war. And as for the deals Lance made to get those movies made...The deals

would make Tony Soprano look like Mother Teresa. The details revealed to Tim as 'Doctor Tim', in confidence. Something Lance perhaps intentionally did to further torture Tim for being kind rather than practical, brainy rather than ballsy.

Patel prepared the cautery to burn out the suspected lobe. Its red hot tip glowed brightly as the anesthetist motioned for the team to proceed onward, and FAST. CAT scans and all other manner of diagnoses had all been ambiguous, and reactivation of them made their assessments all the more muddy.

"To burn or not to burn?" Jennifer asked in Shakesperian manner, giving voice to the question from Tim's silent lips.

Tim needed answers, and fast. What was this unusual mass in this most unusual man? This patient with whom Tim had a personal score to settle with. The man who forced, or rather intimidated Tim into going into medicine rather than the arts, or perhaps even politics. All those one way conversations with Lance echoed in Doctor Tim's brain. The phrases. The opinions which carried the power of proclamations from Lance's know-it-all (and can convince everyone else that it was true also) big mouth. "You're a wise dude, but not a colorful one." "You're good at making people think, but don't even try to make them laugh." "Let us artists and politicians change the world. You're a doctor. We need you to keep us healthy." "We're good at what we do...You're nice at...well, you're just nice, ya know?"

Nurse Jennifer cleared her throat. She threw that 'get on with it or I'll call in the real powers that be at this hospital' stare at Tim.

Just then, in the nick of time, Patel said something in Hindi. Probably nothing he learned in medical school, far more expressive than a passage from the Gita. But something from that book, or perhaps others like it, rang true to Tim. The demons inside of Tim stood naked, exposed, and identified. "Anger, jealousy and greed", he called them by name, identifying the sources of where they came from, and the consequences of obeying there mandates. Then, a breakthrough. "Hate the disease, not the patient," he said to himself, loud enough to come out in a whisper. Audible, thankfully, to Jennifer alone.

"Amen," she asserted.

“Amen indeed,” Tim continued, feeling the Divine Eyes seeing again through his fingers, sensing the uses and limitations of the devices in the operating room better than the manufacturers did.

The lump under the multi-modality creativity association cortex was partially malignant, and partially benign. Doctor Tim removed what he had to, leaving the rest to Lance to do what he had to with it.

Lance returned to work in two weeks. Tim turned on his television set two months later to watch the results of his work. ‘The same old crap’, said the reviewers who were paid to hate Rabinowitz productions. ‘The same brilliant genius’, proclaimed the minions in his company who sought advancement.

“Something...different between the lines,” Tim noted from what he felt was a very objective place. “It’s a start,” his conclusion as he was called out of the TV room in the doctor’s lounge and back to work.