

My skis careened effortlessly through pristine snow, down the Matterhorn Glacier's steep slopes — the wind in my hair and sun on my face. I had never felt more alive, more exhilarated. Then, without warning, a diabolical ooze of shadows eclipsed my light.

My vision blurred; I could no longer perceive depth, only the inexorable pull of terror. The pressure in my head and ears surged precipitously.

I was twelve.

What followed was a disorienting ordeal through a labyrinth of hospital hallways, medical tests, and uncertainty. I sat quietly in dim pathology labs, the silence only punctuated by the rustle of lab coats and the throb of my own anxious heartbeat. As teams of specialists pored over my optic disc scans, retinal assessments, and electroencephalogram, questions gnawed at me. Slowly, my grasp on reality became suspended, getting enveloped in an invisible, inevitable cocoon.

*Would I ever see clearly again?*

I underwent a myriad of medical tests - unfamiliar, uncomfortable, often requiring complete stillness. Curling inward, I became resolute and patient, as I awaited a diagnosis. In this dark crucible, I understood adaptation. To engage my senses, I 3D-printed textured objects at my school's Innovation Hub. I returned to the sanctuary of books, read aloud by my mother, their narratives imbuing my imagination with audible hues. The precision of medical technology, combined with the expertise of my physicians, began to fortify my hope. Mathematical analysis provided structure to the story of my insides written with the ink of biochemistry. Through these experiences, science transformed into the nacreous core of my chrysalis, bringing clarity.

During this time, both my parents fell ill with Dengue Fever, demanding of me an immediate balance between helping with household chores and academic commitments. I reminded myself, 'If I've navigated that, I can endure this.'

After six nerve wracking months, the fog lifted. My illness was determined to be transient. It had been brought on by high altitude and hormonal changes and could be controlled with a few weeks of medication for altitude sickness.

I then began evolving, guided by the nuanced yet clear insights that my diminished vision had unlocked.

Despite my full recovery, the haunting visages of India's suffering rural populace remained lodged in my conscience. I recalled waiting rooms filled with desperate faces, families who had travelled miles and waited days for medical attention. A glaring disparity in medical care came into focus - magnified and crystalline.

Filled with a newfound sense of purpose, I began to explore aspects of biomedical engineering, securing internships that developed my understanding of technological innovation, public health, and data analysis. I worked on an independent project on CRISPR-Cas9 methods and its role in COVID 19 diagnostics. This project dovetailed my paper on cutting-edge tumor diagnosing algorithms. Also, I discovered newsletters like Codon, widening my lens. All encounters amplified my clinical understanding of the diagnostic machinery that had been instrumental in my own journey.

The hours spent in hospital waiting rooms changed me in other ways as well. They revealed the importance of conversation and connection. Words, stories, and writing became my nourishment, in receiving and giving. Each of my endeavors adds to a growing body of work, signaling to me not what I can do, but what I can't do without: exploratory wings.

I am wholly absorbed in what I was earlier suspended in the middle of.

The once-dark chrysalis around me has turned translucent, letting in light.

Looking ahead, my goal is to gain a holistic understanding of the facets of biomedical engineering and help work towards equitable healthcare solutions. I'm committed to giving back to the communities I become a part of, through innovative research and fostering educational opportunities. I take to the skies, trusting my steadiness of flight.

Metamorphoses will come, and not just of physical form, but also of purpose and perspective. And I will, in faith, navigate the flowing updrafts of human endeavor.

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