

*Amanda911*



to Donald Schreiber  
healer and rhymester

and to Amanda Carmona  
whose life is not an emergency

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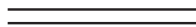
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# *Amanda911*

a novel by

**Mark Schreiber**



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## PART ONE

### *Down the Well*

#### 1

Falling down a well was both the best and worst thing that ever happened to my granddaughter. She was a Disney princess to me, but a comic sidekick to her classmates, who'd never been kissed by a boy—or I suppose by a girl—been asked to a dance, or chosen for any role in a school production that did not conceal her face.

Most people under twenty probably don't know what a well is. Haven't seen one. Probably think it's just something you say when you need to buy time, like *like*, or when someone asks you how you're feeling, although I guess these days everyone says *good* or *OK*, or nothing at all, opting for an emoji instead. Do kids even talk anymore, in the crowded loneliness of their bedrooms? Did Amanda even scream when she fell down the well? Or did she just send a screaming emoji?

So, when millions of kids all over the globe saw the headline, they shared via social media:

#### **Girl Plummets Down Well**

More than plenty had to Google *well* to comprehend its meaning.

I'm sure she got at least half a million hits just from image searches that returned a picture of an oil rig in the North Sea. *Geez*, her international peer group must have thought, or words or emojis to that effect. A girl has fallen thousands of feet smack into a tidal wave. I hope she's more Kate than Leonardo.

The headline came from a national reporter whose news organization knew how to hack the local 911 dispatcher. This because

they were in Iowa during campaign season and the media, the candidates, and even certain foreign governments were trying every trick in the book to gain an advantage.

911 Dispatcher: What's the address of your emergency?

Amanda (crying): Don't you have GPS?

911 Dispatcher: Please give me your address.

Amanda: I'm at the bottom of a fucking well! I don't think they have addresses in wells.

911 Dispatcher: Are you in a safe location?

Amanda: Helloooooooo! Bottom of a WELL.

911 Dispatcher: Do you have injuries?

Amanda: Do you think I could fall down a well and NOT have injuries? I'm not a cat.

911 Dispatcher: I'm sending help right away. What's your name, honey?

Amanda: Don't you have caller ID? Owwwwwww! I think both my ankles are broken! And I'm like in two feet of muddy water. And I just bought these shoes. It's a miracle my phone worked. It really is water resistant.

911 Dispatcher: Is that you Amanda Dizon? It's me, Emma Jackson.

Amanda: Who?

911 Dispatcher: I'm a friend of your mom's. I wanted to go to nursing school but couldn't afford the tuition. And a job opened here.

Amanda (frantically): I'm in a well on our farm. You know where that is? I can't believe you don't have GPS.

911 Dispatcher: Oh, we have GPS. But it's in the script to ask your address. Maybe it's a backup, or to calm you down.

Amanda: It did the opposite. It made me think I'd die here.

911 Dispatcher: Take some deep breaths, babe. Help is on the way. It sounds like you aren't seriously hurt or in danger. Try to think of something else.

Amanda (taking deep breaths): OK. Have you ever gotten any calls from murderers on the job?

911 Dispatcher: You know how many murders we have in Iowa, sweetheart? This isn't Chicago.

Amanda: So, what's the most exciting call you've gotten?

911 Dispatcher: This one!

Amanda: Really?

911 Dispatcher: How many people fall down wells? You think they fall down wells in Chicago? If you survive, you're gonna be famous!

\*

The first flashlight down the well was from the cell phone of the national reporter, who beat the fire department by three minutes.

Her photographer was still in the shower, so she took some quick pictures with her phone.

National Reporter: What's your PingPong name, kid?

Amanda: I can't believe these questions today! You're not here to rescue me?

National Reporter: Only from obscurity, babe. I'd record an interview but the acoustics are terrible.

Amanda: I've fallen down a well. I'm hurt and wet and scared. Don't you care?

National Reporter: Of course I care. But I don't have all day. The EMTs will be here any minute, not to mention my competition.

Amanda: My PingPong name is Amanda911. Because my life is an emergency. Get it? Joke's on me, I guess. Why do you want it?

National Reporter: I'm going to link it in my story so people can ask you questions.

Amanda: How long do you think I'm gonna be down here?

National Reporter: And so we can text if you're no longer able to use your voice.

Amanda: Why would I lose my voice?!

National Reporter: Damn. I hear sirens.

\*

Throughout modern history there have been numerous cases of children, usually babies, falling down wells, capturing media attention and raising the blood pressure of the nation in which they occurred.

But none has garnered as much attention over so brief a time as my granddaughter's.

Perhaps the most famous antecedent was the case of Baby Jessica, who fell down a backyard well in 1987, in the glacial age of television. It took over two days to rescue her, but to the nation it felt like two years.

From the time of the 911 call it took only 47 minutes for the fire department to rescue my granddaughter, but in the lightspeed internet age it might as well have been two years. By the time she reached the hospital she had two broken ankles and six million PingPong followers.

\*

The well was only twenty feet deep, but in the internet imagination it was two thousand. The fire crew had barely lowered a rope with a harness before GIFs were circulating showing a Disney princess clinging to a handsome prince lowered by helicopter above the raging North Sea.

Amanda had started the day with three followers. Now she had two million times that. Not to mention eight million likes for her four posts of her black cat, Luna, taken in the first fifteen minutes after she had created her account. And somewhere between tightening the harness herself around her boney shoulders and digging her bitten fingernails into the fireman's hand, she amassed \$23,000 in a MakeItRain account.

\*

How did this happen?

First, the reporter was a TV personality and bestselling author as well as the political correspondent for a major newspaper. By posting Amanda's story, with journalistic exaggeration of course, and by including her PingPong link, she created a minor sensation. But what made my granddaughter a major sensation were the presidential candidates, who lost no time reposting the tragedy and rescue on their own pages, exploiting the incident for their own Machiavellian ends.

At the hospital they tripped over each other to photobomb her fifteen minutes/seconds/nanoseconds? of fame.

Even the president couldn't resist, Photoshopping himself with Amanda from her knees up with the captions:

**American wells are safe!**

and

**Drill deeper!**

Meanwhile my granddaughter, her left ankle in a cast and her right ankle in a brace, lay in a hospital room that was private in name only.

The candidates were eagerly taking selfies with her, pushing aside her parents—my daughter and son-in-law.

Hey, that's my phone! one of the candidates said, reaching for Amanda's phone while she was busy scrolling through a galaxy of breathless questions.

Is this the new taking candy from babies? another candidate taunted, snapping a picture.

But I left my phone in the library three nights ago and it has a Mt. Rushmore case just like this one—

Snap snap snap. Now all the other candidates were documenting the controversy. Pundits would later claim this as the reason for a three percent drop in his poll numbers.

Amanda awoke from her scrolling trance.

Do you want your phone back? I found it under a table. The librarian said he's a libertarian and doesn't believe in 'Lost and Found.' He restored it to factory settings and said, 'Now you're a capitalist.' It saved my life today, I think. My other phone was a Huawei flip phone. Why didn't you activate Find My Phone? Can I keep it, pleeeeeease? I'll tell my parents to vote for you.

The candidate slunk away, while the others signed her cast and took pictures of what would, in half an hour, be the most famous ankles in the world, leading one Singaporean entrepreneur to create a virtual ankle cast app, where anyone could write a message for Amanda, to post and share.

This app led, as might have been foreseen, to a good deal of pornographic Amanda's Ankles posts, and by night's end Interpol cracked a pedophilia ring in Frankfurt that had debased my innocent granddaughter in ways I will not mention. Such are the vicissitudes of our Digital Age that a sixteen-year-old girl raised in a cornfield could be both the beneficiary of enough funds to buy a car and the victim of an international criminal enterprise in the space of twenty-four hours.

\*

Where are my shoes?

Indeed, by the time the candidates had all left and her parents were able to get in a group hug, Amanda noticed she was barefoot below the ankle cast and brace.

She shouted at a nurse who was too busy saving Amanda's life to

answer trivial questions, like, “Where are my shoes?”

She texted on her PingPong:

Thanks for all the thoughts and prayers and likes and follows! I’m really in shock. I’d love to read all your comments and questions but that would take a gazillion years! So, I’ll just reply to a few:

No, I don’t have a boyfriend.

Yes, I’m straight.

I’m 16. Stalkers beware!

It happened at 7:00 a.m. Before school.

My parents were already at school.

Their school, where they teach, duh.

How could I not be a virgin if I don’t have a boyfriend? Don’t answer that!

You think I jumped?

You tell me how to milk a cow.

No, I wasn’t with a boy.

No, I wasn’t lured.

I have no idea what petroleum tastes like. Do you?

I don’t know if I could see the stars from down there. I was too busy panicking.

I know I’m lucky. But I’m bummed about my shoes. Just bought them. Saved my allowance for a month.

Vans. Posting the model now.

Food coming. Yay! Gotta go.

## You guys want a pic of my tray? Really? You know it's hospital food?

\*

While Amanda eats the most Liked Salisbury steak in the world, let us catch our breath and catch up, because it's going to be a fast rollercoaster from here on out and I don't know when I'll have another chance to fill you in.

Amanda was born on a farmhouse that belonged to my father and then to me. But by the time I divorced my wife and exiled myself to Paris and Bangkok and Buenos Aires to write the Great American Novel, it was no longer a working farm.

Carole, Amanda's mother—my daughter—was a creature that has become almost as rare as the unicorns that graced Amanda's walls—a rural Midwestern hippie liberal. She got her degree in Education but dreamed of reclaiming our ancestral roots and becoming a farmer.

Instead of teaching her the Classics, I should have let her watch *Green Acres*, because she married her own Eddie Albert transplant from the Northeast, a Reagan Democrat with a Master of Economics, and they promptly went bankrupt farming soybeans and had to teach Reading and Social Studies to future baristas at the local elementary school.

I would have bailed them out, except I was teaching English myself at the time to future migrant caregivers in Playa del Sur, Nicaragua for five dollars a day.

The bank sold the land to a multinational corporation for pennies on the dollar, but under the terms of the bankruptcy agreement Amanda's parents got to keep the two-story farmhouse, the crumbling garage, and an acre plot out back, including a moribund well, that for reasons still not explained was never sealed, but that did, to my best recollection, have a hinged wooden cover.

\*

Meanwhile my ex, Carole's mother—Amanda's grandmother—out black-sheeped me by discovering that she was a lesbian and subsequently moving all the way to the next town to cohabituate with



a series of handbag-renouncing lovers.

Against this tapestry of unwoven threads Amanda entered the world. The name *Amanda* means *worthy of love*. And all of us probably could have loved her better and accepted her for the ordinary child she was. For most of her childhood she wished she could disappear into another world, like Alice down the rabbit hole, or like the heroine in her favorite story, *Coraline*, through a magical door in her house.

\*

Her parents believed that LED screens were the new tobacco, and when a tablet her grandmother had given her one year for Christmas broke after falling off the kitchen table during a heated argument over who ate the last Krispy Kreme, Amanda was left with only a Huawei flip phone to connect with the world at large.

Which was why she was at the library that night when she found the candidate's iPhone. She went almost every evening to use the computers and printer to do her homework.

\*

Statisticians claim some of us have to be average, there's just no way to work around that. To say that Amanda was average is probably padding her youthful resumé. Her grades were C's, except for her parents' classes in the fourth grade where, mortified and traumatized by pressure both from her peers for special favors and her parents for special effort, she got D's, and counseling.

She had average tastes, following fashions in clothes, boy bands and sugary foods. Unicorns and Hello Kitty, naturally. Rainbows and glitter lipstick.

I found her insipid, to be honest, but hoped she'd grow out of it. During a brief visit to Iowa during her ninth year, we had nothing to talk about. I bought her bubble gum ice cream and called it a day.

\*

Her parents expected her to be exceptional, to grow like the corn, and launch out of Iowa like a Saturn rocket. They thought educa-

tion was the ticket to future success, forgetting that many children of ambitious, educated parents are intimidated by their example and just want to live until they don't anymore.

By the time Amanda had passed out of middle school, after the fortune spent on counseling and tutoring and introductory lessons in piano, violin, electric guitar, ballet and jazz dance, tennis and fencing, they abandoned their dreams of a Marvel heroine daughter to search for vomit in her toilet, OxyContin in her jewelry box, razor marks on her arms. Amanda, in their eyes, became the absence of horrific things that could happen to her.

\*

And then she fell down a well. Their well! A peril that had been there forever, within view of the kitchen window, but that no one noticed anymore, if indeed they ever had.

Carole prided herself that though her only child excelled in nothing, at least she was healthy and safe. If she raised her daughter to maturity without addictions, repeated grades, or eating disorders she could count herself among the parenting elite. Her daughter might never be a Marvel goddess, but she herself would be a Parenting Superhero.

\*

How many times have I told you to block up that fucking well? Carole shouted at her husband as they raced from school to the hospital.

It was covered up!

Obviously not! You may think our daughter's Coraline, but she can't slip through stone and wood.

When did this become my responsibility? If you wanted it sealed up, you should have sealed it up yourself.

Our daughter could be taking her last breaths and you're triggering me with micro aggressions? Everything is political with you.

She broke a couple bones. The doctor said she didn't even hit her

head. Will you slow down please? Or we'll need a family room in the ICU.

\*

I'm so thankful you're all right! Carole said, smothering Amanda with kisses.

Robert, the father, crept in for the group hug already described.

I'm not all right, Amanda corrected. But look, I've got six million followers!

Do you need a blanket? Are you cold? Where are your socks?

Where are my shoes? I wasn't wearing socks. And no, I'm not cold. I didn't fall into a frozen well.

I'm so sorry, pumpkin. It's all our fault. I told your father a thousand times to seal up that well.

\*

Soon the media pushed their way in, and it took all the doctors on staff to push them back out. But Amanda wouldn't let them expel her classmates, who spilled out into the corridor. Girls who had never made eye contact with her before caressed her cast enviously. And even the cute boys bent down to take selfies with her.

You'll follow me back now, won't you? Promise? said all the teens who had not followed her until just a few minutes ago.

This is huge! You're huge! her best friend, Nicole, exclaimed, draping her *Stranger Things* backpack over the **2 Visitors Maximum** sign. Nicole was a popular girl, already had her driver's license, a trail of ex-boyfriends from school, and a RomeoChat college-age boyfriend she had yet to meet, in St. Louis. But unfortunately, Nicole's popularity didn't help Amanda become popular as well, which was probably Nicole's intent, as I suspect she befriended her in the first place because Amanda was an immobile admirer and in no way a threat. So Nicole strategically compartmentalized her social life between the cheerleader clique and the Diversity Crew, where Amanda had her friends.

You'll be the most popular girl in school! yelled a girl who sat behind Amanda in Science class, yet probably couldn't have told you the color of her hair. (Brown, with vermillion highlights.)

You'll be the most popular teen in Iowa! said an older boy who was a star wide receiver on the football team. Can I have a kiss?

Yes!!!

No!!! her mother intervened.

Countless daydreamed hours, tears, scribbled notes unsent about a boy, about many boys, about that first wondrous kiss, and here it was unprompted, unplanned, without even having to get out of bed, from a star football player no less, a tall and ripped senior!

And her mom had to intercept.

The most popular teen in Iowa? shouted another voice, above the din. By tomorrow you could be the most famous girl in the world!

A hush fell over the room, reached into the corridor filled with friends in waiting, snaked up the stairs all the way to the administrative offices where the hospital CEO had convened an impromptu meeting with the marketing director and the chief physician.

The Montgomery County Regional Medical Center hadn't seen this much excitement since a Republican candidate tripped on the ice during the last election and had his fingers put in a splint in their Emergency Room. But there had been no national media that day, just a local item in the *Iowa Sentinel* the following morning.

Has the Dizon family been given the Premiere Suite? the CEO asked, scanning her medical records on a monitor.

I believe the Premiere Suite is occupied. But she has a private room, said the marketing director.

Well, get her in the Premiere Suite. And let's arrange a media room somewhere. And bring out cots if any of her friends want to camp out in the corridor. Fortunately, we're at only 20% occupancy, so let's take advantage of that.

But we are going to discharge her, said the chief physician.

No, we're not. I've called an orthopedist from Mayo to fly down tomorrow. He's the world expert on ankles.

Don't you think that's overreach? The X-rays show simple fractures. The right ankle doesn't even need a cast. It's just sprained.

Maybe you haven't noticed, but the candidates for our highest office spent the better part of their morning taking selfies with our young patient, and all the world is talking about the girl in the well.

Every five years there's a baby or kid in the well story. Or a cave.

It'll blow over in a day, opined the chief physician.

Which is why we have to act now! chimed in the marketing director.

Where is the CT scan? I don't see it here.

We didn't do a CT scan. She said she didn't hit her head.

Maybe she briefly lost consciousness and didn't know it. How would she know, alone at the bottom of a well?

Physical examination revealed no bruising.

We'll get the CT scan anyway.

I don't think her insurance will authorize it.

I don't care. We have the eyes of the world upon us. Or their phones. Get some fruit baskets down there. And staff the cafeteria tonight.

Good idea, said the marketing director. But might I also suggest we order from McDonald's and Pizza Hut? I have budget for it. We can create a slumber party atmosphere.

Done. Now what about our social media strategy?

My assistant has just put Amanda on our landing page. You can see it here.

Good job. Can we get a picture of the well?

Of course.

And what about the TableTennis account? I hear she has a million viewers!

It's PingPong, sir. She has six million followers, and growing.

We'll let's see what you've put up there.

Sir, we don't have a PingPong account.

Why the hell not?

Because it's a teen demographic. Mostly food porn and dancing.

Porn?!

I mean pictures of food. Dance videos. Fashion reviews. Our IT guy said we shouldn't have it because it's Chinese and they could spy on us.

Damn our IT. They took away my Huawei phone. If the Chinese colonize the moon because of technology they stole from the Montgomery County Regional Medical Center I'll be the first to salute their flag! Now get out of here and get us a TableTennis page!

\*

Amanda was wheeled to the imaging room like a conquering hero, pausing for fist bumps and high fives along the corridor. Nicole, along with Amanda's parents, accompanied her in the elevator.

Why do they want a CAT scan? I don't have a headache. I didn't even hit my head.

It's just precautionary, said the orderly wheeling her bed. We do them all the time.

Not on me you don't!

Maybe you're still knocked out, imagined Nicole. Maybe you're in an alternate universe where you're popular.

Cut it out.

Or you're still in the well and this is all a dream.

Stop it!!!

When Amanda saw the imposing machine with its narrow round opening, she sat up rigid.

Do I have to do this?

Yes, said her father.

Not if you don't want to, said her mother, who had an excessive fear of magnetism.

A young female tech explained the procedure.

I can't do it. I'm claustrophobic.

You were just in a fucking well! Nicole reminded her.

I know, and it was awful.

Man up, said her father, who thought being a feminist meant saying all the bullying things you would say to your son, to your daughter.

Robert, don't be an ass, said Amanda's mother. She was traumatized this morning and this will just give her PTSD.

Carole, the *P* stands for *post*. You can't get post-traumatic stress disorder three hours after the original trauma.

I didn't realize there was a waiting period! Why don't we ask a psychologist?

Why don't we ask your followers? Nicole suggested instead.

What do you mean? asked Amanda.

Give me your phone. You can create a poll.

**CAT scan to rule out head injury. YES or NO?**

And I'll post a picture. Who else wants to get in the photo?

The tech was not amused and looked impatiently at the analog clock on the wall. We have other patients, so if you don't want to do this now...

But 34,405 followers had already cast votes, comprising a more than sufficient sample size: 76% **yes**.



At least there's no skanky water in this hole, Amanda consoled herself, clutching her phone.

Sorry, the phone stays outside, said the tech.

This is worse than the well! Amanda screeched.

\*

By the time she emerged ten minutes later, sweating profusely, the pizza and cheeseburgers had arrived.

This is un-fucking-believable, she exclaimed, walking barefoot on crutches in the cafeteria, surrounded by hungry classmates. Did they bring vanilla shakes by chance?

Honey, you shouldn't walk barefoot.

Mama, it's a hospital. I think they disinfect the floors like every five minutes.

But before her mother could find a pair of hospital-grade slippers an Amazon Prime box arrived.

Vans! My Vans! I'm made whole.

She grabbed her phone and sent Yuji5958 in Osaka several rows of rainbow hearts. It seemed a particularly unusual gesture from an admirer on the other side of the world. But by night's end she would have at least 200 more pairs, making the cafeteria resemble a Foot Locker, and throwing Vans' supply chain into panic mode.

\*

Grandma!

Riven by COPD from a lifelong affair with the Marlboro Man, my ex-wife pushed her walker and oxygen bottle through a sea of teenagers in the Montgomery Regional Medical Center cafeteria and sat down, breathless, next to our only grandchild.

Granny, you look worse than me. Do you want to stay? I'm sure we can get you a room.

Let me see your legs. My Lord, poor child! I told your grandfather to fill in that well fifty years ago! This is all his fault.

\*

While sipping a vanilla shake that had magically arrived, Amanda paused to answer some more questions from her followers.

No, we don't live in yurts. What's a yurt?

No water buffalo in Iowa. Sorry.

We haven't gotten a hurricane in, I guess, forever, because we're about as far from the ocean as it's possible to be. Don't they have Google Earth where you live?

We have everything here. We're not backwards.

No IKEA. But I'm hoping.

No beaches, no.

No islands.

Volcanoes? Who wants volcanoes?

Skyscrapers? Define skyscraper. We have one.

Megacities? We have Des Moines. Form your own conclusion.

Polar bears? You're thinking of Minnesota.

\*

A pair of firemen entered the cafeteria, still in uniform. Amanda recognized the one who had pulled her out. She hobbled over and gave him a hug.

Thanks for saving my life!

I didn't save your life.

I was so scared. I don't know how much longer I could have stayed

down there.

I didn't even make a descent. I just pulled up the rope. And I can't even take credit for that, because it was attached to a motor. Although I could have done it myself, skinny as you are.

All the same...

Our chief wants you to take a photo with us out front, in the truck.

Sure. Can I hold the steering wheel?

\*

The party continued in the cafeteria, though one group of senior honor students had been kicked out for sneaking in alcohol in Starbucks cups.

Amanda took a moment to answer more questions while a nurse took her vitals.

**How did I fall down the well? It was an accident.**

**I keep telling you guys it wasn't an oil well! And for the thousandth time Iowa is nowhere near the North Sea. Or the South, East or West Seas! Stop asking.**

**Are there Black people in Iowa? Of course. Duh.**

**Are there any Asians in my class? Yes. Nipuni is from India. That's Asian, right? And Amy's grandparents came from Taiwan, but she was born here.**

Amanda knew this not because she was geographically studious and sensitive to heritage but because Amy and Nipuni, along with Nicole, were the closest thing she had to a group, her three amigas, her three original PingPong friends.

Nicole pulled the phone out of her hand and saw the questions about Blacks and Asians.

Hey, Diversity Crew, you're lighting up the internet. Let's take a picture.

The term *Diversity Crew* had been coined years ago by a student or students, or some said even a teacher, or coach. Some thought it was even by Harding High's first African American principal, or the scandal-ridden principal who had a *Dukes of Hazard* Hot Wheels car on his desk, the orange one with the Confederate battle flag. In any case, it was either a term of shameful prejudice or one of defiant pride. Those minority students, teachers and administrators who had tried, over the years, to eradicate it found themselves stymied by the nuances of identity politics. For what if the original Crew had been forged in the cauldron of resistance?

Any student not white and Christian was lumped in—or belonged to—the Diversity Crew. Present in the hospital cafeteria tonight were Shanda Low (African American); Nipuni Bardalai (not Indian as Amanda had posted but Sri Lankan); Amy Lee (Chinese); and a Dominican boy from another class whom none of them knew.

For a time, last year, Amanda herself had been included (or excluded) because a visitor to the Dizon home spied a statue of Vishnu on the fireplace. But without additional evidence of what the neighbors mistakenly considered Satan worship, the matter was forgotten and Amanda seeped back into the pure soil of Midwestern Americana.

Under other circumstances the representative members of Diversity Crew might have taken offense. But tonight they gathered for a Diversity Crew group photo with pride, knowing most of the teens viewing the post would be Asian or people of color like themselves, and happy to flow on Amanda's contrails, thinking this might be the ticket to their own social media dreams.

\*

Perhaps the only person in the Montgomery County Regional Medical Center cafeteria who at the beginning of this singular day lacked social media dreams—and this includes the kitchen staff, nurses, janitors, parcel and food delivery drivers—was, ironically, Amanda herself. Her parents' wariness of electronic devices, coupled with her lack of the kind of skills that would have made her popular online, such as coding or gaming—she had given up Candy Crush at Level 6—dissuaded her from perceiving the digital world as anything but a black hole of envy for kids with only three friends and splotchy skin.

Her mother approached.

Your father has a headache and went to the car, but I can stay over.

Mom, no. I'm with my class. You'll just embarrass me.

How are your ankles? Do you need an Advil? I can get your nurse.

I need a morphine drip, but I'll make do.

Promise you won't get in trouble.

Mama, this is a hospital, not a keg party.

Well at the moment it looks more like Studio 54.

What's Studio 54?

Never mind.

But her mom had a point. Someone had turned off the fluorescent lights. The only illumination came from cell phones, the buffet counter, and *EXIT* signs. Someone had brought Bluetooth speakers and cranked up a playlist from their phone. Students were dancing to Drake and Beyoncé. Some on tables. And to everyone's surprise, neither nurses, nor the night residents on staff, nor security, nor other patients shut down the party.

This wasn't a criminal dereliction of duty but a calculated tactic by the marketing director, who used gift cards from her discretionary budget to get the adults and handful of patients to stay mum.

Her money shot came later that night, when Amanda posed with a nurse and orderly and posted the caption:

**Montgomery County Regional Medical Center rocks my world!!!**

\*

Her mother was about to give some sage parting advice when Nicole raced over, knelt before the seated Amanda, and grabbed

both of her hands, mashing their phones together.

Buy me a car, bestie. Please, please, please.

You already have a car.

I have a Ford F-150 with 200,000 miles and no radio. Buy me a Jaguar and I'll drive you everywhere you want until you get your license.

Sure, when I win the lottery.

You won the lottery!

Nicole held out her own phone, or tried to.

Stop shaking, said Amanda. I can't see what you're showing me.

Let me see that! said Amanda's mom, grabbing the phone. What is MakeItRain?

MakeItRain? echoed Amanda, peeking in.

I can't believe you guys! exclaimed Nicole. You never heard of MakeItRain? It's crowdfunding for personal tragedy.

But I only fractured one ankle, said Amanda. The doctor said I can probably go home tomorrow.

But nobody knew that when the story broke, did they? Some good soul lit an account and it rained a hurricane. Now you can post that Iowa does get hurricanes after all. Lol!

What is this figure? asked Amanda's mom. \$305,050? Is that the goal?

The goal is ten thousand dollars! Nicole shouted above the music. \$305,050 is the amount pledged. So you can easily afford to buy me a Jaguar. I just want a basic one. And you'll have money left over to buy a car painted rainbow colors for yourself, and probably a house with a life-size stuffed unicorn.

A life-size stuffed unicorn?

This can't be legitimate, whispered Amanda's mother.

And this is just day one, said Nicole. Look, someone just pledged fifteen dollars. Now it's \$305,065. Let's dance!

But Amanda's mom grabbed her daughter's arm. Can you please give us a minute, Nicole?

She helped her daughter into a wheelchair and wheeled her into the corridor, where it was quiet enough to talk in normal voices, and bright enough to see each other clearly.

She knelt down so that their gaze was level. Are you OK, darling?

Are you kidding? This is the best day of my life!

You suffered a traumatic experience.

The well? I should have fallen down that thing a long time ago!

What were you doing there anyway? Never mind. Listen, this is all nice and fun, and I'm glad all your classmates have finally taken an interest in you, even if they have ulterior motives...

Mom, cut to the chase.

But none of this is real. It's just entertainment. The RainMan account, the six million friends...

It's seven million now! Can you believe that? I've gotten another million followers in like eight hours. How many followers is that an hour, a minute, a second, a half second?

Amanda, darling. Your grandfather always called you his Disney princess. I never liked the gowns and plastic tiaras he sent you. It only reinforces oppressive gender stereotypes. But that's neither here nor there...

Mama, spit it out.

I'm trying to say being a princess has its dark side.

Yeah, for the parents. The princesses are usually orphans.

This is your Cinderella moment. This is your magic ball. You even have your own glass slipper—your cast. But you are going to wake up tomorrow and it will all be gone.

The doctor said I have to wear the cast for eight weeks.

You know what I mean, Amanda.

Who says I'm going to sleep? I'll stay up all night. I'm in a hospital. They can give me any medicines I want. I'm never gonna let this night go.

You have to let it go.

You're making me cry.

Don't cry, darling. I just don't want you to climb out of one hole only to fall down another.



Amanda parted from her mother in the corridor, insisting on wheeling herself back into the cafeteria. She was still wiping away tears when Nicole rejoined her.

I'm ready to dance now, said Amanda.

But your cast. I didn't think of that.

Get me a crutch.

I don't know... Listen. I have a better idea. Look around the room. Pick a boy.

What boy?

Whoever you like best. For your first kiss.

Are you crazy! Why does everyone think I'm Cinderella?

What are you talking about?

What are you talking about? I can't ask anyone to kiss me.

Who said you're going to be the one to ask? Did you ask that football player in your room?

I forgot about him! Is he here?

No, he left. But what about a boy from our class? Who is your crush? Gee, I'm your best friend and I don't even know who you like.

I don't even know myself. I've always been too shy to talk to boys. I can hardly talk to girls. My dreams aren't about a particular guy, but general...

There are one, two...seven, eight...twelve...fifteen boys still here. What about Marty?

She waved to Martin Decker, ripped and confident, power forward for the junior varsity basketball team, blond with braces making his sparkling white teeth straighter every day. Dreamy.

But he was your boyfriend.

A lifetime ago. I've moved on. I dumped him because he's a player. But he's a good kisser.

I dunno...

Or if you like nerds, there's Ned. He says he can hack into the voting machines. Bright future there. And Marty's gym locker is next to his and Marty told me he has a giant you know what.

Why is that piece of information important? I thought this was a first kiss!

Or there's that Haitian guy. He's kind of standing by himself. His family just moved here and I don't think he has many friends. But he's cute.

Dominican.

Huh?

He's from Dominican Republic.

Where's that?

Right next to Haiti. That's probably why you said Haiti. But I don't even know his name. I can't kiss someone before I know his name.

Why not? Anyway, we can go over and talk to him first. What do you say?

Martin.

What?

Martin, whispered Amanda.

You little devil. All right.

In the excitement of the moment Nicole pulled Amanda across the cafeteria, forgetting she was in a cast and not supposed to walk without crutches, and certainly not run.

Ow, ow, ow! Amanda screamed, but her pain was muted by the music and the gratifying recognition that she was finally going to receive her first kiss. Martin Decker was so tall and confident and popular that Amanda was afraid to even look at him. But the idea that someone who had dated Nicole might kiss her filled her with delight.

But of course he wouldn't kiss her, she realized as they reached the cashier side of the cafeteria, where most of the boys were hanging out, eating chips and pretzels and asserting their rights to the soda machine, like male lions at a watering hole.

Amanda squeezed her friend's hand in terror. This was going to be the most embarrassing moment of her life. Martin would scoff at her in front of her whole class, including some seniors and a media person or two who had crashed the party.

But before Amanda could speak Nicole cleared her throat and shouted: Music off. Everyone, your attention please. Can someone turn on the lights?

The lights blinded everyone for a moment. The music stopped and even though Amanda was the new celebrity and the reason they were all there, all eyes instinctively focused on Amanda's more vivacious, glam friend.

No lights! Amanda insisted.

It's better for the video.

No. No!

The lights immediately went back off, such was the power of a girl with seven million PingPong followers.

Amanda tried to squeeze away, but Nicole still held her hand. Good thing, because her foot slipped and she would have crashed to the floor. Instead, she bumped against a table and used a chair to catch her balance.

Oh shit, I forgot about your ankle! Nicole cried. Can someone bring Amanda's crutches?

Nicole, I can't do this.

You said that about the CAT scan and you were a trooper. Do you want to take another PingPong poll? Kiss or no kiss?

No.

A pair of folding forearm crutches appeared as if by magic and Amanda righted herself, although now all eyes were fixed on her.

Owwwww.

This time, without the music, everyone could hear her agony, giving Nicole an idea.

Who among you will take away our princess's pain with a kiss?

Under other circumstances Amanda might have appreciated this sweet and metaphorical gesture from her best friend, a vain and immature girl who had been a very poor best friend, who had neglected to show her attention before today and used Amanda chiefly as an audience for her own dramatic adventures. And while it might be argued Nicole was using her still, that her sudden interest was driven more by seven million faces in the dark than by the wan, vulnerable face looking up at her now, I think it not unreasonable to assume there was a dash of goodwill in her effort.

The cafeteria was as silent as the bottom of a well.

Give me your phone, it has a better light, said Nicole, putting her own phone on the table and taking her friend's. For once Nicole was happy to be on the other side of the lens.

Stand against the table and lose the crutches. Like that. Great. Don't move.

Boys?

Still, no one spoke.

You! commanded Nicole, grabbing her ex-boyfriend by his sweater. Pucker up.

One of the reasons Nicole had befriended Amanda was she knew that her boyfriends, including players like Martin Decker, wouldn't play with her comic sidekick. They could all hang out in a bedroom and Nicole could go to the bathroom without worrying about catching them *in flagrante* upon her return.

Had this bit of theater been instigated by a prankster, Martin would have committed felonies to prevent its dissemination to his peer group. But for a viral video, with Likes certain to be in the tens, perhaps even hundreds of thousands—perhaps even millions, who could say?—an invisible girl, like Amanda, was for this night as hot as Cinderella.

Amy Lee, get over here, said Nicole, inspirations coming in waves. For she realized much of their audience would be non-English speaking.

Translate what I say into Asian for our Chinese audience, OK?

Amy knew there was no such language as Asian. For that matter she didn't even speak Chinese herself. But she wasn't about to let those trivial facts ruin her chance for audio fame. So she recited the dim sum menu from her grandfather's restaurant.

Amanda Dizon, at the beginning of this miraculous day you fell into a deep, dark well. Your body was bruised and battered. Bones were broken. You nearly drowned. You had to eat insects to survive until the brave men of the Montgomery County Fire Department rescued you with a frayed rope. Thank the Lord you're so thin. Girls, let this be a warning to you; watch your weight, exercise. For one day you may find yourself at the bottom of a well with only a frayed rope between you and salvation.

Amanda, you were taken by ambulance to this state-of-the-art hospital, the Montgomery County Regional Medical Center, given emergency surgery on your legs and brain scans because you hit

your head so many times against the jagged stones of the well. And yet you said no to morphine and Oxy, because you want to be an example to the addicted youth of Iowa and the whole country who are losing their lives to opioids.

By this point Amy Lee had run out of dim sum items and had stopped speaking, but no one seemed to notice. Nicole was rocking it.

So, who will bestow the first kiss upon Harding High's fair maiden and take away her pain?

She prodded Martin. Go, go! But no tongue. Keep it Disney.

Martin Decker bent low and kissed Amanda Dizon firmly, but respectfully on the lips.

Amada felt an electric shock, although it might have been his braces.

Nicole held the camera firm, staring at the viewfinder. But before she could click off, something unscripted occurred. Ned the Hacker hacked the Girl in the Well First Kiss Streaming Event and planted his own confident lips upon our princess.

My God! whispered Nicole, almost dropping the camera.

The Dominican boy swept into the frame next. Not so shy after all! And then the remaining boys followed suit, in single file, as if this were a tornado drill. There might have even been a girl in the mix.

\*

In the days and weeks that followed, blogs and newspaper columns would be penned, and panel discussions convened to assert this incident as an ugly example of alcohol-fueled hazing, although the only alcohol that night had entered and exited the hospital in Starbucks cups. Commentators on all sides of the political spectrum would cite Amanda's serial first kiss as an instance of abuse, compelling the Montgomery County District Attorney to bring the matter to a Grand Jury.

But Amanda had stood, or rather leaned, so impassively throughout, in a state of shock, not because this remarkable day was ending, as it had begun, with a trauma, but because the world, which had closed its eyes to her for sixteen years, was finally looking back.

When our sweet heroine awoke, she was in motion. But she wasn't being swept off her feet—that had happened last night—or swirling through the vortex of a tornado, like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, or tumbling in a *déjà vu* trap back down the well, as in *Groundhog Day*. No, she was being wheeled to the operating room in the Montgomery County Regional Medical Center.

She recognized the orderly from the CT scan. He was pushing her. And her parents, one on each side.

What the fuck?! cried Amanda.

Don't be alarmed, said her mother.

Don't be alarmed? Am I dead? I see a white light.

That's just a white light, dear.

Where am I going?

To the operating room.

The operating room!

Amanda reached for her phone.

Where's my phone?

Dr. Patel is going to fix your ankle.

But it's just a fracture! That's what the doctor said yesterday. I'm supposed to leave today.

Yes, dear. But they brought in the world expert from the Mayo Clinic and he says he's pioneered a procedure where you won't have to

wear a cast and will only need physical therapy for eight days.

I don't care!

Amanda glanced at the name tag of the orderly.

James, halt!

Whether Amanda's newfound assertiveness stemmed from her millions of followers or a fear of going beneath the scalpel, she could not say.

But James halted.

She sat up straight, her green eyes wide open, the operating room door within view.

What if I hadn't woken up? My God. How could this happen? Don't I have to sign a form?

We signed it, said her mother. You're a minor.

Well, when I'm president that's gonna be the first thing I change!

Nobody knew where that came from. Let's just say it was an expression.

Dad, you refused surgery for your rotator cuff, but you're going to put me under the knife?

Your MakeItRain account has stalled in the \$300,000's said her dad professorially. An operation could push it above half a million.

Dad!

I love you as a father, it goes without saying, but I think you should also have the benefit of my economic nous.

Noose? I can't believe you guys. Where are my crutches? Where's my phone?



She felt relieved to be back at last in her cozy upstairs bedroom. It seemed a year, a lifetime, two lifetimes since she had been in her room. The last time she had sat here on her bed, scrolling through her phone—or rather the candidate’s lost phone—her ankles were not shooting messages of pain. She had three PingPong followers.

Now she had a bottle of extra-strength ibuprofen and nine-million followers.

For the one or two of you out there who haven’t heard this most famous of quotes about fame, the artist Andy Warhol once intoned (during the Age of Analog Television) that everyone would be famous for fifteen minutes.

Those pundits, journalists, classmates and parents who thought Amanda’s fifteen minutes of fame had been spent were in for a surprise.

\*

Honey?

Her mother found her daughter standing by the window, staring out at the backyard. Or rather, on closer inspection, snapping pictures of the backyard.

The grass was turning brown, leaves from the sycamore tree falling through the crisp September air. The wooden garage, to the left of the iPhone frame, looked ready to collapse. The well looked small and innocuous at the far end, a round shadow, a few yards before the fenced-off farmland that had once been mine. Luna, her black cat, was scampering after a squirrel.

I’m sorry about the surgery. We should have asked your permission. But the Mayo Clinic is the Harvard of hospitals.

Doesn't Harvard have a hospital?

You know what I mean. And Dr. Patel flew in on a private jet.

You said you didn't even believe in the MakeItRain account.

Well, your father's the one with the Economics degree, and he said they're legit. And you don't have a college fund.

Amanda turned to her mother with an accusatory glare.

You're not taking my fortune for no college fund.

The money—if there is any money—will be held in a trust until you are twenty-one.

Twenty-one! I promised Nicole a Jaguar.

You what?

Are there really life-size stuffed unicorns? I didn't see any on Amazon.

Honey...

Amanda turned back to the window and looked into the distance.

I was thinking I could buy the farm back and you and Dad could try planting weed this time. But maybe you're right, said Amanda after a pause. It's probably a scam. Or people will come to their senses and withdraw their pledges.

Honey...

Her mother put her arms around Amanda's shoulders.

I want to talk about what happened last night, said her mother. After I left.

You mean the soda machine running out? God, that could have caused a riot.

You know what I mean. I printed some articles from the #MeToo

movement I'd like you to read.

Amanda put down her phone and looked her mother in the eye.

Mama, last night was the best thing that ever happened to me. If I ever get raped, I promise you'll be the first to know.

She grabbed her crutches and hobbled downstairs.

In the living room she opened the curtains. News trucks were crowded at the curb.

Snap, snap from the media.

Snap, snap back from Amanda.

Her mother rushed to close the curtain.

The doorbell rang.

Amanda took a step, but her mother blocked her.

Now they know you're here. Why did you let them see you?

Of course, they know I'm here. Where else would I be?

I told them you were sedated.

But I want to talk! No one's ever interviewed me before, unless you count that reporter when I was in the well.

You don't know the media. They're vultures.

Thanks for the advice, Carole Kardashian. You're just jealous because you spent years going to college and trying to grow ethanol and in one day I made more money than you and Dad ever did, and Dr. Evil flew on a private jet to cut me open, and all these reporters want to talk to me. Me!

Is that what you think? shouted her mother. That your dad and I are jealous of you?

I didn't say Dad. Just you.

So, you don't think I have your best interests at heart?

I did until I woke up in front of the operating room!

Owww! cried Amanda. If you have my best interests at heart you can go upstairs and get my Advil.

\*

Her mom returned with the Advil, blankets and sheets, and the ragged stuffed unicorn her daughter had slept with since age seven.

She spread the sheets on the sofa, while Amanda watched from the recliner.

What are you doing? asked Amanda.

You're going to sleep down here. You shouldn't be climbing stairs.

No way. I can't post from here.

You're not posting from anywhere today, said her mother, grabbing her phone.

Hey! You can't do that.

I can.

You're a Neanderthal! If you didn't hate social media so much I might have been famous years ago.

You're not famous, Amanda! You're not.

A hush fell.

You're jealous, whispered Amanda. See.

Oh honey, it's like a drug. It's like heroin. I don't want you to crash. This high, it won't last.

Don't you think I know that, Mom! shrieked Amanda, so loud that one of the technicians with a boom mike in his news truck picked it up.

Mama, this is only day two. Day two! Maybe it will last a week or two. Give me that. I'm not going to go into convulsions when it's over. I'm not going to steal car radios. Promise.

You can have your phone back tomorrow, said her mom, disappearing into the kitchen.

Tomorrow?! That's like a decade in social media days. Give it back or I'm gonna go outside and kiss all the reporters!

She tried to get to her feet but cried out in pain.

Her mother returned from the kitchen, bare handed, and kissed Amanda on the forehead.

I have the perfect daughter! She can't run away.

\*

The next ten minutes were the most boring ten minutes of Amanda's life. She stared at the drawn curtains, the abstract paintings on the wall, the wedding portrait of her parents, a family portrait taken when she was nine, the statue of Vishnu on the mantle.

She turned on the TV. But her parents didn't have cable. There were only five channels and the reception was poor. Soap operas, game shows. She half expected to find a news story about herself. But what news was there, anyway? Girl in the Well disses private plane surgeon? Her mother was right. The high was over.

\*

Her mother had figured out, after much pulling of wires, how to disconnect the doorbell. She had previously disconnected the phones in the kitchen and master bedroom. Yes, the Dizon household still had a landline, which embarrassed Amanda to no end. Her mother had even called the police to keep reporters from trespassing into the backyard.

By mid-afternoon most of the news trucks were gone.

So they were both startled when there was a rapid, repeated knock on the door.

Her mother allowed Amanda's original three followers to enter, Amy and Nipuni shyly trailing Nicole.

Why aren't you answering your phone! Oh, hi Mrs. Dizon, blurted Nicole, breathless.

We've been trying to reach you all day! I was even going to leave school at lunch bell when you didn't show signs of life, but Mr. Barton threatened to give me detention.

I told Nicole you were still under anesthesia from the surgery, said Nipuni, stepping forward.

Yes, echoed Amy, closing ranks. Remember when I had my appendix out and I slept for like fifteen hours afterward?

How do you know about the surgery? asked Amanda.

Nicole showed her a pic of Dr. Patel on the hospital helipad.

I didn't have surgery. I don't need it.

Of course you need it. My Lord! moaned Nicole, sitting on the sofa and squeezing the plush unicorn with rather too much force. Do you know what that could do to our MakeItRain account?

Our!!!

PingPong loves surgery. Do you know how many surgery vids there are? How do you think I learned about Filipino psychic surgery? PingPong!

Nicole glanced at Amanda's hands, her pockets, the seat cushion and coffee table.

Where's your phone?

It's being quarantined for the day, said Mrs. Dizon. And I'm afraid I'm going to have to commandeer yours as well for the duration of your visit.

The three girls reflexively tightened their hands around their mobiles.

Is she serious?

Amanda nodded.

Then I'm afraid we're gonna have to go.

Nicole took a couple quick snaps.

But don't worry, I'll keep you alive online until you get out of jail. Actually, we've already posted some comments on your account and returned follows of some hot guys since we couldn't find you.

How did you get on my account? Did you ask Ned to hack in?

Wasn't necessary. I knew your password had to be *unicorn or rainbow*. You need to change it to something ultra-secure, by the way. The Russians will be snooping around before long. Goodbye, Mrs. Dizon.

\*

Luna crept back inside and Amanda hugged her on the sofa in lieu of her cell phone, while game show contestants jumped with joy on TV.

Her father came home from school and, after a brief and meaningless chat about the #MeToo movement, trust funds, and something called the Marshmallow Test, helped his wife prepare dinner in the kitchen.

Amanda popped more Advil and slept.

\*

Dinner was excruciatingly quiet and slow. It reminded Amanda of visiting her late great aunt in the nursing home dining room. But at least in the nursing home there were televisions playing.

Not that tonight's dinner was any different from a thousand other meals at the Dizon household. What had changed was Amanda, and the mad rush of PingPong posts, comments, Likes and Shares that had enveloped her over the last twenty-four hours.

\*

Afterward her mother suggested a warm bubble bath and wrapped a trash bag around the cast so it wouldn't get wet.

Ahhh, moaned Amanda, sinking in. This feels so good.

Her mother massaged her legs with a washcloth. Amanda was too exhausted to be embarrassed. Anyway, the suds were covering the parts of her body that mattered.

Nicole had told her that boys get erections all the time. Even in Algebra class they get hard-ons. Why do you think men invented desks? She had showed Amanda snippets of porn. Amanda wasn't much interested. Nicole showed her one of a Unicorn. Unicorn porn. Amanda thought it was disgusting.

Nicole said boys get erections 24/7. Then they get married and need Viagra, haha!

Lying in the bath, Amanda was glad she wasn't a boy. Her life was embarrassing enough without erections. Imagine boys who broke their ankles. Boys in casts. They couldn't let their mothers, or even their fathers or brothers, help them bathe. Too risky.

She wondered if she would take a selfie now if she had her phone. With the bubbles covering her, of course. That would blow up Ping-Pong! Here was a girl who felt self-conscious in a bikini, imagining a bath selfie for millions to see.

And then she closed her eyes and imagined snapping away, and the bubbles disappearing, until her nipples appeared, and then...

And she imagined Martin Decker looking at her body and not being disgusted. Pressing Like.

\*

At night her parents turned on the debate, live from Iowa State University.

Amanda recognized the candidates only because they had taken selfies with her and signed her cast. Like most of her class, and



to her civically engaged parents' dismay, she wasn't interested in politics. But her phone was in quarantine and there was nothing else to do, so she cradled Luna in her lap and pulled the handle on the recliner.

Blah blah blah?

Blah blah.

Blah blah blah blah?

Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah.

Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah?

Blah blah Girl in the Well...

Fuuuuuuuuck!!!

Shhhhhh!!!

No one was sure who had yelled the profanity and who had shushed them, although both exclamations might have been uttered by all three. What is beyond dispute is that in the next moment the entire Dizon household was standing two feet from the TV, except for Luna, who had raced away in alarm.

It was the candidate who had lost his phone in the library speaking.

Courage, willpower, and fortitude in the face of adversity, that is the hallmark of the American spirit, said the candidate.

Is he talking about me?! screamed Amanda.

I had the pleasure of meeting her in her hospital room and signing her cast. I think her name is Amanda. In the few minutes we had together we had a nice chat.

All he said was, 'That's my phone!' Amanda recalled.

And seeing that she was going to be bedridden for some weeks, and asking about my new iPhone, I gave it to her. I hope the Election Commission won't consider that a bribe. She is too young to vote, haha.

Liar, he wanted it back! Amanda exclaimed.

The Dizons collapsed together on the sofa.

My daughter...has just been mentioned...by a candidate for president...on national TV! sighed her mother.

Courage, willpower, what else did he say? asked her father.

Still think my Cinderella moment is over, Mom?!

Shhhh. Listen!

Because there was more:

I too had the pleasure of meeting your local hero, said another candidate. If all our youth are as impressive as Amanda Dizon, then the future of Iowa and of our great nation is in good hands.

He said our name! Amanda's father exclaimed.

My name!!!

This Girl in the Well tragedy highlights the need for infrastructure projects in the heartland, opined a third candidate. As I understand it, she fell in while trying to get water for her family because the lead pipes in her district have still not been replaced.

Lord! cried Amanda. Is that true? I mean about the pipes?

Fortunately, Amanda's parents are both teachers and have insurance, pointed out a candidate on the far end. But this is why we need universal healthcare. Think about all the children who fall down wells whose parents aren't gainfully employed.

I referred the hospital director to my friend, Dr. Patel, a renowned

orthopedic surgeon, said the candidate on the other end. So, you can say Amanda's life was saved by an immigrant.

Hellooooo! Amanda waved to the TV. Dr. Patel didn't do anything!

Shhhhh.

I had the honor of meeting young Amanda's parents, interjected yet another candidate. Public school teachers, as my colleague alluded to. Fine, upstanding Iowans who know the value of a good education and the dangers of social media, teen sex, e-cigarettes and prescription drugs.

What did you guys tell them?!

I can't believe this! Amanda's mother exclaimed. Say my name! Did I tell you my name? Carole...

He can't hear you, Mom.

I'm sure I told you. Carole!

Relax, Mama. This moment won't last.