

450ml

She spikes the needle into a vein and you watch the blood

wind
its
way
down
into
a bag.

There it will pool and fill and rock back and forth while you squeeze intermittently. Not too much. Not too little. Just enough to keep. It. Flowing.

Your leg jitters and you unconsciously cross your legs.

Uncross your legs please.
Sorry.

It's a natural reaction to shock. You're going into shock.

Just a little bit.

Just a little bit.

You are technically bleeding a lot.

Your body knows.

Is 450ml a lot?

Doesn't seem like a lot

to give.

How are you feeling?

Fine.

Let me know if you need anything.

A juice please?

Would he have been a blood donor
given the chance?

26 years ago you were learning to lip sync *Poetry in Motion* for an Ottawa summer camp talent show when your parents sat you down and told you your friend was hit by a drunk driver. He had been walking home on a sunny summer day when

the
car
hopped
the curb
and
struck.

How are you feeling now?

Fine.

Squeeze....

Squeeze.

Back and forth.

Back and forth.

Your arm aches with the needle in there. Just a few minutes more. You can bear it.

When paramedics got to the scene they thought the spiderwebbed glass was from where the boy's head had struck the windshield. It wasn't. It was from where the driver had punched it in frustration. In anger. He was mad that he'd run into the boy, smashing his ribs into his heart and lungs. Mad he'd gotten caught. His blood alcohol was three times the legal limit. Too drunk to even realize what he'd done.

How are you feeling now?

Fine.

Almost done. You're bleeding fast today.

Is that something to be proud of? What's the record?

Fastest I've seen is 4 minutes and change. I think you'll be done in 5 minutes.

It took two days to declare him dead.

In the end the doctors put a dozen units of blood into him, but it couldn't stop the bleeding.

They pulled the tubes and IVs out.

Let him slip away.

His mother gave them authorization to take his kidneys, liver, and corneas.

Your mother will tell you "Someone can see because of him."

"Will they use his heart?"

"No. They can't. It was too badly damaged."

The driver goes to jail for 7 years. The boy will be 9 forever.

26 years later you give blood for the 20th and last time.

26 years and one month later you get a letter. You have tested a false positive for HTLV, Human T-lymphotropic virus. You are not in danger. You do not have this virus. It was a mistake on one of our tests, however you are not allowed to give blood anymore.

A lifetime ban.

How are you feeling now?