

You Never Forget Your First Patients

His gullet had been fried flat by radiation therapy in his homeland. His name was Hassan. He was flown to England to be mended on my second ward as a student nurse nearly forty years ago. He learnt the word *smashing* and used it for everything. Even on the night he crushed my hand, staring into my eyes boring into his, as the surgeon felt below his Adam's apple

then cut and opened his trachea under local anaesthetic – the relief was *smashing*. The inside of his chest was still burning – the thirst of his soft tissues was unquenchable. I remember him smiling... always smiling – even when I heard him mouth *smashing*... for the last time.

Margaret Adkins