

Excerpt For Paging Dr. Jones

"Code blue, code blue!"

Catherine McGuire heard the paging system calling out the strange announcement. She'd seen it on TV programs often enough to know that it meant someone was in terrible trouble. Was she the one?

The sensation of pain was so intense; she wracked her foggy mind, trying to remember what had happened. She recalled starting to back the car out of the driveway and that was it.

Her mind cleared long enough for her to remember. There had been another terrible argument with Stan, her ex-husband.

His angry words echoed in her mind. I'll make sure that no man will ever look at you. Catherine gasped at the clarity of the vision in her head, of him dragging her from the car. Oh Stan, what have you done this time?

The speed with which her gurney moved down the long hospital corridor blurred the holes in the acoustical ceiling tiles and made her dizzy. The rapid pace was evident by the sound of scuffling feet echoing as she was whisked along.

Her head lolled to the side, and she vaguely noticed someone holding an IV bag. Was the infusing liquid traveling down the tube going to save her? She could only ask the one who knew. Dear God, am I going to die? I feel like it. Please save me, I'm only thirty.

The movement ceased and the prodding and poking began. Her clothing, quickly stripped away, left her body exposed and prickled with goose bumps. Was it her unshed tears that clouded her vision? She wondered.

She tried, to no avail, to stop the painful chattering of her teeth. Finally, a nurse covered her with a warmed blanket. The chill passed, but now her temples pounded in rhythm to the fearful beat of her heart. She silently prayed. Lord, please let me be okay. I'm so scared.

The chorus of shouted directions in the examining room eventually melded into one loud voice, but none of it made sense anyhow. Her eyelashes fluttered as she fought to stay conscious, but the din grew muffled as darkness beckoned to her. The last thing she heard was someone yelling, "Quick, get the code cart!"

* * * *

"Mrs. McGuire?" A deep yet soft, resonating voice called out to her. "Can you hear me? If you can, please squeeze my finger."

Catherine mustered her strength and squeezed, and almost immediately, unspoken questions flooded her mind. I can hear you ... but where am I? What happened?

She struggled to open her eyes only to find she could not see. Something covered her face, and when she raised a hand to investigate, a piercing pain stabbed at her side. A warm hand enveloped hers and lowered it to the bed.

"Now, now, don't touch." The voice was strange, but friendly. "I'm Dr. Jones, your attending physician. You're ... you're badly injured. You've been severely beaten, and your face took the brunt of it. You can't see because we've bandaged your eyes, and it's best if you don't disturb the dressings."

She shifted her position slightly and moaned.

"There's going to be pain, so we've connected you to a morphine pump. Whenever you need an infusion, all you need do is press this button, and the medication will pass directly into your IV."

He placed the control in her hand.

Catherine tried to speak but her words came in an inaudible whisper. "Thank you."

Dr. Jones gently patted her arm. "Your larynx was injured, so speaking is going to be difficult for a while. I'd prefer if you don't try right now-give your body time to heal."

"Eyes?" she questioned softly, disobeying his order because she had to know. The possibility of going blind scared her to death. Her throat constricted waiting for his answer.

"Your eyes are quite swollen, and I'm concerned about possible vision loss, but I've added some medicated drops, and we'll have an ophthalmologist check them out thoroughly."

She had a million questions but couldn't ask them. Swollen eyes ... cannot talk. Am I going to be blind? What day is it?

A sense of frustration welled inside her then subsided in a haze of drowsiness.