Chapter 2: Sure, Take All My Things, But Not the Camera

Not all the stories I share will be as rosy as meeting my wife. This is one of my favorite horror stories. The setting is Medellín, Colombia, home to Pablo Escobar. There's certainly no shortage of dating horror stories here. I've heard countless stories and even have a few of my own to share. This story doesn't cover me in glory, but I find it humorous nonetheless.

As with most encounters of this level of horror, it all started with online dating. I'd been talking to this girl for a few weeks. We never met, and the conversation was pretty casual. I even took a trip back to the United States to see family and buy things before returning to Medellín. We stayed in touch while I was away. There were probably several warning signs, but after weeks of talking I wasn't paying attention to any of them. I'd let my guard down, only to be KO'd in round one, to use a boxing reference.

The day I returned to Medellín, we were chatting. We said we should probably finally meet. I agreed but didn't expect anything. We had made plans casually a few times that fell through, so I more or less expected the same thing to happen this time. After arriving and getting settled a bit, I chatted her up. We exchanged a few messages. She said she was nearby and agreed to come over for a drink. This is when the alarm bells should have gone off. I was excited to be back in Medellín and didn't think much of it. It wasn't my first time in the city. I'd spent a few months there before, and I knew the dangers from stories and firsthand experience.

That night she came over to the hotel where I was staying. We greeted each other. I remember thinking she was nothing like her photos, but again, online dating is a mixed bag. The hotel required guests to show ID and be signed in to get inside, a pretty standard security measure in Medellín. I was still friendly. We chatted for a bit and had a drink.

There was a moment when I sensed things were a bit off. I hadn't yet finished my drink. I explained to her that I was tired and would probably only have one before needing to go to sleep. It was a subtle cue that I'd like to wrap this up quickly and we could meet another day. She insisted on freshening up my drink, which she made herself. I reluctantly agreed. After a few more minutes of chatting, she excused herself to the bathroom. I sipped my drink and waited for her to be done.

I never witnessed her leaving the bathroom. What I recall is waking up. I immediately noticed she was gone. I sluggishly came to my senses and realized my Apple Watch was missing. I tried to see what time it was, but I couldn't find my phone. Then it hit me: she had robbed me. I spent the next few moments taking inventory of what was gone.

She decided my very expensive DSLR camera wasn't worth taking. But my watches, newly purchased MacBook Air, and phones (both my primary and my emergency backup) hadn't been so lucky. I was pretty perplexed about why she didn't take the camera. Later I joked that it was a sign I should pick back up the hobby of photography.

I thought I had just been careless and fallen asleep. But when I realized what time it was, I understood I had been KO'd for almost 30 hours. That's when I realized she must have slipped something into the drink she made. Luckily, I was fine, apart from a bruised ego. I did feel a bit of relief that I hadn't simply been careless. Then I remembered I knew the dangers and should have known better. She was a PRO, slightly different from the one previously mentioned.

What made the situation even more grim was that after I managed to contact family and access my accounts (way harder than it should be in the digital age, when you have no electronics or phone and everything is multi-factor authentication), I realized she had also gone on a shopping spree. She spent several thousand dollars before credit card fraud protection stopped further transactions. She had even managed to access Remitly, a money-transfer app, and move thousands out of my savings account.

Fortunately, I was able to recover all the money from my accounts, but my possessions are gone. I did file a police report. They had her ID and the location (Find My Phone), but I never heard anything after that. I assume the police decided these items were pretty nice and kept them for themselves. Nothing would surprise me.

Always be careful with your drinks, no matter the environment, especially if you're around someone new. I've even heard stories of people working with bartenders to spike drinks.

While it was much harder to find humor in this situation, I did think it was funny that this had happened basically on Thanksgiving Day. I gave thanks that I hadn't been physically harmed. I also thought it was ironic that I had planned this trip back stateside to get some neat gadgets, and on day one they were stolen from me. I have a saying now: anytime I'm robbed, I say I'm donating to charity, and the police reports are tax write-offs.