

A Conversation With Rudy Giuliani Over Bloody Marys at the Mark Hotel

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Rudy, not at the Mark Hotel. Photo: Elsa/Getty Images

As the black SUV came to a stop on 33rd Street in Manhattan, its lights flashing, a pale hand stretched through the open window of the passenger door and gave a little wave. It was attached to Rudy Giuliani, who smiled from behind his tortoiseshell sunglasses. He

apologized for being late. "Couldn't go on sidewalks like I used to," he said, mourning a perk of his past life as mayor.

It was early in the afternoon on Sunday, December 8, and Giuliani had just returned from Ukraine, where he said he was looking for information to undermine the case to impeach his client, President Donald Trump.

"We snuck out of Kiev to escape having to answer a lot of questions," he said, though it wasn't clear if he meant from the press or government officials. "They all thought we were going to leave on Friday morning, and I organized a private plane to go to Vienna on Thursday night."

The back of the car was cluttered with luggage. His bodyguard, a retired NYPD officer who loves Donald Trump almost as much as he loves his boss of ten years, got out to move the bags to the trunk while Giuliani climbed into the backseat.

When Giuliani got to his hotel in Vienna, he said it was 2:30 in the morning, and the first thing he did was search for opera tickets. "Lo and behold, that Friday night they were performing *Tosca*, with the conductor Marco Armiliato." He sang me an aria from *Rigoletto*, one of the first pieces he fell in love with when he was introduced to opera in high school, as he theatrically conducted with his hands.

Over a sweater, he wore a navy-blue suit, the fly of the pants unzipped. He accessorized with an American-flag lapel pin, American-flag woven wallet, a diamond-encrusted pinky ring, and a diamond-encrusted Yankees World Series ring (about which an innocent question resulted in a 15-minute rant about "fucking Wayne Barrett," a journalist who manages to enrage Giuliani even in death).

In addition to being the president's free personal attorney, Giuliani, who is 75, is an informal White House cybersecurity adviser and a high-priced cybersecurity contractor. In one hand, he clutched three phones of varying sizes. Two of the devices were unlocked, their screens revealing open tabs and a barrage of banner notifications as they knocked into each other and reacted to Giuliani's grip. He accidentally activated Siri, who said she didn't understand his command. "She never understands me," he said. He sighed and poked at the device, attempting to quiet her.

Giuliani is quick to announce that he knows "every block of this city," but he lives on the Upper East Side and doesn't linger much across or below the park. When I asked him to bring me somewhere he likes to hang out, he quickly directed his bodyguard to the Mark, a five-star hotel on East 77th Street. Always a creature of habit, Giuliani is extra-aware of where he's welcome these days. He says that "because of what's happened" his circle is tightening, that he doesn't trust anyone anymore.

I asked him how he ever trusted Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, two Russian associates with a

business called Fraud Guarantee who were arrested by the FBI in October. "They look like Miami people. I know a lot of Miami people that look like that that are perfectly legitimate and act like them," Giuliani said. "Neither one of them have ever been convicted of a crime. Neither one. And generally that's my cutoff point, because if you do it based on allegations and claims and — you're not gonna work with anybody," he said, laughing. "Particularly in business."

As we sped uptown, he spoke in monologue about the scandal he co-created, weaving one made-up talking point into another and another. He said former ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, whom he calls Santa Maria Yovanovitch, is "controlled" by George Soros. "He put all four ambassadors there. And he's employing the FBI agents." I told him he sounded crazy, but he insisted he wasn't.

"Don't tell me I'm anti-Semitic if I oppose him," he said. "Soros is hardly a Jew. I'm more of a Jew than Soros is. I probably know more about — he doesn't go to church, he doesn't go to religion — synagogue. He doesn't belong to a synagogue, he doesn't support Israel, he's an enemy of Israel. He's elected eight anarchist DA's in the United States. He's a horrible human being."

In the grand tradition of Soros conspiracy theorists, Giuliani believes the media is doing the billionaire's bidding by printing lies about him, yet he often bungles his own attempts to discredit the media's reporting. While attempting to argue that, despite what has been written, "I have no business interests in Ukraine," he told me about his business interests in Ukraine.

"I've done two business deals in Ukraine. I've sought four or five others," he said. Since he's been representing the president, he said, he has been approached with two opportunities in Ukraine, both of which he turned down to avoid accusations of impropriety.

"The one that I really wanted to do," Giuliani said, was a lawsuit on behalf of the Ukrainian government against a large financial institution he claims laundered \$7 billion for Viktor Yanukovich, the former president. "It would've had nothing to do with Trump, nothing to do with Burisma, nothing to do with Biden," he said. He then explained that the reason why he "really wanted" to take on the case was to learn about Ukrainian money laundering, "so I could figure out they utilize the same money-laundering system for Hunter Biden."

"I thought about it for a month, back and forth, and then I referred it to another lawyer," he said. "I did take advantage of learning a little about the money-laundering system first."

In order to take out the president, Giuliani believes you must first take out his men, so he's under siege, the victim of a conspiracy to remove Trump from office that includes the media and the Democrats and the deep state and even some people he thought he really knew.

And about this, Giuliani is emotional. He reads his own press and sees that his friends, these

“sources close” to him, are being weaponized by the conspirators, helping to paint a public portrait of a man unglued. These are the same concerned people who have told him to be careful with his legacy. “And my attitude about my legacy is *Fuck it,*” he said.

His ex-wife had implied, in an interview with *New York*, that he was an alcoholic. Others anonymously question his mental state. “Oh yeah, yeah — I do a lot of drugs,” Giuliani said sarcastically. “There was one I was addicted to. I’ve forgotten what it is. I don’t know where the drug things come from — I really don’t. The alcohol comes from the fact that I did occasionally drink. I love Scotch. I can’t help it. All of the malts. And part of it is cigars — I love to have them with cigars. I’m a partyer.”

And then there’s the Southern District of New York, the biggest betrayal of all. That was supposed to be his world, full of his guys; he ran the office for most of the ’80s. It was unrecognizable now. “If they’re investigating me, they’re assholes. They’re absolutely assholes if they’re investigating me,” he said.

As he spoke, he fixed his gaze straight ahead, rarely turning to make eye contact. When his mouth closed, saliva leaked from the corner and crawled down his face through the valley of a wrinkle. He didn’t notice, and it fell onto his sweater.

“If they are, they’re idiots,” he went on. “Then they really are a Trump-deranged bunch of silly New York liberals.” He added that he didn’t know for sure if he was being investigated at all, though subpoenas issued to Giuliani associates by the SDNY reportedly request documents and correspondence related to Giuliani, his firm, and, specifically, “any actual or potential payment” to or from Giuliani.

“If they think I committed a crime, they’re out of their minds,” he said. “I’ve been doing this for 50 years. I know how not to commit crimes. And if they think I’ve lost my integrity, maybe they’ve lost theirs in their insanity over hating Trump with some of the things they did that I never would’ve tolerated when I was U.S. Attorney.”

He thought they might be jealous of him, he said, because, in the 30 years since he resigned with thousands of convictions under his belt, the office had declined. The new guys, the ones after him, wish they were prosecuting the mob like he did, he said. They couldn’t do what he’d been capable of.

“It’s a terrible thing to say because it will get the Southern District all upset, but I know why they’re all upset,” Giuliani said. “Because they’ve never done anything like me since me. They haven’t done an eight years like I did since I left being U.S. Attorney. Nothing close.”

“Jealousy,” he added, “and because I’m of a different political philosophy than they are. They’re all — they’re all knee-jerk, now logically impaired anti-Trump people, including James Comey’s daughter, who works there. You don’t think she’s bitter? Do you know the things that I’ve called her husband? I hired her husband.”

He meant her father.

"Her father," he said. "I consider her father a disgrace. I'm embarrassed that I hired him. Never seen anyone run the FBI like that."

The car stopped at 77th and Madison. "Your honor, do you want me to secure you a table?," the bodyguard asked. "Uhh," Giuliani said, pausing, "yeah."

As we walked into the hotel lobby, Giuliani said he hadn't yet discussed the possibility of representing the president during the Senate trial, but visions of cross-examining congressional Democrats and witnesses made famous during the hearings, something he hasn't done since the '90s, satisfied his desire for revenge.

"I'm great at it. It's what I do best as a lawyer. That's what I would be good at," he said. "Oh, I would love it, I could rip — you know, I hate to sound like a ridiculously boastful lawyer, but cross-examining them would be, I don't know, I could've done it when I was a second-year assistant U.S. Attorney. They're a bunch of clowns."

"You plan for days and days how you're gonna cross-examine them," he said of his theoretical strategy. "And try to learn his personality. You try to learn when he's gonna lie, how he's gonna lie. You try to learn how to make him feel comfortable and confident. You try to work on what kind of personality is he. Is he a boaster? Is he sensitive about certain things? Somebody like Biden, for example, is extraordinarily sensitive about his intellect."

He had a few ideas for going after the credibility of witnesses. "The guy that overheard the telephone call," for instance, "anybody check if the guy has an earpiece? Maybe he didn't have it in. How old is he? How old is that guy?" There was a possibility that he was deaf, he said, and didn't know what he heard. "How do we know he isn't a paranoid schizophrenic?," he said. "How do we know he isn't an alcoholic?"

But to the extent that he was aware of a strategy from Lindsey Graham and Mitch McConnell, it was to respond to the evidence the Democrats have presented with a shrug: "Deal with it, like, 'Who cares? How stupid.'"

The hostess led us through a hallway to the dining room. As Giuliani walked down the carpeted ramp, he fell over to his right and hit the wall. He kept on walking as if it hadn't happened. "My God, it's Rudy Giuliani," I heard someone say. He nodded and waved at people he knew seated across the restaurant. He stopped to shake hands with an older man and his wife.

"I'd like some sparkling water. And I know you have wonderful Bloody Marys," Giuliani told the waiter. "Yes, sir," the waiter said, "and I know you love them." Giuliani laughed. "You're a good man!," he said.

After he ordered an omelet with extra-crispy bacon, I asked about the mysterious call logs included in the House Intelligence Committee report, which suggested that Giuliani had corresponded with someone at the White House at axial points in Trump's back-and-forth with Ukraine. The report said the number was "associated" with the Office of Management and Budget.

"I don't think I talked to OMB at all," Giuliani told me. "Of course, it's not clear. I don't even remember. It might have been my son." His son, Andrew Giuliani, is the president's public-liaison assistant. He suggested that perhaps he was calling to discuss with Andrew the White House baseball team, which Andrew was coaching and Giuliani claimed to be very invested in. "I don't remember who I called. I talk to the president, mostly."

He said he sometimes calls the White House to talk to Jared Kushner, whom he likes to joke around with — "I just called to kid him because I once said he was indispensable; I thought he was dispensable" — and Dan Scavino, the longtime social-media director. But the president was often the one calling Giuliani. "He calls me a lot before work and after work. I generally don't like to bother him in the middle of night," he said. "I call the main switchboard, and then sometimes I get switched to another number. I don't know who I called."

He said he and Jay Sekulow, the president's other lawyer, often call the president together. "We both prefer to do it together, so we can have our own interpretation to the call," he said.

He swore that although he doesn't know whom he called, he knows he didn't discuss anything improper with whoever it was. "Those calls — I can tell you what they don't have to do with: They don't have to do with military aid. I never discussed military aid with them. Never discussed military aid with anyone until it first appeared in the *New York Times* of late August of 2019. I had no idea we were withholding it, if we were." He didn't think it was such a big deal once he read about it, he said, because it was "typical Trump; he withholds aid till the last minute until he makes them beg for it."

He lifted the skewer of olives from his Bloody Mary and removed one with his teeth. He continued speaking as he chewed. He ordered a second Bloody Mary.

I asked Giuliani if he thought he could do a better job representing Trump in a trial than Sekulow. He smiled. "Jay is a different kind of lawyer. Jay is more of an academic lawyer. I mean, I've only argued in the Supreme Court once; he's argued it 14 times. I don't know how often Jay's ever cross-examined anyone. I've cross-examined a thousand people." (Then he mused and said, "a hundred.")

"No, but he would be better arguing the case through the court than I would," he said. "He knows the justices a lot better; he understands their temperament better."

Still, if it ever came to it, he thought Trump might pick him instead. “If it’s a very aggressive case, he would be more comfortable with me,” he said. “He was annoyed because over the last couple of weeks I’ve been pulling all his facts together and I haven’t been on television. People who think he doesn’t like me on television, I don’t know where they get that from. It’s just the opposite.”

He made the case that the Ukrainian prosecutor fired for corruption, Viktor Shokin, was in fact not corrupt and had been forced out by the Obama administration precisely because he had the goods on the Bidens. He also claimed to have a secret source with documentary proof that Hunter Biden had been paid off through a Cyprus bank in a transaction routed through a Lithuanian bank. “When I got it” — that is, the document he claims shows this — “I had already lost Lev, and so I had no translator. I translated it with my app,” he said. He took out his phone to show me how Google Translate works.

Back in the black SUV, Giuliani directed his bodyguard to drop him at home and then take me back to my hotel. “Oh, look at those poor people,” he said, glancing out the window to the park, where a man and a woman sat on a bench. “When I was mayor, by the time I was home, there’d be a call to the head of Homeless Services. *Have somebody on Fifth between 70 — is that 75 or 76? A couple, they seem to be freezing. See if we can get them in a shelter.* All my commissioners were trained to do that. And we got it down to almost nothing, zero.” The couple on the bench did not appear to be homeless.

“Do you have all three phones?,” his bodyguard said as Giuliani stepped out of the car. “Yeah, I got all three phones,” he said. “I gotta get down to two. I’m gonna try that tonight.”

A few minutes later, as we made our way downtown, I saw from the corner of my eye the sun reflecting off of something. It was the screen of one of the phones, which he had left on the seat next to me.

I handed it to the bodyguard, who laughed. He called Giuliani to tell him, and Giuliani laughed too.

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