



# MY ATTITUDE TRANSPLANT

BY MICHAEL BRODEUR

*It was my assignment. But it hit me: these are lives I'm touching.*

***“So how are you doing?” I asked, not really because I cared, but because I was supposed to be nice to the patients I was helping back to their rooms.***

**H**ey, Mike! Can you take the lady in the hallway back to her room on the third floor?” the radiology tech asked.

“Yeah, sure,” I said. “You just love to keep me busy, don’t you?”

“You know what they say. We’re supposed to run the candy strippers into the ground with work,” he shot back.

“Excuse me, ma’am,” I said to an older woman in a wheelchair, “I’m here to take you back up to your room.”

“Tell me,” she said, “when did they start employing doctors in their teens?”

“Oh no,” I said with a laugh. “I’m only a volunteer. I come here to help out.” I didn’t add, And to gain experience that will help me get into a decent college.

“Well that’s very sweet of you,” she replied.

“So how are you doing?” I asked, not really because I cared, but because I was supposed to be nice and foster a pleasant atmosphere for the patients.

“I could be better,” she said.

“I’m sorry to hear that. I hope you get better.” We chatted as I wheeled her to her room. At the same time, I was thinking

about how many more people I would need to bring to their rooms before the end of the day. “Hey, I never got your name. I’m Michael.”

“Well, nice to meet you, Michael,” she said sincerely. “I’m Rebecca.”

“It’s been a pleasure to meet you as well,” I said. “If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask. Maybe I’ll see you again.”

“Thank you, Michael,” the woman replied.

I wasn’t too affected by the experience. I took people from the Radiology Department to some designated area in the hospital every day. It was my assignment. After saying good-bye, I went downstairs to attend to some more people in wheelchairs.

Later in the afternoon I received a call from the Intensive Coronary Care Unit. I was shocked. Teenagers weren’t allowed in ICCU.

“Hello? This is Michael Brodeur,” I said into the phone.

“Oh, you’re the one! You’re the boy who was so nice,” a nurse said. “Could you come up to ICCU for a little while?”

“Okay, ma’am, I’ll be there right away,” I said, not quite knowing what to expect. I was curious as to why I had been called, but soon, thoughts of schoolwork, the



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upcoming football game, and food replaced my curiosity.

“Right this way,” a nurse pointed when I arrived. “It’s the door right in the middle of all the others.”

I knocked at the door. “Hello? This is Michael,” I said.

“Please come in,” a weak voice responded.

It was the woman I had wheeled to her room earlier that day. “What’s wrong?” I immediately asked, sensing something was terribly wrong.

“I just found out my cancer has progressed to a very bad stage,” she said.

“Oh, I’m so sorry. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Well, I just wanted to talk to you,” she replied. “You were so kind to me this morning, and, well, I just wanted to talk to you.”

“Of course! I’d love to do that,” I answered.

“You remind me so much of my grandson. You have the hair, the eyes, the face. He looks so much like you,” she said.

“So where does your grandson live?” I asked.

We talked for about 30 minutes. I learned about her grandchildren. I learned that she used to win beauty pageants. I learned that her husband of 42 years had died just under a year ago. I learned a lot.

That’s when it hit me: these are lives I’m touching. Why have I been so casual about people’s lives?

I found out that after she was told about her condition, she had asked for the “boy who had been so nice to her.” The boy who had been so nice? I hadn’t been mean, but I certainly hadn’t been the most sincere person around. After all, for me this volunteer

work was just a way to get into college. I resolved to change. Never again would I so lightly consider these people I was serving. I redoubled my efforts as a volunteer and started to take pride in my work.

I was only 17 years old. But I could make a difference. **NE**

