

## 262 Days To Listen

It has been 262 days since I stepped out onto the street in front of my townhouse in Cambridge. I can remember hearing a long screech. Then I heard the thump of the Ford Focus that swerved to strike me. Since that day I have been in the darkness, listening. Now, I hear the endless beeping sounds of the breathing machine that is keeping me alive in my room at Mass General Hospital.

In all that time listening, I have learned to treasure one sound. The soft squeaking sound of my wife Sarah's white Converse sneakers pressing on the hard cement hospital floor. The sound is the highlight of my day. She was wearing a similar pair of bright white Converse, on the day I first met her at Thomas Prince Elementary School. The bright white sneakers stood out when she tripped Jason Lee, who was making fun of me for being the new kid. I knew then, that this tough, kind girl would be my best friend forever.

As I listen to the squeaks, they begin to move closer to me. I felt a gentle kiss on my forehead.

"I'm here sweetheart?" she whispered.

I notice a slight crackle in her voice today that tells me she has been crying again. I longed to respond to her. With every fiber of my being, I try to open my eyes and say to her, "I'm better," but nothing happens. I am trapped, and can do nothing but listen.

The sounds of day 262 seemed like the normal sounds of every other day, until I heard more footsteps, and whispering. Sarah suddenly moved from my side and walked briskly over to where the whispering was coming from. There seemed to be an emotional discussion occurring, but all in hushed tones.

"Come on, speak up! "What's going on?" I strained to hear but it was of no use.

When the whispering stopped some footsteps moved closer to me. I heard the familiar voices of my mom and dad.

“We love you so much!” my dad sobs.

I begin to feel wet drops falling onto my face and inconsolable sobbing from my mom. “What’s going on?” I couldn't grasp it. Then like a burning bolt of lightning it hit me.

“They're pulling the plug! For god's sake, they are pulling the plug!”

I began to panic! “Sarah, don't do it! Please Sarah don't let them! We have a life to live! I'm not gone, I'm right here! Give me more time! Give me a chance! I can do it, I know I can! I can come back from this!”

But no matter how I screamed and cried, no matter how strained, I couldn't say anything. I couldn't move. I couldn't even open my eyes.

They say the last sense you lose before you die is your hearing. On day 262, in my dark hospital room at Mass General Hospital, I heard the beeping stop. It was followed by the sound of gasps for air, and the inconsolable whaling of my wife. Then there was no sound at all, only silence.