



## The 48 Hour Nightmare

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My new iPhone worsened one of the low points of my life. For years, I've been earnestly begging my yellow-loving, lavender scented daughter to accept therapy. She endured a few sessions to graduate high school but mostly refused. Her anxiety, depression and ongoing struggle to regulate intense mood swings has been taking a toll on her 19 years of life and the rest of us too.

Six months into the pandemic we were feeling waves of emotional heaviness. Six months of sharing small spaces, slamming doors, closing windows to hush the yelling between my two daughters. That Sunday morning, I treat myself to a favorite pandemic coping skill and I breathe easy on my long beach walk with feet in the sand, fresh air, water ebbing and flowing. I pull up to the house and take a sacred pause before re-entry. I walk into a nightmare.

My younger daughter hurriedly meets me at the door and shares that she and her sister were fighting, word daggers thrown, comparisons magnified and then said, "She cut my hair but it's OK. It's no big deal. We are fine."

My stomach drops, my throat constricts, my heart races. "It's not OK, I'm so sorry."

"She also cut my stuffed animals."

I hesitate and whisper, "Pooh bear?"

"Yes, but it's OK. She said she will fix it."

I open the door to big sister's room and stare at the chaos of clothes, trash, writing on walls, and her yelling, "Get the fuck out!" I stay at the door.

"This is not OK. You could have hurt your sister. Are you going to hurt yourself? Have you tried? Are you planning to?" All the questions. Her screaming escalates and she crumbles, crying and apologizing. I inch closer and quietly say, "It's time to get help." She nods her head and starts packing her essential oils, lotions, and all the calming things. I add vegan oat bars knowing that, wherever she's going, food will be an issue.

I call Kaiser and I'm guided to take her to the emergency room where there will be a team to assess and ascertain support. Why not a different place with intensive therapy? For the first time ever, she is willing to go. We go. Crying. Listening to Bob Dylan's, *Don't Think Twice ...* tears pouring down our faces ... *It's Alright*.

She walks into the emergency room alone because of fucking Covid. I can't breathe and I sit in the car and tell myself that she's safe and getting help. My neighbor

of 20 years and friend of the heart pulls up next to my car. We cry, I ramble, and I can't leave the parking lot. We keep vigil together.

The texts start coming from her inside the emergency room saying: "This was a bad idea. It's fucking Covid. People are sick. The lights are on. I'm hungry. I don't trust the food. It's not vegan. I have to get out of here. I love you. I'm sorry." My friend calls the nurse. We let the nurse know my daughter isn't doing well, and she's a runaway risk. I'm frozen and my friend of the heart stays for hours while we cry in separate cars because of Covid.

Night dries my tears and I call my soul sister in all ways. She answers at midnight on the East Coast and intuitively reminds me about, "Water. You need a shower. Water always helps." I showered and my daughter and I text through the night. She is still in the emergency room because there are no beds in the psych hospitals. Fucking Covid. Mental health issues are on the rise ... it's a global pandemic.

Morning comes and I cook vegan food and her sister drops it off to the emergency room. How can she still be in the ER with the lights on, machines beeping, and trauma all around? She sounds anxious, sleep deprived, scared, and wants to be home but needs the help so we soldier on.

After 24 hours, my daughter is transferred to a psych hospital and the nightmare takes hold. She calls me but all the calls go straight to voicemail. I never hear the ring. This is pure torture. I never hear the rings! The new iPhone isn't working right. She's calling me from the psych hospital and I'm missing the calls on my new, ridiculously expensive iPhone. I hold my phone even while I'm on the toilet and never feel a buzz. I frantically start googling everything. I call the psych hospital over and over and she picks up the hospital phone and for forty-five minutes it's mostly tears and some whispered talking.

The nurses disregard her vegan requests so she declares that she is Pagan and begs for the food we packed. One nurse's compassion is sparked. My daughter reveals to me that it's scary, and she witnesses people calling out for help, and the nurses are short and frustrated. They subdue the patients with meds. Then, her voice shaking, her breath shallow, she tells me in a barely audible voice that older men are asking to have sex with her. They are coming into her room and she's scared to go to sleep. All this to get therapy help? This is one big mistake. We hang up with the promise that she will tell a nurse with warm eyes above the mask that she's scared to fall asleep.

I'm utterly flabbergasted when I miss calls from the psychiatrist and more from my daughter. No buzz, no ring, OMG, my new iPhone. I feel like a shitty mom. I call back repeatedly and the psychiatrist says, "Your daughter refuses medication. This is not the right place for her. Come and get her. Discharge is a long mess because of Covid. I ask to speak to a nurse about the sexual harassment. Our conversation stops mid-sentence when she walks through the doors. My yellow-loving, lavender scented girl gets in the car and we drive home astoundingly grateful.

