

Prologue

It was July 21, 2006 when I woke up in the emergency room unable to sit up on my own or move my arms or legs. I guess I was having trouble breathing as the doctor asked me if he could intubate me. This consisted of putting a tube down my throat to help me breath, I told him "No" since I had a medical background and knew how hard it was to get weaned off those machines. So instead I was put on 2 liters an hour by nasal cannula, consisting of a tube under my nose blowing oxygen into me.

I was sent to ICU (intensive care unit), where they put the most serious cases. Then all I remembered was having all these people around me, hooking me up to machines, putting sticky things on my chest to monitor my heart, a cuff around my arm to monitor my blood pressure, and a monitor on my finger to watch my oxygen level. That's not to mention the numerous IVs they had me on.

With the beeping of the machines to monitor me, I was only able to get a few hours of sleep before being woken up by a nurse.

It was five o'clock in the morning and the sun had not yet risen. The nurse came in as it was time for me to take some pills. I was not sure what they were for. I just wanted to get back to sleep.

Just as I began to doze back off to sleep in came a group of doctors.

I first heard them talking to each other about my case but I didn't understand anything that they were saying. She looked like the chief doctor, as she had a long white coat; she began asking me questions, while giving commands, as if examining me.

As I was lying on my back, my arms were bent up on my chest with my hands in a tight fist. I could neither move my arms or legs, either open or close my hands. The doctor introduced herself as Dr. Ross. She was not that tall maybe 5 foot with short brown hair, and she looked to

be in her early 40s. As she was talking to me her voice was very calm and soft, it gave me comfort as she examined me. She first put her finger in my tight grasp of a fist and asked me to squeeze her finger and no matter how hard I tried my fingers wouldn't move. Then she tested my arms and legs, they wouldn't move either. She proceeded to pull out a rubber hammer with a metal point at the bottom. She used this to test my reflexes, tapping on my elbows and knees expecting a reaction, only there was none. She finally used the metal end on the bottom of my feet, expecting my foot to get them to arch and my toes to curl up, my feet did neither. I knew that wasn't a good sign. She said that she wanted to run some more tests before saying what she thought was going on, but that I would probably get stronger as the swelling went down on my spine.

She explained that when I was in the ER they did an MRI of my spine and found out it was swollen with lesions, so they put me on prednisone, through the IV, to bring down the swelling. Every morning the neurologists would come into my room to examine me, looking for any change, only there wasn't any. It had been a week and the doctors had completed numerous tests, looking to find a reason for my paralysis. The doctor asked me if my cats were sick, thinking I could have possibly gotten an infection from them, which they weren't.

An ophthalmologist put some orange drops in my eyes, to check the swelling in my brain. This was normal but it did cause me to have yellow tears and my eyes to dry out badly.

I was also seen from an infectious disease doctor. Apparently I was found with my back against the wall, long enough to cause pressure sores on my back, on both my shoulder blades, that he wanted to skin graft. A skin graft consisted of numbing the area, by injecting lidocaine with a needle, then using a scalpel he cut out a 1 inch in diameter area and then sutured it closed. I asked him how long it would take to get the results, sadly he told me it would take a few days,

and they had to send it out to another hospital. All I felt was despair because that meant I had to wait to find out what my future was going to be.

As I lied in bed on my back, my arms were bent up to my chest with my hands in a tight fist; the one thing that I was able to move was my head from side to side. The nurse had to tape down a big gray button onto my pillow so that I could press it if I needed the nurse.

Lying there paralyzed I was depending on others for everything, from changing the channel to eating. The cafeteria would bring my tray to my bedside, where I would watch it sit until someone got the chance to feed me, as if I were a baby.

A towel would be put around my neck, while they would put a spoonful of food in my mouth, and give me my drink with a straw. The whole time I was wondering if that was what my life was going to consist of, dependent on others.

My mom didn't show up till the next day, like I expected she wasn't very comforting. She focused more on herself than me, walking around the room, saying she needed something to drink because she was dehydrated, only after one swallow she was fine. I was used to the over dramatization, as that was my mom. After only being there a couple of hours, she said she had things to do at home and had to leave.

I didn't really expect anything more from her, though most of the times as I lay in bed alone in the intensive care unit, watching all the other families staying with their relatives made me feel so alone. At night I would cry quietly into my pillow when nobody could see me, or wipe my tears for me.