



In Stitches

What an embarrassment of riches I have in front of me this evening as I sit here preparing to write the story for next weekend! I have had (and am still having) so many new experiences today that I don't know where to start!

Now that's a fortuitous circumstance, but honestly speaking, I'm not particularly happy about it. Because although all these experiences are new, they are all things that - thank you very much - I would prefer not to know.

The building I am in for a three-day stay is beautiful indeed; clean and bright, with wide hallways and a most pleasant ambiance. The bright winter sunshine is pouring in through huge windows everywhere, including those in my room, from which I can see hawks flying in lazy spirals over the river. And if I had thought to bring my binoculars with me, it should be possible to see my own neighbourhood from here, because when I stand in the upstairs window of my own home, I can see this place from there.

The staff have all been extremely pleasant - mostly quite young girls, actually - and that goes quite some way in mitigating the annoyance at finding myself here in the first place.

By now, I suppose you have guessed where I am - it's our local general hospital, of course. And because quite a number of friends and family read these stories, I will clarify right up front that there is no particular concern involved in this stay. There has been no accident, I have no dangerous symptoms, and there is no 'sickness' involved. It's simply that over the past couple of months, I have slowly developed a small hernia in my groin, and the medical advice was clear - get it stitched up before it can develop into a problem.

So my 'perfect' track record of 61 years with no hospitalization - something that I had truly hoped to maintain right to the 'end' - will tonight be broken. I think that if I still lived back in Canada, I might have been able to keep that record in place, because I understand that over there it is possible to have this sort of procedure done on an outpatient basis, but here in more conservative Japan I am getting off easy with 'only' a three-day stay.

But not to complain. As I said, the facility is first-rate, and my impression of all the staff I have dealt with so far is that of a very high level of competence. I was initially taken a bit aback when I met the doctor who will be performing the surgery tomorrow - he was so young! - but he must have seen something (panic?) in my eyes, because he emphasized that he had done this operation upwards of a hundred times, and in any case, a more experienced surgeon would also be at hand.

So with the first day's tests, explanations and paperwork now all done, there is nothing left but to relax in the lounge, sipping some milk tea and using the free time to prepare this little story. And there are no distractions in getting that done, because the hospital has fairly strict rules on electronic devices, and offers no WiFi. I am cut off from email for three days! Why are my hands starting to shake?

Let's hope the young doctor doesn't have any reason for the same thing to happen to him! And that makes me curious - perhaps I should have asked him if I was his first foreign patient. If so, would he be extra nervous, or extra careful?

I wonder!

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