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It was actually supposed to be quite simple: one of my domestic violence survivor moms whose been happily remarried for the past 6 years after "successfully escaping" her abuser was experiencing some "operating difficulties" in Germany (where her current husband is stationed although his unit was deployed to Afghanistan last fall) so I figured I'd hop on over there, calm the crisis and in worst case scenario, have her and the kids come back with me to Hawaii (where she's originally from) so all would be stable until her husband returned from deployment in June/July. (I should know better by now that NOTHING is simple where DV is concerned...)

I arrived in Munich on January 25th after traveling 23 hours and was picked up by my survivor mom and her three children, where we subsequently got on the Autobahn and drove past beautiful, majestic, snow-covered country-side and forests of evergreen trees to their home in Eschenbach, Bavaria. That peaceful, scenic drive to Bavaria would stand in stark contrast to the events that followed in the following weeks.

Within my first 48 hours there, it was clear that my survivor mom was having a "flare up"* (as in hemorrhoidal because there's so much similarity between the two) – *my vocabulary for when a "dormant" inactive abuser suddenly decides to go back "online" (actively abusive towards his victim). If this was meant to scare me, mission accomplished – but if it was intended to scare me away – it didn't work (and if I didn't see this or witness it with my own eyes, I could've/would've never believed it).

The primary tactic this mom's abuser likes to use is something called "**gas lighting**" which is a form of psychological manipulation where the victim begins to question his/her own sanity. (For

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examples of gas lighting, see the accompanying You Tube video below.) Bear this in mind as you read on.

I had been giving the 3 kids a bath while mom was supposed to be cooking dinner. Child 1 finished her bath first so she went to find mom to get her pajamas from her. When Child 3 was ready to come out of the bath a few minutes later, I called for mom to get Child 3's clothes but mom didn't answer. After a few minutes of no response, I left Child 2 & 3 to find mom but instead found Child 1, still wet in a towel, at the open front door yelling for her mom. I noticed that a knife sharpener had been jammed under the door to keep the door open. Presuming that mom had left the door open for a reason, I instructed Child 1 to get out of the cold and took her place in calling for her mom. Although I didn't see or hear mom outside but heard a faint call for help coming from somewhere nearby. Child 1 began panicking saying that her mom might be hurt.

Unfamiliar with the layout of the house, I began searching for mom, trying to follow the sound of the faint call for help. Several minutes later, I found mom shirtless and face down on her craft room floor. Mom's face was a bright red and she indicated that something was around her neck and there was: a belt was snugly tied around it. A hot iron was sitting on the right side of the craft table above Mom and there was a visible, fresh burn mark in the shape of an iron on the back side of her right hip. I took the belt off Mom's neck and yanked the iron cord out of the wall that turned the iron off. Mom told me that two men had grabbed her downstairs, forced her to drink some kind of alcohol and laughed that the kids' bath was so loud that no one would hear her calls for help.

Remembering the knife sharpener was holding the door open, I went downstairs to remove it and dead-bolted the door, hearing it click shut; as I did this, I noticed that two of Mom's wooden door decorations had been broken – one lying on the foyer floor and the other outside the front stoop. After doing this I returned to Mom to ask her what to do. Mom indicated that neighbors might help and I recalled Mom pointing out a neighbor who had been helpful to her earlier in the day so I ran to the front door to get this neighbor, but when I got to the hallway leading to the front door, I stopped dead in my tracks because the front door that I had just locked was wide open!

The neighbor took care of the kids while an ambulance came to take mom to the hospital. Once we got back home some hours later, I went up to the 3rd floor where I saw that the craft room light was still on. When I entered the room to turn the light off, I saw that the iron was on and had been plugged back into the wall – but now it was sitting on the left side of the craft table! Creeped out, I again yanked the iron cord out of the wall but this time, I wrapped the cord up in

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a figure 8 configuration and placed it at the far end of a high top shelf on the LEFT side of the room – no one was there to witness me do this; I then turned the light off and shut the door behind me.

When I woke up the next morning, the craft room door was still closed. Mom and I left the house to drop the kids off at school and when we returned, I saw that the craft room door had been reopened. The iron had been taken off the shelf and was on, plugged back into the wall again, sitting on the RIGHT side of the craft table. I retrieved Mom to show her this, explaining what I had did with the iron the night before. When Mom entered the room, she found a message signed in red crayon on a wall to the left-side of the room that read "Ha Ha" with a smiley-face.

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