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S is for.....

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Bryan Vincent Redmond

S Is For...

I will not say I remember as if it were yesterday, for the event is something I wish I never experienced. In fact, I don't remember how it even began. I only remember her asking me what my favorite color was, *her* being a middle-aged, yet beautiful and delicate, nurse. Then I was out.

I began jumping over this hurdle when I was fifteen years old. Diagnosed with scoliosis, I was administered a back brace to rectify two curves in my spine. Out of the twenty-four hours God blessed me with daily, I was required to wear it a total of twenty. In those days, I woke up already with the contraption from hell. It ran from the center of my chest past my stomach and all around, enclosing and constricting me into a perfectly postured rectangular position. I got dressed, went to school, ate dinner, and went to sleep in the mechanism. The four hours that I didn't wear it, I attended rehab or exercised on my own, showered, and allowed my soul to be temporarily free. My freedom was already limited inside that brace. The shackles would soon tighten.

I always exceeded my twenty-hour requirement. My doctor would complement me on my efforts, promising health. By senior year, x-rays showed my once squiggly-lined shaped spine to be an S, with curvatures of 52 and 56 degrees. My spine was applying pressure to my lungs and heart and would not stop curving. On February 7, 2014 during the second half of senior year, which was spent at a new school, I attempted to answer that sweet nurse's question before my spinal fusion surgery began. The anesthesia was so strong, I cannot remember if I even answered.

I do remember, though, what happened afterwards. I woke up in immeasurable pain, a pain I do not care to even attempt to quantify. What I had become is so much more important,

and far easier to calculate. For two months, I became the shadow of my former self. After the surgery, I remember trying a variety of different foods. Each my body rejected. Each - except oatmeal. For fourteen days, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I ate different combinations of the grain. Those first two weeks were the hardest. I became the most impolite and vile individual imaginable. I recall once screaming at my mother from my room. My back was in pain and itchy, I could not bathe because my scar was not done healing, and I was having a hot flash. From my room, I screamed and cursed at my more-than-compassionate mother about the temperature. She came into my bedroom in a skull cap and jacket, obviously freezing. I broke into tears.

Eventually, I regained my strength. I was able to eat normal foods, the pain simmered down, and I learned to walk again (my father, annoyingly, was a big proponent of exercise!). Entering into a virtually new world, I returned to school, made up two months of classwork, and graduated as valedictorian with over \$2 million in scholarships. Today, two rods and twenty screws still hold me up. In addition to the physical challenge, my surgery tested me mentally, emotionally, and most importantly, spiritually. Many nights I lay in my bed pondering when God would finally pull me over this two-year-long hurdle. My friend Logan visited one day and prayed for me, and I found the answer. God conditions us for life, just as an athlete prepares for his or her sport. Overcoming scoliosis and now with the ability to persevere through any difficulty, I earned the *S* that my spine had formed. That *S*, a gift from God, stood for **Survivor**.