

On the Mend

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On the Mend

by [jemdetta](#)

Summary

“It’s Taylor,” Shifty said. “He fucked up, man.”

Notes

Dear Sailorhathor, you are the queen of YT recipients. I did write the Foopocalypse fic we talked about, but unfortunately my beta picked through what I had and mentioned there were some huge problems with the entire story, so it’s back to the drawing board for that one. In the meantime, here is something else I worked on as a treat, hope you like it!

The hotel phone rang at 4am, startling Dave from a light, restless doze. He shoved his head under the pillow to muffle the noise, hoping it was just a prank call from one of the other guys and that they would give up soon. It was only when the phone rang insistently for the third time that Dave let out a groan, flinging the pillow away and rolling over to fumble with the receiver, his eyes still shut. "Yeah?"

"Dave?" There was an odd, shaky tenor to Shifty's voice that made Dave's eyes flutter open, a little more alert.

"Chris? What's wrong?" Dave sat up in bed, dread pooling in his stomach.

"It's Taylor," Shifty said. "He fucked up, man."

Dave frowned. "Fucked up? Like, how?"

"He OD-ed on somethin'. He's on his way to the hospital right now, someone found him in his room."

Shifty was still talking, but Dave was barely registering anything he said. All he could think was, *Oh God no, fuck no, fuckfuckfuck--* Bile was rising in his throat, and Dave just wanted to stumble to the bathroom and violently throw up, grab something, smash something.

Thank God for Shifty, who must have deduced that Dave was in the middle of a major freakout. "Okay, y'know what-- get dressed, stay in your room. We're comin' to get you."

It was a testament to how shaken Dave was that he didn't remember who took him to the hospital, how they got there, or even *which* hospital it was. All he registered was him sitting in some clinical waiting room with Shifty pacing back and forth while Nate had his head buried in his hands. John Silva was talking in low, urgent tones to a team of doctors who were flipping through a multitude of charts, their expressions grave and stern. Dave only realized he was claspng his hands a little too hard when someone loosened his grip and stuck a styrofoam cup of inky black coffee in his hands -- Shifty, who gave him a sympathetic grimace and a clap on the back. Dave downed the coffee and didn't taste a drop of it.

Later, John huddled them all together and told them the gist of things: it'd been heroin, coupled with a bottle of JD on top of the booze they'd already consumed earlier last night at the bar across the hotel. Dave remembered leaving early because he'd been disturbed by the alarming speed with which Taylor had been knocking back all that gin and vodka, and the last straw had been when that rat-faced soundman - Matt or Mike or something - had shown up to the bar and slipped tiny baggies of coke or worse into Taylor's pockets.

Nate was now asking John how much longer Taylor would be in a coma. John replied that the doctors didn't know.

Dave knew everyone had been eyeing him nervously, as though they were afraid he'd break down or freak out. Maybe they weren't too far from the truth. "Can we go see him?" Dave asked quietly.

"Not just yet," John said. His hand on Dave's arm was gentle and strangely paternal. "We'll get you guys in ASAP, okay?"

Dave had never seen Taylor looking more vulnerable or fragile than he did right now, cocooned in that vast, NHS-regulation hospital bed with tubes running out of his body. Dave was only slightly comforted by the complicated-looking machines looming behind the bed, displaying Taylor's steady heart rate and God knew what else-- Dave didn't give a shit, as long as Taylor was alive.

He could hear the low murmurs of the other guys talking quietly, Nate asking the nurse a question. It was all just background noise to him, because all he could think was, *Wake up, buddy, you gotta wake up, please fucking wake up, please, dear God*. Dave remained silent and looked up only when Nate gently shook his shoulder. "Dave, anything you want to ask the nurse?"

Dave took a good look at her for the first time. She was plump, dark-haired and matronly, like his own mom, and this comforted him in a way he didn't know he needed. "Anyone sitting here?" he asked, pointing to the wooden, floral-upholstered chair by the side of Taylor's bed.

The nurse frowned, a little confused while Shifty and Nate exchanged wary glances. "N-no, I don't think so."

"Okay, good." Dave proceeded to sit down, and refused to leave throughout the rest of the day.

The next week passed in a blur, and Dave learned how to sleep upright in that ugly floral chair. The nurses had stopped bothering to attempt to chase him out once they realized the term 'visiting hours' meant nothing to him, so they started bringing him water and even towels whenever they made their rounds. Dave could not bring himself to leave Taylor's side, because he couldn't bear the thought of Taylor coming out of his coma and finding himself all alone.

There were some disturbances from the media, especially after John broke the news that the rest of their concerts for the summer had been cancelled. But the hospital staff were quite efficient about keeping the press out, and Dave was happy to play guard dog for Taylor's own ward.

The other guys came by everyday too, and it took Dave a while to catch on that Nate and Shifty had worked out an informal roster of sorts, taking turns to check in on Taylor and bring Dave food, coffee, his clothes - whatever he needed. When it became more apparent that Taylor wasn't going to die, Dave finally managed to keep something down and went to grab a substantial nap on the couch in the nurses' breakroom while Shifty swore up and down that he would get Dave immediately if Taylor came to.

Over the next few weeks, Dave started to become all-too-familiar with all those long-running English soaps, takeout from all the restaurants within a 1.5 mile radius of the Wellington Hospital, the sweet nurses assigned to Taylor's floor and the harried doctors who were perennially too tired and overworked to recognise their famous patient.

Every night, Dave prayed feverishly to a higher power he didn't believe in for Taylor to make it through.

One day, Shifty - bless his heart - brought two of their acoustic guitars to the hospital, so he and Dave wordlessly tuned the strings before attempting covers of things Taylor liked - Queen, the Eagles, Led Zeppelin. The nurses and hospital staff would stand in the doorway during their breaks, listening attentively and quietly applauding between songs, but Dave was playing for the one person who wasn't quite awake, the heart-rate machine beeping steadily in the back.

Taylor woke up sometime in August, when Dave could hear the hospital staff starting to complain about the heatwave terrorizing London. At this point, Nate had to return to the States to attend to an urgent family matter, although Shifty had remained in London with Dave. The doctors hadn't given them many updates, which was why Dave had been surprised to wake up from a nap and find Taylor with his eyes already open, staring at Dave in confusion.

"Hey man." Dave cleared his throat, reaching out to grasp Taylor's hand. He didn't know if he should run out and get the staff, get someone-- but Taylor was just staring blankly at him, as though Dave were a stranger.

"T, it's me," Dave said hesitantly. "How you feelin'?"

Taylor was eerily quiet for a few long moments, long enough that Dave was beginning to be worried. He refused to think about Kurt, who'd come back from the brink himself and once he'd recovered after his OD, he'd assured Dave that everything was fine, everything was good. His eyes, however, had been dead, lifeless. Dave would never forget that.

Dave tried again, his grip tightening on Taylor's hand. "Dude, it-it's going to be okay."

For some reason that galvanised Taylor into action, and he yanked his hand away from Dave's hold in an unreasonable fury. "Fuck off," he snapped, burying himself under the blankets. This was so much like what he always did whenever they were trying to wake him

and get him out of the tour bus that Dave let out a long, shaky sigh of relief, smiling for the first time in weeks.

“Yeah okay, I’ll fuck off.” Dave stood up, feeling like actual physical weight had sloughed off his shoulders, smiling as he went down to the nurses’ station to inform someone that Taylor was finally awake.

The hospital assigned a physiotherapist to Taylor, as the doctors were concerned about any possible muscle atrophy during his coma. The physio was a tall, burly Welshman named Dafydd who had introduced himself to Dave and Taylor with a hearty handshake before sheepishly admitting that he had every single one of their records. During Taylor's last week in hospital, Dave watched as his Welsh namesake taught Taylor all sorts of handy exercises and warned him not to hunch over whenever he played drums or his back would pay for it. Taylor, who was mostly silent and sullen whenever Dave was around, responded to Dafydd with such enthusiasm and camaraderie that Dave found himself both relieved and strangely jealous.

On the day before Taylor was due to be discharged, Dave let himself into the room. "You up for a walk?" he asked, more than certain that Taylor was antsy and already suffering from mild cabin fever.

Taylor eyed him in surprise. "Where?"

A few weeks ago, Shifty had told him about a surprise landmark that was just walking distance from the hospital, so Dave took Taylor there. They both watched from a distance as tourists struck Beatles poses while making their way across the iconic crosswalk outside the Abbey Road studios. "Whoa," Taylor said, smiling as they watched cars honking at the errant tourists holding up traffic. "I didn't know we were so close by."

"Me either," Dave admitted. "Shifty found it by accident, when he was getting takeout. Otherwise I wouldn't have known."

Taylor glanced at him. "Why not?"

Dave merely shrugged, ignoring Taylor who was scrutinizing him a little too closely. "You barely left my room, didn't you?" He didn't sound accusatory though. In fact, he sounded awed.

They fell back into silence, watching the Abbey Road crossing for a little while longer, and Dave felt Taylor slipping his hand into Dave's, humming 'Blackbird' under his breath. Maybe things were really going to be okay after all.

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