



CAROL B. NISKALA

# DELIVERANCE

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## Nora

It was still there. I could feel it coiling in my throat, sticking to my flesh, and bonding to my soul. Like hot taffy being stretched in a candy shop, getting bigger and tougher every time. I tried grabbing it, wrapping it around tightly on my hand, and pulling it with all my might. My eyes were popping out of the sockets, nausea was starting to be overwhelming, and I had to bend over, falling onto my knees. I was losing my strength; my body was shaking so violently that it felt like my cells were vibrating to that infernal hum inside my ears, and my sight blurred. I could not hold it anymore; my hand lost its grip, and it bounced right back inside my throat, the recoil strong enough to make me actually throw up as a result.

My eyes were unfocused and watery; I had to catch my breath and wipe my mouth at the same time. How was it still here? How is it still possible for this thing to be with me? All that money and talking to angels, or whatever crap we did in that session, was for what? I think the fact of not really believing in any of those things has to be a part of the reason nothing really worked. I have to stand now, and yet, I can't because my legs gave in. They felt cold, and my bones turned into jelly. I will have to sit on the floor and try to keep myself from vomiting again. Catching my breath, suddenly I remember what that shaman woman told me: "It won't last because it will kill you if we don't remove it. If you die, it will jump out and go to someone else." ...could I try to stretch it out again and shove it in someone else's throat? Well, trying to pull the thing from my throat did not work a minute ago, so it has to be something else. I think at this moment I am running out of choices. Then it hits me: if it will jump when I am dying, I can then pass it on to

someone... What if I get to control the dying part in a way that I can still pull it and it will come out? What could I do to make it jump out and yet I can come back from it alive?

Most likely I can give myself a shot of some illicit drug and be almost dead. That drug can be morphine from the hospital, and I can also get naloxone, something that we use for reversing overdoses. It's not a perfect plan, but it is the best one I have. I need to get to the hospital as quickly as I can. I scramble to get out of the back of my house and to get my car keys, purse, and nurse badges. It's my day off, but I can always say I forgot to write down some of my hours on the logs so they can make it into the paycheck. Driving there was not easy; I think I did a better job on my first day as a student driver than this. The control of my body is pretty bad because I keep losing my footing and, in consequence, the control of the car. People keep honking and cursing at me, and some even give me the finger for being such a reckless driver. Luckily it was just a ten-minute drive; otherwise, I would have completed just the dying part of my plan.

I get into the parking lot of the hospital, and as quickly as I can, although wobbly and visibly sweaty, I move into the main building and get into the elevator towards the nurses quarters. There they have the offices for registering our hours and also access to the pharmacy. I have no idea how to explain getting the meds when I am off the clock, but losing my job for being a dope head beats dying every day in my opinion.

While I get to sit on the computer and look for the logs and clear the box number for the meds, I get to use my lie about forgetting to register my last hours, and everyone bought my crappy appearance being out of nervousness, as I never messed up those things before. I have always been a goody-goody somehow, and maybe helping others being my mission is what got me here 3 days ago.

I should have never helped that choking man outside the hospital. But it was my duty, the one I signed up for as a nurse, I know. He had his eyes blacked out, his lips blue, and his last words were *Grboda*. He had a crumpled piece of paper with that name written and a phone number. Little did I know that a strange, unpronounceable name would take over my life as the devil living in me and the phone number would be the one I would call when I was in my darkest hour. I would have never believed it myself if I

hadn't seen the black and slimy entity crawling out of the man and jumping right into me. I have been in this haze between life and death ever since, and now that the shaman from the phone number did not save me, this last desperate act is my only option.

Now that my colleagues have been distracted with my cover-up story, I wait a few minutes before the shift changes. You can always count on the people on duty to leave five minutes early and the next people to be five minutes late. This is my window, and I cannot mess it up and risk being caught. And just like clockwork, the current team starts leaving, and then I can move to the pharmacy and get what I need before the next people come in. My hands are shaking, and my throat burns from pain and from almost a chemical burn; a thick resin of sorts stuck around the airways that I cannot cough out. I touch my forehead, and it feels clammy and warm, a fever coming in strong, making my eyes foggy and unfocused. I need to keep moving. As soon as I unlock the cabinets and get ahold of the drugs, a thought passes through my head, and suddenly I know what to do.

I rush to the inpatient care, and I see that Barbara is still there. She is in and out of here every now and then, a hopeless addict beyond a cure. I feel horrible thinking that a life is worth more than others, but in this case it is to kill or be killed, and I rush ahead to make the last part of my plan: convincing Barbara won't be hard when I mention that she will score some dope. All I need to do is that she takes my offer and someone finds me just in the nick of time before I expire for good, but after I pass the thing on to Barbara.

I have to grab onto the walls to keep myself from falling, but I make it to the inpatient care and Barbara's room. Once I get in, she wakes up and gives me a strange look. She knows who I am, Nurse Nora, but her puzzled expression questions me silently, as in, what am I doing here? That is a sensible wonderment, since I have no uniform on and I look like death. Most likely I belong more in an institute as a patient rather than a worker. I tell her I feel bad and I need to score fast and right now; if she helps me, she

can have some of it too. I know by the look in her glassy eyes that it won't take much for her to say yes; I am basically just dangling a carrot to a hungry rabbit.

Much as I expected, Barbara accepts my proposal. I close her door and explain that I shoot first, and what is left of it is hers. I prep my arm for the intravenous shot, and I can see by her reaction that it might be a bit much for me, but that is what I intend. I reassure her that as a nurse,, I know what I am doing, and after she takes her shot, there is naloxone here, just to be safe. I take the shot, and to be honest, I feel the same as before: clammy hands, confused, and most likely my mouth is purple from hypoxia. While Barbara scores, I can feel myself gurgling like I did before, and my breath slows dangerously. Barbara stops taking the drug and rushes to me. She knows well enough that I am dying and tries to give me the naloxone, shuffling it to my nose, but I hit her hand and shout, Not yet. I feel the thing coming out, crawling out of my being, and unlike last time, giving it a push with my hands will be easier. I feel the sliminess of that thing, slipping away through my dying hands, and in one last push I take it out and throw it away, and it hits the wall in a loud thump. I don't think I have more time, but it needs a new home before I can live again. It's falling through the wall, leaving a black sludge behind. I can smell the sickening and pungent odor of evil and death that lingers behind it, as much as it was a few days ago in our last encounter. Barbara looks in shock and drops the naloxone, falling on the floor, the sheer horror of what is happening before her once glassy, now terrified eyes. It starts crawling away from the wall and towards Barbara, and before she has a chance to scream, it goes inside her. I am running out of time for staying alive, and before the nurses' shifts return. I feel numb and weak. I touch the floor looking for the antidote to my poison and cannot find it. I see from the side of my eye that Barbara is flopping and struggling with the thing coming in, just like I did before. My breath is getting shallow, my eyes are foggy, and my limbs are getting unresponsive. I... cannot... find... the... the... no... air... cannot... live...

## Barbara

What in the name of Jesus just happened? Is that black slug that shut off from inside Nurse Nora came into me? Oh, my sweet Lord, is she dead now? Please, don't do that to me, miss. I can't go back to that hellhole. Please, please wake up! She isn't waking up! I am so in trouble! I can barely stand; my legs are weak, and I feel that the world is spinning and spinning. Where is the inhaler thingy, the one with the anti-drug meds she told me about before? Oh my Lord. Maybe she has one in her purse. Help me, Jesus. I need to find something. I need to get that thing out of me. I should have gone to the church camp and let this devil out of me, not gotten an extra one. Here is her purse; maybe there are some meds in here. My hands are so sweaty, and my mouth tastes like ash. Why do I feel so shaky? I didn't even have time for the shot. this is... What? There is nothing in this purse! What is all that garbage? so many papers and notes. What kind of stuff did you mess up with, lady? Maybe there is something useful here. What, is this even English? What is a *Grboda*?

Song suggestion: *Deliverance*, by The Mission

<https://youtu.be/Cvd51LxnWjo?si=QJkwPIPLhaebjhVy>