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All butterflies
Are like poison in my eyes.
I cringe when I see them
Flutter..flutter..flutter
Around me—surrounding me,
Taking over my thoughts,
Breaking into my dreams.

All butterflies
Are like poison to my eyes.
I feel them moving inside me,
Trying to steal my befuddled heart,
(--just don't steal my LIFE!).

Then in comes a man
Who takes the fresh leaves from my hands
That I have used to lure the butterflies onto me, into me,
Trying to look like nature,
(But I guess too much nature can do me great harm).
Jumping my poor heart into alarm
..I didn't know.

All butterflies
Are no longer poison in my eyes--
I wave with a smile as they flutter past.
The angel-like man took them out of me
And replaced them with a somehow healing toxin.

All butterflies
Are simply insects in my eyes,
Glorious in their own way,
As I live in a green steadiness
And they live on their own
And leave me alone
..without flutters.

Parallel Strokes

A normal day, a beautiful morning,
Turned grave, indeed, with no forewarning.

A sudden sensation, I cannot explain
Why my eye is beset by a caustic pain.

My vision is blurred, not helping to blink.
Lost in this haze, I feel out of sync.

A cranial ache, a bolt from the blue.
My sense of what's real is vastly askew.

As I lift my arms, my mind plays a joke.
My left will not raise; I know it's a stroke.

I rush to the phone, my balance undone.
Mashing the keys, I reach 9-1-1.

First Ending

I fumble my words, but I get through the call,
And the medics arrive in no time at all.

I come to the clinic, and I'm sent on my way;

Thankful I'll live to see a new day.

Alternate Ending

I request EMS, but my speech is impaired.

The minutes turn to hours, as if no one cared.

After much delay, my rescue arrives.

They prep me for transport; it'll be a long drive.

We come to our stop, and the doctors proclaim:

“The wait was too long. You'll not be the same.”

Eat Your Vegetables

Since I was little
Up through my teens,
I was given vegetables
And told, "Eat your greens!"

I'm all grown up
And getting old,
I've suffered a stroke
So I've been told...

"Too many vegetables
Form blood clots,
Cabbage, broccoli,
There are lots."

But I must be careful
To eat enough,
I still need vegetables
This will be tough.

Without my veggies
Should I get cut,
I'll continue to bleed
My veins will not shut.

All of the sudden
It comes in bouts,
I get this craving
To eat Brussels sprouts.

Too many vegetables
Oh! What a sin,
I will protect myself
With Coumadin.

Always taught
To eat a balanced diet,
I see a veggie
And I'm frightened by it!

I

Tick Tock.

Oh, I feel a little dizzy.

Tick Tock.

Hmm, something feels different.

Tick Tock.

I'll just try to finish the laundry.

Tick Tock.

EDIT? I thought I bought TIDE?

Tick Tock.

Honey! Can you come here?

Tick Tock.

That didn't sound right. Am I slurring?

Tick Tock.

I can't lift my left arm. My leg feels so heavy.

Tick Tock.

Why is my eye closing? My whole face is numb!

Tick Tock.

What's happening?!

Tick Tock.

II

Tick Tock.

Are we at the hospital yet?

Tick Tock.

Do you think we should've left sooner?

Tick Tock.

I just wish we were there.

Tick Tock.

III

Tick Tock.

We're here?! Maybe I can get some help.

Tick Tock.

I can't...I can't even pronounce my name correctly.

Tick Tock.

John, what did the doctor just say?

Tick Tock.

They can't give me the medicine?

Tick Tock.

TP what? I don't...I'm not understanding.

Tick Tock.

Please, someone...help me!

Tick Tock.

What am I going to do?

Tick Tock.

The Stroke Patient

Mrs. Ellen Daniels awoke in a hospital bed on a Sunday morning, sunlight streaming into the small hospital room. A small, thin woman, Ellen looked younger than her seventy-one years would suggest. Her age was betrayed only by the deep wrinkles etched around her eyes and mouth. She raised a thin arm and surveyed the hospital band wrapped around her right wrist. Only then did she notice her son, Michael, sitting by the side of the bed, his head drooping as he slept. She smiled and tried to speak. Her words were slurred and nearly incomprehensible.

Ellen's son awoke with a start. "Mom! How are you doing? I got here as soon as I could."

She tried to ask why she was in the hospital; again her words were garbled. She vaguely remembered the ambulance ride and bumpy journey to the hospital. Michael got to his feet and leaned out of the room; he returned moments later with a doctor in tow. "My mother's language is unintelligible; she's slurring her words," said Michael anxiously. "Is this normal after a stroke?"

Ellen lay back in shock, at the word "stroke". The doctor explained, "Yes. Slurring of language is normal. However, I think we caught it early enough. The medication she has been given should..."

The doctor's words faded into the background as Ellen tried to process the news. She tried to ask what had caused the stroke; her vexation with her inability to speak was overwhelming. She had always been an independent woman, and losing her voice was crippling. The frustration crashed home as she discovered her inability to move her left leg. Ellen's world was collapsing around her; she was not used to this dependence on others. Head spinning, she closed her eyes, exhaustion settling deep in her bones.

Michael stared worriedly at his mother; he had never seen her without control in any situation. He placed his hand over her wrinkled, hospital-banded one. His mother had always been the one there for him, the provider and shoulder to lean on. Now he would have to take up her traditional role. Michael knew it would be difficult; his mother was a very self-reliant woman. As he watched his mother sleep, she seemed restless, disquieted. Standing carefully, he motioned to the doctor in the hallway, "How is she doing?"

The doctor hesitated, then explained, "Like I said, we caught it rather early. However, I get the feeling that she seems to have lost hope. Am I wrong in thinking your mother is a strong, independent woman?"

Michael laughed. "My mother is the strongest person I know. She has always been the source of strength in our family."

"In that case, she is going to need the support of her family. We often see this; the most independent

patients have the most trouble accepting the situation. They hate to give up control. She is going to need you to help her feel safe and secure.”

Nodding, Michael glanced into his mother’s hospital room, “Is she going to be alright?”

“I believe she can recover, depending, of course, upon her mental state. If she feels hopeless and uncaring, the odds aren’t so great.” Michael nodded and thanked the doctor before returning to his mother’s room.

Ellen was awake again and stared at the ceiling, lost in contemplation of her condition. “Hi, Mom,” smiled Michael, taking her hand again. “The doctor says you are going to be alright.” Ellen smiled half-heartedly, appreciating her son’s concern for her well-being. She was thankful he had been there to call 911 with the onset of her symptoms. Neither of them had known the symptoms of a stroke; Michael had become worried at her sudden lack of coordination and balance. Seeming to sense what she was thinking, Michael said, “I’m glad we called the ambulance when we did.” Ellen nodded, staring at the steady pulse of the heart monitor next to her hospital bed.

“You’re going to be fine though, Mom,” assured Michael. Ellen’s attention returned to her son’s earnest gaze. His light blue eyes were red-rimmed from lack of sleep.

“David will be here later to visit,” Michael continued, referring to his six year old son. “He misses his grandma.” Ellen smiled thinking about David’s eager smile and bright eyes. The image lifted her ever so slightly out of the hole into which her mind had settled. A slight tap on the door announced the prescience of a nurse holding a slim file.

“Mrs. Daniels?” she asked and continued after Ellen’s nod of confirmation. “I have the information on stroke symptoms and causes your son requested.” She held out several brochures and leaflets to Michael who took them with a nod of thanks. Seconds later, Michael’s wife, a slim blonde woman entered, a small boy peering out from behind her legs.

“See, David, Grandma’s okay. She’s even awake.” Hesitantly, David went to the edge of his father’s seat, smiling shyly at his grandmother. He hugged his father and approached Ellen’s bed. “Hi, Grandma.” His small extended hand clutched several colorful papers, each strewn with a smattering of children’s art. Happiness suited Ellen as she saw the carefully drawn lopsided hearts and stick figures. She fumbled for the bed remote; grasping it, Ellen raised the bed to a more seated position. She saw David’s eyes widen in amazement, having never seen a hospital bed before. She took the drawings from her grandson.

Carefully forming the words, Ellen said, “Thank you.”

David hoisted himself up to sit beside her and began explaining with great seriousness each aspect of his artwork. He pointed to a pair of stick people standing together. "See, Grandma, this is me and that's you." Ellen looked down at the excited, proud boy seated beside her and knew she had to get better for his sake.

Michael stood up and kissed his wife, "I'm going to grab a bite to eat, Annie. I'll be right back." She nodded, watching her son cheer up her mother-in-law.

Michael left his mother's hospital room, pamphlets clutched in his left hand. He would have to make sure his family knew the symptoms of a stroke. He did not want his son to lose his beloved grandmother for a very long time.

Information Sheet

Student Writer: Lara Schoe er

Title of Writing: The Stroke Patient

Name of Intern: Matthew Nied

Research Project Title: Reaction Times to Ischemic Stroke and Education Overview for the Communities Surrounding Marymount Implications and Outcomes

Writer's Statement: My story focuses on an elderly woman, Ellen, who has just suffered a stroke. She must learn to allow herself to be cared for by her concerned family. Her son Michael is worried about her but does not allow it to show; he stays strong in an attempt to support his mother. My story stems from Matthew Nied's research project regarding strokes. In the story Michael mentions that he does not know the symptoms of a stroke. Matthew's project dealt with education about stroke symptoms; I tried to incorporate this idea into my work.