

Malpractice  
By Orson Scott Card

Went to Doc today for checkup and got the old kickinthepants routine about losing weight but theres more. My chest was flabby like normal but he found a scar where there shouldnt be one, I couldnt remember having anything done there. Only operation in last six months was in Tulsa, Okl, where I was *supposed* to have my arm set. (Broke it riding a stupid horse, never get me on one of those things again.) So Doc made me lie down and go to sleep, did an exploratory on the spot (miracles of modern medicine) and he asked me when I came out of it why the hell did I have a heart transplant?

So who had a heart transplant?

Somebodys been mucking around in my body and when I find out who hes going to eat that horse that crammed me into the tree and hes going to eat everything that horse has produced in the last six years. Doc says its obviously somebody elses tissue and even though the operation was neat it looked hurried, some of the laser sutures look as bad as if theyd been done with catgut like a few hundred years ago. Nothing *wrong*, he says, but pretty ragged. As if it mattered how ragged it is with somebody elses stupid heart pumping my blood.

Consolation prize: Doc says its an OK heart, except for a murmur, which he says wont cause me any trouble but if it stops murmuring and starts yelling I should drink nitroglycerin or something.

Why would somebody stick a different heart in me? My old one may have skipped a beat now and then (Ah, Marilyn!). but it ticked OK and it was mine and I was kind of attached to it (Ha ho).

So I thought back to when since my last checkup I had been out anywhere near a loose scalpel and the only time I've been gassed that I know of was in Tulsa with my arm. I asked Doc, he said maybe it could have been done then but the guy wouldve had to be pretty fast. And the spare pieces wouldve had to be pretty handy.

So tomorrow Im flying to Tulsa and Im madder than hades (once every third profanity I use a euphemism to keep in practice for the Daily Noose, which is "a family paper") the hospital there had better be on there toes since I plan to do some onthespot transplants of heads and arms and other appendages when I find out what and who did what was done and why. Goodnight, dear diary.

*August 3*

As long as Im writing this thing might as well be accurate and put in the good old 5Ws. Im in a plane and Tulsa is sliding forward to meet me and I thought Id fill in some details.

I read yesterday's stuff and it sure looks like a rough draft. But thats what it is. For the Noose they pay a guy who can spell to fix my stuff and they pay him half what they pay me, for the very good reason that he may know how to spell but I know how to write, which is worth more.

Name: (love those little colons) Frank Mabey as in perhaps but the ys at the end.

Occion: Journalist which means I can write better than the president but not as good as

Van Clapper which is fine because what the hell would I do with all that excess money the old man's got.

Temperament: Mad as heck.

Reason for writing this stupid diary: Every boy should keep a journal. I somehow dont feel like telling anybody that Ive got the wrong pump. Might sususpect something else is transplanted, too, and Id just as soon avoid speculation. Id tell my sweet loving X only X doesnt give a damn which is fine, because I dont want any of her lousy used damns anyway. Darns. Got to keep up those euphs.

August 3 cont. (tune in next week, same time, ect.)

Went to Tulsa Center for Medical Treatment (everythings a center. someday Im going to build a building and call it the Indianapolis Edge for Journalistic Somethingorother) the guy who did my arm has retired. In fact, the day he did my arm was the last day he worked at the hospital, which is lucky on the next days patients but pretty tough on me. He put in a hard day that last day. Got a list of 12 ops the guy did (his name is Hyman Maier—he must be a Baptist. Ha ho).

: (love those colons)

Amos N. Ditweiler

Ronald Smith

Joann Capel

Morris Major

Scott Peterson

Valery Van Vleet (geez, the things some parents do to there kids

R. R. Trane (I hope to hell his name isnt Rail Road)

Bartholomew (Ha ho) Biscuit (actually Bascom, but the name biscuit occurred to me and Im compulsive)

Wanda Bath (Im not making this up, folks)

John Jorgenson (back to the relms of the ordinary

William E. Jagger

Mark Muse

The reason for this list, dear diary, is that I dont want the names left around on any scraps of paper and you, dear diary, never leave my side. These people who were operated on were all in for relatively minor operations but for some reason which the hospital people do not pretend to fathom he used total anaesthetic on everybody. The guy I talked to looked at the records and said, (I quote) “Why did he put you under total for an arm?” Im supposed to know this? Im the doctor? What do I tell him, he put me under total because he had a spare heart he wanted to find a home for. And I looked warm and loving and not the romantic type—heart unlikely to get broken. So much for you, X.

So heres my whole sweet lead on the guy. Hes a doctor, pretty good, only he retired (he wasnt all that old) and left no address, didnt even pick up his last check and his lawyer paid his bills. Ordinary guy, no wife (died, I should have been so lucky, widowers dont pay alimony) one kid, works in an ad agency in NY nobody knows where nobody know his name. And Maier (the doctor who retreaded my radial) was a GD. Which I think it appropriate.

GD, dear stupid diary (must assume diary is stupid for the sake of clarity) stands for

Gods Deliverance, the church that believes god is reincarnated every twenty years or something, there prophet got zapped in Denver by a pervert with a laser meatcleaver (some tight security there, folks, those things weight thirty pounds and you just dont stick em under your jacket), and the girls all wear long hair or short hair or something so they look alike. This is Frank Mabey, journalist, speaking. You can tell by the preceision of my data.

In other words, I have a choice to find Maier. I can look through the whole GD church. Oh, theres another choice. I can forget it and just take my pulse a lot.

*August 4*

Whee. Its back to the whole world. The GD church keeps no member ship records, on purpose because then somebody might try to do them harm. Not a bad idea, because the guy looked like he was going to be helpful till I said Hyman Maiers name and then suddenly Im a communist and he gets slanty eyes just looking at me. My heart feels funny. Not the murmur, its kind of a pleasant lullaby at night. I just *feel* it, thats all, and Ive never felt my heart before. Come to think of it, Im not feeling *my* heart now!

*August 11*

I mustve decided to forget it because I havent done anything for a few days now, only Doc called today and theres something more and now Ive gotta find that bastard Maier and find out what the hells going on. Found thee, dear diary, because we are back on the trail. The boss asked me what I was investigating today. Told him “heart throbs” (ha ho, laughminute).

News from Doc—pictures show something funny about the heart, he wants to open me up again. Good thing my insurance covers everything. I think Im becoming Docs hobby.

*August 13*

My heart is growing. Good news, huh? The ragged edges were not all sloppy surgery, they were heart tissue overgrowing the sutures, which means that the new heart is taking over (welcome to Latin America, heart, time for a coup). My aorta is two inches new tissue, with a whole new genetic pattern. And the veins to my lungs are completely new tissue. What scares Doc most, besides the fact that hes never seen this happen before, is that the new tissue is moving into the lungs. Why would heart tissue take over the lungs? Only its changing from heart tissue into lung tissue, and Dos says it seems to be progressing faster.

Whatever kind of heart this Maier stuck into me, it thinks that *it* got a *body* transplant. I wish to persuade it otherwise, but Doc says what is he supposed to do, give me a third heart? Generally frowned on, and the new thingamajobby (more than a heart now) isn't doing any *harm*. Replacing it would be cosmetic surgery. Which my wonderful policy dont cover, mine friend.

Why oh why did I ride that horse? Why did I go to the Tulsa Center for Medical Treatment? Why was I born? (This last, dear diary, is mock despair, lest you think Im becoming desperate, I am, but think it not.)

*August 17*

The GD church doesnt like me, which is mutual. Not only that, but Im pretty sure theyve got a tail on me, in the form of a very nice looking girl who could probably kill me with one hand

(she looks mean) and who isn't very good at hiding. In fact, I think maybe there not worried about whether I know their tailing me or not. Maybe they want me to know. Maybe she isn't tailing me. Maybe she thinks I'm a male prostitute. Here the speculation is more fun than finding the facts, because there jes ain no facks to fine.

*August 18*

Visiting my fellow operates, the ones on my list. Amos N. Ditweiler is on a business trip, Ronald Smith was killed in a car accident (waste of good operation, there, Maier, what did you give him an elbow?), Joann Capel was home but refuses to show me her scar (and slammed the door when I told her I really had to see it) which is understandable considering the operation she was in the hospital to get, Morris Major wants me to go to hell. Thos are all the ones who live right in Tulsa that I was able to talk to. Good days work. Morris looks like Maier gave him a new nose. Without removing the old one.

*August 19*

Id rather be selling fuller brushes. These people are more than rude. There nasty. Scott Peterson is a fag with a fat giant for a girlfriend, and even though Peterson didnt scare me, when his girlfriend told me to scram, I scrum. Valery Van Vleets mother thought I was a child molester (shes 11) and so I cant see her. R.R. Tranes name is not Rail Road, its Robin Rex and Id go by R.R. too. But Trane *did* admit that he had an operation, which was for gall bladder, but thereve been no complications and no extra scars. Heres my guess—he got a new gall bladder and doesnt know it. Or was I the only lucky transplantee?

But, dear diary, we hit paydirt with Bartholomew Biscuit (nee bascom) who viewed me with suspicion but when I told him my sad story got a worried look and told me that hes been really worried because he had his lungs cleaned out (a smoker, filthy habit) only there are scars on both sides of his chest and the anticancer operation is supposed to be done through the throat. What is more (and this interests me a lot) he had noticed that his scars are actually getting wider, and the skin of his scars is white (he is black), which makes him suspicious that somethings a little bit wrong. He promises to call me. Oh, he also said the new skin is hairy. I inspected my scars for hair today. None, so far, that werent already mine. I hope.

*August 20* in the wee small hours

Met my tailer from the GDs tonight, we had dinner. She *is* a tailer from the GDs, admits it cheerfully, but she says shes only there to protect me. Sweet. I offered her five hundred dollars to protect somebody else, but she only smiled and told me to go to hell. I asked her if shed follow me there and she said “anywhere” so I went to my apartment. No dice, GDs believe in virginity for single women, she has the apartment next to mine and told me that she is bugging my room for sound. Nice of her to be so frank. Im Frank too (ha ho) and I told her that she was bugging me too. She said sorry. I said a word that the Noose would replace with a euphemism. She slapped me (do women still slap men for being obscene? X slapped, but it was for kind of the opposite reason) and we went to bed, in different rooms thank heaven, except that heaven is on the GDs side.

Maier was a GD. This girl (Myrel Merle Murl Mirl Mural who knows how anybody

spells a weird name like that?) is also a GD. My heart seems to be on their side too. And one (just one, but hes the only one who really talked) of the other operees has weird things happening to him too. I think Im onto something and it aint peaknuckle.

August 20 in the evening after four hours of sleep and a hard days work.

Wanda Bath doesnt.

John Jorgenson is an ad executive and his operation was a very personal one because he is middle-aged and middle-aged people tend to think such operations are very personal. But he, too, for reasons he refuses to describe, is also worried. I urged him to see his doctor, he said he would, and he said he would tell me if there was anything unusual. William E. Jagger lives in Sacramento. Mark Muse is a talking aardvark, Ive never seen such a repulsive person, why didn't Maier transplant his head? His operation was to remove a bunion—total anaesthetic, for petes sake, Im going to sue the hospital, they let any nut stick any patient under anaesthetic and nobody even asks questions. His bunion is all better. He also has a scar on his throat and when I asked him about it he said "what scar" got a mirror and by gum, he had a scar, hed have to check into that, by gum, by gum. So by gum he says hell call if theres anything to call me about.

Ditweilers back from his trip, I have an appointment tomorrow, but I think I wont bother. He's the kind who strings investigative reporters on for months without a word. probably thinks Im going to pry into his affairs. Who gives a darn (euph) about his affairs?

*August 21* at four a.m. which is grounds for murdering Doc for his phonecall this morning but hes scared and so am I. There is no medical way that what is happening to me could be happening to me. He checked the genetic type, says that with our limited knowledge of genetics exact identification is impossible but the person whose heart I have was male (thank you), had brown hair, white skin, blue or green eyes, and is of medium height barring pituitary problems. That narrows it down to a fifth of the world. Whee.

At least its proof that the heart isnt mine, since Im tall, blond, have brown eyes, though I am male and white, excluding me from any of the attractive minorities. I always wanted to be an indian when I was a kid only I couldnt get into a tribe without a reservation (Ha ho).

August 21 in the evening dear diary, why am I even bothering to write to you, when there is a communist plot to take over my body?

Got a call from Jorgenson at 7 a.m. and he wanted me to come over so I did, his doctor opened him up and looked at his prostate and bingo. Whole new set of male organs, not a tricky operation, but Jorgenson didnt want new ones, he liked the old. Too much sentimentality. And in him, too, the transplant has overgrown its boundaries. His doctor is too worried. His doctor told him to take a sedative. Why isnt my doctor that thoughtful?

This afternoon went back to talk to Bartholemew Biscuit since he hadnt called, he told me ha hadnt called because it was so damn ridiculous, which I agree with except when its me, in which case its pretty serious. Yessiree bob, a lung transplant, which has taken over his heart (me in reverse) and is progressing to the skin. His doctor is not worried. His doctor is delighted. At last, something new for the MDs to do. And get this—genetic check, and it comes from a medium height male with brown hair, white skin, blue or green eyes. Now maybe thats coincidence but I

did some research and now I really am scared.

See the GDs prophet who was assassinated in June was named George Peppinger and I looked up the old *Time* stories on him and he is, you guessed it, medium height, blue eyes, brown hair, white skin. Im doubtless paranoid, but Maier *was* a GD and what if these nuts have some idea of keeping their rainmaker alive? I dont like playing incubator to somebody elses chicken. So Im in the airport going back to Doc for a progress report. Murrul Myril Myeroll has bought the ticket next to me, so therell be no writing on the plane. I plan to ask her a few questions. Then I plan to push her out the window (Ha ho). (Whats so funny?)

*August 22*

Doc is treating me really carefully and I feel like Im already deceased. My new heart (Sweetheart, Heart of Gold) has given rise to new lungs, new trachea (those are the plumbing), a new esophagus, a new stomach, and the list goes on and on, so that theres less of me in me than there is him in me. The Doc admits that since he doesnt know how it happens he cant do much to stop it. No way to transplant my whole innards, therere limits to what the MDs can do.

But you see I know whats causing it and Id tell the Doc only then hed lock me away for believing such drivel. See, my little GD virgin friend Moral (yes, folks, I finally got the spelling of her name, and I nearly puked too) is very staryeyed about Peppinger. They dont think Christ or God or anybody reincarnates *in particular*, they believe that anybody can, if hes got enough of the world spirit. There are spirits and bodies, see, and some spirits are of the world spirit, and they are strong. Others have forsaken the world spirit and stand all alone and so they are weak. So that some spirits are so weak that it takes two or three or many of them to operate one body (welcome schitzophrenia) and other spirits are so strong with the world spirit that they can control many bodies all at once (heil hitler). She has only a little world spirit (humble child) and so only controls one body “But I am alone” she said. I congratulated her and she glared at me.

There was a lot of other stuff. I had to pretend to be very interested, and Im a lousy actor because she said she knew I didnt give a darn (she said darn, not my euph this time, looks like she repented of swearing at me the other night) about the GD church anyway. They think that Christ was not God but his friend, trying to save, not mankind but God, by casting out all the weak spirits and letting Gods great world spirit in, and so on, who understands this stuff? I never went to catechism.

*August 25*

Peg of My Heart, I Love You  
Dont let us part, I Love You  
I left my heart in San Francisco.  
A half-hearted effort  
A hearty laugh  
Heartless wretch (O that I were so lucky, mother)  
My heart is heavy (full, light, in my throat)  
My hearts in my throat ha ho hee hee howdy.

There is now strange hair growing around the scar on my chest and also on my back which never had hair before and when I look closely I see a very thin dividing line where the old

me is giving way to the new somebody.

Only I know who the somebody is except that I think Im crazy to believe it but the GDs must believe it too else why are they watching me? Protecting me—maybe they think there prophet can take over. If they think so, their right, and hes doing a damn good job.

I thought of killing myself just for spite but then I figured what good would that do because

- A. they would stop me (they watch me a lot
- B. and there are 10 other transplantees still living.

Ha ho.

If I could draw I would draw a picture of my head and put a little light bulb over it. There *are* things I can do. World Spirit, go to hell. I shall send you friends.

Luckily, I have done nothing so far to arouse suspicion except that they probably know that I know. Question? How does one untail a tail?

*August 26*

Answer: You dont. Tighter than glue. I tried taxis, I tried walking through crowds, Moral is tighter than glue.

*August 28*

*Victory.* I am now on the plane to Sacramento and except for the fact that anybody around me might be a GD, I think I made it. Moral is waking up about now unless I broke her neck, which I doubt because lets face it, Im not all that tough. If I hadnt had my gun (registered, folks, my occupation allows weaponry for self defense) and if she hadnt happened to hit her head on a urinal I think I woulnt have made it. Shes pretty scary. She may be a virgin but she knows all about the laying on of hands. The bruise on my arm is pretty bad, I can see it through my shirt sleeves.

Took a jet to Boston, then from Bostom to Dallas only I got off in Chicago and flew to Tulsa and hopped right on another flight to Sacramento. Maybe they'll catch up and maybe they wont, but at least theyll have to do a little research unless somebody saw me who knows me and thats the gamble Im taking.

*August 29*

Greyhound bus to san Francisco. Job done.

*August 30*

Landing in Tulsa. I reread this thing and Im absolutely sure Im insane except sane or not Im committed (ha ho) to this now. No turning back at all.

*August 31*

Radio is talking about the rash of Tulsa murders and frankly I dont see what these nut murderers get out of killing strangers. I would kill myself right now except that it would leave the job undone. I had to kill Valery Van Vleets mother too because there was no way to get to the little girl without

I want to vomit

I vomited but I dont feel any better. What am I doing Im killing people and even though I dont believe in God I feel damned. I cant be insane because insane people can black these things out and why the hell am I writing at a time like this except that I guess when Im dead I hope that people will understand and at least think I was crazy except Im not except that thats what all crazy people say (and all sane people too) but at least I know that what Im doing is insane. I know its insane but the MDs dont understand whats happening to me and the others and I cant think of any explanation except what the GDs say oh what the hell Ill just shutup and try to sleep

I cant sleep

I dont want to sleep anyway. I want to die.

### *Septemberemberemberemberember the First*

And the mission is accomplished I had to kill a whole bunch of GDs and thank heaven for my permit to buy ammo because without it theredve been no way. If Im right or wrong it doesnt matter anymore because there all dead and Ill be too as soon as I finish writing this which Id better hurry and do because my guess is theyre trying to find me right now. I realized after I got all but Biscuit that theyd better not try to stop me because the only way they could do it would be to kill me and Im a peace of there prophet, who they dont want to kill. Im carrying valuable cargo. Which is why they havent called the cops, because the cops would kill me. And besides, how would they explain how they know who Id kill next without letting out their little secret which even if nobody believed it I figure they dont want anybody guessing.

I got all new skin on my tummy, and this Peppinger must have been a pretty virile guy, if body hair has anything to do with virility. I feel like a new man Ha ho.

I thought maybe it would be kind of harder to do Biscuit because after all I liked him but after youve killed about twenty people who arent fighting back, who just look at you allsurprised and frightened Vomit Vomit. Good thing I dont plan to get myself with poison because Id puke it up before it got me. Dead time, boys and girls. Whoever reads this, take a good look at the GDs and do yourself a favor. Dont let anybody operate on you under total again. There aint nothing worthy dying for, unless its making sure that youre the only person living in your body.

I just thought of something. What if I had waited a little longer, and this Peppinger had got to my brain? Would I just become Peppinger?

Who gives a darn (euph.

I do.

I found myself with a pistol barrel in my mouth wondering why. I remember why now, I think. I have read this journal, and I think I remember thoughts of a few minutes ago. They were not my thoughts. But they are my memories.

This gun has killed. These hands pulled the trigger. This heart beat faster as the gun fired. These ears still ache from the explosions. These eyes wept in remorse. My mouth still tastes of vomit.

But I did not kill. Please, God, I did not kill.

I was killed. Mabey says so and I remember a mad face and a meatcleaver, coming from



nowhere in the depths of a crowd of smiling, laughing, loving faces. I remember a moment of pain, and then

No. This I cannot

I can think of no reason to believe that this journal is a fraud.

I have looked in the mirror. I am the man I remembered myself to be.

### *3 September*

I have met with Hyman, Ron, Moral, Chaste, and Egan. The answers are clear. Such a great sin has never been committed, and yet the hearts of those who sinned were pure.

Surely the humble fisherman whose hearts' love had been torn from them did not sin in wishing him alive again. And in the wishing, neither did these disciples of God's Deliverance sin. But ours is a different age, and it was the genius of Egan and Shaste, the deft hands of Hyman, the force of will of Ron and Moral that have brought me back, not from the grave, for I never was there, but from where I was, and that is sin enough.

The chemicals are destroyed, boiled away or burned or both. The papers are all ash, which has been raked to dust and scattered through the fields and woods of this countryside. And they have knelt before me and given solemn oath before God and before me (it is a mark of all our weakness that they and I hold it necessary to vow before someone else than God) that their secrets will die with them.

We all have blood on our hands. They have the blood of eleven murdered men, women, and children. I have the blood of Frank Mabey whose body I stole. I have done what cannibals only mocked: I have eaten his flesh and taken his virtue and I live because he is dead.

This sin is on our heads, and though we will proceed as we had planned before the man servant of sin cut the thread of my thin and nebulous life, nevertheless we, like Moses and Aaron, will not see the promised land.

I will lock this away until my death, because for the sake of the movement we must go on. Penance for these sins will come later, in God's time. Now we must work in God's Deliverance. After my death this will be Frank Mabey's testament and my confession.

It is no jest that religion forbids all good things, and the stronger the forbidding, the better the thing forbidden. But the forbidding is only for a time. To own is forbidden, until the thing owned has been earned. To copulate is forbidden, until that copulation is locked within a family. And to die and to kill are forbidden, until God himself reaches down his hand and releases us from life. This I have taught them now. I see that it must be the cornerstone.

### *10 September*

They ask me, again and again, what is death like? What did I feel? What did I see?

I show them, but they see not. I tell them, but they hear not. If death were not desirable, it would not have been forbidden us. We are taught to fear it, and we are forbidden to seek those who have died, because if we knew, if we understood what lies within our reach, at the cost of a pill, a bullet, a blade, a breath, then in the moment we understood, this world would be unpopulated. We would leap into our graves like a lecher into his lady's bed.

But we do not know, and the fear is on us, and God in his mercy will deliver us from ourselves if we can school our passions.

Perhaps God will let me stand on a high hill and look out into the promised land before he lets me return to him. Then my people will mourn me. But I will go singing.