



## Reflection and Anticipation

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By Gina Tobalina, MD

TODAY WAS THE FIRST DAY of the last quarter of my pre-clinical years in medical school. Today I also got my schedule for the next two clinical years. Surgery first. What was I thinking when I requested that?

Looking back, I don't know how I survived the first two years without getting kicked out or quitting. I'm still in awe thinking about my acceptance letter back in May 1999. I cried in my boyfriend's arms and left two black smudges on his shirt where my mascara had run.

They actually let me in! It meant moving across the country from Michigan where I lived with my grandmother and had just graduated from Wayne State University. It meant moving into an apartment that I rented over the phone, sight unseen. It meant doing something very big, all alone.

School started and I waited for them to tell me my acceptance was a mistake. They never did. In fact, they reassured me that I really was supposed to be there. I struggled through classes, no longer the smartest one. I didn't get the A's I was so accustomed to. My boyfriend left me.

My ego was shattered as I received the lowest score on the Biochemistry test. But things eventually got better. I managed to stay afloat. Now, towards the end of my second year of med school, I actually have some confidence back.

I compare my interactions with patients from my first quarter to now. I have learned a lot. A whole lot. And I know that I will learn so much more in the upcoming clinical years. Eventually, I will emerge a doctor.

When anybody asks me what med school is like, I compare it to boot camp. I have never been in the Army, so my analogy is pure speculation. I tell them that med school admits people they think will make good soldiers. Then they break you down so they can build you up into a doctor.

Instead of six weeks of basic training, however, med school lasts for four years. I like to think I am nearing the end of the breaking-down period and entering the building-up, but I can only hope. I do have my surgery rotation first.

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