

I hated to go to the ER, but I felt that I was going to die if I waited any longer.

The drive to Pristine Hospital was uneventful. Arriving there, I parked the car and sat there for a minute. It was 5:00 pm. I got out of the car and walked toward the entrance.

There was no wait at the check-in desk.

As soon as I checked in, they had a bed waiting for me. The physician's assistant who performed the initial intake was preternaturally good-looking – like an actor.

I waited in bed for an hour, while they ran some tests and started an IV port. Time passed slowly. I began to surmise that something was wrong.

The nurse came back after the 7:00 pm shift change and let me know they needed to wheel me into a different room.

She told me to just lay back and relax. I couldn't. My instincts were screaming. I had a death grip on my new iPhone. I had not had the phone long, and already it was hacked.

The nurse wheeled me down a long hallway and into a part of the hospital that looked like it was under construction. The floors and equipment were all draped in clear plastic tarp material.

She opened the sliding glass door at one of the rooms, and wheeled my bed inside, re-attaching the IV, which I presumed to contain just fluids, since I told them I was severely dehydrated.

I laid there a while considering the situation. I didn't like this. I wanted out. Now.

A doctor in a white coat stepped into the cramped room. He looked as though he had stepped out of a line-up of soap opera actors ready for their next big audition. Saying nothing, he methodically checked my IV.

“Are you keeping me here a little while longer to ensure that everything’s okay?” I asked suspiciously.

“Something like that,” he replied. Then he pulled up my hospital gown and laid his bare hand on my stomach. His eyes met mine. He had an odd look in his eyes, as though he was looking at a cadaver. He left without a word. That gesture reminded me of how a demon might look, patiently waiting to collect another soul.

Then I noticed something else. I had a guard outside my door. A twenty-something young woman had posted up in a chair directly in front of the sliding glass door to my room, facing me, not quite eight feet away.

And then I noticed the counter behind her where three or four “health care professionals” were pretending to work while surreptitiously watching me.

I looked around me and felt a silent scream rising in my throat – my usual bravado gone.

In the past five years, my ex-husband and two family members had repeatedly tried to kill me, motivated by the sizable life insurance policy taken out by my ex-husband. Unsuccessful, he had hired multiple hitmen to come after me relentlessly. Still no success. Now it was whole groups of people?! O God.

I used to think I was bullet-proof – but this might really be it.

I got my phone out and started scrolling through my contacts to see if anyone would be willing to come rescue me. I knew for a fact now, that they were not going to let me walk out of here.

My stomach had started to feel better. Maybe I had just been severely dehydrated and that had subsided with the IV fluid treatment. A young man wearing a lab coat walked in just then,

with a brisk, business-like demeanor. He carried a small, paper medicine cup in his hand. He didn't bother introducing himself. He stood, studying the digital read-out on the IV pole.

“So, have you worked here long?” I fished for info while he checked my IV.

“Yes, for two years,” he replied, absentmindedly.

“Can I leave soon?” I didn't want to seem too eager. I didn't want them to realize I had their game figured out...yet.

I was watching for my opportunity to run. But now I was hemmed in – surrounded. The hall outside my room was eerily quiet. I realized that I was the only “patient” in this section of the hospital.

“Not yet. We have some medicine for you.” He handed me a green pill. I took it and swallowed it with some water he handed me in a small plastic cup.

“That's good,” he said approvingly. “I'll be back to check on you.”

After he left, I sent a couple of text messages out. I didn't have many friends. I messaged my neighbor at Jefferson Harbor Apartments. She was a hard-working single mom. Maybe she was still up...Uh oh...whatever was in that pill the orderly had given me was making my stomach cramp worse than ever. I had to use the bathroom.

I eased myself out of the bed, laying my phone inside my purse, hoping it would be safe there. I hobbled toward the sliding glass door, weakly. My guard came to the door to see what I wanted. One of the fake hospital workers behind the counter lifted her eyes to check on me.

I told my guard I needed to use the restroom. She unhooked the IV and led me down the hall. The ensuing dysentery caused me to return to the restroom twice more. I was feeling much weaker now.

I lay back in bed after my third trip to the restroom.

My guard cackled like a witch and said to the others standing nearby, “She’s dying.”

I rolled over, grabbed my phone and tried to find a journalist I could reach out to online. I desperately wanted to let someone know about the terrorist threat, the bombs, and the revolution before it was too late. I wanted my death to mean something.

I found a contact with the Village Green Gazette, and I tried to send a quick email – but it didn’t go through.

At that moment, the young man returned with another green pill in his hand. I hesitated when he tried to hand it to me.

Reluctantly, I took it. I held it in my hand and asked him for a cup of water, which he handed to me quickly.

“You need to take your medicine,” he said in a commanding tone.

I nodded weakly and put my hand to my mouth, taking a quick swallow of the water. I handed him the cup and he took it. Satisfied, he walked away and slid the glass door shut behind him.

I motioned to my female guard. She had a demonic grin on her face as she watched me, in rapt anticipation of my imminent demise.

She came to the door, and I got up for one more trip to the restroom. She walked me down the hall through the piles of clear, plastic tarps lining the floor. I entered the restroom by myself and closed the door behind me.

I turned to the commode and opened my hand, dropping the green pill into the commode. I flushed it and watched it swirl down the pipes. I washed my hands and came out to be walked back to my room by my babysitter.

That took care of that. But what was next?

On the trip back to my room, I scoped out my surroundings a bit more carefully.

Looking to the right, I saw an exit door to the outside – right there! But I was too weak. I knew I couldn't make it. I would never be able to outrun my guard in the condition I was in. I sighed as we made our way through the tangled tarps back down the hall to the dead end – my glassed-in fishbowl room.

I got back into bed. I had had enough of this. I picked up my phone and dialed 911. I told the operator I needed the police, and I gave her my location. The operator said that someone was on their way.

I heard someone outside in the hall say, “She just called 911!” They could see every move I made on my phone.

I could feel it coming – the preliminary quiet in the moments before a crisis ensues.

Standing up, pretending to reach for another cup of water, I reached into my purse and got my switch blade out. I surreptitiously concealed it inside the folds of my hospital gown and then slipped back into bed.

Not a moment too soon.

Another health care provider/actor, burst into the room. He was medium height, slender and was wearing a full plastic shield-style face mask, gloves, footies and head-to-toe green

scrubs. He came at me with his hands raised like he was going to choke me. They had sent him in to finish me off before the police arrived.

Not so fast.

I whipped out my switch blade from under the sheet and snapped it open holding it up where he could see it – a defiant look in my eyes.

Shock and fear crossed his face. He turned quickly and fled the room without a word.

I got up out of bed, adrenaline pumping – just in time to face my next attacker. Another pseudo-doctor came in almost at a run. He was younger and taller than the last one. I held up my blade in his face boldly.

“Don’t do this,” I stated. Half-pleading, half-commanding.

He also turned and fled the room.

The hall was quiet and empty. My guard was gone, probably off somewhere helping her team formulate their next plan of action.

One thing was certain. Their intentions were that I would only leave this hospital one way: in a body bag.

I got back into bed, conserving my energy for the next round of terror.

This was it. I braced myself to meet death; let come what may. The seconds ticked by like minutes, the minutes like hours.

The police officer arrived. I talked to him from my bed as he stood in the hallway outside my door. A woman had also arrived on the scene, presumably from another part of the hospital. She joined the officer in the hallway.

“Officer, can I please leave? They have finished their treatments, and I am ready to leave now!” I pleaded. The switch blade was tucked safely back inside my purse.

“No Ma’am. They can’t discharge you yet because they say you must have a psychological evaluation before they can let you go,” said the officer. He was an older gentleman and he looked sincere.

“Oh. Okay, thank you.” I replied.

I sank back down into the bed feeling defeated as he turned and walked away.

They really had this one sewn up.

Hopefully, the fact that I called 911 and a real police officer had laid eyes on me provided me with a tiny amount of leverage.

The female doctor who had joined the cop walked away and my “guard” was back in her chair posted at my door.

“Bad acting!” I yelled at her. Then I rolled over facing the wall.

I may have dozed off...and then the female doctor I had seen in the hallway with the cop came in and took a seat with her laptop. I sat up.

She asked for my knife. I grabbed my purse and dumped it out on the bed, handing her both my knives and my mace. She looked at them in surprise. Then she began to conduct an interview.

She seemed much more intelligent than the others. I hoped and prayed that she was for real.

During the interview I was calm. I decided to go into a little detail about my ex-husband Bo and why I was sick in the first place. I told her about our daughter Persephone and what had happened. I let her know I was writing a book and I planned to expose him.

“You shouldn’t make him mad,” she stated bluntly.

At that, I was seething. I shouldn’t make him mad? How about he shouldn’t make me mad!

After she had gathered all the information she thought she needed, she started wrapping up our interview.

“When can I leave?” I asked.

“If you can get someone to come in and vouch for your mental status, you can leave after that. Otherwise, you’ll have to wait to see the psychiatrist in the morning,” she replied. She left the room.

I pondered the interview and waited...

She came back with reinforcements.

Eight people in scrubs crowded into my cramped little room. My heart started pounding and I sat up.

A woman held a tray decked with an array of small vials filled with clear liquid and needles. O God! This was it. It was over.

I started crying. The nurse I had talked to earlier stood over me like an evil Nazi scientist – with three husky male orderlies behind her holding restraints.

“We can do this the easy way, or we can do this the hard way,” she stated coldly. “You can cooperate, or we can hold you down.”

“I’ll cooperate,” I said faintly. “This is murder,” as I looked her dead in the eye. “May God have mercy on your souls.”

She wasn’t deterred.

The woman with the tray started handing the vials one at a time to Nurse Nazi, naming them. Four powerful sedatives, strong enough to knock out a rhino, went into my IV port. In seconds – it was lights out.

When I woke up, I was extremely groggy. I could barely hold my head up. It was the afternoon of the next day I had been unconscious for more than 12 hours.

A nurse came into my room and wheeled a television on a cart to the foot of my bed.

I looked around. My guard was gone. So were all the plastic tarps. Hospital staff bustled about in the hallway. It was the day shift. Were they legit?

The nurse turned on the TV. A nicely dressed lady with dark hair spoke to me from the screen. It was the psychiatrist.

“Good afternoon. I’m here to do your evaluation,” she began.

“Okay,” I responded. My voice sounded far away, as though it belonged to someone else.

“How are you?” she asked.

“I’m feeling much better. I’ve been sick for weeks. I thought maybe someone put something in my food...”

“Oh really?” She raised her eyebrows.

My head dropped forward a little, and I almost lost consciousness again.

And then, something deep inside me shifted. My inner self whispered, “You’re about to mess up. Wake up and think fast.”

“Actually, it was just a case of food poisoning. Bad chicken. The doctors and nurses have done a great job of treating me. I feel 100% better.” I flicked my eyes to the “nurse” standing by my bed and noted the look of fear in her eyes.

Yes. Things were turning right now in my favor.

“Okay, great. That is good to hear,” she responded.

“Yes, Ma’am. And I feel ready to be discharged. It’s Saturday, and I am supposed to be packing today. I am moving tomorrow. So, I need to get home now.” I finished up definitively.

“Okay. Well, I agree with you. You seem fit to be discharged. I’ll send the paperwork over to the nurse and they’ll be in to help you get ready to go shortly,” she stated matter-of-factly, satisfied with my response.

I leaned back in the bed as the “nurse” turned off the TV and gave me a sidelong glance as she wheeled it aside and left the room.

The interview with the psychiatrist had not gone their way. Doubtless, they had hoped that by pumping me full of drugs, they would make it impossible for me to make it through the psych eval.

I had won this battle. But the war was just heating up...