

This is how she is

By K. Uwe Dunn

(Names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individual)

This is how she is.

This is not how she is.

I met her when she was unconscious.

Her eyes were half open and her breathing labored.

She was three hundred and fifty pounds.

She barely fit in the bed.

Her sides pressed up against the rails.

Her eyes were open but she wasn't looking.

She couldn't see.

She was snoring.

Why didn't they send her out?

Because she came this way.

This is how she came from the hospital?

When did she become unconscious?

The EMTs brought her this way.

It's not what the family was expecting.

The family was expecting their mother.

The family was expecting their mother to talk, to go to activities, to be rehabilitated.

The family came with smiles and gifts.

Why weren't they made aware?

Who knew what when?

When did she become unconscious?

When I met her, she was unconscious.

They told us to try to wake her up for supper.

Supper wasn't for two more hours.

She needed to be washed. She needed to be changed.

We washed her face. She didn't wake up.

We rolled her. She didn't wake up.

We changed her. She didn't wake up.

It was like she was in a coma.

Was she in a coma?

Is the doctor aware?

Yes, the doctor is aware.

How are her vitals?

Her vitals are fine.

I think they should send her out.

This is how she came.

There's something wrong.

This is not how she is.

This is how she is.

The family came.

Call 9-1-1 right now.

My mother is unresponsive.

Get the RN.

Where's the RN?

She's dealing with a resident who left AMA, against medical advice.

So, a resident who just up and left?

Yes.

That's an emergency.

This is an emergency, too.

This is more of an emergency.

Call 9-1-1. I want her sent out right now.

They called 9-1-1.

The EMTs came and took her out.

Presumably, they weren't the same EMTs who brought her only

A day or two before.

They weren't the ones who brought her here like this.

A box of her stuff.

A box of her stuff is at the desk.

It says, "Margorie Tims" on the side.

She died.

She died at the hospital.

Did we follow protocol?

Did we do all that we could?

I told my supervisor.

She told hers.

We did what we could.

I never talked to her.

I have no idea what she was like.

Three hundred and fifty pounds, eyes half open, labored breathing.

Marjorie, can you hear me?

Marjorie, it's time to eat.

Marjorie. Marjorie. Marjorie

It's no use.

She's not answering.

She's not responding.

She's not here.

But she is.

This is how she is.

K. Uwe Dunn is a certified nurse aide who lives in central Pennsylvania with his wife, Isabella. He has a bachelor's degree in English literature, a master's in painting, and is fluent in the German language. His work has been featured in *Kestrel: A Journal of Literature and Art* and is forthcoming in *The Tishman Review*, *The Petigru Review*, *HeartWood Literary Magazine*, and *Echo: A Journal of Creative Nonfiction*.