

Dizzy Dan's Hologram: Part I – ER

Dan Neuth is a Street Roots vendor and periodic writer. This is the first of three columns, told through his perception of events surrounding his recent attempted suicide and recovery.

BY DAN NEUTH
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Diarrhea dribbled down my leg. I fell onto the toilet with my underwear still on. The 50-60 sleeping pills I had taken were making me lose control of my muscles and bowels. I stunk.

I felt peace. I heard my wife yelling. It struck me as odd that it wasn't at me. Why was the toilet moving? Some part of my shrinking awareness realized she was calling 911 and was angry, then nothing.

It was dark and cold; people carried me outside and put me on a gurney, then nothing.

Something was hitting my chest. Someone was yelling my name. It pulled me out of oblivion.

Oblivion is not an experience. It is nothing. And that was my goal, but not for the first time. I have a string of failed attempts to end the hologram, but I had always kept things quiet before. This was a public event. It was not my intent to make such a big stink.

My chest being thumped increased my awareness to a numb, detached state. Demands to wake up, move my hands or legs or open my eyes filtered in. My nervous system was way too suppressed to respond yet. "Dan, wake up" and other such meaningless comments were being said. I heard complaints about the sickening smell surrounding me, how drug addicts were using emergency room resources; how low my oxygen level was; how my blood pressure wasn't registering and the difficulty of getting the I.V. started because of the blood pressure.

I was too sedated to move or talk, but I did manage to change my breathing to make a different noise. They picked up on this and became more persistent. One thing I didn't expect was the amplified pain from the needle digging around under my skin looking for a vein.

I started involuntarily grunting when one of the needles seemed to jab a nerve. Pain and sleep are not compatible. My increasing awareness was centered in pain. It's an ugly way to come to. My startled response started to kick in and my arm jerked a little. Stabbing the needle into a new spot.

I tried to say, "That hurt." The emergency staff recognized my attempt to speak and started asking me what I took. I said I took sleeping pills. They asked what kind of sleeping pills, but I didn't know. It was an old prescription my wife had quit taking over a year ago that was still hanging around the house.

They had tubes and wire taped and stuck into me. They asked me if my wife could come into the room. And I felt my first emotion of the event: resentment toward her for calling 9-1-1. I said she could come back anyway. Three staff left the room and one made a comment about the smell after leaving the room. And then, I felt my second emotion: embarrassment. I had never intended the paramedics or emergency room staff should have to smell my shit. I had expected the coroner, whom I would never meet, to deal with those problems. Shit happens.

My wife came back crying, which was a big change from earlier in the evening. She had wanted me to leave, but I was afraid of experiencing homelessness again. I no

longer had the mental toughness to sleep outside and the homeless shelters are a nightmare. I knew I would become one of the hopelessly lost people who do things like yelling at random people on the sidewalk or at a signpost.

She said she wouldn't let me die. To me, suffering through a complete mental breakdown from living on the street with compromised mental and emotional resiliency seemed a fate worse than death.

My wife cried and held my hand while I coldly looked back. The staff asked some questions and I referred them to my wife because I couldn't speak well and didn't remember details. She was the only one who knew what kind of medication I took.

They asked me to drink about a pint of charcoal suspended in some kind of liquid. I tasted the awful liquid. I was told the alternative was to stick a tube down my throat. Pain is a powerful motivator in the moment. I drank the charcoal.

Within 30 minutes some of that charcoal wanted to come back out. I still didn't have control of my body. Three staff moved me onto a chair with a bucket in the seat. Something jet-black, oily and a smell out of hell came out. Even I felt nauseated at this point.

I apologized and it was lame. This was an assault. If I had done this in public, I would have caught a felony. I am honestly deeply sorry the staff had to endure this. I don't think my emergency room visit was a wise use of resources and I think many people will agree with me.

The ER staff told me I was going to Cardiology, which was a real experience and a topic for the next column.



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