

The soft humming of hospital fans and the murmurs of wandering doctors are the kind of noise a worrying mother shouldn't need to hear. But she did. For a few hours by now. She could tell you all about the rhythm and pattern of each of them, and with a good guess point out which doctor did which round. She didn't know it could take this long, yet at the same time she felt the conflicting echo that they might just be stalling for time.

Of course, she didn't know that beyond those doors, the doctors were merely explaining to him what exactly had happened. Using a few charts and some pantomime they could perfectly convey why his chest felt so heavy and constricted, and why he had to have tubes spray a sharp, minty air inside.

"It's... sort of like asthma. I know a few kids in your school have it." The doctor said at first. "Your lungs are a little... well, not built well. They get clogged and can't take in the air as well as they should. It's like putting a doorstep under the door, get that?" The doctor explained with a little passion, letting the young kitten nod before moving on.

"Alright. And that tube's the reason you can wake up. That sharp smell is a powerful medicine clearing out your lungs and bringing in a richer kind of air. That way, you can breathe normally, if only for a while." The doctor finally put the charts aside and rubbed his eyes, taking a deep breath. With heavy steps, he moved over and slowly removed the tube from the boy's nose.

"If you ever feel dizzy, or heavy, or start to wheeze, you need to breathe slow and deep, holding your breath a few seconds. So try it with me." He said, after closing the valve. He took the boy's hands, one in each, and spread them apart... and inward. Slowly teaching a steady rhythm.

The mother tapped her finger and looked at the clock. It was marked with many time slots and colours, signifying a variety of daily events that happened, from lights on to lights off. They said it'd only take a few minutes to hook him up. They said she'd be in there within an hour and they'd give her the rundown. She heard from other parents how breathing problems start, but never heard about how scary that first time can be. From what she picked up, it'd get better with age... such things never matter. Naturally, they'd matter later... but later's later.

"You're doing great. Now, the final thing." The doctor reached through a drawer in the corner of the room and pulled out an L-shaped bit of plastic. "This is an 'inhaler'. You'll get one of your own. It's loaded with the same medicine in that tank next to you, that you've been breathing so far. Whenever you get dizzy, or heavy, or feel a shortness in breath... you put it in your mouth, close your nose and take a deep breath while squeezing." He said, miming every step of the way. The only answer was a quiet response, a sign the youngster understood without feeling too easy.

"You'll also get another for home. Every time you go to bed and when you wake up. Make it part of your routine. And like I said, don't worry too much; you and your mother get a nice flyer and will be here for check ups. I heard you already come sometimes for your eye problem, so that shouldn't be a problem, right? And be happy; you'll grow out of it. Once you're about 20-25, there's a good chance you'll only carry one for emergencies. Your lungs just need a little time."

The boy nodded and tried to hide under the sheets a bit, which wasn't easy with the tube that was rather firmly pressed down his nose. He would be there at least a few days to make sure they were 100% sure on what was going on, as well as some other physical examinations. Not to mention trying to ensure the mother didn't bang herself on the head with genetic guilt.

Though he wasn't hiding from the doctor, but for the boy a bed over. He seemed very out of it, head leaning back as he wasn't just tubed... no, this kid had a mask tied around his mouth, with several patches on his chest. And all it took was a point for the doctor to chuckle.

"That's Dave, Danny." He said with a smile, trying to stop laughing. "And he's fine. Dave's... a bit like you. Silly eyes, lungs that aren't as good. He's only out of it... well, he has a lazy eye on top of a focus problem, so his mother wanted laser eye. Of course at his age he has to be... 'dulled'. And take a guess; they found he was more vulnerable to the medicine than they thought so they canceled the procedure, and now he's just waiting for the stuff to wear out, as he's not much good

asleep. I'm sure he can get the surgery later, though with how mothers are he'll likely have to wait until he's 16 and can get the operation with less intensive medication."

The doctor seemed to not mind to gossip with a kid who seemed only half aware of what he meant anyway. Then again, he was a pediatrician and wasn't exactly going to talk to elderly patients on a day to day basis.

"You'll get along fine with him, little Danny. He's about your age, good kid. In fact..." He muttered, taking the chart and looking over the personal details in the back. "Yea, he's in the same school. I'm sure you must know him then? Oh well, classes tend to get fractured. That reminds me I should get your mother. A nurse will be here for the rest of your stay. Just remember not to play soccer without your inhaler!"

"Ma'am... madam, please!" The nurse tried to calm her, as she seemed quite furious that all that talking went on behind her back. All those nerves of waiting around just piled and piled, ultimately becoming the futile fury mothers made their name with. One could only assume how much more fury would whirl around the room had the other child's mother been there to complain about her loud mouth and complaints. It's moments like this a child picks up the lessons of shame and humility, to see their mother spit out all their useless concern as anger towards the innocent.

"Madam, your child is fine. What he has is easily treatable. The doctor just wanted to tell him everything one clearly." No words helped, as one must never address the problem, but the emotions. For its not logic that fuels most living parents, instead they are run by illogical temperaments and emotions.

"Do you think I care? I should've been there and..."

"Madam, this is not YOUR problem. This isn't a social disease, you don't have to alter his diet or who he hangs out with. He just needs to take some medicine..." The nurse, sweetheart that she was, clearly had eons of experience driving her calm demeanor, talking right through the mother's tirade. "If you calm down, you won't upset him. There's a good chance getting too nervous can cause a relapse."

A good paradox always shuts them up. What mother would want to be the very root of the problem that torments her child? "Your Danny has been fine so far. However, I can assure you children with 'enthusiastic' parents usually suffer more severe relapses. Stress is not good for him right now, especially after such a severe attack."

The mother received a nice flyer and was told of the times where they'd schedule a few follow ups for later, before the nurse assured her, again, that he'd be fine. And that as long as he didn't suffer any major attacks, he could grow out of it.

One the night had settled, the boy had already gotten most things from home that he really cared about. It wasn't his first time, as he didn't get his glasses very kindly either. Yet, the mood was a bit different, especially when he was awoken by the other boy in the room.

"Hey..." He heard, trying to open his eyes, which felt so heavy this late at night. The windows clearly painted a vivid moon, meaning that even with the ambient light of machines he could still see everything as a pale white. "I remember you from school. Why are you here?"

"Wha?" The feline muttered as the raccoon sat down on the chair the mother had used earlier that day. Of course the boy wasn't tired; he'd been forced to sleep for a good while, and it took another good while to get full control again. "I think so? The doctor said so."

"Do you know if they did my eyes?" As he got his negative feedback, he pulled the sheets up. "So did they cut you?" He asked, putting his finger at his own nose, since he usually saw those on surgery patients.

"N-not really. I had trouble breathing and then I was here. They kept saying a lot of stuff about breathing and my mother kept making a racket." The other boy seemed to understand that a panicked event must've blanked his mind.

"Well.... uhm... I have similar things, I guess. Wanna come to my place when you can leave?"

"When can you leave?" Was the answer, echoing gently against the sterile artificial materials.

"Soon enough. Already got a call from mom saying she doesn't want to do it anymore. You gotta have a buddy, you know." The bedded boy blinked, and with his dark fur it was easy to see the whites of his eyes flicker. "For your... breathing. I have a buddy too, but he's in a different grade. I could introduce you to the gang. And the nurse. You'll need to know her if you want to keep doing PE."

"I do, I dun wanna skip out on practice!"

"You probably won't be allowed to play games... I got kicked out when they heard... they cared too much about their ratios or something. But I know other things to do. Uh..." The raccoon felt his mind uncloud, noticing just how much of the light was the moon and the quiet night light. "S-sorry for keeping you up. I'll invite the rest for the visit, okay? I'm sure you'll like them!"

"Nah... it's fine. Better than being alone!" He said, the raccoon boy scampering back to bed. His lean figure, posed against the moon's rays, seemed along like a limbering pile of slim branches and twigs, yet struck a pleasant figure. The kitten couldn't help but smile. At least he made a friend!