

“...Dispatch, we have one to transport to the hospital. Sixteen year old girl...”  
“...estimated arrival time, two minutes...”

“...pulse is thready, lost a lot of blood...”

“...get two units A positive blood and get an IV drip running STAT. Get her to X-Ray...”

“...got another one for you. Neck trauma, blood loss...”

“...put him next door...”

“...helicopter pilot brought him in, she performed CPR...”

“...found him out by some abandoned warehouses. Looked like there’d been one heck of a party...possibly a rave...”

“...He’s in d-fib....code three. Bring a crash cart...clear....clear...again...call it”

“...Time of death 4:02am...”

Silence.....

“...looks like she was hit by a bus, but she’s fighting...”

“...regaining her strength rapidly...probably wake up any time now...”



## Dealing with Consequences

By Jill Irving

Forty-eight tiles. There were forty-eight tiles in the ceiling of my Farmingham hospital room. It’s one of the little games I’d learned to play to pass the time in the many hospital rooms in which I’d had the opportunity to stay. On the longer stays, I usually ended up counting cracks in the wall, floor tiles, and anything else that came to mind. This was a long stay. There were roughly sixty floor tiles, you have to estimate a little due to furniture, and no cracks of which to speak.

After three days my pain was reduced enough, and they’d lessened my meds, that I could think of other stuff, like how much I hate being confined to bed and how much I despise being unable to do for myself. I was desperate for a shower and something to do. I’ve never been one to watch a lot of television and I’d finished the one book that had been brought to me. Unfortunately trying to do my school work was a little too tricky with the

limited space on the tray table and the effort of sitting up for long periods of time. So essentially I had little I could do in long stretches of time.

In such a state, it's not surprising that I started trying to put together the little fragments that I heard during my trip in to the hospital and in the ER. I was in and out of consciousness, so all I had to work with was little snippets of conversations, but it was better than watching soaps, so I let the fragments run through my head to see if I could fill in the missing pieces, like a puzzle for which I didn't have the picture. I always liked puzzles though.

I remembered a lot of what filtered in was about my own condition. The usual medical mumbo-jumbo, it seemed like I needed some blood. I vaguely recalled having someone in the bed next to me in the ER for a while. A male...something about a "neck trauma"; I thought that was likely why it kept replaying in my head. It must have made me think of our wrinkly-faced friends. Or maybe it had something to do with the comment about a Rave. Whoever heard of a rave in Farmingham? I made a mental note to discuss it with the gang when I got out of the hospital; after all there wasn't much I could do in my hospital bed.

When the candy striper came in and offered to paint my nails I even considered it for a moment. Okay, a short moment. I couldn't figure which would be worse, listening to her inane babble for the time it took her to do it, or the comments I would have to endure if I actually had painted nails (can't you hear the comments about pink going so well with combat gear?). In the end, I told the little twit to leave, might have scared her a bit too. I'm not my usual, pleasant self when I'm bored.

Visitors weren't helping too much, either. Mom had been in for a bit each day. First time she read me the riot act. I told her it wasn't my fault, I never even took a swing...it was true too, but my history was working against me. Grams visited too. She was the one who thought to bring me a book. It wasn't my cup of tea, but I figured it would be a good way to show her that I'd be appreciative of anything she had to teach me. Besides, I was bored! My new friends hadn't been by much. They visited the first day I was conscious, but it seemed a bit like they were just trying to let me know I was the only one who got hurt. Raine had that "I told you so" look. I could have argued until I was blue in the face that it had nothing to do with being her friend, but what was the point? Some people just "know" they are right and don't want to hear anything different. I'd like to see how she fared in the same situation.

Normally I like my alone time. But being in pain, and especially considering how I ended up here, I didn't enjoy being alone with my thoughts any too much. It's one thing to face the ghost of your father. It's another to be caught flat-footed while that phantom used you as a punching bag; and that phantom hit a whole lot faster and harder than my dad ever did in life. Knowing that it was some sort of mystically conjured creation of a head case with a pair of evil headphones didn't make it any less painful, either physically or mentally.

I was laying there contemplating turning on the television to see if there was anything less inane than so-called "reality" T.V. when the door to my currently private room opened. I looked up hoping it wasn't the nurse come to give me a sponge bath...she made me a bit uncomfortable.

“You’re looking good!” A familiar voice announced on entering the room.

”Jersey Girl,” I smiled back at her, and regretted the action almost immediately. Sometimes I think a split lip is the worst kind of pain, because every time you move your mouth or eat it gets irritated. “What are you doing here?”

“We’re stationed in Portsmouth these days.” TJ pulled a chair over beside the bed and sat on the arm. “I heard about your dad and thought I’d look you up, see how you’re doing.” She looked over my prone and battered body. “I didn’t expect to find you fallen to pieces.”

“Ha, ha.” I rolled my eyes. “I didn’t expect to see you again.”

“Funny, I always figured we’d meet up when you were a bit older and wiser.” She winked and continued, “So I guess I’ll have to come back in a few more years.”

“You aren’t catching me at my best. Normally I’d have five or six comebacks for you, but right now my head is fuzzy and I can’t think of one.”

“Honey, even at your best, you weren’t quick enough for me.”

“And to think, I was complaining about not having visitors....the candy striper is looking better all the time.” I tried my best to sneer.

“Really?” Her grin said plenty.

“You know, if you are going to give me a hard time, the least you can do is be useful.” I pushed the blankets back. “Give me a hand” I ordered.

“What do you think you are doing? Are you supposed to be getting up?” TJ jumped up from her seat.

“I’m going to the bathroom. You can help me so I don’t hurt myself as much. Or you can keep out of my way. Either way, I’m not using that stupid bedpan. There’s nothing more embarrassing than having to have someone take away your excrement.”

“Thanks for the visual.”

“Any time. Are you going to help me?” I held out my hand towards her.

She linked wrists with me. “I’m not sure this is a good idea.” She added doubtfully.

“So? It’s my bad idea and I’m the one who’ll suffer for it.” I grimaced a bit as she helped me sit up on the edge of the bed.

“You sure you want to do this? I can see it’s hurting you a lot.” TJ asked while she moved to my side to help me off the bed.

“Let’s just do it.” I took a deep breath and stood up. Her arm slipped around behind me; and she helped support me into the bathroom. “Thanks. Wait outside.”

“You sure you can handle this?” She asked raising an eyebrow.

“Remember the point of this little excursion is to take care of my own bodily functions. I’ll handle it or die trying. OUT!” I pointed at the door.

“Okay, fine. Don’t lock it...just in case you need a hand later.” She turned and pulled the door shut.

”Fine.” I answered. I glanced around the bathroom as I slowly lowered myself to the toilet. There was a handicap-equipped shower stall to my right. On the sink to my left there were small packages with a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, and shampoo. Sitting there, I started to have one of my brilliant ideas. I reached over and grabbed some of the packages off the sink.

Slowly and rather painfully, I got up and went to the shower stall, starting the water at a nice hot temperature.

“Hey, what do you think you are doing?” TJ asked barging back into the bathroom.

“Showering.” I dropped my hospital gown. “At this moment I can’t think of a single thing I’d rather do.”

”Jesus! Look at you!” She hissed. “Is there a spot on your body that isn’t black and blue and green and yellow?”

“I think there’s a purple spot on my neck behind my hair....you can check it after I shower.” I stepped in. “OH GOD is that good.”

“Really now?” TJ’s voice was dripping with innuendo.

“You have no idea how disgusting it feels to be sponge-bathed for three days in a row and not to shower.”

“Sponge-baths can be fun!” I could hear her grin behind the shower wall.

“Does your mind ever get out of the gutter?” I asked.

“Does yours ever go into it?” She parried back.

“Sorry, TJ, I’ve got other stuff to think about.”

“Like what? Twenty ways to tick off your neighbor? Or maybe the twelve-step plan to getting oneself beaten to death?”

“Well, those are definitely thoughts that cross my mind, but generally they come naturally. I prefer to clutter it with Star Wars, Monty Python, and Princess Bride references.” I replied as I rinsed my hair and turned off the water.

“You are such a geek”

“And proud of it! Hand me a towel.” I ordered.

“If I don’t?” She asked holding a towel behind her back.

“No big!” I shrugged grabbing for my hospital gown. “I’ll just get back in bed all wet, and then probably catch my death of cold in that cold room.”

“You really aren’t any fun today.” She threw the towel toward me and stormed out of the bathroom. “And all those nasty bruises are ugly to look at.”

“And here I wanted to you stand around looking at me while I was naked.” I remarked facetiously.

“I always suspected that about you!” She called back from the main room. “I’m going to go see if I can find something decent to eat. Maybe if you’re lucky, I’ll score something decent for you.”

“Whatever. Hospital food is no worse than mom’s cooking.”

I made my way out of the bathroom to find the nurse, I secretly called her Nurse Crab, standing there looking disgustedly at me. I think she was tempted to kick my butt. Fortunately they frown on that in hospitals. Instead she made me suffer through settling me back in the bed and put me in restraints. Feeling clean made me handle the whole ordeal without putting up too much a fuss. Amazing how a shampoo can really put you in a whole different place.

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**T**J snuck back in a while later carrying a small bag. She popped some flowers down on my side table.

“For you. Maybe they’ll help you feel better.”

”Thank you.” I responded looking at them.

TJ seemed to notice my restraints then. “So is the nurse getting kinky with you?”

I shook my head in consternation, but I’d been expecting the comment. “No, actually she thinks I’m a cross between Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein’s monster.”

“She’s not so far off, at that.” She laughed at my predicament. “This has all sorts of potential.”

“Cut it out and untie me.” I ordered.

“See, I knew you were cut out for command.” She released me from the restraints as she laughed it off.

“What do you have for me?” I asked examining the bag she’d set in the chair.

“I didn’t think I could get away with bringing you junk food, and knowing you, you wouldn’t eat it. I brought you some granola bars and trail mix.” She passed it to me.

“Excellent.” I opened the bag and pulled out a granola bar. There was a book in the bag as well. I pulled it out. “Is this for me too?”

”Who else?” She shrugged. “I thought Isaac Asimov’s version of I, Robot might interest you whether or not you see the movie version.”

“About now, any book is of interest.” I set the book down on my bedside stand.

“Was the shower worth it?” She sat back on the chair arm.

“You have no idea. Thanks for your help.”

“Any time, honey.” She grinned with that leering look she uses to disturb me. “Well, visiting hours are almost over. I better head back to the shipyard. I put my cell number on that bookmark in the bag. Give me a call when you’re feeling better.”

“Will do.” I promised as she headed to the door.

So I had my book to keep me occupied for the rest of the evening. It was reasonably good. I’d mostly read mathematical treatise by Isaac Asimov, it was interesting to see the creative side of his theories.

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Around midnight I could hear a great deal of noise in the hallway and a gurney was rolled into the room by two orderlies. My previously private room had been invaded. I wasn’t sure how I felt about that. I just didn’t think I was the roommate type.

The orderlies left after shifting the other patient to the other bed in the room and pulling the privacy screens around it. Nurse Crab came in and efficiently hooked my roommate up to the equipment in the room. She didn’t stay long and fortunately didn’t notice that I was out of my restraints. I feigned sleep anyway.

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I was woken again by the sounds of loud voices and the whir of wheels sliding into the room. Once again I heard the sounds of imminent death.

“...patient is in v-fib...crash cart...”

“clear...come on....clear....again”

It didn’t last long and yet somehow it lasted forever...I could hear the tone of the flat line on the equipment. Finally the equipment was turned off and there was silence. A whole lot of people passed out the door until only the doctor and nurse were left.

“Call it.” A male voice ordered resignedly.

“Time of death 2:13 a.m.” A soft female voice announced.

“I thought this one was going to make it. She’s only fourteen.” The male voice continued.

“We’re seeing more and more of these cases of neck trauma. What’s going on?” The woman asked.

“I don’t know. I wish it would stop. It so wasteful for children like her to be dying! And for what?” The man’s voice was fierce.

“The cop who brought her in said there had been a rave.”

“Don’t these kids have anything better to do than party?” His frustrated voice asked as they walked out towards the door.

“Were we any different?” Her voice was soft and compassionate. I could see her slip her arm around his back in comfort.

"No, I guess it was just the world was different." The door closed behind them.

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I don't know when they came to take away my roommate, but she was gone in the morning. I was awfully thankful for that. It's strange that after all the undead I had seen recently, having someone die near me seemed to really bother me. Maybe that's a good thing. Maybe that just goes to show that the harsh realities of life had not made me completely cold.

I was finishing the last couple of chapters of my book the next afternoon when a thought occurred to me. If neck trauma is a euphemism for bites from a blood-sucker, then it stands to reason that the dead could walk again. What if they walked again in the hospital? All those suffering people would be unable to get away. It was unthinkable.

I sat up slowly. It was hurting less and less. The doctor had given me clearance to move around a bit after hearing about my defiance yesterday. He figured if I felt well enough to shower, it was a good sign. He was unhappy with the nurse putting me in restraints. So today, I was under orders to take it easy, but allowed to move around a bit. If things went well, I'd be out tomorrow.

I reached for the phone and tried to call Jacqueline, but there was no answer. I didn't have any phone numbers for the rest of the gang and there was no phone book convenient. I called MacEnroe Motors, but they said Raine wasn't around. I slowly got up and went to the locker across the room to see if my radio was there, but it turned out Mom or Grams had taken most of my stuff home. A clean pair of sweats was in the locker to serve as nightclothes etc once I was allowed to get up. I slipped into the sweats, grateful to get rid of the open back hospital gown. It only hurt a little as I bent down to put on the pants. I slipped into old sneakers that were by my bed and decided to go for a walk.

If anyone was concerned with me walking about the hospital, no one commented. Luckily, my nurse was no where to be seen. I'm sure she would have had a few pithy things to say about it. I didn't know what I was looking at when I started, but I realized after I'd gotten in the elevator, that I had to head to the morgue to check out my suspicions.

I stopped on another floor and found a supply room. It was locked, of course. I found a med cart sitting outside a door to a room where a nurse was taking care of a patient. I snatched a roll of tape off the cart. I found a seat close to the supply room and ripped a couple pieces of tape off to have them ready. I didn't have to wait long. The nurse with the med cart came back and went into the closet, most likely to get some more tape. While she was in the room, I leaped across the hall and pushed the door locking mechanism in, using the tape to keep it held down. I then ran back to my seat.

The nurse came back a moment later, pulling the door closed behind her. I held my breath to see if she noticed the lock didn't click into place. Luck was with me and she didn't. I watched her until she was out of site and then waited until no one was looking towards me. I rushed across the hall and slipped into the storage closet, pulling the door shut behind me.

Inside, I quickly found the clean linens, including some scrubs. I changed into a pair of scrubs and found a mask to slip around my face if needed. I slipped my sweats between some clean linen and headed back out of the storage room, removing the tape as I left.

I got back into the elevator and went to the first floor. The morgue was in the west wing. Trying to act like I belonged, I marched purposely towards the morgue. The clock on the wall showed it to be after 5pm. Much of the daytime staff would have left, meaning there'd only be a few people left in this area, and they hopefully would be thinking about dinner.

I glanced into the windows in the morgue door. The room appeared empty as did the office. I quietly slid into the room and moved directly into the office area. From the office, I could see better into the main vault of the morgue. There were several covered bodies on tables and many 'vault' drawers where I assume the bodies were kept cold.

I wasn't looking forward to it, but I knew I'd have to look for these supposed "neck trauma" victims and make sure they didn't rise. The only way I knew to stop that was a pointy, wooden stake. And here I was without one in my pocket...actually without pockets. I started looking around the office for something useful to use. Who knew they collected such junk? Apparently one of the morgue techs was an x-file fan, because there was an "I want to believe" poster on the wall of the small room. One of the techs must have smoked because there was a half empty carton of cigarettes and a lighter sitting on one of the desks. In addition to the usual office equipment and computer equipment, there were some cleaning supplies and air fresheners on a shelf near the door. A bag of golf clubs leaned against the wall waiting to be taken out to the green.

The only thing I could find that could be useful was pencils. They wouldn't have been my first choice, since they break easily, but I suppose beggars can't be choosy. I had grabbed a handful and turned back towards the door when I heard a noise from the vault. I stopped, ducked and moved so I could look through the window.

I noticed almost immediately that one of the bodies on the tables had started to move. I was about to run in there, when the sheet got thrown off and a distinctly naked, distinctly female form rose up on her knees and moaned. I stopped dead in my tracks when I realized that she was on top of another naked form, this one male and he was groaning too...in pleasure.

Jesus, are people sick! Doing it in a morgue with dead bodies on the tables next to you, that's got to be one of the most disgusting things I've heard of. Well, doing it with the dead bodies...that would be worse.

I sat down quickly leaning on the wall for support, still hearing their cries of pleasure, while trying to cleanse my mind of the imagery. I had the feeling that this could scar me for life. I guess it's a good thing I wasn't interested in sex to begin with....

A few minutes later, I heard them finish up. They murmured there congratulations, thanks, and such as they hurriedly got dressed and exited the room. I waited a few minutes to make sure no one else was around before slowly trying to push myself back up. My ribs were starting to scream mercilessly at me so I knew I needed to get back. Besides, Nurse Crab would be looking for me soon.



I quietly made my way to the vault. The room smelled like formaldehyde, death, and sex. What kind of sickos could screw in here? ICK!

I made my way to the tables. Since I had no idea of any victim names, checking the toe tags wouldn't do me any good. I steeled myself to pull back the covers and check their necks. I counted to three and pulled back the first and nearly lost my lunch.

I closed my eyes and listened to the drill sergeant in my head telling me not to be a pansy, then opened them and inspected the body. It was a young child, with blue lips and no apparent neck wounds. I covered him quickly and moved to the next body. This one was an older man, again no neck wounds. Covered and moved on. The last body out on the tables was a teenage girl, her skin a pasty white from blood loss, and vampire bite marks clearly visible on her neck. The girl was clearly younger than me. I found myself contemplating how sad it was for someone so young to die in such a manner.

I was looking at her young face, when the eyes opened. Fortunately, even if I wasn't at full strength, my reflexes were fast. The creature started to rise as I slammed the handful of sharpened pencils I was carrying into its chest. There was a momentary delay as the vampire reacted and then the poof. I pulled the sheet away from table and left only the inevitable dust.

A couple of the pencils had broken so I threw those on the floor and turned thinking I should look for the other victim, just in case. I was too late.

To my right one of the fridge units stood open and empty. A naked teenage boy was coming at me from the left, and in case I had any doubts, he put on his game face as he came at me.

My luck had run out. With my ribs so sore, I was moving stiffly, I wasn't up to fighting a vamp...not that I had any choice at this point, unless you consider being a vamp's dinner a choice. I needed to think smart and quickly or I was going to die. I grabbed the instrument stand beside the table and pushed it hard at the vamp. As he avoided it, I ran across the room towards the office. The vamp was right behind me. I didn't have a lot of time. In the office I grabbed a golf club and swung out with it as the Vamp came into the doorway. The vamp was knocked back. I grabbed a canister of air freshener and ran across the room to the desk.

Praying the lighter was full; I grabbed it and shoved it in my pocket. The vamp started into the room coming fast. I stepped on the chair and ran across the desks, surprising the vamp and gaining enough opportunity to get out the door. I headed back into the nearly empty morgue area.

The vamp was only seconds behind me. I held up the aerosol spray can, sprayed and flicked the lighter. A jet of flame shot out from me at the vamp as it crashed through the doorway. I watched as he flew around the room trying to put out the flames which just kept getting thicker and hotter. Suddenly he went up in a poof of dust and smoke.

The room then had the lovely scent of burnt flesh and smoke. I sprayed some of the aerosol spray around the room and took it and the lighter back to the office. I snagged up the linens which contained my sweat clothes.

Making sure no one was coming; I headed back out to the elevator to return to my room. Before reaching my own room, I stopped in a public bathroom and changed back into my sweats, disposing of the scrubs in the trash.

My mother and Nurse Crab were waiting when I got to my room.

“Where have you been?” Mom asked as Nurse Crab glared.

“I went for a walk around the hospital.” I explained quickly. “The doctor said I was allowed to get up now. I thought walking would be a good way to help me return my health, without overdoing.”

“You should have let the nurse know where you were going.” Mom argued.

“I didn’t expect to be so fascinated by what I saw. I lost track of time.”

“Well, you should be more careful.” She admonished. “I just got a call from the doctor, you will be released tomorrow. I’ll be back before work in the morning to pick you up. Be ready to go. I don’t want to be late.”

“I’ll be ready, mom.”

After she left, I called Jacqueline again. I told her about what I’d found. She admonished me for checking it out alone, but under the circumstances, waiting would have been bad too. I decided to tell the group about the raves when I got back to school and we could look into it together.

When I got off the phone, I decided to lie down and stay down....get a good night’s sleep. I was going home tomorrow. Who knew what other consequences I’d be facing when I got there?