

Guest editorial: Two everyday enemies

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There's a story about a good man, a person like you and me. You know, one of the goodguys. He was out walking around the block one day, and some thugs jumped him and beat the living crud out of him. No shame. Just tore him up in broad daylight and left him there. They laughed as they walked away.



Eric Black Some people came by, and they were scared they might get jumped, too. You know, if it happened to him, there, in broad daylight

Some people came by, and they were texting. And you know you can't see anything around you when you're texting. You can't see past about 10 inches when you're on your phone, and so they just flat didn't see him.

Some people came by, and they figured he deserved it. I mean, if you end up like him, you must have done something to deserve it.

Frankie had just woken up.

It was midday, and he was still strung out, which was why he had just woken up. He wiped the drool off his face, rubbed the haze of last week's meth out of his eyes, clenched his teeth and started looking around. As he

scanned his living room—yeah, he didn't even make it to his bed—he saw out the front window a guy lying halfway in and halfway out of the bar ditch in front of the house. This was interesting.

Frankie got up from the couch. His body hurt all over. And he turned the knob and opened the front door and ambled out to the bar ditch to see what was going on. What he saw was that no good, so-n-so Tom from up the street, sprawled across the bar ditch with his clothes shredded, his blood flowing, some teeth broken and an arm twisted in a direction an arm isn't supposed to go.

Frankie hated Tom, and Tom hated Frankie. They had history. Frankie had abused Tom's sister after getting hooked on meth bought with Tom's money. Tom, for his part, had done everything he could to turn the town against Frankie.

Frankie's hands were shaking. It might have been coming off meth. It might have been rage. It might have been Tom dying in the ditch.

Frankie reached into his pocket for his phone, the one he used to score more meth.

He knew enough to call 911.

Frankie sat down in the grass next to Tom. His mind was numb. It might have been from the meth. It might have been from anger. It might have been Tom dying in the ditch.

Frankie waited until the police and the ambulance got there. He watched them load Tom into the ambulance. He didn't say a word. He watched them close the door and drive away.

Yeah, Frankie was a meth head, but he also was human. He couldn't just let Tom die in the ditch.

When Tom woke up a few days later, he had no clue where he was. He'd gone to the local hospital first, just to be flown to the trauma center at the big hospital in the city, but he didn't know that. When Tom woke up a few days later, he could smell Frankie before he could see him. He didn't know to hate the smell, but the smell turned his neck until his eyes saw Frankie.

Tom's heartrate jumped. The alarm went off. As the nurse came in, Tom hissed, "Get that blankety-blank out of here!" The nurse calmly replied: "You might want to reconsider, Mr. Thomas. Frankie's the reason you're still alive."

Tom's face contorted. It might have been the nurse's defiance. It might have been the pain. It might have been Frankie.

Tom stuttered, "Wha ... what? Huh?"

The nurse gave a brief explanation and left. Frankie sat quietly in his chair. Tom lay quietly in his bed. They both stared at the wall.

Lunch came and went. Dinner came and went. The nurses, they came and went, too. Frankie just sat there. Tom just lay there.

Tom knew Frankie didn't have what you could call a job. Tom knew Frankie had the shakes. And Tom figured all Frankie wanted was money for another hit.

Frankie knew Tom despised him. Frankie knew Tom wanted to see him sprawled out in the bar ditch. Frankie knew Tom just wanted him gone.

But life doesn't always give you what you want.

You might think Frankie had the upper hand in that hospital room. After all, Tom was the one who nearly died. But in this life, no one really has the upper hand.

The next day, as Tom's heart monitors beeped out a steady rhythm, Frankie's chest went helter skelter. Frankie made an unmistakable grunt, and Tom instinctively pressed the call button. The nurses arrived too late.

Frankie didn't have what you could call a job.

Frankie didn't have any more meth, and so with no meth and no money, Frankie didn't have what you could call a friend.

A few days later, still crippled up but able to get around, Tom stood quietly by a preacher who said all the words. The preacher finished and walked away. Tom just stood there, trying to understand the open hole at his feet.

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you”
(Luke 6:27-28)

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