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TIGER IN A CAGE

WRITTEN BY JAKE BARTON

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Characters:

The Tiger, a young boy in a coma

The Nurse

The Father

The Doctor

The Tiger: *I keep having this dream. I am a tiger. I am a tiger in a cage. I am surrounded by people in variations of a uniform. Most wear long coats. I can only assume they are safari hunters. Have they just caught me? Why does one hold what looks to be a dart in his hand? Too many unanswered questions—for such a simple tiger—in a cage.*

The Nurse: Mr. Williams, you're going to have to make a decision soon.

The Father: I can't. Not yet.

The Nurse: Well, at this point in time, the vitals are consistently showing no signs of life. Usually at a time like this, the family chooses—

The Father I need more time. I just...need more time.

The Tiger: *I look at them through the steel bars that restrain me. This is a first for me—being caged. Don't they know I'm too young to be caged-up like this? Tigers are meant to be free—to roam—to explore. Don't they know tigers live for their yet-to-be-discovered adventures? These people look at me with such fear. Are they afraid of something? What could they possibly be afraid of? Could it be me? I wish them no harm. I simply want to leave this confined place and live my life! They talk amongst themselves, but of course, I do not understand anything they say.*

The Doctor: Mr. Williams? I'm Doctor Reed. I understand what a difficult time this must be for you and your family. I'm here to answer any questions you might have. Sometimes, knowing certain facts—makes the decision process—well, it makes things easier

The Father How long...? How long can my child live like this?

The Doctor: It depends, of course. Each patient is as unique as the situation that brought them to this destination in the first place.

The Father He won't feel anything, will he?

The Doctor: No, he won't feel a thing.

The Father No pain?

The Doctor: No. No pain whatsoever. As I said, he won't feel a thing.

The Tiger: *I know I should feel anger. Tigers are known for their strength and aggressive behavior, but for some reason unknown to me—strangely—I feel weak. Perhaps I am just tired from the chase. Honestly, I do not remember being chased. That I am caged comes as a complete surprise to me. I do not remember... ever... feeling so...calm.*

The Father What do I do? Tell me, Doctor. What do I do?

The Doctor: You know I can't tell you that...

The Father My gut tells me *No!* This kid is a miracle! A miracle! Did you know that? We weren't even supposed to be able to have children, and then, *bam*—we were given the most precious child that was ever born. And he, of course, was followed by his little brother, Jacob, who we—we can't lose him, too, Doctor. We just can't lose another child... He's our pride and joy.

The Tiger: *My pride was small—consisting of my mother, my father, and my little brother.*

The Doctor: Oh, I'm sorry. I was unaware—

The Father Jacob was the meanest little fart you'd ever meet. Rebellious as the day is long. Where we used to live, there was a community pool. We'd let the kids play in the shallow end of the pool—supervised, of course. They had to have their little floatation devices on before we'd ever even let them near the water.

The Tiger: *My little brother and I would pounce about in the shallow waters near the embankment—splashing about with wild abandon.*