

A Night in Detroit General

Suzy Kleencheez

1970

Editor's Note: The following is a taped rap by a young sister from East Detroit who was able to get a first hand glimpse of the medical care afforded the city's poor.

I took an overdose of pills and I'd been throwing up and I couldn't sleep or anything, and I had to be admitted to Detroit General Hospital because I was in the city.

The whole trip was a complete nightmare. I went in to the hospital at two a.m. and didn't get out until five o'clock the next afternoon. The only treatment I got the whole time was intravenous feeding and one shot in the ass. I was supposed to be "under observation" but I was in the emergency room the whole time and they wouldn't even stop by my bed when I pushed the call button.

When we got in there, they started asking all these questions first thing. I was really messed up and couldn't really go about it. A couple of friends who went down with me tried to answer these questions. I was sitting there ready to pass out, but of course I couldn't get any help until all the forms were filled out.

When I got into the emergency room they just put me on this cot and stuck this needle into my arm and took all these cuts. They said first they couldn't admit me until my parents sent me something saying it was all right. Another friend acting as my mother called in for me to be admitted to the hospital.

After this they used intravenous feeding and during this time I was just laying there, I couldn't move or anything the whole night.

One emergency case was a girl who had been in a fire and was dying of smoke inhalation. Nobody seemed concerned about that. They were just standing around joking about it, and while I was laying there it was driving me crazy. Finally, after checking the heartbeat and everything, they decided she had been dead for about 20 minutes. And they went back to their joking.

The place is pig paradise, too, man. Pigs are all over, coming in and out, they seemed to have free run of the place. Detroit pigs, sheriff deputies, private guards—all types, big and small. If they paid to have hospital staff there instead of all those pigs, they might be able to cure somebody.

Also in the room were a couple of patients who were mentally crazy or something. I almost got hit by three intravenous bottles because they strapped this lady's arms down and she'd kick the bottles and they'd strap her legs down and then she'd move it with her side or something just kicking it with any kind of motion she could.

So I was moved to another lady, an old lady—and she was really getting carried away. She was really mad because she had to eat with the left hand. She was getting blood in her right arm and was lying flat on her back. She was saying, "Isn't this a fuckin' bitch. You can't even eat in this place." And she was trying to rip the needle out of her arm.

There were like about three or four of these people who were throwing things and stuff. They were all strapped down to their carts and wheeled out to the psycho ward. Except for this one lady who was just screaming all the time. They just left her there screaming.

It was terrible on my nerves, which were pretty messed up anyway. I was so sick and lonely and they wouldn't tell me what they were going to do, but I didn't dare cry because this one guy told me that if they thought I was a depressant they'd wheel me out too.

I couldn't eat too good when I finally got some food, because I still had this needle in me, and I was afraid it would go through the other side of my arm. Also, the mattress on the bed kept slipping down the end. They tried to tape up the mattress and that was no good. And they finally gave up and let me slide.

In the end, I almost had to go to the psycho ward anyway. Jo and Donna were waiting for me outside for five hours. But the nurse wouldn't let me up to see or let me use the phone.

This doctor said I had to stay to see a shrink before I was released. I knew this meant I'd have to stay there another night. And they'd bring in my parents and start interrogating me about "where'd you get the dope" and stuff. So I was starting to get desperate.

Finally some kind of guard came in and told me there was someone who had to speak to me outside. They didn't stop me so I just went out and met up with my friends again.

They asked if I was released, and somebody who knew nothing at all said "Yeah, I guess so" and we left.

I was still weak 'and sick. I slept fourteen hours that night. But I took off as quickly as I could out of the hospital. I haven't heard anything since then.

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