

“You’re Early . . .”

Category: Hospitalized

written by Sara Ann Conkling | June 7, 2025

The year was 2008, and I was hospitalized for extensive pre-op testing. Awaiting me was a long and risky operation to try to save part of my left kidney. A well-meaning but errant interventional radiologist had ablated it with alcohol. Not just once, but twice!

(Note to every radiologist: Before injecting that alcohol, it’s best to make sure that what you think is a renal cyst isn’t really a diverticulum.)

I was surprised that I had been given a private room in a university hospital that was notoriously full and crowded, all of the time. Maybe the person in charge of room assignments didn’t want me speaking to another patient about how the radiologist had partly destroyed my left kidney, leaving me in horrible pain and with a massive infection.

Just hours into my luxurious stay, my private room evaporated in a cloud of apologies as a new roommate was wheeled in. She was being moved because of an infection her previous roommate developed.

We chatted, and I finally got around to the mundane question of “What do you do for a living?”

“I’m a medical examiner,” she replied.

“You’re early,” I quipped. “They haven’t killed me yet.”

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