

Traumatic events

TEFLONRABBIT ARTICLE No.307

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Don't step off the brink without a safety net

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Aroma

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Rumness



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A couple of drinks too many and the next thing you know, life has changed forever and you can't get a do-over.

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During an otherwise uneventful evening, the author was conducting the normal patrol of the interior when his attention was attracted by the cloak room attendant:

Stewards! Stewards! I need a Steward down here right now Stewards! Stewards!

Hearing the unmistakable tone of urgency in her voice, the author quickly descended the stairs to the basement cloakroom two at a time. Upon turning the corner between the flights, his field of vision was fairly assaulted by the vision of smashed safety glass panes in the fire doors. Still descending the last few stairs he caught the eye of the cloakroom girl. She was visibly distressed and gesticulating toward the female toilets.

She's in there, quickly get her before she gets to the mirrors, she fell down the stairs.....

Without appraising much more of the situation, he darted into the powder room which served as an antechamber to the female toilets. Sure enough there was a somewhat disorientated woman holding her face and heading toward the secondary door into the toilets. The powder room was in fact lined all the way round with mirrors with which she could have surveyed the damage to her face. Obviously concussed she had not realised this and assumed that the only mirrors were above the sinks in the toilet. Catching sight of the blood pouring between her fingers as she held her face, he quickly stopped her by the shoulders, turned her around and explained that she needed to come upstairs.

No, no I need to get to a mirror, I just need to see my face.... I need to get t....

There is often a need to talk over the customers in such a role and this was certainly one of those occasions:

Not right now, we just need to give you some first aid, so come upstairs with me and we'll get this all sorted, come on now. No never mind the mirror, just come with me.

Guiding her by the shoulders, he walked her up the two flights of stairs and approaching the top, noticed that the manager was descending the first few steps on his way toward them. Due to the urgency of the situation the author had not at this time, seen her face properly. Guiding her by the shoulders necessitated walking behind her and as such obscured her face from vision. Due to the angle of perspective he did however see the managers face when he was exposed to a full frontal appraisal of her injuries. The manager was no newbie and had worked as a doorman in some quite hard core roles prior to his move into management. Nonetheless the look on his quickly greying face was one of unbridled horror. Taking her other arm he assisted with walking her up the last few steps, through the office door and up the final set of stairs to the management office.

Once in the office, both the manager and the author worked their way through every dressing in the substantial first aid kit in an attempt to stem the flow of blood pouring from her face. This event occurred only a couple of years into the authors career in security. The most serious injuries that he had encountered amounted to black eyes, bloody noses and the occasional gaps in dental integrity. This did not prepare him for the highly challenging countenance of someone who, for all intents and purposes, looked as if she had gone through both windscreens in a head on car collision. As he replaced yet another blood soaked dressing he attempted to counsel himself through what he was seeing. Thoughts of micro stitches and the advancing sophistication of plastic surgery flashed through his mind. Then he removed the soaked dressing to replace it again and

noticed that an entire section of her nose was missing. Her left nostril simply wasn't there any more and was presumably still stuck to the wire mesh in the safety glass downstairs.

It transpired that this unfortunate girl in her early 20's had fallen down the first flight of stairs, got up dusted herself down, took one step off the next flight and did the exact same thing again. At the bottom of the second flight were the fire doors which she hit face first without otherwise breaking her fall. The nature of safety glass is such that it will not shatter and generally does not receive sufficient force to break the wire mesh. This time it had broken and she had pulled herself backwards through the glass and mesh in order to free herself. The damage done during this self extraction is undoubtedly what caused the vast amount of the cuts, lacerations, incisions and punctures to her face.

Stifling the increasingly uncomfortable knot in his stomach, the author was suddenly focused on the mental state of the girl who was rapidly descending into a hysterical shock condition.

Just let me see my face - I need to see it, get me a mirror - I need to see how bad it is. I just need



At this point the author recalled an episode of the popular British medical soap 'Casualty' where the male nurse, a Mr Charlie Hungerford, had the need to calm down a hysterical patient who was in danger of going into a similar state of hysterical shock. Shock is and continues to be a potential killer. The compensating mechanism of women is considerably lower than that of men and there have been numerous cases where serious shock can cause the internal organs to shut down and death occurs shortly thereafter. Fortunately the script writers of 'Casualty' are privy to real world advice from A&E staff. In the scene Charlie Hungerford takes the womans hand and after introducing himself assures her that he isn't going anywhere and to squeeze his hand if she feels scared at any point. The author replicated this to the letter.

What's your name dear? - OK my name is (name redacted) and I'm not going anywhere until you're safe. If you get scared just squeeze my hand...

Somewhat reluctantly she allowed her hand to be taken as the changing of the dressings continued. By this time she must have lost over a pint of blood and the blood soaked dressings literally covered the floor of the office. The expertise of Charlie Hungerford worked like a charm. She stopped hyperventilating and calmed down to a more tranquil state of occasional sobbing. She felt more safe and as a result stopped trying to break free to reach a mirror. There were no wall mounted mirrors in the office and if there was a hand mirror in the desk drawers the chances are that it would have had an incriminating amount of cocaine residue on it.

Some minutes later the paramedics arrived and this announced the end of the authors first responder duties. He attempted to let go of the girls hand while explaining that the ambulance was here now and they were going to look after her. With what felt like a superhuman grip she clamped her hand around his and screamed;

"NO!! DON'T LEAVE ME - PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME!!"

This was perhaps the most traumatic part of the experience for the author. He had been living with his girlfriend for a year or so and had become somewhat more experienced in the many complex emotional states of women. Unfortunately for the girl, the money making requirements of the premises do not suddenly stop when an emergency occurs. As such there was still a requirement for him to be conducting his duties. The interior still needed securing, intoxicated revelers still needed supervision and their ingress and egress still needed enforcing. Every minute that security staff are not watching everything is another minute which can lead to more emergencies.

I'm really sorry (name redacted) I've got to go back to work now. Look you're going to be OK, the paramedics will look after you until you get to hospital and then they'll fix you up.

The last part of this statement was a blatant lie. She certainly wasn't going to get 'fixed up' because there is no way for micro surgery to replace missing cartilage. Whatever was going to happen would not result in her getting her face back to the way it was before her chaotic descent into the basement. She slowly released her grip and allowed the author to let go. Turning to see the look on the paramedics face, the author saw yet another expression which fairly mirrored the one he had seen on the managers face fifteen minutes prior. This was the last time he ever saw her and her fate was something that he just had to consider somebody else's responsibility. This was really quite challenging and recalling the experience would be traumatic

for the rest of his life.

In the subsequent months, the girls family brought a legal case against the premises by way of a claim for compensation. Despite the undoubtedly professional care she had received, a claim based on inadequate handrail provision was made against the club. This included a daytime visit to the premises with a Health and Safety officer (who just so happened to be her father) for the purposes of acquiring photographs of the stairway and corresponding lighting. On this occasion the manager was working and was able to appraise her recovery. As it happened the claim was unfounded. The handrail provision was well within the law and the entire thing was written off as occurring due to her intoxication and carelessness. During the to and fro of the legal wrangling, the manager was of the opinion that she should be given the money due to the fact that her face was completely ruined - for life.

The owner is fighting the claim because he says it was her own fault. We pay insurance premiums monthly just in case something like this happens, the settlement won't come out of the takings. I say she should get the money because I've seen her face and it is totally ... and I mean TOTALLY fucked.

The owner was less empathy orientated and fought the case every step of the way. It's possible that he was aware of certain factors that neither the author nor the manager were exposed to. Suffice to say she didn't get a penny. the glass was replaced prior to opening the next night. The cloakroom girl was a bit shaken up, as was the author, But with successive nights spent fielding other unrelated emergencies, the memory faded and life went on.

It's not known what happened to the girl with the lost face. In a knife culture like Glasgow, having any facial scarring is possibly worse than a death sentence. The legacy of the razor gangs means that if your face is scarred you will not get served in bars or potentially even the supermarket, you will not be allowed into nightclubs and you will find that people in the street look away to avoid perceiving your injuries. For a man this is bad enough but for a young woman with her entire adult life ahead of her, this is potentially the worst possible thing that could ever have happened. Hopefully she didn't kill herself but if she has, the author would not be surprised.