

1

PERSONAL
ESSAY
EXS

intensive care unit, I imagine she deals with similar situations on a daily basis. She doesn't know this woman any better than I do, and yet here she is, offering up services and "words of wisdom." Therefore, I'm overcome with anger, not at my mother but at myself. ^{I live the ghetto} If she can be hushed and proper with appropriate bedside manners, why can't I? SS - summer I'm overcome with jealousy, and I retreat subtly, settling onto one of the lime green benches. This particular room is accented in tropical colors—orange, lime green, brown. The dying woman sits in the center on a pale blue hospital bed, raised so she can sit up and watch the visitors.

Once on the bench, I avert my eyes from my mother and the dying woman, painfully embarrassed. Instead I look through the expansive windows behind me. I try to imagine that this woman is close to me. I can't help feeling that if she were, I would know exactly what to say. Then my mom sits by me, and I dart a look back at the woman. In my head, I go over the things I know about her. She had emigrated from Mexico to find work, leaving her children behind with the promise of money. Now her cancer has metastasized after a shocking diagnosis. She is days away from returning to her home country, to die surrounded by loved ones, and from what my mom told me, it's possible she won't make it. I come back to reality and steal another glance. Her presence fills the room, making it hard to breathe. She's inescapable. There's nowhere I can

look without seeing some part of her. I know the cancer is in her liver; her skin is a sickly yellow color. Her hair falls in disheveled clumps, and I suspect it's just a matted wig. Her eyes bulge out of her gaunt face, miserably somber and stony. I

Stark
imagery

CONCRETE
IMAGERY

BACKSTORY
MOTIVATION

GOOD
MIX
OF
STORY

above Earth's lamentation. I stare around me, mind blank of anything but awe and the music. I hear the real, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation. Two football fields could fit comfortably inside the sanctuary, which is of Spanish architecture and covered with frescoes. The music - is it a choir of angels? - reverberates off every surface, inside me. Above the tumult and the strife, I hear its music ringing. Everything else is gone; I am alone, humbled, because I am surrounded by something much greater than myself. It sounds an echo in my soul. All I see is a fresco ceiling, brilliant chandeliers, saints along the walls, a dozen paintings of biblical stories, a magnificent balcony. My heart bounds at the sight of words painted majestically on the high-vaulted ceiling: MAGNIFICAT ANIMA MEA DOMINUM ("my soul proclaims the glory of God"). How can I keep from singing?

"YES! Christy's shriek brings me back to earth with an unpleasant jolt. 'Thank you for finally putting some emotion into the song! That's what I keep telling you - when you put your heart into the music, you can change a person's life with song.' The piano rolls out music, flowing as a river, soothing as an embrace, the notes wrapping around me like a blanket, comforting me. Staring around Visitation Catholic Church in Kansas City, I cannot take in enough - the emotion, the art, the music, my epiphany. It is all more than beautiful, more than a church, more than architecture and paint and stained glass. I know now how much I have taken for granted. My tongue can practically taste the bittersweet emotions coursing through me. The dome, reflecting the heavens' wintry stars, soars over my head. Change a person's life with song... only now did I realize what Christy meant.

Having just performed the concert of a lifetime, my mind overflows with gratitude and wonder. Just eighteen months ago, I had been a walking and talking bag of pessimism, conceit, and resentfulness. But as the summer breeze drifts through the sanctuary, caressing my hair and lifting my spirits, I feel content, humbled, and truly at peace. I thank God for my opportunities - the chance to see things in a new light, to appreciate the many gifts granted to me, and to learn from my

2

NICE
CONCRETE
IMAGERY

GOOD MIX
OF
DIAGNOSIS

GOOD
PLOT
SYNOPSIS

SENSORS

BECOMES
INFORMAL

3

Good TRULISH Detail

"We need to get you on some new medication." He says, certain that no one will criticize this idea when he has that many degrees hanging on the wall behind him. "You need to take this every morning along with your current medications." Gee, thanks Doc, this Dextroamphourmetamine should really help! Never mind the fact that these are the only pills left in your medicine cabinet. I mean, this has to be the one that'll help me, right?

Great TONS through irony

Next we go to the Psychoanalyst. The guy who's idea of therapy is to try to get me to dissect my own brain for the reasons why I don't do any work. I'm skeptical after everything with the psychiatrist. "We need to figure out what's stopping you from succeeding." He says, focusing on every move I make like it's telling him everything he needs to know. "Then, you need to just do your work."

Good Cynicality

What? That's it? "Just do the work." That's what you're going to tell me? I realize that this wasn't what I wanted to hear. I wanted him to say "Hey, there's a loophole for geniuses in the school system. They don't have to do any work that seems stupid to them!" I'm not satisfied with this; I want to do things my own way. But soon, I realize that there is no other way. No other way, no magic loophole, no free lunch, and the first piece of the puzzle falls into place; before I can do things my way, I have to do it Their way.

good the good series of logic / reactions

Well then, at this point some people might say "Oh look! The psychoanalyst fixed everything, so that must mean happily ever after, right?"

Good Set up PROLEPSIS

Not exactly. All the psychoanalyst did is make me accept a fact that I had known to be true my whole life. This didn't suddenly break me of my habits and fix everything in my life. As

works and funny & realistic & suspenseful

Good interplay of Dialogue / Reaction