

The New Year has begun.

I had a really depressing start. After the roommate left I had to clean up the mess. He was messier than my roommates in college. I felt like I was living in the back of Alex's car. There was so much s... on the floor you could barely get around. Everyone got a laugh coming by our place. Anyway I was just dumping everything on his side of the room into the garbage, and I came across a bubble wrapped bottle of Crown Royal still in the purple bag. Its beauty took my breath away. The next day I took it up to the Company Commanders office and poured it out in the sink. Oh how it crushed me to participate in that vile act.

Things have been pretty slow since the last email. I was on call the 26th and was summoned to the trauma bay at around 1 am. Three Iraqi police pulling guard duty at one of the prisons were shot during a jail break. One of them had minor soft tissue injuries. The other two were more banged up. Young fellow I took care of was shot in the left arm and the face. The bullet shattered his mandible and when he came in he lost his airway. We intubated him in the trauma bay, and took him to the OR. I did a tracheostomy and then helped the oral surgeon wire his jaw shut. Later that morning and day I did a burn with Dr. Renz and an incarcerated hernia with him. It was a long day, but everything went well.

We had some tough news a few days ago. A trauma surgeon attached to our CSH (combat support hospital) working in Mosul, Iraq in the north was killed. He was hit killed by a mortar round lobbed into the base. Two others were injured. This was his 3rd deployment. He was a reservist, and he had only been in theater for about a week when the incident occurred. In the real world he was a very big name in the Trauma community. When the war broke out he signed up purely out of patriotism. No ROTC obligation, no Med School Scholarship. He did it because he thought it was the right thing to do. Married with a young family. Can you believe that?

I am on call again today, and so far things have been good. I took care of a MP that was in the middle of lecturing his soldiers on being vigilant when he got hit by a sniper. Luckily the sniper's round caught him in the hip, just missing the hip bone and causing some soft tissue injury. I took him to the OR with my Ortho colleague and we washed him out. He will do well. As I was leaving the recovery room his Commander was walking in to see his soldier. He asked if I was the doc taking care of him, and then he presented me with his unit coin. He was very grateful and really nice. You could tell he was the real deal and a strong leader.

The new guys are settling in and it has actually been quite painful. There is a ton of friction between the ED docs and the Surgeons. I have managed to avoid this so far. It is basically a turf battle centered around how trauma is run here. The ED docs are very sensitive and as the gatekeepers are reluctant to implement new policies that would require them to make this a more team approach. This will likely change though after last night. 4 patients were blown up in a mortar attack and all had mostly extremity trauma. The ED guys did not call me down. They decided to deal with it themselves and they eventually called the Ortho surgeon for two of them. One of the ortho guys took this fella to the OR and did fasciotomies and washed out a ton of bilateral lower extremity wounds. In the PACU the patient's right foot is noted to be cold

and pulseless. He calls me and I come by at around 11pm. Sure enough the guy has no pulses and the foot is cold. We take him to the OR and shoot and angiogram, which shows complete obstruction of the main artery in his leg right above the knee. We explore it and a large piece of shrapnel has completely transected the artery and lacerated the vein. Unsure what the final outcome will be. The ED doc says that the patient had palpable pulses in the trauma room, but he was the only one down there. He did not call Ortho until he had completed his workup, and he never called me to come down and assist with the trauma survey. This is a wacky trauma system. I suspect though that things will change soon.

I will send some pictures out shortly after this email. All of the pictures are from the Green Zone. On one set are the Crossed Swords. This area was Sadaam's parade ground. On the back of one of the fists you can see "4th Alabama". I am not sure what sort of unit they were, but they left a nice mark from the homeland. Also we ate some Iraqi cuisine the other day at the "Baghdad Restaurant", which you will see. The bread was really good as was the Hummus. We had lamb kebobs and the lamb was pretty scary actually. I had a few bites and then stuck to the bread and hummus. I shaved the moustache on Christmas Day. It was getting ridiculous. I could not keep ice cream out of it at dinner, and the upkeep with trimming it was becoming a pain in the ass. In Iraq as a male if you don't have a moustache you are basically a metrosexual. So the interpreters here in the hospital are mostly female. They loved the moustache and are always asking why I shaved it. The nurses on the other hand have been calling me a Pedophile for the last month that I have had the moustache. Anyway it is gone, and I don't miss it.

Hope this finds everyone well

Will keep in touch

E