

A Soliloquy in LP Humility

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I am the King of the difficult LP.
Many have I tried and none have I failed.
When any struggled, it was me they hailed.
That was why I shouted with sheer glee,

Early one morning when medicine paged me.
“We gave it a shot, but we’re at a loss.
Everyone tried, even our staff, Dr. Ross.
We’re thinking about IR Fluoroscopy.”

“Well you certainly have the right PGY3,”
I said, dripping with pride and arrogance.
You are in the presence of LP brilliance.
Forget about IR, they can’t beat me,

I am the King of the difficult LP.
“He’s a real lightweight, just a hundred pounds.”
“And you still couldn’t get it?” Smugly, I frowned.
“Easy, No problem,” I said confidently.

“He’s got HIV, that’s why he’s so skinny,
And we think he’s got a brain infection.
We need your help, to answer this question.”
I checked his whole chart, coags and CT,

No signs did I find of increased ICP.
So I gathered my needle, gloves, and tray.
To myself I thought, “This is child’s play.”
I entered his room and they introduced me,

As the King of the difficult LP.
I laid him down in the fetal position,
“Work with me, I need more hip flexion,
Trust me, be easy, no need to worry.”

I inserted the needle slowly and smoothly.
Little by little, I advanced to that spot,
Till I heard that ever familiar pop.
“That wasn’t so bad, didn’t I say it was easy?”

But as I waited, nothing could I see.
I probed and re-inserted, but still nothing.
Then I started sweating and stammering.
“It must be you, it can’t be me.”

Of clear CSF, the needle remained free.
I paged the Chief, “It’s Dr. Perfect LP...
Need help with a puncture, lumbar variety,
I couldn’t get it, it’s a real toughie.”

“What happened to the King of the difficult LP?
I’m busy but there may be somebody free.”
Then in walked the little intern, Blakie.
“Him?” I thought, “He’s just a green newbie.”

He sat down, re-draped, and palpated.
Found his landmarks, and inserted gently.
“The kid’s going too far inferiorly,”
I thought to myself as I watched and waited.

He paused, then advanced, paused, then advanced,
Paused, and then before my eyes, I saw the flow.
That was the day my ego took the big blow.
I sat there in shock, appalled and entranced,

That he obtained what I could not procure.
He shrugged. “I guess I just got lucky,”
Out of innocent modesty said he.
In seeped that unfamiliar feeling of failure.

On that day I lost my sovereignty
As the King of the difficult LP,
But gained a more important victory
Through a lesson in LP humility.

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