

Spilling Sand

by Michael Tusa

"I've got these dark brown spots on my forehead, I think it might be skin cancer"

The doctor looked at me with a pained expression, as if I had swiftly kicked him in the throat.

"Have you been in the sun a lot lately?" the doctor sighed out

"No, not really, I just go for walks"

I eyed him intently. Ours eyes caught, and then he quickly looked away, staring at the ground.

"So why this time, why do you think you're sick now?"

"Well my family has a history of cancer doc, you know that, and I just want to make sure it's nothing serious"

"You do understand my skepticism Mr. Randolph? This is your 7th appointment this month, you do realize that don't you? This being the 3rd time you have thought that you might have cancer."

I nervously, eased my hand onto my neck, scratching intensely, there was no honest itch, but I felt the need to scratch in this situation.

"Yes, yes, now I understand that Dr. Brown, but as my doctor, I'd like a little support, this could be serious" my voice shaking uneasily, breaking half way through the sentence, the glass of my lies, shattered pieces glinting on the ground, I was standing in my own self evidence.

"I know John, I understand that, but you need to understand, that there is nothing wrong with you. We have discussed this before, and I don't know how many more times they are going to allow you in here, how much longer will it before they send you away? Insurance

hasn't covered the past four appointments, and you and I both know, that after Martha died, your financial issue, has become well, lets say I'm not the only one aware of it."

I coughed nervously, rubbing my crooked arm up and down, my spotted wrinkled skin bunching like carpet too thick for a door to move over.

" I know, it looks bad, but im still all there doc, im not that old" I stammered

I looked at him with confidence this time, my eyes staring at the numerous hairs on his young head, envious of the youth.

"Look John, maybe we need to look at the possibilities of mental health iss...."

I cut him off quickly.

"NO NO NO!" I boomed, my voice now seizing every atom of my bony body, I tightened in my chair.

"I tell you I am fine damn it, Im fine, all Im asking you is to take a damn look at my forehead, I don't psycho analyze you Dr.Brown, do me the same service!"

He began to open his mouth, but I didn't stop, the antique pistons of my heart were running hard, and I wasn't slowing down.

"DO ME THE SAME SERVICE I DID YOU!", "TWO TOURS IN NAM DR. BROWN, TWO!" "THREE PURPLE HEARTS, I RISKED MY LIFE, I SAVED YOUR FATHERS ASS!"

He stiffened, and looked me in my sunken shuttered eyes.

"Im fully aware of the service you've done not only me, but my family John, im aware. Now please calm down you old fool, those are

age spots! Your 72! Its natural to have spots on your skin! You can't come to me every time you find a new wrinkle or crease in your damn paper framed body!"

I looked to the ground, embarrassed. I felt terrible, maybe a mental evaluation wasn't such a bad idea, I was old, and I knew it. No longer could I stand for barely a minute, I had begun holding onto walls for support as I walked, I coughed and yacked indescribable things into the bathroom sink, I yelled at the kids playing on my lawn. It had sneaked onto me quietly, the tenderness of age abiding in me and embracing my every iota of being, and I hadn't even batted an eye at it.

"Ok, doc, I'll go quietly" I coughed. "I won't bother you no more, I'll just stay home, and tend to the garden like usual" I said. "I just, I was more afraid I guess, that it wasn't cancer" I confided slowly. "But it's not, and its just age, let's just chalk it up to age" I said, staring at the ground, at my leather worn oxfords, the tips roughed, and the bottoms worn and unsewn hanging lifelessly.

The good doctor smiled approvingly.

"I don't mind you coming in John, I really don't, but you shouldn't worry so much, take it easy, you're a veteran and you deserve it." He said heartfully.

I took the good doctors words to heart, and slowly lifted myself out of the chair, rejecting his hand of help. I thanked him and turned. I creaked open the thick wooden door, the nurse smiling from her desk as I left the hallway, then the building. Traffic buzzed in my ear like angry insects, a man talked on his cell phone, discussing business as usual, a plump kid and his mother, held balloons and ate hot dogs, devouring as if he had never eaten. This was what I protected. And I was shamed by it. I shuffled slowly to my old car, the windows cracked, letting the soft air in, I unhinged the door and

entered the vehicle, collapsing hard like a torn sand bag onto the shredded leather seat, I felt as though I could feel the sands of my internal hourglass spilling out my sides. I started the car, and slapped the dash. I pulled slowly out of the handicap parking space, and veered around the corner. I drove, signing Johnny Cash, snapping my finger, tapping my foot, sometimes rubbing the spot on my head. I stopped at the usual intersection, somewhat cheerful, thinking of the house I would go home to, the red brick house, the white picket fence, I had slaved over on a warm summer day. My old dog, Nixon, and the beautiful garden that I lived for, the true American beauty I had gladly protected. I stepped slowly on the gas, cars honked as usual, the old buzz. I thought of the carrots that were beginning to sprout, and how Martha used to help me pick them, I began to turn my head to the side smiling, ready to look at the usual faces, of the stopped people in their cars, waiting for their turn, the one time I ever saw the young stop, and as usual, I would imagine they were thanking me, rewording their moving lips as they talked on phones to my liking, the buzz even louder now, angry insects protecting a bludgeoned hive, my head at last made the usual turn, I looked expectantly, all most excited, but all I saw were the headlights inside my breaking window.

