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### The Stabbing: An Unexpected Journey

The hardest part about telling the story in which I accidentally stabbed myself in the abdomen is explaining I was totally sober and sane at the time it occurred. I mostly chalk it up to a lack of attentiveness due to the common syndrome that causes adolescent boys to feel invincible. It does however still puzzle even me exactly how it all went down, but I'll do my best to explain as much as I can.

This is a story that begins on a summer day in Waterloo that was the perfect temperature; warm enough to incite the desire for a swim, but by no means sweltering. Being middle school kids, my friends Dan, Austin, and I decided to spend our day at Sunnyside Country Club's pool since Dan was a member there. We never did make it to the pool. Before heading to the club we had to stop at Dan's both to grab lunch and allow Dan to get into his trunks. While waiting for him to change I eyed his new butterfly knife (the kind you see people in movies swinging about with rapid wrist movements). It was great fun to twirl around—making the blade appear and disappear with a simple flick and twist. As you may well imagine the sight of me wielding such a flashy tool of destruction struck fear in the hearts of my friends. Because of their fear I made the decision to hold the knife with the blade towards me in order to put their minds at ease. It was after making this switch that tragedy struck. While listening to my friends chat about not much at

all, I somehow managed to bump the door frame of Dan's closet, with the knife striking first, and my gut following. In doing so I ended up sticking myself with it. Instantly I lurched backwards, dropped the knife, and fell to the ground. Dan and Austin were mystified as to what the hell I had just done, and Dan asked: "Are you okay man?" I replied as I slowly stood back up: "Yeah, I think I'm fine. I just poked myself a little." It was then that I lifted my shirt to assess the damage. Directly under my belly button I found a hole about a thumb and a half wide, which hesitated for one long second, and then promptly began draining blood in flowing waves on pace with my heartbeat.

Immediately I rushed into action dashing into his bathroom and balling up toilet paper to act as a makeshift bandage. All of a sudden the immense pain brought with it an extreme bout of nausea, which caused me to vomit the less than perfectly chewed turkey sandwich I had scarfed down in the kitchen minutes earlier. I returned to Dan's room holding my single-ply dressing against the gaping hole I created. I told the two of them I thought the wound was worse than I had previously estimated. In reply to this observation of mine Dan said: "Ok, well Sunnyside has better First Aid anyway, so we'll still just walk there." I think the reason I did not object to his idea was the rapid loss of blood. At that point the "bandage" had leaked a little to which Dan addressed with the utmost concern: "Hey man you're bleeding on my fuckin' carpet."

We then set off on our journey to Sunnyside. My entire midsection was gripped by what felt like a very sickly cramp enveloping the sharp pain of the wound itself. As we walked my condition progressively worsened, so I decided to call my mom and have her pick me up. I believe my exact words upon her answering her phone went something like: "So I may or may not have stabbed myself in the abdomen, and it may or may not be pretty deep." Apparently my talent for understatement survived the injury intact.

As we trudged on toward the pool, Dan's mother was driving in the opposite direction on the road where we were walking and pulled over to see what we were up to. Dan turned to me and said: "Cover that shit up, I don't wanna get in trouble." I did and even exchanged niceties with her all the while hiding the wound under my shirt, and holding my pathetic ball of toilet paper over the damage. After she left us my power of vision left too. Everything got a fuzzy yellowish tint, and then went black. I remember holding my hand in front of my face and not seeing a damn thing (I later learned this was due to the rapid drop in blood pressure I was experiencing). I sat down quietly and patiently waited for my sight to return. When the world finally faded back into view, I called my mom again and told her she should probably hurry since my sight had just temporarily escaped me.

She arrived at the street corner where we had stopped walking, which was about half a mile from Dan's house, and I gently climbed into her black SUV. I explained what happened and she was more stupefied than anything. She really did not have much to say, which in hindsight I totally understand considering I would have had no idea what to say in her situation either. She works at the hospital so she had already made arrangements for my arrival. We walked into the Emergency Room and straight into the room they had waiting for me there. It was there I had the pleasure of explaining to the surgeon and the hospital security guard what I had done; all the while both of them gave me looks that implied suspicion and at the same time confusion. Technically the hospital is supposed to report all gunshot and stab wounds to the police, but my mother knew the security guard, and therefore was able to convince him I wasn't a hoodlum who had been injured in a gang fight. After that I was wheeled into the operating room and forfeited my consciousness; otherwise I would be able to provide more details about the surgery.

As I woke up the anesthesia wore off slightly before the drug they give you to paralyze you during the surgery, and I was fighting with every bit of effort I could summon to lift my arms. I must have looked ridiculous because the nurse saw what I was doing and rushed over to tell me to relax. After I was fully conscious once more I learned I had two smaller incisions to go with the one I made for myself; which the surgeons had used to gauge the depth of my wound and see what all I had stabbed through. As it turns out I went completely through all the muscle and fat, but luckily I stabbed at an angle which prevented the knife from puncturing my intestines (that would have made everything much worse). All in all, the knife went two full inches deep into my midsection. For the next several weeks I was held together with nine surgical staples, three for each incision. Apparently it is fairly normal for the staples to fall out during the healing process, but they failed to mention this fact to me. A couple weeks later in the shower one of the staples fell out and I was mortified. I told my mom, and she assured me I would be fine. My subconscious must not have felt that way however, and that night I dreamt they all popped off at once and I fell apart spilling my innards everywhere. Luckily this never translated into reality though, and the rest of the staples were removed on schedule without incident.

This experience made for a day that ended up far from boring. Nowadays it serves as a reminder of the vulnerability that comes with owning a human body, and how easy it is to forget about this as a teenage boy who feels invulnerable. The best things I have taken away from this accident of mine are the cool scars it left me with, and the crazy story it has made for. Many a person, strangers and friends alike, have been at least temporarily entertained by my anecdotal participation in how not to learn knife safety. At the end of the day, there is something to be taken away from every experience even if it is just some scar tissue and a funny memory. I have

also learned that it is not always best to look good; in fact the most important lessons often come from the instances in which we look foolish. In the end it is necessary to take everything into account, good and bad, and make the best of the whole mixed up, beautiful experience that is being human.