

Bailey Moss

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Dribbling Blood

It was the morning of Saturday, January 7, 2006. I came downstairs with my yellow “Parks & Recreation” youth basketball shirt on ready to brave the cold. I could smell a raspberry fruit braid from a fundraiser that my mom had bought, baking in the oven. It would be ready for me to eat after I returned home from the weekly basketball team I signed up to be a part of. My dad, Doug, was just about to drive me over to the junior high gym, because even though I was only in middle school, the junior high was where our scrimmage was held.

“I’m planning to just stay and watch you play today.” he said.

“No one else will be there, and I don’t really want you to stay either.” I made it sound like none of the other girl’s parents would be there, and that was not true. I was never the athletic kid or even remotely hand-eye coordinated. I was embarrassed to have him stay, which is why I talked my dad out of sitting for the length of practice. He dropped me off in the blustery cold and drove away. I ran up the stairs into the school, ready to warm-up.

The junior high gymnasium was so cool considering I was only in fifth grade. I could only imagine how awesome it would feel once I was old enough to play sports and go to school there. In all reality, it was a musty old gym with a dull basketball court. All I saw was a shiny floor where mature and empowering junior high athletes performed.

My friends and I talked for a bit before practice, then the coaches announced we would

be playing “tunnel tag” before our scrimmage. “Tunnel tag” is a game when players will tag one another, then they are supposed to stand still until another player crawls through their legs to “unfreeze” them.

My friends and I were running around, sliding under others’ legs, and laughing as usual. I was turned around laughing uncontrollably with my friend, Julie. I decided that I should probably face forward to know where I was going so I wouldn’t trip on anything, but it was too late. Jaclyn Fish, a sixth grader at the time, toppled directly on top of me, piercing her front tooth through the tender skin between my nose and upper lip. After our heads crashed into each other, tears immediately began streaming down her face because she had a bloody nose, so I stood up since I was in shock of what happened. I saw her blood on the basketball court. The room was spinning and my vision was blurry. Reaching my index finger out, I felt blood drip down my hand. My body was numb, but I sprinted to the nearest bathroom on the east side of the school.

“There’s a hole!” I screamed when I looked in the mirror. I got closer to the mirror and realized that there was just a thin layer of skin on the inside of my lip that had not been impaled. Clay, one of my best friend’s dad, rushed into the girls bathroom shortly after and was asking for my home phone number.

“Bailey ran into another girl at basketball practice and will need to be taken to the hospital.” he frantically explained to my mom. Clay was a bigger guy with lots of hair all over his body, broad shoulders, and up until that day I had always been kind of intimidated by him.

I grabbed some paper towels to clean up my mouth. Once my parents were contacted, I paced back and forth in the junior high entrance area with Clay. He was actually a really funny guy, so I’m not sure why I had been intimidated by him in the past. The paper towels were rough and did not feel gentle bunched up all together pressing against my open lip wound. I didn’t care

too much at that point, because it was getting the job done. Soaking up all the deep red, almost brown colored blood. I peaked into the gym to see my friends starting their scrimmages, and I made eye contact with a few of them. They looked worried about me, but as a matter of fact, I was quite excited. I had loved hospitals ever since first grade, and I had especially been wanting stitches or a cast at some point in the near future. I was hoping that I would get the opportunity to receive my first stitch soon. Within a few minutes, I saw the maroon minivan come to a halting stop in front of the doors, and my parents both hopped out and ran inside to grab me.

“Take the paper towels off and let me have a glimpse at it.” I did what my dad told me, but he didn’t look too pleased at what he saw. I thanked Clay for staying with me while I waited for my parents. I remember rushing into the car, my mom sitting in the backseat next to me. She kept telling me to tip my head back and to keep holding the paper towels between my mouth and nose. My dad dropped my mom and I off right next to the doors, so we would not have to walk as far.

The charge nurse at the desk told me that Doctor Darnold would be working with me that morning. Doctor Darnold was a family friend, because my sister, Maggie, was friends with his daughter. We did not have to wait long to get into a room at the hospital.

“Good morning, Bailey Moss! Didn’t expect to see you here today.” I told him that no one plans on going into the hospital to get stitches. He laughed at my witty remark. I thought I made a good point, and I was glad that he got to be apart of my interesting morning. Soon after, he cleaned my mouth up, numbed me, and began sewing up the laceration. Up until that point I had been excited to get stitches, but now that it was happening, I was nervous. My mouth was still numb from shock, so the numbing injection surprisingly did not hurt, but tickled more than anything.

“Ouch Ouch Ouch Ouch! Are you done yet?” I kept repeatedly saying to Doctor Darnold while he was putting twelve stitches through my soft flesh. I think I was psyching myself out, because my mouth was completely numb. I could feel pressure and tugging of the attached piece of thread though.

“Keep still, Bailey. You mustn’t be wiggling around and talking if you want to be stitched up.” I felt as though Doctor was shunning me, but it was for my own good. Five days was how long my stitches were to be in my lip until the open wound would supposedly be healed.

A lot happened in that five days, none of which included a picture being taken, which I still regret to this day. Once we pulled the minivan into the garage, I sprinted into the bathroom to check out my awesome stitches I had so badly wanted. They weren’t all I hyped them up to be in my imagination, but everything is an experience, right? As we ate the raspberry fruit braid Mom had prepared during the short amount of time I was gone, I bragged to Maggie that I got stitches. Maggie had plans to meet up with group members for a school project that weekend. They met at our house, and being the annoying little sister, of course my new stitches had to be the center of attention. After I had told my sister and her pals about my mishap, they continued to tickle me and tell cheesy jokes. They were trying to make me laugh so hard that I would stretch my upper lip skin and break the stitches out. I was biting my lips so hard, but it hurt even worse to hold the laughter in. Thankfully I heard from the living room, “Stop torturing her and let her be! Would you think before you do something dumb next time?” My dad was on my side that day, so I looked over at him and flashed him my pearly whites through the crooked numb smile as best I could.

The next day at church, an elderly woman asked if I got hurt from kissing a boy. I told

her “Nope, I have never kissed a boy before.” and continued to tell her what actually happened. During school, people were asking if I got in a fight! Everyone loved the story. The stitches and my becoming scar were making me stand out from the crowd which was exciting.

When Thursday morning rolled around, my dad took me into the doctor’s office. A very nice nurse told me, “You’re just going to feel a slight pull, but it shouldn’t hurt too bad.” *Too* bad? I was a little nervous after hearing that, but she was right! It actually felt like someone was lightly tickling me, like when I had gotten the lidocaine injection. This was a much nicer tickle than Maggie and her friends the previous weekend.

I skipped basketball practice the following Saturday to let my scar heal one more week. I returned to the yellow team strong as ever, although that was not very strong. The coaches were curious as to how I was doing. In sixth grade, I did not sign up to be apart of the “Parks & Recreation” youth basketball team. Every year when it’s January 7, I have a little personal anniversary and remember the happenings in 2006.

Over three years later, I was entering high school on my first day of freshman year. I was slightly nervous, but since Maggie was a senior, I knew a large portion of her graduating class which was reassuring. I had not seen Jaclyn Fish in a few years, and definitely had not talked to her since I stepped over her blood in that musty hardwood gymnasium court. I remember going to the bathroom on the first day in the high school and seeing her. I felt brave, so I asked her if she remembered running into me. She claimed she never ran into me. I showed her the visible scar and she continued to deny it. All I was asking for was a little closure, but by this time I was getting ticked off, since I had the scar to prove it. Frustrated with her, I eventually just went into the bathroom stall and let her be.

I’d like to think that she had been dizzy and busy with her bloody nose, and she does not

remember how exactly things happened. Maybe she was embarrassed or thought I was mad at her. There was no one to impress, and I loved my scar she had given me. Although Jaclyn claims that she did not give me the coolest scar, I know what actually happened that Saturday morning.