David

by Jake Barnes

I teach a writing class at the Senior Center. I have a student who wears leg braces and can walk a little with the aid of crutches, but he mostly gets about in a wheelchair. He was the victim of an auto accident when he was in his teens.

When I am down in the dumps, sometimes I think of David. His injury was a long time ago. He is cheerful and funny, and his prose is excellent, his poetry not very good. His rhymes are awful. I keep encouraging him to write stories not poems, but I think he enjoys writing things that don't fit together. Things that stumble.

I was feeling sorry for myself one day, and I read one of his stories about his stay in the hospital after his injury. He made friends with a fellow who spent part of the time in an iron lung. The young man was a painter. His arms and legs were paralyzed. He held the brush in his teeth. He was a terrific painter, my student said. His paintings sold like crazy.

I am not aging gracefully. This morning I woke up mad at my wife and mad at the world. Last night my wife told me to stop whining. Her exact words were “Suck it up.” I didn't appreciate that. Then I thought what David would say. He'd say, “I *resemble* that.” That brought a smile to my face. Resemble, not resent. Good, old David. He's always kidding around.

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