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Mrs. Swenson

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### Gut feelings

Skipping along the sidewalk on State Street, the smell of fried food hits me like a truck. The late October air bites my arms, leaving goosebumps in its wake. With my brother at my side, I feel invincible amongst the chaos that is Fourth Friday. We trot down College Avenue in pursuit of our friends who hung out around the candy shop that is no longer there. Soon, we bump into a young man, face splashed with acne and greasy black hair stuck to his sweaty forehead. He appeared absolutely miserable, his red shirt advertised a local dojo. This was probably a promotional event. “Do you want to fight the ninjas?” He croaks, clearly sounding bored with his minimum wage job.

This appeared like the challenge of a lifetime. I always wanted to learn martial arts. The thought of flying through the air ready to attack was appealing to me. I eagerly look up at Jacob, hope swimming in my eyes. He sighed and mumbles “Let's go ask mom.”

We hurriedly dash across the street to the neighboring antique store. I spot my mother, turning over a small, red vase, presumably one she would use to put Xenias in. “Mom! Mom! Mom!” I screech, not paying any mind to the other customers trying to shop. She jumps a bit, barely catching the vase in her hands.

“Yes baby, what is it?” My mother states as she adjusts herself.

Jacob answers for me, responding with “There’s this lame guy across the street who wants to teach us about martial arts or something. Emma really wants to go and it's free.” With the unbeatable price, my mom nods her head, signaling that it's alright to go.

I rush out the door, excitement swirling around in my stomach. This is the anticipation butterflies wish they could create. My toes reach the curb on the sidewalk. They curl around it as I lurch my body forward to check for oncoming traffic. Jacob notices me struggling to see over the hoards of pedestrians, he assures me that it is safe to cross. Something claws at my stomach, urging me to check one more time. *The ninjas can only fight for so long* I think, so I decided to cross.

I’m suddenly overwhelmed with the feeling of air being rolled out of my lungs. My body is like a ragdoll as I hit the ground with a thud. The taste of iron floods my mouth as my tooth goes through my lip on impact. The world around me is fuzzy, a flurry of people surround me, but they all look like a water colored mess. I'm suddenly cradled into the familiar arms of my mother.

“Oh my god, my sweet baby! Are you okay? Someone call 911! Did you hit your head?” she inquires at a rapid fire pace. I begin to shake, although I wasn’t cold. I look down at my legs and see my left, perfectly clad in my green sweat pants. My right leg however, is mangled and twists in all different angles.

I answer my startled mother with a question, “Will our insurance cover this?” I croak, straining to open my mouth since blood had dried it shut.

My mother works for Nationwide and I felt that that was the only reasonable question to ask at that time. She laughs through her tears, “Of course, sweetie.” Her attention is slowly taken

off from me and onto the blaring ambulance that pulls up to my right. A large man gets out of the back. He has a black 5 o'clock shadow peppered with grey and thinning white hair.

He approaches my shambling body. "Are you alright? Did you hit your head?"

*Not this again*, I think. "No I didn't hit my head, please stop asking that!" I sass him, the stress of the situation finally catching up to me.

"My right leg just really hurts." I admit.

The man looks down at my leg and his eyes grow to saucers. He clicks a small red button on his walkie talkie and requests something I could not pronounce. I made a mental note to investigate the word later. Another man gets out of the ambulance, appearing much younger and inexperienced than his superior. He's carrying what appears to be garden shears. He crouches down to my height and lines the shears up to my right leg and opens them to begin cutting.

"STOP! DON'T CUT OFF MY LEG!" I scream.

The poor boy jumps backwards, nearly knocking the older man down. He brushes himself off and calmly says "I'm not going to cut your leg off sweetie. I just need to cut your sweatpants to see what your leg looks like."

This seemed just as bad. "These are my *favorite* sweatpants, you don't understand! I got these from Justice," I say as I attempt to bargain with him.

My mom hurriedly steps in and explains to me that she will buy me another pair after I go to the hospital. The pain of my right leg makes the quick decision for me. "Fine," I mutter, letting the paramedics know that I was not happy.

After a pair of comfy sweats were destroyed and a young, female paramedic fainted, it was safe to say I wasn't going to be able to walk for a while. The ride in the ambulance is nearly

unbearable. With each little bump, my right leg reminded me what true pain really was. Upon arriving to the hospital, I was given an x-ray. This ended with me screaming in pain as the radiologist tried to adjust my leg properly. My poor mother watched in horror as I called the radiologist every mean name my nine year-old self knew under the sun.

The worst part of this experience was waiting. Sitting in the hospital for hours, I dose in and out of consciousness. The smell of antiseptic and sound of heart monitors lulled me to sleep. Finally, around 3am, I wake up to the words “Tibia shattered” and “Fibula broken in half”. *What the heck are those?* I wonder.

The doctor was very sweet, his warm smile and happy demeanor relaxed me. He slowly slipped on a feather thin sock material that ran from my foot all the way up to my mid-thigh. He then wrapped layer upon layer of cotton webbing over my leg until it looked like a giant cotton ball. The doctor pulled away to admire his handy work. His blue eyes met mine and he asked “What color gauze do you wan-” “Green!” I exclaim as I cut him off.

He chuckles and wraps a dark green plastic material all over the cotton. Once it hardens I am wheeled out of the hospital, happy to go home and rest.

I lost two things that night: a pair of comfy sweatpants and the ability to walk for four months. However, this incident serves as a reminder to myself: *always trust your guts*. When that little voice in the back of your head urges you to do something, listen. It just might save your life and your sweatpants.