A Day's Wait
Ernest Hemingway

A DAY'S WAIT

there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on.
I read aloud from Howard Pyle's Book of Pirates; but I could see he was not following what I was reading.
“Why don’t you try to go to sleep? I'll wake you up for the medicine.”
“It’s rather stay awake.”

After a while he said to me, “You don’t have to stay in here with me, Papa, if it bothers you.”
“It doesn’t bother me.”
“No, I mean you don’t have to stay if it’s going to bother you.”
I thought perhaps he was a little lightheaded and after giving him the prescribed capsules at eleven o’clock I went out for a while.

We flushed a covey of quail under a high clay bank with overhanging brush and I killed two as they went out of sight over the top of the bank. Some of the covey lit in trees, but most of them scattered into brush piles and it was necessary to jump on the ice-coated mounds of brush several times before they would flush. Coming out while you were poised unsteadily on the icy, springy brush they made difficult shooting and I killed two, missed five, and started back pleased to have found a covey close to the house and happy there were so many left to find on another day.

At the house they said the boy had refused to let any one come into the room.
“You can’t come in,” he said. “You mustn’t get what I have.”
I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks flushed by the fever, staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed.
I took his temperature.
“What is it?”
“Something like a hundred,” I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths.
“It was a hundred and two,” he said.
“Who said so?”
"The doctor."
"Your temperature is all right," I said. "It's nothing to worry about."
"I don't worry," he said. "But I can't keep from thinking."
"Don't think," I said. "Just take it easy."
"I'm taking it easy," he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.
"Take this with water."
"Do you think it will do any good?"
"Of course it will."
I sat down and opened the *Pirate* book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.
"About what time do you think I'm going to die?" he asked.
"What?"
"About how long will it be before I die?"
"You aren't going to die. What's the matter with you?"
"Oh, yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two."
"People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two. That's a silly way to talk."

"I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two."
He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.
"You poor Schatz," I said. "Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometers. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer. On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight."
"Are you sure?"
"Absolutely," I said. "It's like miles and kilometers. You know, like how many kilometers we make when we do seventy miles in the car?"
"Oh," he said.
But his gaze at the foot of the bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very slack and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance.