

## *Nine things just for me*

A teacher once told me that is a grand act of care to notice things. In an effort to notice a fraction of what I've seen in my medical training, I now note nine.

1. My attending has small feet. He drives the pedals of the daVinci robot in thin white socks. It's my first day in the OR and even though he seems larger than life, even though we are digging into a man's prostate, even though I am flinching every time he has asked for a Kelly, I can't stop staring at those small white socks.
2. Labor and Delivery is full of women caring for women. On the floor, we urge Mama that she can do this, that Baby is coming. In the work room, we ask one another "Did you eat?" and after, "Did you eat enough?"
3. Birthing seems lonesome. At the end of a C-section, I stand at the surgical drape. On one side, the surgeons close Mom's uterus with purse-string sutures. On the other, Mom lies with her eyes closed. Her partner cradles Baby, FaceTiming family.
4. Kidney stones—for all their trouble—spill out the ureteroscope like tiny yellow pebbles, the kind that belong at the bottom of a fishbowl.
5. Full Trauma can take many forms. It can be a failed suicide attempt with a nicked vein, summed up by the patient in two words that carry the weight of everything: *bad day*. It can be a man rolled in in the evening on a gurney with bullets buried in his chest, arms, and back, eyes open and intubated, and at the end of it, when the surgeon has called time of death, when his body is being cleaned, I hear someone chat about after-work plans.
6. Things that should feel traumatic sometimes don't. A teenage girl might cartwheel drunk off a parking garage, only to be upset that the hospital staff cut off her vintage thrifted belt as she's discharged home. Seventeen-year-old boys, their ribs cracked open and pieces of lung removed, sip orange juice with their mothers at bedside, watching *Captain America* on their laptops.
7. In the cabinets by every water dispenser there is ginger ale, saltines, and honey graham crackers. There is also a limit of how much of this I should eat.
8. YouTube can convince a forty-year-old fertile female to try the carnivore diet. YouTube can also teach her about the cholecystectomy she is about to have so extensively that she can list the complications when consenting her surgery more thoroughly than I can.
9. Although tempted to optimize my life to excel in this microcosm of order, definite scope, and hierarchical responsibility, I remind myself to balance this kind of care-giving with the care-taking of my other homes— the community I live in, the body that carries me throughout the day, the small apartment I share with four others— in the non-eighty hours of the week. Amid the giving, it is important to remind myself to take, so I note these nine small things, just for me.

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