

The Cage

This body is a cage. Nothing is easy anymore. Just trying to grab my coffee mug in the morning is a struggle. Sometimes I spill the hot coffee on myself because I can't control my arms. I used to be a physics professor, highly respected and revered. Now I need my wife to help me get to the restroom. This is not who I am. This shell of a body feels like a cage.

Today has been harder than usual. Since the stroke I have been trying to get back to the way things were. I don't want to accept my imprisonment in this body. These bars are cold and hard. My physical therapist assistant tries to be upbeat every time we work together, but she doesn't know what this cage feels like on the inside. How dark it feels in here. I know she is just trying to help, but it is just so frustrating when I can't even transfer a small cone from one hand to the other. It makes me want to scream, but I stay silent.

Sometimes it feels lonely in this cage. My wife tries to get me out on the town, but she doesn't understand how people look at me. The looks of pity and curiosity in people's eyes only remind me of what I have lost. When I spill food on myself, people around me look disgusted. Why can't they see that this cage is not who I am?

Will things ever be the way they were before? Will I ever recover and escape this cage? I can see how tired my wife is. She loves me. But caring for me is taking a toll on her. I don't want to bring her down with me and shackle her to this cage. She deserves to relax in her retirement. I hope she doesn't resent me. I try to put on a smile for her. I want her to know how much I appreciate her.

I just keep remembering those walks we used to take every night. We would hold hands and just enjoy walking in the nature. Will I ever walk with her again? I reach a shaky hand towards hers and try to squeeze. As she looks back at me, the bars of this cage begin to fade. I realize that this cage may imprison my body, but it cannot imprison my heart.

My therapist asks me why I am smiling so much today. I tell her my cage bars are beginning to fade. She pauses and looks confused for a moment, but then I see the corners of her mouth creep up as she smiles at me and turns to grab the cones.