

Three Period Game

That's not my son. My son isn't the kind of person to fall unconscious at a Rangers hockey game. No, that's not like him at all. Dylan's 28 and perfectly healthy, he shouldn't be collapsed on the floor. The way he's lying looks uncomfortable, facedown with his neck twisted up like that. His body is limp, fingers cold. He's not waking up, no matter how hard I slap him.

"Help! Someone help him!" His cheeks are pale, his lips almost blue. My heart pounds in my chest. No one's paying attention. My voice isn't loud enough to cut over the noise, the crowd cheerfully streaming around us on the concourse. Security's all distracted, focused on waving someone over. The foghorn blasts. A point scored for the Rangers.

A fresh-faced teenager arrives, pushing a wheelchair with a large red bag on it. He looks barely old enough to drive.

"Hi, my name's Chris, I'm a medic with the stadium. What's going on today?" he says, pausing at my son on the ground. "Ah, I see." He hoists the bag up off the chair and drops it on the floor, snapping gloves on.

This kid, a medic? No, that can't be. I have to call 911, he needs help. Dylan's too heavy to move on my own, his body hardly budging with me tugging his arm. Someone rolls him to his back. My hands are shaking, vision going black around the edges. His fingers are still cold, chest faintly rising with every breath.

"My son's not waking up, we were just—we were waiting in line for food when he fell over," I say. "He's been normal all day, he just came back from the restroom a few minutes ago." His arm's sliding out of my grip, clammy from my sweaty hands. "Call 911, we have to get him out of here!"

“Okay, ma’am. Just give me a second.” I’m not old enough to be called ma’am. My son’s not old enough to be dead on the floor. “Does your son have any medical history?”

Do I tell him about my son’s past drug use? No, he promised he wasn’t using anymore, always telling me he was good and not to worry. I even bought front-row tickets to celebrate three years clean. This had to be something else. The kid’s jabbing his fingers into Dylan’s neck, peeling his eyes open with his other hand. Absolutely no sense of urgency.

“What do you think you’re doing? He’s not waking up, we need to call an ambulance! Dylan!” I go to slap his face again, the kid holding up a hand to stop me. Stop me from touching my son? “We need to go!” I’m shouting now.

“Ma’am, we’re staying here so I can work on him. Do you want him to actually die?”

Of course I don’t want him to die, how dare he?

The kid looks unfazed, reaching for the mic on his shoulder. “Chris to command.” Someone answers, their voice fuzzy with static. The kid continues, “I have an unresponsive at 108, I need the stretcher.” He turns away to root around in that giant red bag of his, unzipping pockets and connecting tubing to something. The kid’s movements are slow and lackadaisical, my son not enough to make him hurry up. He grabs Dylan’s jaw, jamming something in his mouth.

“Stop it, stop! You’re hurting him!” My son, my only son, unresponsive on the floor with a teenager shoving plastic down his throat. I lunge towards the kid, who lurches away from me, equipment scattering.

He’s yelling, voice surprisingly strong. “Ma’am, back off–Security!”

Strong hands loop under my arms, pulling me away from Dylan. Fabric and flesh tear under my teeth, my legs kicking out. My son needs me. I need my son. I can’t see him anymore,

my vision filling with tears. More hands are on me, trying to hold me back. Someone's screaming. Multiple people are screaming. I think I'm one of them. Why isn't anyone listening to me? I—my son—why can't we leave? Why can't we go? I'm gasping for air, someone wrestling me to the ground. Metal clicks shut around my wrists.

A bright yellow stretcher rolls into sight, an inappropriately bright color for what Dylan's going through. There's too many people between me and him, I can't see what they're doing. I can't see him. The stretcher jolts. They must have loaded him onto it. They're taking him away? Away? They said they were staying. Where are they going?

“Dylan! Where are you taking him, you bastards—”

“--Ma'am, I need you to calm down--”

“--that's my son!” I shout. “Let me come with you, I need to go with him!”

The stretcher's quickly disappearing. Writhing on the ground isn't working. I can't see him. People walking by are staring at me.

“Ma'am, I'll have them escort you to the hospital, but you need to take some deep breaths for me,” someone says.

Multiple hands haul me upright, catching me when I collapse. I can't control my gasping, breath coming quicker the harder I try. My face is wet, cheek stinging from where I was slammed to the floor. I don't see Dylan. I hope—he must be already at the hospital, with doctors saving his life. Yes, he has to be alive and well. He's probably awake and laughing, his skin flushed and pink. The teenager's kneeling, packing the equipment back into the bag. I spit at him. “Why are you still here?!”

He levels his gaze at me. “Ma'am, I am a state-licensed EMS provider. I understand this was very stressful, but you do not interfere with my job.” He turns to address the men holding

me upright. “I don’t want her here, and she’s not riding in our truck. You guys can take her, but she’s not coming with us.”

A wail erupts from my lungs. The foghorn blasts. The Rangers score again.