

Author's note: Several years ago I endured a rather uncomfortable medical procedure to repair an old sports injury that had flared up. For six weeks prior to surgery, I was required to live with a rubber hose stuck through the wall of my abdomen so that my bladder would not fill. The ordeal reminded me that one can find humor in the midst of adversity and evidence of sublime truth in the most unlikely of situations.

MR. BLADDER'S VACATION

Mr. Brain one evening checked his list
to see if anything was missed.
As near as Mr. Brain could tell
though old, the body functioned well.
Some parts weren't working as they should,
but conditions overall seemed good.

That same night he was jarred from sleep
by a call that came from way down deep.
He turned on lights and answered the
phone.
It was Liver calling and he wasn't alone.

"Have you heard the news?" the Liver said.
"Mr. Colon thinks that Bladder's dead!"
"He says for weeks there's been no action!
No expansion. No contraction.
He says he pushed on Bladder's side,
got no response and thinks he's died!"

"We checked to see what Willie knew
and found that he was feeling blue.
He says he feels no urge to go.
He's all dried up and has no flow."

"The Kidneys have become alarmed.
They're both afraid we'll all be harmed.
They say without their friend around
They'll overflow! We'll all be drowned!
So tell us, Brain, should we assume
that Bladder's fate has sealed our doom?"

"Oh goodness, no," said Brain to Liver.
You needn't fear the Kidney's river.
Bladder's resting. He's not dead.
He has a drain tube in his head.
So when the Kidney brothers pump,
it all flows in a plastic sump."

"Tell Willie not to be depressed
or feel he cannot do his best.
He can still engage in recreation
While Mr. Bladder's on vacation."

"Vacation!" Mr. Liver shouted.
He fussed. He fumed and then he pouted.
"Vacation! Why of all the nerve!
For fifty years I work and serve!
For fifty years I do my best
And no one offers me a rest!"

"Now calm down, Liver," said the Brain.
"You'll give the rest of us a pain.
There is a simple explanation
why Mr. Bladder's on vacation.
His job performance was restricted
because his drain became constricted."

"Ed Mueller has a plan," said Brain,
"to fix our friend's constricted drain."
"He stuck a tube in Bladder's head
The Kidneys now drain there instead.
Until it's time to fix his drain,
old Bladder gets to rest," said Brain.

"Now just a minute," Stomach spoke.
"Surely this is just a joke.
But if what you have said is true,
Then I deserve vacation, too!"
"Why, everyday I grind and churn
and what I can't digest I burn.
I, as well, have done my best!
I think that I should have a rest!
I'm quite upset. Make no mistake.
Give me a tube! I need a break!"

"Oh, shut up, Stomach," cried the Lung.
"Do your complaining to the Tongue.
Although we know the body needs you.
You only work because he feeds you.
Yet day and night I keep air flowing.
It is I who keeps the body going."

"It is I who has to deal with flu.
It is I who has vacation due.
Give me a tube so I can take
an overdue and well-earned break."

"Oh, stuff it, windbag!" shouted Heart.
"You're not the most important part.
I thump and bump and pump all day.
I never get time off to play.
I give the body circulation!
I'm the one should have vacation!"

Then Pancreas joined in the fray.
The Lips and Tongue had much to say.
The Lower Bowel insulted Spleen.
Increasingly, the talk grew mean.

The Tail Bone gave old Spine a shiver.
The Gall Bladder pumped bile on Liver.
The Fingers pledged to go on strike.
The Knees told Feet to take a hike,
and through it all the Bladder snoozed.
The Brain was not the least amused.

"Now stop this fight!" commanded Brain.
This isn't right! It's quite insane!
We each are special. That is true.
We each have unique jobs to do,
but all of us from head to sole
are part of a much greater whole.

Then Brain commanded Butt to sit.
He focused Eyes and called on Wit.
He ordered Arms to hold Wrists tight
and gave the Hands these words to write.
He sent this plea to Doctor Ed.
This poem is what the doctor read.

"Dear Doc," said Brain, "I'm out of rhyme."
And now I do believe it's time
to pull this tube and wake up Bladder
before my body parts get madder.
Take off this bag and end this pain.
Please pull this tube and fix my drain!"

*I find sometimes life will remind us
in funny ways of ties that bind us,
that each of us must play a role
as part of a much greater whole.
This lesson was impressed on me
and all because I couldn't pee.*

— J. Patrick Galloway

Patrick Galloway is a "professional question asker" and owner of a marketing and opinion research firm in San Antonio. He also writes poems inspired by special occasions and life events. Several years ago he had to prepare for a procedure to repair a urethral stricture that required him to be fitted with a super-pubic catheter for several weeks. While driving home one day, he suddenly realized that he'd forgotten what it felt like to have a full bladder and was inspired to write Mr. Bladder's Vacation. He presented it to his urologist just before surgery. He is happy to report that all is now well with Mr. Bladder but adds that General Bowels still feels a bit humiliated about being inspected during a recent check-up colonoscopy. His urologist, Edward J. Mueller, is currently a clinical associate professor in the Department of Urology at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.