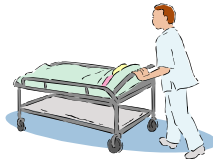


WHO AM I?

by
Hal Ames



When I woke up I was confused. Everything was different. I did not even remember going to sleep. As I looked around the room nothing looked familiar. The room had dark curtains that were covering the windows. Only a gleam of light came through a small tear in the material. There was just enough light filtering through the drapes to see that I was in a very small room. There was the bed I was laying on, a small desk with a chair across the room and a door.

I got up and walked to the door. It was locked. I looked for a light switch, but I couldn't find one. I searched the desk, but it was empty and there wasn't anything on top of it.

I sat down on the bed and tried to recall how I had gotten here. What was I doing before I fell asleep? Everything was confusing. I vaguely remembered going out with some friends to dinner. I couldn't recollect what day it was. I was so frustrated trying to figure out my circumstances.

Just then there was a noise at the door. There was a key being inserted into the lock from the outside. Then the light went on. It was so bright that for a moment I was blinded. When my eyes adjusted to the bright light there were two big men in white jackets entering the room.

"Time for your shower Ms. Jones," the first man said to me.

"Huh? Shower, what do you mean?" I asked very confused at what was happening.

I sat down on the floor refusing to go.

“It’s time for you to go to the shower and get ready for your meeting with Dr. Andrews. He is waiting for you,” the first man responded as they each took one of my arms and lifted me off of the floor.

“Why did you call me Ms. Jones? That isn’t my name,” I asked the men as they were carrying me out of the room.

“Let me down, I can walk on my own. Why are you hurting me?” I started to yell at them.

I was kicking and wiggling, but they were too big and strong. They dropped me down outside of a different room, handed me some clothes and a towel, and they told me to get ready.

I turned to yell at them, but they slammed the door shut.

I studied the room. There were two sinks, two toilets and two shower stalls. I thought that it was strange that there wasn’t a mirror. I looked inside the first shower stall and saw a bottle of shampoo and some soap. I went back to the door to make sure it was closed. I wanted to lock the door, but there wasn’t a button to lock the door.

I got undressed and took a hot shower. It felt so good to be clean. I was still confused about where I was and what was happening to me. Why had they called me Ms. Jones? Then I realized, I did not remember my name. Was I really Ms. Jones?

After I got dressed in the sweatpants and sweatshirt they had given me, I knocked on the door. The men opened the door, and they escorted me down the hall to an office. The door said, “Dr. Andrews” and under it said “Psychology”. Why was I going to a psychologist?

I walked into the office. There was a pleasant looking man with black glasses and dark hair. He was smoking a cigarette and reading a chart. He did not notice me right away.

After a few moments, the doctor looked up from his papers and said, “Ah, I’m sorry. I was just reading. Come in and sit down Ms. Jones.”

I sat down and just stared at him while he continued to read.

“Quite an impressive file you have here Ms. Jones. I haven’t read anything this interesting for quite some time,” Dr. Andrews informed me.

“So what exactly does the file say?” I asked.

“Sorry, that’s confidential,” as he placed the folder face down on the desk. “So how’d you sleep last night?” The doctor changed the subject.

“I don’t really know sir. I woke up in a strange bed in a strange place. Then two big thugs carried me to the bath. I haven’t even eaten breakfast yet. By the way what is the time? And what day is this?” I asked.

The doctor responded, “We’ll get to that soon enough Ms. Jones....”

“Why do you call me Ms. Jones?” I interrupted.

“When you came here you couldn’t tell us your name, so we gave you the name Ms. Jones. Do you remember your name now?” Dr. Andrews asked.

“Uh, I’m not sure. I don’t remember much, just something about going out with my friends for dinner last night, or so I think,” I tried to give an explanation.

“Ms. Jones, you have been here for five months. Every morning it is the same. You wake up in a strange place and you don’t know your name. Last night you were here. You had dinner in the dining hall. Do you remember that?” Dr. Andrews informed me.

“I was here? Are you sure? I remember going to Alfie’s Pizzeria with my friends last night. Why are you telling me I was here?” I asked. I was very confused.

Ms. Jones, every day we hear the same story. You have had a serious brain injury from a car accident. We aren’t sure just what the problem is, but we go through the same thing every day. You come here confused and lost. We tell you your whole story, and then you understand the circumstances. But the next day it is the same. Would you like to see a tape of the first day you were here?” He asked.

“I guess so,” was my reply.

I watched a video of myself. There was another doctor asking me questions. I was saying the same things. “Is that REALLY me?” I questioned the doctor. In the video I

had a bandage on my head and my arm was in a sling.

“Yep, that is you. I have just taken over your case. Dr. Hamilton, who you see on the tape, has taken another assignment.

“I have a question for you. I have been doing extensive research on memory dysfunction after severe trauma to the brain. I have been studying your case and I think I have a therapy that will help you remember who you are and restore your memory. Are you interested in doing this? It’s a bit radical, but If my theories are correct, we should be able to help you,” the doctor unfolded his ideas to me.

“What do you have to do?” I asked.

“It involves surgery. We need to reestablish contact between the two halves of your brain. It seems that some of the nerves that carry signals from one side of your brain to the other have become damaged. It has been a while since your accident, so I may not be able to reconstruct all of them. Our CAT scans of your brain have shown there has been remarkable healing on its own. We just need to help it along a little bit.” Dr. Andrews explained.

“When do you want to do this?” I asked.

“Today, if that is OK with you,” was his reply.

“What have I got to lose? I don’t like not knowing who I am,” I responded.

“Well, all surgery is dangerous. We could fail and leave you like a vegetable, but I’m confident that this will help you,” the doctor tried to reassure me.

I agreed to the surgery. I was taken to another room to prepare. I wasn’t given anything to eat or drink. The worst part was that I had to have my head shaved. I watched as my curly brown hair fell to the floor after being cut by the clippers.

I was placed on a gurney, and I was wheeled down a long corridor to the operating room. The doors burst open and inside was a team of doctors and nurses. They were in blue scrubs and had masks on their faces. I could still see the smiles on their faces under the masks. This helped to relax me a little.

The anesthesiologist put the oxygen mask over my face and told me to count. I

think I got to ten when I fell asleep.

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The room was spinning and I felt nauseous. Everything was blurry. I tried to talk, but a tube was in my mouth. I looked around the room. It was empty. I fell back asleep.

The next time I woke up there was someone leaning over me and looking at my face.

“Are you OK?” a voice asked.

I mumbled, “I think so. Can I have some water?”

I was given some water from a straw. The tube in my mouth was now gone. I had better vision now as I looked around the room. Everyone there was smiling at me. Suddenly I saw a familiar face. “David! Where am I?” I blurted out.

“She recognizes me! I can’t believe it, she recognizes me!” the man I had called David started to yell. He began to cry.

“Of course, why shouldn’t I recognize you, you’re my husband. What’s going on here?” I asked.

I was told I needed to rest for a while and then they would explain everything to me. I fell back asleep.

Later that day, when I woke up, friends and family surrounded me. I found out that I had been in a car accident on the way home from dinner at Alfie’s Pizzeria and I had sustained serious brain damage. I had been in the hospital for five months. Dr. Andrews had heard about my case and decided to try his new surgical method.

I remembered that my real name was Gina Harris

It took a couple of months to regain most of my memory. Strangely the memories of the five months in the hospital were gone, but I was going home to my family.

Thank you Dr. Andrews for helping me!



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VOCABULARY: (*Match the word its definition*)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. gleam _____ | a. ray, shine |
| 2. wiggle _____ | b. sift, clean |
| 3. therapy _____ | c. not working correctly |
| 4. sustain _____ | d. tube for drinking |
| 5. straw _____ | e. hold up, support |
| 6. filter _____ | f. healing, cure |
| 7. dysfunction _____ | g. know, remember |
| 8. surgery _____ | h. remember the past |
| 9. recognize _____ | i. an operation |
| 10. memories _____ | j. twist, shake |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. I was on a vacation with my family. | T / F |
| 2. My name is Ms. Jones. | T / F |
| 3. I had surgery to fix my brain. | T / F |
| 4. Dr. Rodriguez was a psychologist. | T / F |
| 5. My husband's name was Daniel. | T / F |
| 6. I lost my memory because of an accident. | T / F |
| 7. I took a bath after getting up. | T / F |
| 8. I went home to be with my family. | T / F |
| 9. I was in the hospital for twelve months. | T / F |
| 10. I had surgery on my stomach. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What is her husband's name? _____
 - a) Bill
 - b) Frank
 - c) David
 - d) Daniel

2. What caused her injury? _____
 - a) car accident
 - b) falling down the stairs
 - c) assault
 - d) big storm

3. Who was her original doctor? _____
 - a) Dr. Grumman
 - b) Dr. Hamilton
 - c) Dr. Andrews
 - d) Dr. Jones

4. Where was she for the past 5 months? _____
 - a) in school
 - b) at work
 - c) in my room
 - d) in a hospital

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What was the doctor's name that helped her?

2. What did she find in the shower?

3. Where was she eating dinner the night of my accident?

4. How many men carried her to the bathroom?

5. What happened to her that caused her memory loss?

6. What did the doctor have to do to fix her memory?

7. How long had she been in the hospital?

8. Who was in her room when she woke up with my memory?

9. How high did she count before falling asleep in surgery?

10. What kind of scan showed damage to her brain?
