

“Be steady. Be certain.”

He gestures at the IV stand and bag of antibiotics.

My dad’s eyes are sunken, swollen like dark plums. His hands shake under the heated blanket.

I close my eyes and count.

*One.*

I imagine drowning, heaving through my own self-manifested trepidation. How do I -- No. I need to think.

*Two.*

“Be certain,” he said.

If there is a force more destructive and detrimental than disease, more wanton and wicked than warfare, it is certainty. In a world where there is certainty there must be doubt.

I cannot be certain.

*Three.*

In middle school I learned about the Scientific Method; it anticipates error and feeds off of doubt. There is no such thing as a “flawless theory”. A theory is an idea supported with evidence; no scientist will assert that a theory, even their own, is absolute. Therefore the term “flawless theory” is similar to an oxymoron, because the scientific world believes in revision and doubt. The correct term would be a “very-well-supported theory”. At first, people believed in the geocentric theory. After all, what else could be the center of the universe other than Earth? In *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Bodies*, Copernicus audaciously proposed the heliocentric theory. Suddenly a widely accepted theory had been challenged -- and he was right. It was this man’s doubt that opened our eyes and brought us closer to the truth.

I glance over the beckoning bag of antibiotics.

But this isn’t like developing or disproving a theory. If I make a mistake now, I can’t revise it.

*Four.*

I had listened to the podcast *Serial* last night. Sarah Koenig was a master of entertaining her doubts in order to explore the different possible scenarios in the murder case framing a man named Adnan. Despite Adnan's great reputation contradicting his sentence, Koenig holds onto the doubt that Adnan could be the culprit. A prodigious amount of people assured her that "he wasn't that kind of guy" because he was intellectual, athletic and religious. But she still asked questions like, *Can a guy that attends a Mosque also be the guy that kills his girlfriend?* Vice versa, when Koenig uncovered some undesirable rumors about Adnan taking money from the Mosque, she didn't succumb to certainty; she asked, *Can a guy that steals from Mosque also be the guy that kills his girlfriend?* In a case where you cannot untangle the truth from the lies, doubt will be an ally.

*Can a sophomore in high school with an instruction packet and no prior medical training correctly change an IV?*

*Five.*

I look at my dad.

*Six.*

I made up my mind.

Because if there is a force more destructive and detrimental than disease, more wanton and wicked than warfare, more cruel and careless than certainty, it is idleness.

I think of my mom, who confided in me that she had secretly been attending English as a Second Language classes for the past month. Giggling nervously, like it was her most precious and scandalous secret, she asked me for help on her homework.

I think of *Les Miserables*, the scene where Marius and Enjolras, along with other French revolutionaries, sang "Let us welcome [death] gladly with courage and cheer / Let us take to the streets with no doubt in our hearts" before most of them became martyrs.

I consult with Atticus Finch, and he tells me, "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do."

My heroes.

Were these people driven by certainty? Were they consumed by doubt? No. They were simply brave.

I jammed the needle into my father's vein. And I began.