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## "Surviving COVID-19 Again"

Here I was at Stateville's Health Care Unit (hereinafter HCU), on Friday August 18, 2023... I felt sick but not totally out of it. I had been there since 9:30 in the morning, waiting to see Dr. Perez. Some other men saw her and left but not me. Oh, they were peeved too. I was told she couldn't hear that good; another nurse would relay the message, whatever one of us said to her. Hmm...

Listening, I decided to write down what I was gonna say. In that way, my message would not be misunderstood. My nose wasn't running but I sneezed a lot. I coughed up phlegm; Funny thing, I had a fever but no chills. No vomiting or diarrhea. I hadn't eaten either.

Two hours passed, more men came, more left. Whether it was the dentist, physical therapy, talking to the psyche, or seeing the eye doctor, lunch time they bounced. When they returned, saw patients, and they left, I knew the kitchen was done with lunch.

In fact, the kitchen changes shifts between 12:30 and 1:00 PM. I asked

① Corrections Officer Smith, (hereinafter C.O.)

about our trays. He was working at the Helo main entrance.

"Your trays will be waiting for you back at your units." Unquote.

I knew better. The closer it became

1:00 I began to realize I was S-O-L.

The other men in the bullpens - places for us to sit as we waited to see the medical pro assigned to us by pass; were grumbling too. It was late.

Some men came and left. Yet, no Dr. Perez. Tried to hearing us grumble Lt. Clark asked would anyone like to leave. Hell yeah! I was ready to bounce. She opened the door, I walked right outside, caught the escort line back to C-house, my unit.

It was almost two in the afternoon when I stepped into my cell. For over four and a half hours, just wasted. Getting out my cell is always cool but sitting and waiting like I did... no haps. Security will tell ya after so many hours,

"Your pass is cancelled today. We'll reschedule whoever you were here to see."

Sure enough, that's exactly what happened. Friday nite, for institutional mail I received a Medical Pass for Dr. Perez.



on Monday, the 21st.

I thought it didn't matter. All Saturday I tossed & turned with a fever. Sunday morning, I tried to get up and moving but I couldn't. I chilled, as soon as the shift changed on 3rd, I was leaving with the Cottage Med Line - the Diabetics, Treatments, and Hypertension Folks.

After I had a cell house worker inform Sgt. Pinto, she was okay with me leaving with the Med Line.

As soon as we made it over to the HCU and the men received their meds and treatment, I was called. I went into the examination room, I hopped on the med bed, and the curtain was shut. The nurse took my vitals. I was still burning up! No diarrhea or vomiting just the fever. I sneezed some but not much coughing.

"Mr. Ward, I'm going to have to swab you for COVID-19 and the Flu," the nurse said.

"Okay."

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So he pulled out a six-inch Q-tip,  
"This is gonna feel strange. It may  
hurt... I'm sorry to have to do it."

"That's okay," I winked at her, "I'm  
sort of used to it, the swab tests."

The first swab was for the flu; she  
inserted it in my right nostril, all the  
way up... I held onto the bedrail.

The next one was for COVID-19. It  
was worse. Seemed like after she  
inserted it into my left nostril, she  
was probing around in my brain! DAMN!  
Finally she pulled out; she set them  
in test tube survey.

"I'll have your results in a few  
minutes, Mr. Ward."

PAUSE.

"Nothing on the flu, Mr. Ward... you've  
got COVID-19."

"Again?"

I knew I had something but not COVID-19  
again. I survived it last time before the  
vaccines. I took both too. And she confirmed  
it.

"I'll have to swab you again for  
COVID-19."

"Okay, let's do it."

She went inside my left nostril again; I felt the same pain from her probing too. It didn't take long for the next results either.

"It's true, you have COVID-19. We'll have to admit you."

"Yeah, I figured that." I hollered over to my brother, Lake-Bey, in the other med bed, behind the curtain.

"Did you hear that, Lake-Bey? I have tested positive for COVID-19 again."

"Dang, Ward-EL. I thought I had something too. My tests were all negative. This morning, after I came in from work on the graveyard shift I went straight to sleep. I slept until about an hour ago. I'm not sick, just exhausted. I guess."

"Well, maybe all you need is some rest. Get your rest! You work in the kitchen."

"You gone be all right?"

"Yeah, I'm okay."

"Do you wanna go back to your cell or have your cellmate pack an overnite bag for you?" The male nurse asked.

"I'd go back and get my overnite bag." I sneered. "See what happens when you do not renew my cough drops!"

⑤

He laughed it off but I didn't think it was so funny. See, about three weeks ago the same male nurse came over for Sick Call. I had a prescription for some more cough drops, I tried to get it renewed before the expiration date. Sure enough, they let it expire.

After it expired, he was there to tell me that. Also, his plan was to setup an appointment with the nurse practitioner to get my prescription renewed over again... I imagine that!

I went back to my unit, packed up my bag, told my cellmate I had COVID-19, and I told the gallery officer I was burning up. And, I was.

After I was escorted into a one-man cell at the HCU - Infirmary, I checked out my cell, an Isolation cell. The plumbing was not good; it took several flushes for the toilet to work; there was hot and cold water. There was a shower but it didn't work. So, I asked for some cleaning supplies. I went to work.

Fortunately, inside my overnight bag I had four or five T-shirts and boxers, several pairs of socks, my second pair of shorts, my extra set of sheets, my GTR tablet, and my radio. Cool.

There was a desk slash tray on wheels, an adjustable bed, and a shelf. After I washed up I crashed. I slept until I was awakened by the graveyard shift. The nurse came in, along with a med tech with a strong Jamaican accent.

"Mr. Ward... how are you feeling?" she asked.

"I'm sick." I held out my arm, and she wrapped a wrist-reader for beats and pulse per minute. "Not good."

She was short, brown-skinned, about 5'3 and very thick! When she smiled, I saw a gap between her two front teeth.

My pulse and blood pressure was okay. I was told to keep my mask on whenever the door opened. Nothing else, I crashed, went straight to sleep.

On Monday the 21st, I slept through breakfast and the 7 to 3 shift came to check my vitals. The nurse came in with a med tech I saw at the pharmacy; she was an older Jamaican woman. Her name tag said, Freda. No fever, my vitals were good.

"Dr. Perez will see you today, Mr. Ward" the nurse said. "She's hard of hearing."

Oh yeah? NICE TRY. I already had my notes out, ready! What was sad the nurse tried me when Dr. Perez arrived.

She was older, about seventy. Only thing, after we got past the greetings as she saw I wrote stuff down her hearing improved. The closer she was I had no reason to yell. Her hearing was so good I was given a refill on the cough drops, no problem. She listened to my lungs; they were clear. So where was the phlegm coming from? She told me about some Paxloxy or Paxloce to take for COVID-19. I had to sign a waiver to begin taking it for five days. If this was going to help me get better, okay.

"I'll sign it... run that!"



Nurse Lingo gave me a shot of Anti-Bacteria Soap. I thanked her. Before the shift ended she gave me a whole squirt bottle. In the last 24 hrs. there was no telling who I infected with COVID-19.

Getting down to business I had a court date, my final hearing on my lawsuit was September 15th. I needed to write the court and tell them I was under quarantine. But first, I needed my legal box!

Thank goodness, Clo Stanton, my girl, was working in the back of the infirmary. I called her over.

"What's up, Ward?" She smiled, "You got cooties, huh?"

"Ha! Ha! Very Funny. Listen, I have a court date next month. I need my legal box. Would you call over to C-house and talk to Lt. Grey? I'd really appreciate it."

"Yeah, anything else you need? Lemme know."

"Oh yeah, I'll need a yellow document folder too."

⑨ "Relax, I gotcha." She leaned in on the door, "You gone be here for a minute."

She smiled again, "Coolies." And walked off.

She was about forty, light-skinned, kinda skinny, with hair sometimes all-dreaded off. She wore her DOC cap sometimes too.

Just a year ago before B-house was closed, when I worked over at the Education Bldg. and she was the gallery officer on 4th Gallery I made sure I built rapport with her. After work and shower line she made sure I was last... we talked.

Stateville's Grapevine, she was gay. Well, I didn't care about that. She was okay with me, I was polite to her. And, it paid off. She could have easily done otherwise but she made the call, I got my legal box and document folder too.

Lt. Grey even stopped by to check on me... wow. And it was time to write the clerk, Ms. Katawa, and the Commissioner Jacksack. I wrote them and requested a continuance.

The HCU workers brought me my law library paper work and I was given ten bottles of water.

After I ate, cleaned up, I crashed.

Later, on the 3rd I was given my first dose of Pavlov, three pills as big as my thumbnail. What a bad taste too.

When the shift changed and the "graveyard shift" came on I met some "lookie lous." Who are they? These are men and women who come and just LOOK inside the cell(s). They do not speak, just look at you and walk away... I don't get it. I kept writing, taking care of my business!

The only thing that night was the real thick, Jamaican accented med tech. She was very easy on the eye and friendly. Yet, after checking my vitals again I forgot to ask her what was her name. I crashed.

Three days in the HCU someone was kicking on the door, trying to get medical attention! It happened on the day shift. I noticed the staff wasn't really paying attention to him. Why? I killed on that one, just sat up, ad'justed the bed, and felt the air conditioning.

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Outside my window, I saw a hornet buzzing around. It kept buzzing and buzzing ... then I saw the honeycomb. A HIVE. Okay, I have neighbors. So, as long as they don't move inside I'm okay. I saw a patched up hole in the wall too. And there was a patch on the floor. DA AUG! It was well taped but each one I saw was a fire hazard. A safety hazard too.

After I used the toilet, flushed it several times, the water turned brown! Oh, shit! I started kicking on the door.

First an HCU worker showed up.

"What's goin' on Ward-EL? Why are kicking on the door?"

"Man, the water from the toilet turned brown. You know it takes several flushes!"

"Aw man, you've been at Stateville long enough to know how the water is." He bounced.

"I'm not accepting this! Y'all know the living conditions are poor!"

Clifton showed up.

"Ward, what's wrong?"

"Look at the water in this toilet! It's brown! You all know it takes several flushes for it to work!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Call a plumber, this is inhumane, Ms. Stanton."

She bounced but next time Sgt. Hobbs showed up.

"Mr. Ward, what is the problem in your cell?"

"Sgt. Hobbs," I gestured, "The water from the toilet is brown, you already know it takes several flushes for it to work! The shower doesn't work! And there's no hot water! What's next?"

"Mr. Ward, the infirmary is raggedy. No plumber is coming into your cell to fix anything." Unquote

I calmed down. I waited for the shift to change; it did. I started reading Mixing Music and COVID-19 And The Immune System.

The more I read about COVID-19 I noticed a lot had to do with mucus in the lungs too. So, I decided to test

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down on drinking milk. I knew before reading that book milk adds to the mucus in your system, hard for the excretory system.

Around midnite they came and took my vitals I found the thick,  
Samaritan's med tech's name was Opti or Uptee. Hearing that I slept very well.

By the morning, on 7 to 3 shift I finished Mixing Music and I took notes before I finished COVID-19 And The Immune System. This was the fifth day of taking Paxloxy. I was tired of taking them but... I needed too. Three at a time, twice a day, a total of thirty doses. WHEW!

No Fever, my asthma wasn't bothering me. I felt better too. My nose wasn't stuffy. I wrote some. I even started reading Steven King's Memoir.

Now, this was something. He wrote about himself, his journeys made as he became the icon writer we know. I was blown away by that! It sure helped me stay focused on my writings.

As the shift changed on 3rd I saw two or three hornets flying outside my window. Well, as long as they didn't fly inside.

The Glamazon made her round during the afternoon count! Now, she made my day! And, I like dark sisters too. She looked inside my cell,

"Ward-EL? What are you doing in there? You got COVID?"

"Yes... it's one of those things, you know."

"Are you all right?"

"I'll be back later. Are you sure you all right?"

"Yeah, I'm okay. I'll be out in a few days maybe."

She finished her rounds. And sure enough, she returned. I won't reveal her name 'cause she and I have been liking each other for years now. Last I heard she was at NRC. I told her after I make parole I'll look her up, get those digits. She agreed. REACTALK.

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Two hours later, she returned.

"No matter what, I still love you, Ward-EL!"

She bounced.

Whoa. I'll definitely look her up!!

Was she being nice, trying to cheer me up... maybe. Or was she serious? Hmnn this is my article, my Fantasy... lemme expound on that! Yes, it worked. I slept quite well. I got up only for my vitals check on graveyard shift. I went back to sleep.

Nothing was really happening on that Saturday. Dr. Perez said I would be discharged on Monday. So... I just relaxed, tried to do some cardio.

Nothing doing.

I was so outta shape, I couldn't do fifty push-ups, fifty sit-ups, or some leg lifts without getting tired. I cleaned up and washed up. The radio was worth listening to since my tablet could not login.

Before the shift ended I was given a case of bottled water by the HCU-workers I drank two bottles and I made some tea. No more meds to take, I just relaxed. Only thing, I had beef with my Bland diet, on 7 to 3 shift. I was given a regular diet.



Yet, on the graveyard and 3-11 shift they honored it. Well, Ms. Beverly, from the kitchen came over to talk to me about it. No matter. I was discharged on Monday.

The eighth day, August 28<sup>th</sup>, that morning Lt. Clark and Sgt Hobbs confirmed I was being discharged. Not before I saw the Ideologist about my hearing. Four months ago I failed the hearing test in my left ear. So, he checked me out again. This time I did better on some tests, worse on others. I will see him again, three months later, and another test.

I went back to the Infirmary, gathered my stuff. Clo Fowler opened the door. I threw everything in a big, plastic bag except the Anti-Bacterial Soap.

"You can take that squirt bottle with you. It's cool."

"Thanks."

All the time I was prepared to leave the toilet kept running and running and running... where's the plumber?

I saw on the door the sign read,  
"Respiratory Isolation."

TRIP. I was leaving the HCU Feeling healthy, eating healthy, and my mind was healthy. Yet, I am returning to the same unit, C-House; it is not clean. As soon as I walked in someone was coughing. I went back to the same gallery, into the same cell, same cellmate.

All in all, I finished reading three books, I wrote the Court of Claims, completed my legal work. Now, I can focus on two important matters: Finishing college at NEIU's U.W.W. and earn my parole with my upcoming clemency hearing next year.

Remember C/O Smith, who worked the HCU's main entrance? A few days later he was walked up outta the HCU... and outta the prison. Some days later that all of the HCU workers were fired too. And one of them was busted with a cellphone in his laundry bag!! Hey, that's part of doin' time at Stateville too. Stateville will always its conspiracies... that's how a prison functions, by dysfunction.