Affairs of the Heart

by Kevin LeMaster

There was a time I could run uphill at an astonishing pace, but lately, things that were once possible, were about as possible as my abdominal turning plural, and the burning sensation in my neck was getting worse when I walked. I was 45, out of shape, and had a sedentary job that made me fat and lazy. My diet consisted of everything fried and my lifestyle revolved around my four children.

One day, we were at a park that required some trail walking and I felt like Jumbo had sat on my chest and stuck his trunk in my mouth, sucking every bit of air from my lungs it was then that I decided that I needed an exam of the heart. After extensive tests and a catherization, it was determined that bypass surgery was the answer. Now, my father went through this, and I wasn't keen on the idea, but if it would extend my life, I was for it.

I stayed in the hospital the night before the surgery, alone in a dully painted room that was as bleak as my insides, trying to imagine several outcomes, all bad. The television's senseless programming only heightened my anxiousness, finally lulling me to sleep to an episode of Friends (I swear it's like warm milk).

The next morning, I was shaved, skinned and stuffed like a Thanksgiving turkey for its untimely demise. The rest if the time, I do not quite remember, only sounds accumulated during rim sleep; I collected these morsels of thought for purposes of blackmail to be used later. When I came to, I was gasping breath through a washer hose, recently removed and was greeted by my daughter and her idiot friend; not the first person I wanted to see after waking from euphoric dreams of super models in skimpy swimwear.

I was in the hospital for over a week, regaining strength enough to walk down a hall filled with onlookers, gawkers, and just plain

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pains in my ass. I wasn't up to social contact of any kind, and I didn't want a bunch of old people looking at my open hatch-back gown that had been flashing everyone behind me for more than an hour now. Walking was my priority. Running was not an option. Crawling, however, was certainly a possibility.

After everything I have been through, I realize one thing. No matter how insignificant you think life is, a heart can be broken. All it takes are some rib spreaders and a sharp knife, but love is the only thing that puts things back
in the right place, making it beat for all the right reasons.