

## The Lost Muse

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Paul was a 40-something vivacious guy who loved his paint brush and was ever eager to revive the modern art scene in the city. He spent hours in his basement working on the canvas which he called his 'Muse'. He had noted to his friends that this particular painting would bring the city alive. One day when his friends came to visit him they noticed that he was holding the paintbrush awkwardly. He still had the finesse but he was just struggling with his brush. They urged him to meet his primary care physician who in turn referred him to us.

On our first meeting we spent a great deal of time talking about the 'MOMA' in New York and he seemed cheerful and even optimistic that I could fix him and he could go back to his Muse. As I continued to examine him I noticed that he had twitching all over his body. He could not tightly squeeze my fingers and his hand movements just seemed clumsy. We put him through the grind of medical testing including multiple blood work, MRI scans and the dreaded EMG. When I met him back in the clinic the tension and anxiety was palpable in the room. This time around his hair was unkempt, clothes loosely hanging and he seemed queasy.

I slowly went over all the testing that I had done so far. Then holding his hand I gave him the inevitable diagnosis of Lou Gehrig's disease. There was a hush of silence in the room and after a while Paul asked me how long would he live. He told me that he didn't fear dying but he just wanted to get back to his Muse and complete the painting.

As the months passed by he progressively became weaker and had even greater difficulty painting. He read about stem cell therapy in Mexico and traveled all the way there to try it. It didn't help him and in turn only made his symptoms worse. He read about an antibiotic infusion that helped a few patients with Lou Gehrig's and traveled to a 'special clinic' to get these. Even this didn't help. Then he read about lithium (the medication that is used in mood disorders) that seemed to have helped a few patients with Lou Gehrig's. He tried it. He had also heard about an herbal medication that helped a few patients and spent his life savings on buying that.

None of these so-called therapies helped him. He told his friends that he tried all these medications not because he wanted to live longer or enjoy his life. He hoped that at least one of these treatments would give him enough strength to go back to his Muse and complete his work.

By the time I saw him 8 months later, he had become wheelchair bound. He could no longer hold his head up and was drooling saliva. I talked to him about getting a feeding tube as well as getting an assist device for his breathing. He seemed more at ease this time but he still spoke to me about his unfinished Muse. That was a last I ever saw of Paul. A year later I got a letter from his friend noting that Paul had passed away in his sleep. His Muse though still remained incomplete.

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