

EXCERPT

*BONE SLICE*

By Bette Golden Lamb & J. J. Lamb

A fast-moving gurney screeched through the metal double doors of the Robotics Surgical Suite. The circulating nurse glanced up at the wall clock.

*First surgery of the day and right on time.*

She gave herself thumbs up as the techs rolled the patient to the operating table.

“Okay, on three, let’s move her over.”

The patient’s eyes were wide open, even though she was juiced-up with pre-op meds. She seemed way too aware.

“Whah ... haw...” Her words made no sense and she looked scared.

Anesthesiologist, surgical nurses, and surgical techs were waiting—waiting for the two surgeons to make their entrance and get on with it.

More observers were in the OR suite this morning. Nothing but a pimple on everyone’s ass.

Both surgeons had finally scrubbed—even though the lead doc at the console didn’t really need to. They just liked gabbing with each other.

They took up their positions—one at the patient’s side to attend to the robotic arms and assist as needed, the other across the room to the console. From back there he would control the actual surgical instruments electronically.

“Let’s do it!”

The room swirled with activity: the anesthesiologist started the preliminary anesthesia, the assistant surgeon injected a long-acting local into four designated areas, and four trocars were inserted into the abdominal incisions.

Next, the robot was docked next to the patient and after some adjustment, a 3D camera filled the viewing screens with images of the patient’s insides.

The surgeon at the console complained about the view. “Let’s get some more gas to expand the abdomen.” He spoke to the circulating nurse. “How about some music?”

Then it was a go. Surgery moved with clocklike precision for the next half hour.

“What the fuck?”

Everyone looked at the monitors. They were all blank.

“Fix it!” demanded the doc. The hand controls went wild; he couldn’t stop them.

“I’m trying. It won’t focus,” the nurse at the 3D camera cart yelled back. She was furiously working with the controls.

He tore away from the console, grabbed a sterile gown, and double gloved.

“Pull those damn trocars!” he snapped. “Damn it! Get an instrument tray in here. Now! Move, for god’s sake,” he yelled at the nurse who was unwrapping the tray of sterile instruments. “We need to open her up, now!”

Telly monitors were going crazy. Alarms were screeching.

He grabbed a scalpel, slashed a long abdominal incision. Retractors stretched open the wound. Blood gushed, poured out onto his gown, the table, the floor.

“Pack those sponges. More! Suction! Dammit!”

Soon there was a long, steady beep.

The surgeon and his assistant pulled their hands from the patient’s mutilated insides.

He shook his head and looked at the clock.

“Time of death, eight-fifty-seven.”