



Thursday Memo – September 10, 2015

The Eternal Teacher - by Joanne Dannenhoffer

I take a deep breath and exhale.

Bubbles of anxiety, grief, and exhaustion float above my head, rising through the sea of half-shed tears I find myself submerged in.

As I step over the threshold of my mentor's hospital room, I take another deep breath.

Shedding the heavy cloak of an anxious resident and a scared girl, I pull around myself the white coat of the confident and compassionate physician; the physician he always makes me believe I can be.

As we start to discuss his case, I try to speak with enough specifics and technical terms to show him the respect he so richly deserves, but with little enough jargon to allow him to be the patient for once.

"Have you thought about the risks?" he asks me, as I tell him about the procedure I have planned for him.

"Yes," I tell him, the unspoken "you've taught me well" floats between us.

We finish our discussion of the plan for the day.

"Any questions or concerns?" I ask him - my standard closing statement for any patient encounter.

"No no, very good Dr. Dannenhoffer, very good", he mutters with a subtle smile and a nod of his head.

More reassurance I could not ask for.

As I step out of the room I can't help but wonder - which one of us has been healed?