

# Chapter 42

Chapter 42 marks a time in my life when my freedom was completely stripped away, and my world became unrecognizable. I was confined in a treatment center where even the most basic rights were denied. I couldn't go outside, drive, or even enjoy privacy. My blood was drawn weekly, and every moment of my life was supervised—whether I was sleeping, watching TV, or changing clothes. A strict schedule controlled my every move, with mandatory therapy sessions and endless meetings. The sense of being trapped was overwhelming, and I couldn't escape the constant feeling that my life was being directed by others. Watching the flow of people in and out of the facility—therapists, doctors, and security guards—while I was stuck in my room only deepened my isolation. It made me feel as though I was locked in a cage, with no control over my life.

I was told repeatedly that everything was happening for my own good, but it felt like abandonment. My family, despite claiming to support me, acted like I was a threat. I did everything that was expected of me, following every rule, but it never felt like it was enough. My visits with my children were brief and controlled—only allowed if I was compliant. I turned to my only lifeline, Cade, who called to check on me during this time. His stories, like the one about getting bitten by a scorpion, became one of the few distractions from the horrors I faced daily. Even though Cade's tales seemed far-fetched, they gave me some sense of normalcy and connection. The endless therapy sessions, the new medication that made me feel like a shell of myself, and the feeling of being watched 24/7 created a crushing weight on my psyche.

The medication transition was one of the hardest parts of this experience. After years of being on Prozac, I was abruptly switched to lithium—a drug that left me sluggish, disoriented, and unable to function. My sense of time became warped, and I found myself unable to recognize my surroundings or even my own thoughts. The more I was

medicated, the more I felt like my mind was slipping away. I wasn't the same person I had been before. And yet, I was treated like a criminal. My security team, who had always been with me, now looked at me like I was a threat. The invasive monitoring continued—blood pressure checks three times a day, blood draws with a team of staff watching over me. I was treated as if I was dangerous, as if I might somehow explode at any moment.

Being immobilized and deprived of movement was another form of punishment. As a dancer, movement was my life. It was how I expressed myself, and it's how I remained grounded. But in the center, I was kept in a chair for hours, unable to move. The lack of physical activity made me feel like I was losing touch with myself. I was disconnected from my body and from who I once was. I began to notice how my body was changing—not in healthy ways, but because I was sitting still for far too long. It was a stark contrast to the energetic life I had known, and it was unsettling. The only moments of relief came in the form of dreams—dreams where I could run and be free. But when I woke up, the stark reality of my situation hit me again.

It wasn't just the physical toll that was damaging—it was the emotional and psychological isolation. The time I spent in that place felt endless, like a nightmare from which I couldn't wake. Even when I was moved to a different building, still under the same system, the change didn't offer much comfort. I wasn't alone anymore, but being around other patients didn't bring me peace. I was still trapped in a world where every moment felt controlled, where my identity and spirit were chipped away at with every passing day. I wanted to be free, to experience life without the suffocating weight of constant surveillance and judgment. But freedom felt like an impossible dream, something that might never be within reach again. Even when I was among others who shared similar experiences, I felt like an outsider in my own life, disconnected from the world I once knew.