

Play with me

by Steve Reiman

Lily, her half-sister Jordan, and I were on duty in the old Emergency Room of Fletcher Allen Health Care. A nurse who knew us well welcomed us and asked if we would help her with a patient. These are words I love to hear. Then she said “He is in X-ray right now and I’ll bring him over after we know the damage.” Soon thereafter, I could hear him coming.

The little fellow had lost the end of the fingers in a car door accident. The nurse was holding him up by his injured hand. He was screaming, kicking, hot, and sweaty. As she brought him around a corner, he saw my two German Shepherds looking straight at him. Lily had a small Frisbee in her mouth and Jordan was holding a tennis ball. Both were dressed in hospital scrubs, with stethoscopes, pagers, and FAHC photo ID badges identifying them as Dr. Lily and Dr. Jordan. As the boy saw them, he immediately stopped screaming and stared intently at the two dogs in costume.

Jordan placed her tennis ball at her feet and kicked it to the little boy. It was a trick she loved to do to get people to play with her. The boy watched the ball roll slowly to his feet and I dropped to my knees and asked “Will you play with my dog?”

The boy, taken completely by surprise by the unexpected visitors, slowly reached down and pushed the ball back to Jordan. The dog picked up the ball, chewed it a few times, put it on the floor again, and kicked it back to the boy. During their little game, the nurse and her assistant sewed up the boy’s injured fingers.

The nurse thanked me saying that she had no idea how she was going to stitch up the boy until we came along. This photo was taken later in the waiting room.



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