

The Window



In

early 2023, we were planning a trip.
A good one.

Tracey and I had tickets to see The
Cure, our favorite band, when they
came to Tampa at the end of June.

We live just north of the city. I booked a hotel, grabbed
tickets, and even planned a second leg of the trip by train
to Miami, where we'd see them again.

Tracey had never been on a train before. I wanted to
make it special. I booked everything: the train, the hotels,
and the return trip. All of it.

But then I got sick.

It started with stomach issues, then confusion. Every day
it got worse. I'd wake up more foggy than the day before.

Then the headaches started. I didn't know what was happening. I stayed home from work.

Tracey and I were texting like we always do. We're always connected: silly texts, love notes, and little updates throughout the day.

But that day was different.

I kept sending the same message over and over, like fifteen times in a row, each just a few seconds apart.

Tracey noticed immediately. She called me.

I don't remember that call.

I don't remember much of that day.

She rushed home from work and found me in a state: lost, looping, and confused.

I couldn't say what day it was. I didn't even know my name. I kept repeating, "I'm confused." Over and over.

She drove me to the ER.

The nurse took one look at me and sent me straight for an MRI.

After the scan, the doctor walked in and placed his hand on Tracey's

shoulder. "You're going to want to sit down for this."

That's all he said at first. I'll never forget the way his eyes looked when he said it.

“You’ve got a massive tumor in your brain. It’s pressing against your pituitary gland and your optic nerve. We need to operate right away.”

From there, it was a blur. I vaguely remember the ambulance ride to

Tampa General Hospital.

They brought me straight to the neurological ICU.

I’d be there for two weeks.

The surgery was scheduled just a few days later.

A couple of nights before the surgery, I called my mom.

Now, you have to understand, my mom’s a lifelong Mormon. That whole side of the family is LDS. I grew up in it. I even held the Aaronic Priesthood at fourteen.

But I drifted. As I got older, I stopped believing.

Eventually, I landed somewhere between atheist and agnostic.

She never argued with me about it. Never forced it. But I always knew it quietly disappointed her.

So, with surgery ahead and no guarantees, I did something I hadn’t done in decades. I asked her to send elders from the church.

I asked for a blessing. Not so much for myself, but for her.

I could tell she had wanted to ask me for a couple of days, but didn't because again there's this unspoken thing about it between us.

So when I asked her, she broke down and thanked me.

The day before the surgery, two elders came to my ICU room. My

mom and her husband stood beside me. Tracey was there too.

The two elders laid their hands on my head and spoke words I hadn't

heard in years.

It was quiet.

Not just in the room.

In me.

That kind of quiet stayed with me to this day.

And after the blessing... I cried. I really cried.

I hadn't shed a tear since the diagnosis.

I'd only joked and laughed with the doctors, nurses, and Tracey.

But after that blessing, the dam broke.

I cried like a kid. Tracey held me.

I think something inside me finally understood how serious all this was.

That night, I couldn't sleep. Tracey dozed off in a makeshift bed in

the room. I watched her sleep. I was listening to an audiobook on my

phone, but I couldn't focus on it.

I made little noises to stir her, not loudly, just enough.

Eventually, she woke and climbed into the narrow bed with me. We held each other until morning.

Then it was time.

A team of doctors came in and explained everything that could go

wrong. Blindness. Death. A cerebrospinal fluid leak. You name it.

We signed the waivers. I literally signed my life away.

They wheeled me down through narrow hospital halls that looked

nothing like the high-tech ICU.

It was dim.

Cramped.

It felt more like a janitor's closet than a surgical wing.

I remember thinking, "Where the hell are they taking me?"

Then the double doors opened.

Inside was a room that looked like the bridge of the Starship Enterprise.

Robot arms. Monitors everywhere.

The full team was already in place.

They prepped me. They put the mask over my face and told me to count down from a hundred.

And right before I went under, I said the first prayer I'd said since I

was a child.

I didn't pray for myself.

I prayed for Tracey.

Just for her to be okay.

That's all I wanted.

If I only had one prayer left to pray, I would give it to her.

Then I let go.

I woke up in my room, with nurses all around me.

Tracey was there.

Her face was the first thing I saw.

She smiled and said, "I'm so proud of you."

She kept saying it. Over and over.

I remember feeling confused, but grateful.

Also, I was peeing uncontrollably.

That's one of the side effects when your pituitary gland is damaged or removed.

My sodium levels crashed. I was dangerously thirsty.

I couldn't stop peeing.

The nurses were scrambling to stabilize me.

They had removed the tumor through my sinuses.

No scars on my head. No stitches.

They used a small tunnel through my nose, carefully dissected the tumor, and cut the stalk of the pituitary at its root.

Gone. Just left it on the cellar floor, as they say.

Recovery was rough. I stayed in the ICU for another week, then got

moved to a regular hospital room.

The new room was smaller.

Quieter. No constant beeping, no hustle of ICU nurses.

Just me, a window, and the distant echo of what was supposed to be.

That window faced the arena, the exact arena where The Cure was playing that night. The same show I had bought tickets for months

earlier. The one I planned everything around.

Now I was watching it from a hospital bed.

The arena was lit up like a beacon. Full of life, music, and people.

And I was just across the street, staring through glass.

And I missed Tracey.

She had gone home to rest. I told her to. She needed sleep.

But in that quiet hospital room, I felt the strange ache of missing

something you never really had.

Like the concert belonged to a different version of me.

A version who didn't have a tumor.

A version who got on the train, laughed with his wife, and sang along to Pictures of You with thousands of others. I sat up, leaned toward the window, and stared.

I imagined Robert Smith's voice floating through the air and

wrapping around the night sky.

I imagined Tracey sitting beside me. Just to see it. To share that moment.

But it was okay. Because something else was happening.
Something

quieter. Something I couldn't quite explain.

It was like the universe pressed pause.

I wasn't where I planned to be.

I wasn't who I planned to be.

But I was alive.

And I was awake in a way I hadn't been in years.

That window didn't show me what I missed.

It showed me what mattered.

I leaned forward and pressed my face against the cold
glass, listened as hard as I could,

and for a moment,

I heard the music.

