

After receiving the decision from the doctors to proceed with Stem Cell Transplant (SCT) to treat my amyloidosis (a rare disease of the blood marrow), I was given a few more tests and then taken up to the apheresis department. Apheresis is the medical process where ALL your blood is removed from your body, put through a machine to separate/clean/destroy blood cells and then put back into your body. Working in an Apheresis department would be my idea of a dream job if I was a vampire. “Whoops, I forgot to insert the input catheter!” I begin treatment next week (Friday at Yale New Haven)

The room where Apheresis takes place has several hospital beds where patients are lying next to a towering machine with tubes running everywhere. Imagine a robot octopus.

The patients seemed asleep. I turned to the Doctor on the floor, “What’s with the sheet over the patient on the bed over there?” I pointed. “Oh,” he replied, “Some don’t make it.”

“Nurse, get him out of here. The Doc shouted.

We are really backed-up here,” the Doc assured me.

I glanced towards the wall where I noticed two huge instruments that looked like harpoons. “Doc, I asked, “What’s with the harpoons, where’s Moby Dick?”

“Those are the catheters. We put one in each arm,” the Doc replied.

“So let me get this straight Doc,” I asked, “Those needles are larger than my arm but they will go *into* each arm?”

“Yes,” The Doc answered.

I fainted.

“Wake up! Wake up!” A nurse shouted as she shook me, “You gotta move.”

I stumbled to my feet. Across the room a patient cried out for a mercy kill. The nurse screamed, “I’m sorry, Sir, insurance won’t cover your request. Now TAKE THE PAIN!”

A priest entered the room, “Who the hell asked for last rites in here?”

I wasn’t Catholic, but I remembered a friend who—no matter what the mayhem, carnage and/or debauchery—would receive a clean slate upon confession each Sunday. What a merciful and forgiving God. Sign me up, I thought.

“Father, Father, I implored, “Can I have a preview; a run through?”

“Son, have you been to Confession?” The Priest asked.

“Yes,” I said hopefully.

“When?”

“Two hours ago, Father.”

“That's much too soon, my Son” as the priest began to move towards other patients.

I made my way out the door into the hallway. I had left a disturbing scene.

Just then, a young girl as bald as a bowling ball stepped in front of my path pushing her infusion rack.

“How old are you?” I asked.

“Ten,” she replied.

“Don't you realize that you are threatening my self-pity,” I demanded.

“So what,” she said. The directness of youth in our day and age of political correctness is refreshing I thought.

Fear not gentle reader that yon errant knight would defend his honor.

I yelled, “En garde!” and lunged towards her. She stepped aside and then swung around to deliver a devastating blow to the side of my head with her infusion bag. Though not mortally wounded I staggered towards the hospital exit door.

.....to be continued.