Becoming a Balloon

By Jill Bowman, M3

It started four weeks ago.
First it was my feet.
Then my legs.
Then my belly.
They were getting bigger;
I was getting bigger-25 pounds to be exact.
I didn’t know why.

I also had a “rash”
And large bruises
I didn’t know why.

No, I wasn’t itchy.
I felt okay otherwise.
But
One month ago
I guess I did vomit something black in color.
That was weird.
I had black colored stools as well.
Huh…must have been something I ate.

I was becoming a balloon.
I got bigger and bigger each day.
Oh well, time for another beer.
I need to get some sleep.
And, I better take some Tylenol too.
I haven’t had my twelve yet today.

Here comes my mom.
She thinks it’s odd I’m becoming a balloon.
Better go to the doctor she says.
Why?
I’ve never had any health problems.
But, I’ll listen to Mom.

Here comes my doctor
It’s late at night,
I just want to go home.
There’s nothing wrong with me.

What?
You say there’s fluid in my stomach that shouldn’t be there?
Why does it hurt so much when you push on my right side?
Just leave me alone.
WAIT…
This rash isn’t a rash?
Spider angiomas…what are those?
What do you mean my liver isn’t working?
But, alcohol couldn’t have caused this many problems.
Not possible.

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A Med Student’s “Night Before Christmas”

by Derrick Fenchel, M3

Twas the night before Christmas, and I was on call
Not a patient was stirring, there was no work at’ all
Upset the female on call room was locked up tight
I trudged to the male on call room, for the long night
With all beds filled with boys, had no choice but to spoon
Made me feel like the King of Pop (sorry, too soon?)

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When out from my pager there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my cuddling to see what’s the matter
“Adult Activation,” better get there fast,
Quick to my resident, or it was my ass
To the ER I flew, as swift as could be
When I got there, to what did my wondering eyes see
But a drunken mall Santa, whiskers soaked with gin
He drove through a nativity scene shouting, “I WIN!”

His breath reeked of booze, as he tried to resist us
Bloated yells of “You ain’t so tough now Baby Jesus!”
He lay on the gurney, his face covered in blood
Limbs writhing in pain and clothes soaked in mud

The intern looked up as she sponged sweat from his brow
“A urine sample is needed, place that catheter NOW”

I’d seen it done once and I knew the end goal
So I rammed that tubing down Santa’s South Pole
He screamed in his pain and struck out with his fist
For I surely was named to his Naughtiest List

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“He’s lacerated his spleen, to the OR stat,”
Great, I thought, 6 hours of me retracting his fat
To the OR, we readied for the surgery
Quickly a tool, the intern handed o’er to me
“This is a razor used for shaving the pubic zone,”
“Ha!” she cried out, “the patient’s, not your own”
I pulled up my scrubs and helped the best that I could
From what I was seeing, it didn’t look good
On Ringers! On O2! Have Type O Neg ready-
On Valium and Versed, his vitals are steady-
The surgeon is scrubbed in, the patient is snowed
Now slice away! Cut away! Open up this wide load
Three hours in, something bad started to grow
A groan from my stomach had moved down below

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Okay. Great!!
You’ll make me feel better.
There are medicines to take this fluid away.
Fantastic!!

What?
What do you mean I can’t have anything more to drink?
You just told me you were going to make me better.
With medicines.

Okay.
Well,
I don’t want to feel like this again.
Yeah, I’ll stop drinking.
No, I don’t need any help.
I can quit on my own.
In fact, I’ve quit already.

Wow
I am feeling better.
That furosemide and spironolactone.
They’re amazing drugs.
I’m no longer a balloon.
My belly is nice and flat again.
This is incredible.
I think I’ll have a drink.

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The procedure was long, Santa’s liver was pissed
My fervent hope no one just noticed my sphincter mist
But the surgeon was sharp, and he said with a howl,
“I smell something rank, I think we nicked the bowel!”
My clandestine approach to my flatus now thwarted
I spoke up “Beg pardon, you smell me, I have farted”
“Get your stinky ass out of my surgical suite”
Slowly I walked away, with head hung in defeat
Cast out for farting, that surgeon, what a prick
Nothing to do now but write a note on Epic
Soon the patient was stable, the surgery ended
Passed out on the keyboard, my note forever pended
I dragged myself back for a quick wink of sleep
Thirty six minutes left till my senior would beep
I closed my eyes and nestled all snug in my bed
While visions of Taylor Swift danced in my head
And I thought to myself in the cold winter light
“Merry Christmas to all, and to all a goodnight.”