

## GETTING OVER DOROTHY

Peter Murphy

*Greatest family film of all time!  
Discover your courage.  
Follow your heart.  
And find your way home.  
—from the trailer*

O screeching, winged-monkeys. O avocado-tinted witch. O wrinkled-faced Munchkins with your silly, shrilly voices. O yappy dog. O man of hay; tin-can man, man-lion shill of Lay's potato chips. O horrible Dorothy with your enchanted, blood-colored lips and pumps. I call on you. I say, I will fear you no longer.

You have given me nightmares since mommy and daddy dumped me in a dark theater to watch you four times in one weekend when I was five so they could get blitzed at the corner bar without the encumbrance of me. True, I wasn't alone. They attached me to a gang of cousins who stole my popcorn money as I cowered in my seat, eyes closed, covering my ears, with nowhere to hide. Since then you've driven me from the living rooms of friends whenever you've shown up on television. You've made me a nervous man who cannot bear to walk along your yellow brick road. Christ, you've made me fear rainbows. *You ought to be ashamed of yourself—frightening him like that. Until now.* Now, I refuse to let you terrify me.

I have just charged my Discover card seventeen bucks to see you supersized and in 3-D at the IMAX. I swiped my card again at the candy counter to buy a wheelbarrow-full of buttered popcorn which I never eat since my heart went bad. I will watch you, and I will not cringe, I will not weep, I will not fear, and I will not leave this theater until the closing credits roll.

As the lights dim, my hand opens and closes like the claw of a crane, lifting the cholesterol-causing corn kernels to my mouth, over and over—I cannot stop. I cannot stop—except to sip from the half-gallon of Diet Sprite to wash it down.

But when I pat my pocket where I keep my tiny bottle of nitroglycerin, I feel nothing but change. My big gulp quivers when I

realize it's not there. And as the great winds spin across the colossal screen, I look up to see a farmhouse swirl toward me, courtesy of the magic of 3-D. I duck as it lands on a witch's head instead of mine, and hear the little ones croon, *Ding-dong, ding-dong, the witch is dead.* I sit there, white-knuckled for one hour and forty-two minutes as they sing Dorothy off: *She's off . . . She's off . . .* to see the Wizard.

My first heart attack, when I was 40, felt like Dorothy placed her palm on my breast and gently pressed down. Then she punched me, the bitch, grabbed me by the throat, threw me to the ground, and jumped up and down on my chest until the Munchkins pulled her off and dialed 9-1-1.

*No. No! It was an accident!* cried Dorothy. *I didn't mean to kill anybody!*

Since then, the nuclear stress tests, the echocardiograms, the catheters threaded through my groin, the medicated stents, the Plavix, the Lovaza, the Metoprolol, the Lipitor, the extended-release Isosorbide, the aspirin, and the missing nitroglycerin have been working together to prevent the next arterial clog that I know is dying to build up.

*Well, ring around the rosie, pocket full of spears!* cackles my angina. *Thought you'd be pretty foxy, didn't you? Well, I'm going to start in on you right here!*

But instead, the jaded witch dissolves into the gutter, and Dorothy wishes herself back to the farm, and I rise from my seat and leave the darkness behind.

O IMAX screen the size of Kansas, I have come, I have watched, and now that I have finally conquered, I have nothing to be afraid of except . . . wait . . . my chest . . . my chest . . . a pain in my chest . . . *Oh, you cursed brat! Look what you've done! I'm melting! Melting!*