

Watermelon Man

Harry Prichett

I like going to Doctor Posner's office. He always has magazines that I would never buy on my own. Today however, I received some bad news. Doctor Posner told me I had a tumor the size of a watermelon on my head.

"This thing has been growing for some time, Steven," he said.

Thinking back, I do recall feeling some discomfort when I washed my hair. I never thought for a second it would be a tumor, certainly not one as big as a watermelon. I walked towards the door; I stopped and shook Dr. Posner's hand.

"I'm surprised you're still alive, Steven," Dr. Posner said. "Hang in there!"

"Thank you, Dr. Posner." I replied. "Thanks a lot." I stood on the sidewalk for awhile trying to decide what I should do with myself, since I had taken the day off of work. I had just eaten breakfast so I wasn't hungry. I walked towards the park, where I could sit and try to absorb what Dr. Posner had told me. There was an empty bench near the fountain that was shaded by a huge maple tree. I prefer to sit next to the fountain; I love the sound of splashing water. I watched a group of children playing. The simplest things made them laugh. They worked so well together, sharing ideas, taking turns being the leader. One little boy hopped on one leg while holding both hands in the air. All the others followed, falling and laughing.

I felt the need to scratch my head, but was very conscious now of my tumor. I decided against it, and the urge passed.

What did Dr. Posner mean when he said, "I'm surprised you're still alive?" I didn't want to dwell on this, but it was hard to put out of my mind. I began to feel very

sad, very alone. There wasn't anyone I felt close enough to call and share this news with. I guess I was alone. I guess that's what they mean when they say, "you're feeling alone." I was alone, alone with my thoughts, alone with my tumor, my tumor the size of a watermelon. Now what?

An elderly lady sat down next to me with a large, soiled, brown paper bag. She opened it slowly and with great effort.

"Would you like a potato chip?" She asked.

She wasn't looking at me so I thought she might just be talking to herself.

"Would you like a potato chip?" she asked again.

"Are you talking to me?" I replied.

"Would you like a potato chip?"

"No, thank you. Thanks, anyway."

"I make them myself, at my house. They're quite good."

I didn't want to hurt her feelings. "Oh really," I said. "Then I guess I should have one."

I reached into the bag and pulled-out one of her potato chips. It was perfectly rounded and cooked to a golden brown. I took a bite and was surprised how good it actually was-so crisp, so perfectly seasoned.

"You're right," I exclaimed. "They are very good."

"Here have another one."

"I don't want to eat all of your potato chips."

"You don't have to eat all of them. Go ahead, have another one."

The second was better than the first. “Those really are good. In fact, that’s the best potato chip I’ve ever had.”

“Thank you,” she replied. She leaned her crumpled frame towards me and whispered, “I use thyme.”

“You should try to market those,” I said. “Sell them, you know?”

“Why?”

“Why? Well, to make money. Paul Newman does it.”

“I just enjoy making them, and eating them, that’s all.”

The woman slowly rose out of her seat.

“You’re leaving?” I asked.

“Yes, I’d like to go home and make some more, for tomorrow.”

“Oh. Would you mind if I had another?”

“Here, young man, take the rest. I’ll make more.”

“That’s very kind. Thank you very much.”

The old woman shuffled away. I spent the rest of the afternoon finishing that bag of potato chips and watching the children play in the park near the fountain. I died that evening, right on that bench.