**THE PRE-CHRISTMAS DINNER MIRACLE
MEDICAL RECOVER**

 *Every physician almost hath his favorite disease.*

Henry Fielding, Tom Jones

Back in 1992 I was shopping for Christmas dinner at Bell’s Supermarket in Athens, Georgia. I had a cart-full of food. The last aisle, as planned if one goes through the aisles in proper sequence, was the bread row, as well as the frozen food row.

I was now reaching down for some soft rolls, which were on the lowest shelf. I reached way to the back, thinking the grocery clerks might place the most stale rolls in front to sell first. I was wrong. I pulled out a plastic-wrapped set of buns, dripping with greenish liquid. Embarrassed by my lack of skills in everyday life, I turned around to see that nobody had observed my confusion. As with many of us who make egregious errors, I immediately sought to lay the blame elsewhere.

A half-filled cart stood beside me. I deftly dropped the dripping rolls inside. Then I observed and I loitered, though the latter is against the law in specific localities of most cities.

I was suddenly dismayed to see an unusually ancient couple wobbling toward the contaminated cart. I turned my mind to the intendedly efficient grocery store design, and considered how my suspicious mind took my hand to the back of the lowest shelf to find the rotten rolls.

I now allowed the elderly couple to gain entrance just before me at the check-out counter.

A singular guilt gripped me on this Christmas Eve shopping excursion.

As the extraordinarily discolored plastic-wrapped package was gingerly picked out of the cart by the cashier, I saw the elderly couple exchange looks. My emphatic mind realized what they were both thinking to one another: They each thought, “You fool; *you* did it, but I’ll cover for you.” She actually said, “Yes, of course, we want it.” He eagerly said, “Yes, we’ll pay for it, indeed.”

As you realize, this was an extremely objectionable thing that I had done, and on the day before Christmas, no less. No Santa Claus for me!

But there is something called prediction or prescience in life. Here is what I know happened:

The elderly couple Mr. and Mrs. Cook returned from shopping on Christmas Eve day, to awaken their grandson, who had been bed-ridden since his medical discharge from the Marine Corp, one week before, because of an incurable disability. In fact, he was dying. Would Arnold even be alive tomorrow for Christmas dinner?

Sometime late in the pre-morning hours of Christmas Eve night, the grandson struggled to the kitchen, and did not turn on the lights so as not to awaken his frail and resting grandparents. He groped in the refrigerator and found something soft—something each grandparent had meant to throw away on the sly.

He eagerly enjoyed the moist, soft taste—medicinally prepared by unknown natural elements.

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Twenty years later, in the year 2012 as a very old man, I write this Christmas story, after reading in today’s Athens Journal-Constitution of a Professor Arnold J. Cook (A.J.) who has just won a Nobel prize in medicine, a man described as “so inspired by his grandparent’s miracle Christmas cure when he was dying in 1992 that he devoted his life to the medical sciences and to the good of all humankind.”

After all these guilty years living with my naughty, soggy, dirty-roll trick, this is my most fulfilling Christmas.

And Merry Christmas to you!