

*I remember thinking when I first heard her tell the story, as the events continued to unfold, that something that horrible should never happen to a girl as wonderful as her. But life somehow has a tendency to turn on those who love it the most and she was one who truly did with all her heart. This was, of course, despite the fact that she'd forfeit hers to give her father happiness. She left me shortly after explaining her recent past to work another of the gas station's grueling graveyard shifts. I watched her push through the doors and work her way through a growing line of customers to grab her position behind the counter. Never in my life could I recall a time where I felt so much sorrow for someone and still so helpless as well. Though she seemed so strong to only choke back tears once during the hour and a half she spent explaining the events to me, I knew she was feeling broken inside and prayed for her to have peace in this moment where she could only feel distress, fear, and numbness. From behind the register, she looked up to see me still watching her, nodded in my direction, faked a smile to show that she would be all right, and returned to her customers. Her words were echoing in my mind as I threw the car in reverse and left her there for the night. "He's a wonderful man," I could hear. "He's the sweetest father, the...the kindest doctor. They're going to make him look like a monster. He's a wonderful man!"*

Jill rolled in her bed as the dream continued to take her in. In her hand she held a single red rose from her father as she waited to receive her degree, a bachelor's from the College of Pharmacy from Ferris State University, a medium-sized school in Big Rapids, Michigan. The colors of the ceremony were as vibrant as they could only be in dreams. Her gown rippled as if it were liquid, as did the wave that her peers and her made as they arced across the stage in a big C. The audience was littered with smiles as the names of future optometrists, doctors, and pharmacists were sent into the air by the president of the university. Parents wept and laughed at the same time as Jill slowly stepped to the center to receive her handshake and diploma. A background hymn could be heard, but Jill recognized it as Moby's "First Cool Hive" and not the worn Pomp and Circumstance. The line continued to thin, gowns advanced to reach the crest of the wave, and before Jill knew it, she was next in line. She threw a quick nervous glance to her mother and father and they swelled with pride. As she hit the apex, entered the spotlight, and glimmered all the more, the president reached out to shake her hand. Jill put her hand out to join his and nudged her left hand forward to grasp the diploma from the dean of the College of Pharmacy. She looked up into the president's eyes and saw him take realization to whom she was. His face hardened and he withdrew his hand. With her hand still out, Jill looked to the dean for help.

"I'm sorry, Ms. Williams," the dean said. "It seems we cannot allow you this degree."

"Can't...why?" Jill questioned.

"Because of your father. Please step forward, we'll discuss this after the ceremony."

"My father?" Jill could only respond. "My father is a good doctor."

"I'm sorry, Ms. Williams," he replied as if to say 'I'm sorry you believe that' rather than 'I'm sorry your last four years were wasted.'

Jill spun to the audience which had begun to snicker at her. "He's a good man, a great man and a great doctor. You don't understand. You just...you don't understand."

You only hear what they want you to hear.” The crowd erupted with laughter and Jill lost her parents’ faces in their cheering. She could feel her face growing red and her eyes welling up.

Jill bolted upright in her bed and felt the fragments of the dream linger still. She wiped her eyes, threw a glance to the clock that read 5:40, and slowly lay back to attempt to wash those images from her mind. Seconds after her head nested in the pillow, the phone rang. Jill got up and left her room in the Kappa Psi co-ed Pharmacy fraternity house to walk down the hall. She could hear the telltale signs of sleep that her brothers were emitting as she approached the phone room. Jill prayed silently that it wasn’t her mother with more bad news. It was the third time this week that Jill had woken up in the night to flee nightmares. She yawned as she reached for the phone.

“Is Jill there?” a hysterical voice pronounced on the other end of the line.

“Mom?”

“Jill, baby, it’s your father. They arrested him an hour ago.”

“Mom? Ma, what are you talking about?”

“Honey, they had a warrant for his arrest. He called me from jail. They took him right out of the basement he was living in. They won’t let him out.”

“Why? Why was he arrested?”

“Misconduct? Mispractice? I don’t know. He’s being sued by the State of Michigan. They won’t even talk to him.”

Well, c-can’t you get him out, Mom? I mean...jail. God. Mom you have to get him out.”

“I can’t, honey. I can’t do anything. I just wanted to let you know before you heard it on the news. Don’t you worry, though. I’m sure it’ll come out all right.”

“All right, Mom? How, all right? How is it all right for Dad to be in jail?”

“Don’t come apart on me, Jill. We need this family to be strong. If we don’t then they win, Jill. If we don’t then *he* wins.”

“Ray’s behind this?”

“Of course he is, honey.”

“Why can’t he just leave us alone? Why can’t he leave Dad alone?”

“I wish I knew, Jill,” Jill heard her mom sniffle on the other end of the line and though her folks’ relationship was on the rocks, she knew her mom still loved him. “I’ve got to get to work at six, honey, so I better let you go. Be strong, Jill. I love you.”

“I love you, Mom,” Jill answered, throbbing with pain. Jill heard the connection drop and she hung up the receiver.

“Why can’t he leave us alone?” she asked to the silent house. Jill followed the hall back to her room, lay down in a ball on her bed, despite the summer’s heat, to hide her tears from the morning.

...and in Gaylord today, a local doctor was arrested for criminal sexual misconduct with one of his patients to await a trial for these charges. The state of Michigan is suing him on charges of rape. Names have not yet been released, but we will fill you in on the details as they emerge.

*Such a shame about Dr. Williams. I remember once Tom had fallen in the back and hurt his back. We went to see Dr. Williams because he’d been our family*

*practitioner for the last decade and he was aware of our financial status. The doctor took a look at Tom immediately even though he was reasonably busy. He discovered that Tom had just strained a muscle in his back and prescribed him some painkillers. He also relaxed Tom by saying that though his back would be stiff for a couple of days, he'd be up on the ladder to finish painting the house before he knew it. The best part was that Dr. Williams didn't charge us for the visit and gave us the least expensive medicine possible. He really cared about us. We never felt worried to see him for routine check-ups or problems because we knew we were in good hands. He knew his stuff, he charged less than the other doctors in town, and he treated us like we were family.*

*The other day, Tom went to get his yearly physical to our new doctor. It's been about 8 or 9 months since they closed down his office and we just recently got a temporary doctor, thinking that Dr. Williams would be back in operation before a year. Anyway, Tom came home that day very upset. It seemed the new young man who he had gone to for the check-up treated him poorly. Tom's never been good at showing his feelings but you could tell he missed Dr. Williams a bundle. And when I saw the bill we received for a standard physical, we both began to miss him more. No bloodwork, no prescriptions, no tests. Just a couple questions and a couple vital sign checks and the new boy billed us twice what Dr. Williams charges for the works. I don't know if all this stuff they're saying about him is true, him violating a lady and all, but I can't believe the sweet gentleman that cared for us all these years would do something like that. The girls and I think it's a shame what they're doing to him and his reputation as a doctor. I wonder how he and his family are taking it. It must be a strain.*