

J O E S I X P A C K

**HELLO,
NURSE!**

“Quality Health Care”

Revised from a the previously published story at TGstories.com

A Tales of Transformation Story



2010 eBook Edition

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QUALITY HEALTH CARE

“You can crash at my place. It’ll be like back in med school.”

Great. He only had been arrested twice in med school. Graduating out of there probably had saved his life.

“I just need a little help for a couple of months. That’s all.”

Oh, God.

It was a perfectly reasonable request – a perfectly sensible proposal his old friend had made.

Except for *one* detail.

“No one will ever suspect you. You’re never gonna get caught.”

The *catch*. Dane Thompkins was having trouble with the *catch*.

“What do you say? I’ll even buy you a plane ticket.”

Dane had to think. He *really* had to think. His friend, Jimmy Lynch, had called him up and made a job offer to him. Jimmy was opening his first office, a small general practice in the midwest. It was a tremendous achievement for such a young doctor to open an office just three years after getting his degree. But it had been Jimmy’s dream to “hang a shingle” and practice medicine like his grandfather had. In fact, Dane was deeply envious of the idea. It reminded him of his childhood, when he used to play doctor in his backyard.

But Dane had taken a different route after medical school. He spent his time trying to get grants for his studies. Hanging a shingle wasn’t the way he wanted to go. He wanted to work in research, finding new medicines and new treatments. He wanted to follow his ideas and break new ground, but he had found the actual process of getting money more troublesome than he ever thought.

Months and months of writing proposals and perusing grants had gotten him nowhere. He had been totally unsuccessful in his attempts so far, and he was in a deep financial rut. Dane had been living with his uncle for the past year, unable to find work and unable to break down and accept some “lesser” job at some chain hospital or nonprofit clinic. He had his pride at stake.

What he needed was a temporary thing. He just needed to earn a few bucks to pay off the bills and get a head start again. Once he had some money, he could go after the grants without worrying about the short-term.

So here was his med school roommate, Jimmy, offering him just that. Quick money for a few months’ work, free room & board and some good times on the side. It was very tempting, but there was one big problem.

According to the story told by his old roomie, Jimmy had to cut corners on expenses to open his office, and was running it by himself. The load was too much, and he needed a nurse. The nurses’ union was very strong in his state,

and just meeting the mandatory minimum salary was impossible on his meager budget. So he had offered Dane the opportunity to be his “medical assistant” for a few months until he could get enough patients to afford a full-time, accredited nurse.

It was also noted by Dane that this arrangement was very, very illegal.

It’s against the law to hire non-union nurses in most states, and it is certainly illegal to hire non-accredited nurses, even if they had medical doctorates. Plus,



this was nothing compared to the financial threat of of the large HMOs who would never reimburse Jimmy a cent if they knew what was going on. But Jimmy was desperate. Yet Dane was even *more* desperate, in the end.

“Yeah, okay, Jimmy. I’ll do it.” Dane said, knowing it was already a bad idea. If there we one defining characteristic about Jimmy Lynch, he was a slick talker. He just hoped he wasn’t making a decision he was going to regret.



Dane’s first day of work was a whirlwind of activity. He was filling out forms, filing papers, answering the phone, tracking appointments and – when time allowed – doing some medical stuff on the side. He had flown out just the previous night, dumped his duffel bag at Jimmy’s place, and grabbed about four hours’ sleep before getting to his new job bright and early.

“Jimmy!” Dane called aloud down the office hall. “We’re outta envelopes!”

It was a large enough office, with a reception desk that served as Dane’s little office for paperwork. Then there was Jimmy’s wood-paneled office, three exam rooms, and four rooms full of equipment. It was obvious to Dane that whoever was selling medical equipment in this area had made a mint with Jimmy. That explained why he was short on cash.

“Jimmy! Envelopes!” He yelled again.

Dressed impressively in a three piece grey suit and a long white coat that made him look years older and far more professional than he deserved, Jimmy slinked down the hall to stick his head in the office window. “Doctor James R. Lynch, M.D.,” he whispered.

“Envelopes,” Dane responded.

Jimmy looked Dane over and squinted his eyes. Dane had shown up to work in jeans and a polo shirt, and Jimmy was obviously put off by his appearance. But Dane really didn’t care. If Jimmy gave him trouble, he’d just bring up that trip to Vegas in ’04. That always shut him up.

“There’s petty cash in the safe,” Jimmy said, pointing to it. “Get some.”

Dane held up a sandwich and a coke. He had already discovered the petty cash. “Four dollars and eighty-six cents is not petty cash,” Dane said. Jimmy growled and dug into his pockets for a five dollar bill. “Go get them now, before the next appointment.” Dane immediately sat up in a rush, spilling the the coke all over the heaping disorganized pile of forms on his desk.

Jimmy’s head dipped in defeat.

For his part, Dane knew he was a disaster on two legs. In just the first three hours of the first day on the job, he had lost files, canceled perfectly good appointments and scheduled eight patients in the same half hour. He had already alienated one half of the clients and had insulted the other. That didn’t even

count what he had done to the microwave earlier this morning. Dane hoped it would come off with a stronger solvent.

“I’ll take care of it,” Dane said, dejectedly. He was desperately trying to make things right. “Don’t worry about it.” He stepped back from the desk and brushed off the splatters of soda on his shirt. He looked around for something to mop up the mess. “Paper towels?” He asked Jimmy. Jimmy dug into his pockets again.



It was at the end of a very long, very frustrating first day of work that Dane had finally gotten everything squared away. Or at least, close enough. It was eight o’clock at night, but now he had at least taken care of his basic responsibilities. Except for the ones that he had pushed off until tomorrow.

Jimmy strolled back into the reception area, stretching. He started to remove his white coat and fold it over his arm. He looked through the small office window to see Dane massaging his temples. “Tough first day, huh?”

“I thought there’d be more, you know, medical stuff,” Dane said. “But it was phones, forms and filing. The three F’s.”

“Two F’s and a P.” Jimmy corrected. He stretched out his back as he talked. “I know it was difficult, and I guess I didn’t prepare you enough for the administration side of this job... Sorry, man.”

“I’ll get the hang of it, Jimmy,” Dane said. That wasn’t his first instinct, though.

Earlier in the day, he had been seriously thinking about skipping out on his friend, high-tailing it for the airport. But he couldn’t do it. He had to pull it together. “It just may take a while,” he added, to cover his butt.

“You know...” Jimmy said, suddenly getting an idea in his eyes. “I did get this thing off the internet...” With that, he was off like a shot, heading down the hall. Dane heard some rustling in his office, and a minute later he reappeared with a small box. “Here we go.” He tossed it to Dane.

Dane caught the box and flipped it around so he could read it. “Teach Yourself Medical Office Management And Procedure.” He read further. “Includes CD-ROM.”

“I bought that for help in running the office, but I never got around to using it,” Jimmy said. “If you want to check it out, it might help.” Dane opened the box and a small manual and CD slipped out.

“Yeah, yeah. This could help a lot.” Dane said. He was ready – desperate – for any assistance whatsoever. “Lemme run it now.”

“Take it home. You can use the computer back at the house.”

“Good deal.”



The two took the short drive back to Jimmy's house as the summer sun set for the night. This area of the country was actually very picturesque. Dane enjoyed seeing the last slivers of the sun disappear over the low hillside.

As Jimmy had promised, there was a nice, new computer in his house. In fact, it was in the "den," which was now Dane's temporary room. After downing most of a pizza and some idle channel surfing, Dane sat down to check out the CD for a little while before he went to bed. It had several different sections, and at least on the surface, it looked to be exactly what Dane needed to know for running the office. Although it was almost midnight, he clicked on the opening tutorial to see what it held.



The morning sun was still casting shadows that slowly crept along the wall at Jimmy's office. Dane, however, didn't really notice. He was in the zone.

"Jimmy? Hey Jimmy!?"

"Yeah?" Jimmy replied, as he strolled down the hall.

"Mrs. Shearer is on the phone and wants to talk to you about her dialysis," Dane said. "She's on line two."

"I'm expecting..."

Dane interrupted. "The Willard boy has been bumped back to 9:30, so you have fifteen minutes before Mr. Parker's chest x-ray session. Mrs. Parker is waiting in room 3 for her prescription and she has some questions. And I need your signature on the release forms in your 'in' pile before the post office picks up at two."

"Oh," Jimmy said, taking a moment to digest everything. He blinked a few times and then straightened his tie. "All right then." He walked off.

As Dane flipped through the appointment book, he was astonished at how easy it really was to run the office smoothly. Just yesterday he was lost in a mess of mistakes, but the CD-ROM had been an amazing help. The system for running the office was easy. A child could do it. It was painfully simple to him now. It was just a matter of priorities and time management.

That CD-ROM spelt everything out so clearly. It was the best piece of learning software he had ever used, Dane thought to himself. The retention of the material was incredible. He could remember every detail of the lessons as if they were still playing out in his mind.

Without even thinking about it, he dialed in a phone number. "Mr. Janson?" Dane said into the phone. "This is Dr. Lynch's office. I just wanted to confirm your appointment today at 4:00." Why did people even get paid for this sort of work? It seemed unfair, really. He could sleepwalk through this. "Very good, Mr. Janson. We'll be expecting you," he answered.



A patient then handed in a clipboard and completed form. Dane glanced at the form and noted the insurer, and placed it in the appropriate bin. "All right, Mr. Totale. If you'll follow me, I'll take you an examination room."



Dane got home to Jimmy's and expected to feel exhausted, like he had last night. But even as he tried to convince himself to at least fake being tired, he knew he was a lost cause. Jimmy had gone out to pick up some beer, leaving Dane just idle.

He cleaned up his den-bedroom a little. He organized the refrigerator. He alphabetized Jimmy's DVDs. Finally, he gave up and walked over to the computer.

He had been avoiding it, because he knew how successful that software had been. He knew he'd just get sucked in and run them for the rest of the night. With mixed feelings of caution and eagerness, he booted the computer up. Once he saw the opening screen, all doubts washed away.

If the opening tutorial had been this helpful, he was looking forward to what the next lessons could do for him. When the text started to flow across the screen, Dane leaned forward in his chair and let the experience overwhelm him.



Dane had returned from his lunch break looking a little different from when he left. "New look?" Jimmy asked him as he stepped back behind the office window.

"Just presenting a more professional appearance." Dane said. "I went downtown to the department store." Gone were his jeans and polo shirt, now he had outfitted himself in more traditional attire: white pants, white shoes & socks, and a white v-neck shirt. "It's important for patients to feel they're in a professional, competent medical facility."

"Right. Sure." Jimmy said. "Lemme guess the title of the last CD-ROM chapter: 'Professionalism.'"

"Could be," Dane answered.

"Well, it's probably is the right thing to do. Can't look too professional."

As Jimmy started to retreat to his office, Dane stopped him. "Oh, and I had an idea." He suggested. "We have to keep things here at the office professional. As in, what we call each other."

"Huh?" Jimmy quizzed.

“Just for the office, maybe we should keep it a little more...”

“Professional?” Jimmy finished his sentence.

“Yeah. It couldn’t hurt. For here at the office, you’re Doctor Lynch and I’ll be Nurse Thompkins.”

Jimmy smiled. “Uhhh... I...” He waved his hands in a gesture of amazement. “If you’re okay with that, sure. I guess.”

“All right then, Doctor Lynch,” Dane replied.

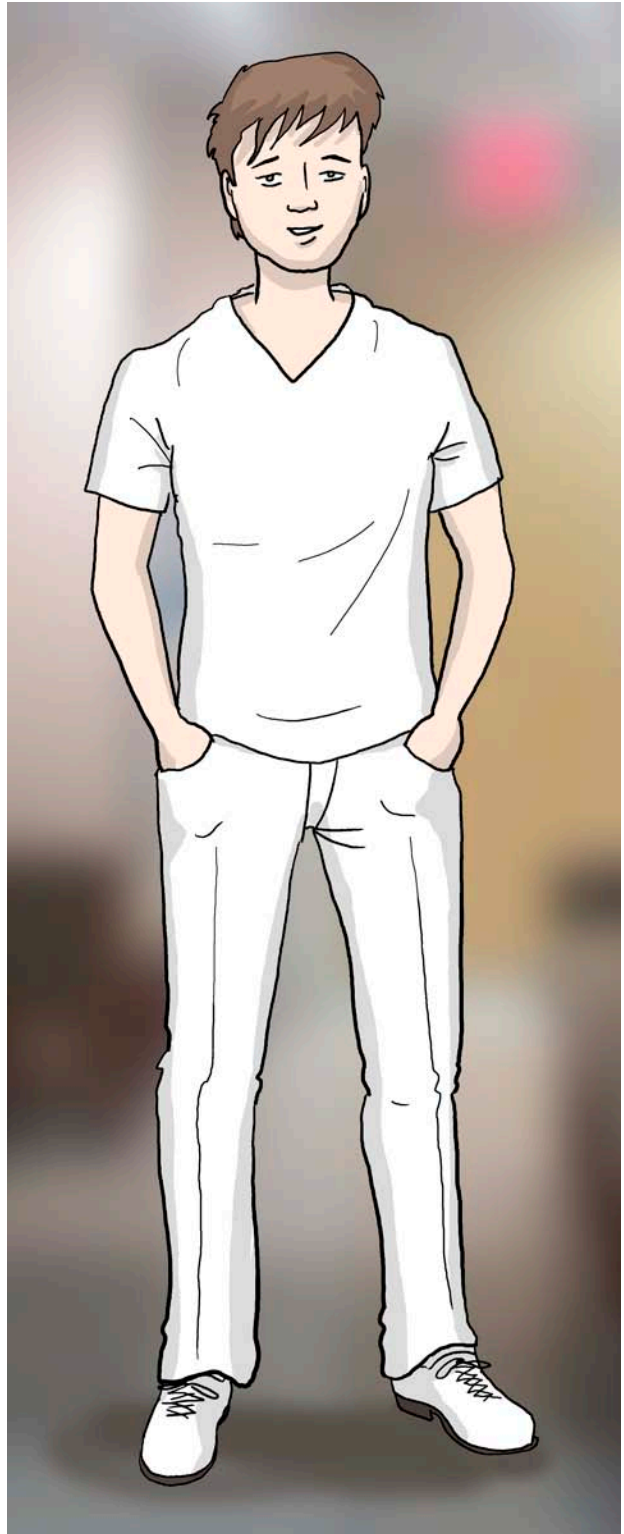
“Send in the next patient, Nurse Tompkins,” Jimmy said, smiling back. He went back to his office and smirked to himself.



After another long, busy day, it was five thirty that evening when the two closed the office. The second the door was locked, Dane let out a loud sigh of relief. He leaned back in his chair and popped open the top button on his pants. “Ohhhh yeeaaaah.” He said.

“Problem?” Jimmy asked, seeing his friend’s face show an expression of bliss.

“Pants.” Dane said,



looking down at the brand-new white slacks he was wearing. "I bought 'em too small. I don't know why. I haven't been a 32 waist since high school."

"Wishful thinking."

"Yeah." He patted his belly. "You know, I really should lose some weight. It's beginning to pile up on me."

"Well, if you're serious, I'm sure I've got something to help." Jimmy rubbed his chin in thought. "I got some Orlistat and some Adipex... And I got this new thing, Melanotan. A clinical trial thing."

"Gimme the trial stuff. I always like being ahead of the curve." Jimmy fetched the box from another room and tossed it to Dane who promptly downed two pills with a swig of water. "They seem safe enough."

"I trust you," Dane explained.

"There may be a slight chance of explosive diarrhea and advanced monsterism," Jimmy joked.

"I'll let you know if it happens," Dane replied.

Jimmy snickered and wandered over to the computer to the side of Dane's desk. He looked at the page up on the screen. "Web surfing on company time?" Jimmy asked Dane.

"Just looking for porn." Dane said, sarcastically. "Seriously. It's a nursing uniform site. I need to get some new stuff for around here. New pants, at least. Plus these shoes are killing me anyway." He clicked on a button. "You need any stethoscopes, otoscopes, sphygmomanometers or lab coats while I'm ordering?"

"No, that's okay. I've got plenty. I buy my sphygmomanometers in bulk."



That night, Dane skipped the pizza, trying to at least believe the diet pills were working. He hopped right on the computer, ready to get into the next tutorial. As usual, the text on the screen drew him in and shut out the world. The title for this session was called "The Professional Look." After a few minutes, he was in a trance.



It was later that week when the package from the nursing uniform suppliers' arrived. Work came to a halt as Dane attacked the big box and tore it open. Fortunately, there were no patients in the office at that moment.

Dane immediately grabbed some items and ran off, to get out of the increasingly uncomfortable clothes he had been wearing all week. He took over an

exam room for himself as he changed. Once he was satisfied, he paraded himself in front of Jimmy, making a display of his new outfit.

“Hey, Doc. Pretty snazzy, huh?” Dane said, posing for Jimmy.

“Are you wearing *mules*?” Jimmy asked his friend.

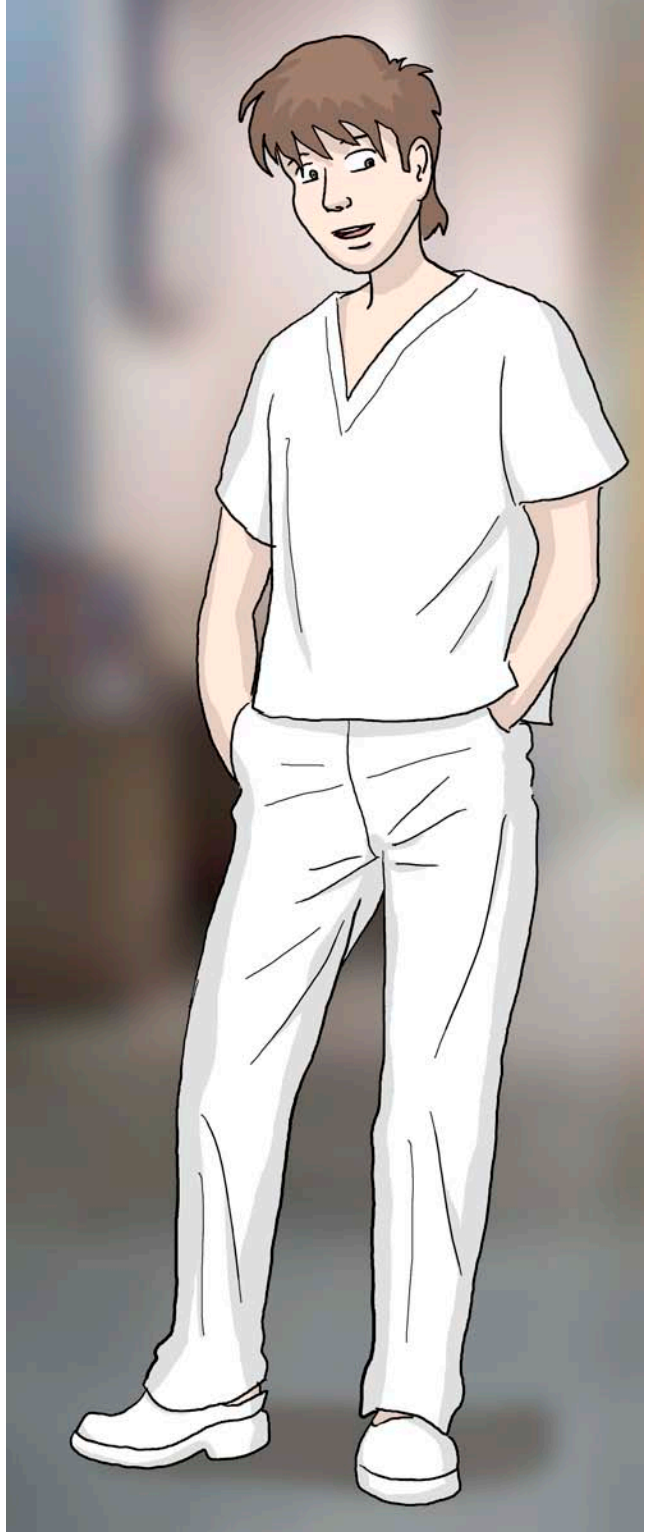
“Clogs,” Dane corrected. “Unisex Nursing Clogs. And they’re very comfortable, thank you for asking.”

“I suppose.” He took a closer look at the slightly strained expression on Dane’s face. “You know, you’re turning blue,” he observed.

“Just a little.” Dane popped the button on his new pants. “Wheeeew!” He let out the air he had been sucking in.

“Did you order 32 waist again?” Jimmy asked.

Dane looked at him incredulously. “No. I’m not an idiot.” He flipped open his fly to check the label. “28,” he said. Rolling his eyes and sighing, he glanced at Jimmy to see if he was amused at his mistake. He was. He then took a big suck of air and buttoned them back up and headed to



his desk, as if nothing happened. He organized some paper on his desk and tried to look busy, the suggestion being that Dane should leave him alone.

As soon as he did, Dane grunted. "Where did I put the pills?" he said. He then heard Jimmy snicker from down the hallway.



"What's tonight's lesson?" Jimmy asked as he entered his friend's bed room, leaving a glass of soda on the desk for him. He noticed that Dane was already dressed for bed, in his sweat shorts and frayed t-shirt. Dane was transfixed in front of the computer, his eyes wide open and his mouth slightly agape.

Dane shook his head abruptly as if he has dozed off. "Huh?" He looked over his shoulder at Jimmy. "Oh. The uh... Tutorial. Yeah. It's titled Work Delegation and Rules of Authority." He examined the drink Jimmy had just given him. "Is this diet?" He asked.

"Yeah. Oh, hey. I just got some lasagna delivered. Want any?"

"No thanks, I'll pass. The diet is starting to pay off finally. I don't want to ruin it now." He sipped the drink.

"Your choice," Dane said. "Just don't smell it. You'll be in trouble."

Curiosity got the better of Dane. "Maybe I should just take a look at it," he said, getting up out of his chair. Immediately, he started to lose his balance.

"You okay there, Dane?" Jimmy asked.

"Yeah... I'm just..." He then cringed in pain. "Oh, man..." He said faintly, just before he collapsed on the floor.

"Dane! You okay?" Jimmy yelled. "*Dane! Can you hear me?*"

Blackness took over Dane's world.



He awoke in a familiar place, the largest of the three examination rooms back at Jimmy's office. He felt quite out of sorts.

"Bud, you there?" Jimmy's voice asked. His blurry grinning visage then came into Dane's view.

Dane croaked out some words. "Yeeah... What..."

Answering the obvious questions, Jimmy interrupted him. "You collapsed at home, now you're in my office. How are you feeling?"

"A little out of it." Dane massaged his temples. "What happened?"