



DIANE PAYNE

THESE THINGS HAPPEN

In a heavily sedated state of endless morphine, I wake up confused in a hospital bed, unsure where I am and why my leg is sliced in half and propped up on a pile of pillows. It was supposed to be an arthroscopic surgery, but something went wrong, very wrong. I ended up with major reconstructive surgery, leg split in half, staples from top to bottom.

No sooner than I begin wallowing in self-pity, my roommate, an elderly woman with a boisterous voice, starts calling me Delores, though I assure her that is not my name. "You've always been a bad girl. Lies, lies, lies. That's all you speak. You told me you were going to let me stay at home!" She throws her plastic water bottle at me. My leg is so large there's no way she could possibly miss. The pain is excruciating. I scream. She laughs.

I've only been back in this world a few hellish moments and I want to return to the world of heavy sedation. My transition from the peaceful oblivion under anesthesia to this old woman is too abrupt. I'm not even sure if all this is simply a bad dream.

A nurse hears my piercing scream down the hallway and scolds me. "Why are you screaming? Use the call button. What is this water doing all over you?"

"Delores has always been a bad girl," my roommate insists, as I lie there in a puddle of ice water, lifting the ice cubes off my blanket.

"What happened to me? I thought there would only be three holes."

The nurse frowns before answering. "You'll have to ask the doctor. There wasn't anyone waiting for you after the surgery. Why did you come alone? Now you'll have to wait until he makes his rounds tomorrow."

"May I read my chart?"

"You may, but you won't understand it."

"She never understood anything," my roommate adds. "But she