

## The Great Escape

Ryo Banty wasn't your average man. At seventeen he was already displaying characteristics some might call odd. His thin white hair was slowly falling out, and his well-muscled body was covered by a hospital gown and a blanket. His left arm lay in a cast; he flexed his hand and felt the pain.

Ryo wasn't quite sure how he'd gotten here, but he was pretty sure a bus had hit him. The worst part was that he'd been in Sicily to catch a connecting flight; somewhere between flights he'd been hit by that bus. How? More importantly, he'd missed his connection.

He groaned and cursed his luck. He'd been going to visit family in Dublin for Christmas, but all the direct flights were sold out, and of course Anchorage had frozen over. His parents were going to kill him.

Ryo used his working arm to hit the nurse call button. A few minutes later a nurse walked in.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

Her English was heavily accented, but grammatically flawless.

"Yeah," Ryo said. "When can I leave?"

"I'm not particularly certain. I'll go get the doctor. Is there anything else?"

“Um... can I have some water? I haven’t had any since—how long have I been here?”

Ryo’s heart skipped a beat. What if he’d been here for a week, or a month, or—?

“Four-ish hours,” the nurse said.

Ryo tried not to call himself stupid. People don’t have comas that last years. “I’ll go get the doctor now,” the nurse added and left. Ryo was alone again.

For someone hit by a bus, he didn’t hurt much besides his arm. He wondered if he had other injuries and was just sedated. His mind wandered to family: three days before Christmas, he could still make it. He’d need a cab or a car to France (two days), then a ferry to the UK, and from there to Ireland. It wasn’t elegant, but it was his best chance.

The doctor entered; his aged face and white coat were equally forgettable. “Hello. My name is Dr. Abate. How can I help you?” The doctor's voice showed no hint of a accent unlike his assistant.

“I’d like to know when I can be discharged.”

“I’m afraid you suffered a severe concussion,” the doctor said. “We can’t in good conscience release you without cognitive tests first. And you’re only seventeen.”

The nurse walked in carrying a pitcher and a cup, and set them on a side table.

“It says here you’re seventeen,” the doctor continued. “We’ll need parental consent to release you.”

Ryo frowned, disappointed.

“Well,” the doctor said, “let’s look at your injuries. Your left arm is broken and you also have three fractured ribs. Other than that, it’s just bumps and bruises.”

Ryo reached for the water and took a sip. His throat was drier than the Atacama Desert. He broke into a coughing fit.

“Are you all right?” the doctor asked.

Ryo downed the rest of the glass. “Yeah. I’m fine.”

“All right. I’ll get you a test.” The doctor stood and exited, closing the door behind him.

The second the door shut, Ryo threw off the blanket and stood. He would need to escape. He tiptoed toward the door, an action made difficult by his blurred vision. Did he really hit his head that hard?

A few steps from the door, something tugged at his arm, the IV stand. Cursing quietly, Ryo crossed to the other side of the room to retrieve it. With the stand in hand, he moved toward the door. Just as he was rounding his bed, the doorknob turned.

Ryo went full-actor and rubbed his hands along the painted wall, pretending to admire the colors.

“All right,” Dr. Abate said. “I’ve got your—?! Oh, you shouldn’t be standing. Get back into bed, young man; we need to test your coordination and processing.”

Ryo tried not to let his frustration show. He might have escaped if it weren’t for that accursed IV stand.

“All right then,” the doctor continued, “let’s begin. Can you raise your arm over your head?”

Ryo complied, raising his right arm over his head, though he noted that the doctor hadn't said which arm.

"Good, good, now then you seem to be mobile enough; now then." The doctor took out a set of square cards from one of his coat pockets. "What color is this?"

Ryo looked confused as he gazed at the blank square. There wasn't any color on it. "White?" he said hesitantly.

"Brilliant!"

They continued like this for some time until all the squares were put back into the pocket and a puzzle sitting on a nearby table, meant to entertain visitors was given to him.

"You have an hour, Ryo, I'll be back to check in on you. If you need anything, call the nurse." The doctor left, closing the door behind him.

"I've been given a second chance." Ryo didn't realize he had spoken as he was too busy jumping out of bed. Ryo grabbed the medical stand and tip-toed over to the door. He didn't know why he tip-toed, but it felt right. He opened the door revealing a hallway with another door, probably with another patient behind it, across the hall from him.

"Left or right?" He whispered these words as he scanned the halls. Ryo as indecisive as ever turned around doing a once over of his room. He saw something that he had missed before.

Under his bed was a stack of neatly folded laundry with his phone, wallet, and watch. Ryo started, he hadn't thought about his possessions. He ran back in the room, locked the door behind him and threw on his clothes which ripped off the IV, then he bolted out the door, and left or

right? Ryo chose left, as he got out his phone to call someone, anyone who would get them out of there. He reached the front entrance without incident, but he needed a real escape plan. Reaching into his pocket he took out his phone and opened the uber app.

“Has anyone seen the man?” a staff member asked worriedly, Ryo knew without looking that it was probably him. So he slipped into the only place he knew wouldn’t have cameras: the bathroom. As soon as he entered he sought out a stall pulling the door shut behind him. Ryo glanced at his phone and the app opened on it.

“Driver will arrive in 4 minutes.” It read displaying the text in a small white font. Now Ryo needed to think about what to do. He could get another flight to Dublin, but he had been planning a road trip. He didn’t have a car though, but he could rent, but it would be cheaper to fly, right?

“The driver is here.” The notification banner read on his phone.

“Ok.” Ryo said, taking a deep breath, then exited the stall and left the bathroom. He turned walking towards the exit. He could see his car and felt an incredible sense of nervousness as he walked towards it. The doors clicked and he pulled one open and took a seat. The driver left the hospital without saying a word, Ryo couldn’t get a good look at his face, but he seemed of darker complexion and a robust build. Ryo closed his eyes, letting out a breath and finally relaxing; then he heard a sound, a voice, one long forgotten with a taunting tone.

“Tra 50 metri svoltare a sinistra.” a different language, but the same horrible vile thing was behind it. Ryo opened the door despite the fact that the car was moving, and leapt onto the sidewalk. He didn’t feel pain from the new scratches he got but did from partially landing on his broken arm. Ryo bellowed in agony and tried to lift himself unsuccessfully. He lay there for who

knows how long till police showed up and pulled Ryo off the ground and to his horror, drove him back to the hospital.