

The Nightmare Bill

*Healing that takes place **after** treatment*

During the summer of '23 I attended many raves across different states with my long-term partner. I found the experience to be a complete thrill! I got to do so many fun things such as dancing, listening to new music and meeting new faces. I did all of this while traveling and I loved every second of it.

In mid-August I attended a rave that was happening in Iowa. I remember the room was dark, and a variety of different colored lights were flashing everywhere, and I *clearly* remember the room smelling of smoke and sweat. Everyone was dancing and/or jumping around nearby. The entire party was completely alive, and everyone was enjoying themselves. It's amazing how quickly things can turn left. I had started shaking my head along with the music when suddenly, a girl nearby while jumping and dancing, struck me in the head. She had hit me hard enough near the top of my forehead. It had created a gash almost the length of my pinky and purple bruising was quickly starting to form around it. I remember being shocked. I don't even remember feeling pain at the time it happened because I was so surprised. everything was happening way too fast and I was trying to process what was going on given the circumstances I was in. Here is what I remember. The girl had immediately started apologizing "OMG I'm so sorry *jesus christ* I think you're bleeding" I recognized the girl from other parties as well as the fact that we attended the same university together. However, I am afraid of confrontation and didn't want to make the situation a much bigger deal. I had covered up where the damage had taken place and had replied "No worries it's okay it's completely fine." It was not completely fine. The look of horror on my partner's face told me that this was no simple cut. I was escorted out of the party and driven to the emergency room

by my partner. We waited over an hour to be seen. During the time spent waiting I had been trying to control my breathing as the initial shock from the incident was starting to wear off and the sharp pain coming from my forehead was starting to be felt. I tried distracting myself by scrolling through social media.

When I was finally able to be seen I was in the ER for a couple of hours because I ended up having to receive stitches. The physician was really kind. They were patient with me as I explained to them what events had led to the incident. We were able to make jokes about what had occurred and they sent me on my way that same night

I had eventually returned home with my partner and at that point I was completely fine. I had thought that was the end of the situation. A nightmarish night comes to a perfect conclusion wrapped up perfectly with a bow and a couple stitches and medicine that would ease the pain.

What I had not realized was that a week or so later the hospital would be sending out a bill that was over \$1,800. My insurance had not covered the entire procedure and I was expected to pay the rest. I remember reading the letter and my entire body went into a state of both panic and fear. I have so many responsibilities in my life that are huge stressors already. I'm in college far from home and I receive no financial support from my family at all. I already am working multiple jobs and living paycheck to paycheck. After this incident I have been spending quite a bit of time alone trying things to help me stay relaxed. Right now I would like to say that I am dealing with the fear and worry that comes with medical debt. Some days it's hard for me to not start crying because it all just feels so overwhelming.

I had posted on my Instagram story and reached out to my friends and family for guidance about what to do. I'm a broke college student. I don't have over 1,000 dollars to just give out. Unfortunately I had soon learned that most of the people in my life had never gone through something like this. The most popular response to this situation was "Can't you just ask your

parents for the money?” Or “Did your insurance not cover that?” For awhile I felt completely drained.

I had eventually found two people who reached out to me and offered up guidance about potentially calling the hospital, getting an itemized bill, seeing if there was any way to get the price down, and even potentially getting on a payment plan. I spent 30 minutes on a phone call with a woman who handles the billing and requested the itemized bill. She was helpful when it came to getting the itemized bill and discussing options of payment.

I am still working on a solution to pay this hospital bill. I find it hard to bring it up and talk about it in my daily life. Sometimes when I begin to talk about it I become tense and my heart rate starts to increase rapidly. To me it's hard to be happy and move on from what happened when I have the cost of what happened looming over me.