While Moonlighting

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(Fam Med 2013;45(7):512.)

A rural hospital on windward Oahu, where I worked weekends long ago to earn a few bucks, down payment on a house.

Three stretchers under spotlights, a doctor's small office, outdated texts—not much for an ER far from the medical center.

Saturday night. Pineapple fields yielding to darkness, as a mom and dad, two sons drive home from the movies.

A drunken sailor runs a light. Thud of metal, tinkle of broken glass. Silence... then the wail of sirens.

How do you say, “Your wife is dead” after stitching the lacerations on her husband's face? What do you say to the man unharmed but for bruises, who does not know what he has done? You want to shake him, yell at him. “Do you know you have killed someone!”

And the boys, the battered boys. Who will help their father tell them? You will. It is all up to you.