

Life Signs

By Suzy Hopkins

The dining room at a maximum security prison seats 40 – 10 tables of four unfriendly men. These are people who hate each other for reasons of race, religion, gang affiliation or just feeling fear or disrespect by the other inmates. The tables are bolted to the dingy concrete floor as are the metal chairs. Often a fight will break out with plastic trays being used as weapons. These altercations are brief since there is a marksman with a rifle in a space around the top of the room who subdues the trouble makers. There is a large red-lettered sign posted on the wall: “NO WARNING SHOT WILL BE FIRED.”

This particular sign describes life. There is no warning when you marry the charming guy who turns out to be a gambler or a cheater ruining your marriage. There was no warning when your cheerful boss becomes your stalker so you have to quit the job that you adore. There is no warning when you get a devastating illness that cuts your life short.

Large red-lettered warning signs could have been life changers.