

## **LOOKING BACK**

The ray of sunlight gently announces its presence through the window, timidly inviting itself into my room. Asking to be a companion of my solitude with a meekness only the morning light can be capable of. A light not yet burdened by the demands of the day that lies ahead. With silence, it cast a soft shadow on the few pill containers by the window. I humbly accepted the invitation from the sun into my small fifth-story room overlooking the river.

The sun felt the need to warm the coldness that radiated from those bottles, and the darkness of the half-drawn curtains was not a deterrent to this noble mission. Outside, all I could hear was a disconnected symphony of sounds from monitors trying - and failing - to harmonize the passionate yelling of my neighbor. He was remembering the days when he had served in the war, not so long ago. Or maybe it is now?

My tired eyes had seen the sun rise and set on eight and a half decades of existence. Its beauty and ugliness intertwined into one inseparable narrative, littered with laughter and tears as numerous as sand on the beach. I remember the losses for which time didn't stop when I wanted it to, and when it raced by, the happy moments that I had wished to last forever.

My gaze caught my reflection in the window, and I saw the marks of the stories that I have lived through on the body that has been my home and constant companion since the day of my birth. My deep-set brown eyes overflowed with tears of joy and sadness on more days than I can count. The eyes looking back now have gained wisdom through the trials of life more than they ever wished to have gained. A life of experience that has come at a price. These eyes have also witnessed the life stories of many with their triumphs and tragedies alike.

But also in those eyes, I see courage to have made it through decades of uncertainty. In the window's reflection, the woman looking back at me starts to smile as she remembers the little joys of the past that have brought her to where she is now. The moments of tender touch and heartfelt tears that once made her feel alive now give her strength to stand tall today. She looks back at that reflection with pride, knowing how many battles she has fought and won.

As the day slowly draws to a close, the shy, timid sunlight that welcomed the morning retreats, making way for the evening to unfold. It slowly bids the day farewell, knowing of its inevitable return the next morning. The hustle of feet rushing from one place to the next begins to quiet with reluctance, knowing the many tasks that have been left unfinished with the fading daylight. Conversations left unsaid, documents left unwritten, and emotions not yet processed by the hearts that bear them. The one constant in the background is the coldness of the fluorescent lights, becoming more pronounced as day fades into night.

Just outside my door, I overhear a conversation between two young resident doctors thankful to have made it through another stressful day in the ICU and afraid of what the darkness of the night may bring. Their voices, shrouded in hesitation and worry, were barely masked by the neutrality of their words. They prefer to face the setting sun in my window than to see each other's eyes and acknowledge the

uneasiness that lies between them. They gaze longingly at the sun, aware that they need its warmth and companionship now more than at any other time of day.

A few minutes pass, and their reflections become more evident on the hospital's cold glass windows as the darkness settles in. Each resident takes a few moments to familiarize themselves with this new reflection of who they are. A reflection of a person that they did not know this morning. The passing day has taught them new ideas and events that have now become a permanent part of their memory and who they are. The acknowledgement of the many changes that one day can bring begins to settle, and a new reality unfolds. They slowly begin to smile as the evening sky boldly reveals its deep purple hues, allowing them to momentarily forget the endless words and thoughts that have floated through their minds today. The beauty of the evening sky was a moment needed by all of us to remember that outside these walls, there is light.

Dr. Monica Ghebrial  
Internal Medicine PGY-2  
Department of Internal Medicine  
University of Manitoba