

Excerpt from Chapter 3 Into the Hands of God – pages 30 - 32

I finally let go of my husband's hand. I was terrified, yet it was time for me to be brave—right? Deep in my heart, I knew the only One who could give me strength. The doors to a sterile, white hall opened. I was wheeled in on the gurney, surrounded by the transfer assistants.

They gently said, "It's time to go."

I could no longer hold back tears, and neither could my family. One by one, they each kissed my forehead and said, "Helo, I love you."

I wept and softly replied, "I love you, too. Always know that God has each of us in His grip." I had so much more that I wanted to say, but there was no time left.

One of the transfer assistants repeated, "It's time to go now."

I released my husband's hand reluctantly and felt his grip even after we let go. I looked back at him as long as I could, and whispered again, "I love you." We turned a corner, and then I couldn't see my family anymore.

The heavy doors to the main surgical hallway opened. I felt a swish of cold air pass by. On either side of the gurney were two men dressed in blue—the transfer assistants. I looked up at their faces; they looked determined and intense. They were moving me steadily and quickly. The gurney was strong, with metal railings, and felt like it was on ice skates as it glided across the floor. At that point, I noticed the starched, crisp, white sheets that covered me. The hallway was bright. White. Wide. I felt like I was in a tunnel, staring up at the lights on the ceiling.

I told myself, *"I'm leaving my family only for a little while. Do not look at what you might lose; look at all that you have. You are in the skilled hands of an incredible neurosurgeon, and the hands of God are incomparably stronger."*

The gurney turned again, then stopped, and another set of doors whooshed open. We passed through. The doors shut behind me and made a loud, mechanical click that I will never forget. I was shaking inside.

We had reached the main surgical suite. The room was bright, white, sterile, and cold. It smelled cleaner than home. I was now surrounded by more machinery than I had ever seen before, above and around me. Clicking. Flashing lights. Odd sounds. Wires. Tubes.

Everyone was dressed in blue and busy. I was lined up right next to a massive table. A loud ratcheting noise sounded as they locked the operating table in place. More loud noise. The gurney brakes were locked. A man stood right next to my side. He grabbed the gurney's railing and a loud "swish and click" sounded as it was pulled down. I thought, *"This place is noisy."* At the same time wires, tubes, and equipment were moved away from me. Then I heard them say, "Okay, Helo, we are going to move you now."

It felt like I was enveloped in a white, starchy hammock resting on top of a plastic board. Three people surrounded me—one at my head, one at my feet, and one by my side. They said in cadence, “One, two,” and on “three,” moved my body onto the stiff operating table. They quickly adjusted my positioning, moved the sheets, secured parts of my body down with straps, pulled down a portion of my gown and brought back wires, tubes, and machinery. I heard more beeping and clicking.

I heard water running in the sink. I saw someone assisting Dr. Rasis with his gloves. He had on a mask, the whole surgical garb, and a light on his head. He looked so different than he had in his office. I was being poked with needles, including an IV put into my inner elbow. A cuff was wrapped around my arm. Wires were attached to my upper torso with sticky tabs. Tubes were placed in my nose and at first it felt suffocating, as if air was being forced in, but there was no time to argue about their placement. This was all happening so fast. I’m thinking, *“Okay, now I know this is real.”*

The anesthesiologist said, “Helo, you’re going to sleep now.”

Tears rolled down my face as I looked up and locked eyes with Dr. Rasis. He looked at me and said, “I am going to take good care of you, Beautiful.”

I gave him a quick smile and whispered, “Thanks.” I thought to myself, “I love you, Rich. I love you Lauren, Jordan, Austin, Dad, Mom...” I wanted to list everyone that I loved, but time was running out. My whispers became faint. “I love you, God.” The cold and sterile room began to look fuzzy, and I fell asleep. That’s what anesthesia does.

Excerpt from Chapter 5 The Quest for Rehabilitation – pages 48 - 49

My complaints didn’t convince the rehab staff to give in to my feeble attempts to quit, because they were not going to quit either. God never left my side—so I kept seeking hope. I could breathe on my own now. I wanted to stand and walk again. I just wanted to go home. Time for me to step aside from what I wanted, and allow God to show me His will.

Late in the afternoon on my first day of rehab, Rich touched my shoulders and woke me up from a long nap. I still spent more time sleeping than staying awake.

“Helo, time to get up, a doctor is on his way to see you,” Rich told me.

“No please, not another one. What’s this one for?” I complained.

“You need to be evaluated to see if you can continue to stay here in rehab,” Rich said.

“So I might get to go home now?”

“No, Helo, they need to see if you should stay here or move to a long-term care facility.”

“What’s that?”

“A nursing home, Helo,” Rich quietly replied. I could tell by the look on his face that he was a bit sad.

“A nursing home?” Now I was angry and exasperated. “I am not going to a nursing home. Help me get ready to see the doctor.”

Rich helped me sit up in bed, put on my hospital robe, and then he swept my hair back. Moments later, there was a knock on the door.

“Helo, I am Dr. ‘Smith’. Can I come in?”

“Yes, doctor,” I responded.

In walked a psychiatrist dressed in a navy suit, crisp white shirt, and decorated tie, carrying a clipboard. He asked Rich to leave the room, closed the door behind him and sat down in a chair across from me. He had a calm yet inquisitive look on his face. I held my head up, looked at the doctor, and felt like I was about to face a medical inquisition.

And so began the flood of questions: “Do you understand why you are here? How do you feel? Do you want to stay here? Can you do this?” I responded slowly with, “I know why I am here, but I don’t want to be—I’d rather be home, I feel trapped inside of my body because it does not work like it is supposed to. But I am determined, and by God’s grace I will pull through.”

Thankfully, after what felt like a draining hour of countless questions and delayed answers, I passed the psychiatric evaluation and it was determined that I was “emotionally ready” to continue with rehabilitation therapy. The doctor got up and before he left the room, he looked back at me, and said, “Helo, you will get to stay here until you are strong enough to go home.” The door closed behind him, and I thought to myself, “*Just give me a moment everybody. I am fragile, but God is going to keep me strong.*”