

The Arrival



The rain was pouring down, soaking into my corset dress, and dripping from the chains draped around my waist. I was terrified, wet, and captive. The only thing that stood between me and the prison that would become my temporary residence was a tall chain-link gate. The shackles on my ankles clanked against my high-heels, serving as a reminder of the loss of my freedom and dignity.

This moment should have been the worst of my life, but I was overcome by my thankfulness for the rain that fell on my skin. It had been so long since I had stood outside, been rained on, felt wind or even had fresh air not tainted by a thousand breaths. Despite the gripping fear of not knowing what was ahead of me, and a guard holding tightly to the chains that bound my wrists to my waist, I stood in awe with my face to the sky.

My moment of solace was interrupted by the screeching movement of the gate. I was asked to walk forward, led like a leashed animal to the point of entry. Walking through the prison doors, I was expected to know procedure for a place I had never been. The speech of the guards was harsh and demanding. Once the doors behind me were secure, my chains were removed and I was uncuffed. After a series of metal detectors, embarrassing strip searches and relentless paperwork, I was finally offered a tray of food. I was not even concerned with the quality of the food, as I was famished and welcomed any nourishment. The day had been more excitement than what I had seen in quite some time.

I was added to a small group of offenders, none of which I knew, all of us new to the facility. We were given the label “intakes” and given light blue scrubs to wear. Once dressed, we were put in a room to watch a series of orientation videos that they believed would be helpful in integrating our adjustment to the prison. The videos talked about the programs the prison offered and how to attempt to remain safe while incarcerated. I retained very little, as I was exhausted, my ankles were bruised and raw from the rubbing of the metal, and I hadn’t slept more than two hours the previous night.

Once the process was complete, we were issued 2 boxes to keep personal items in, along with state clothing, and moved into a large living area referred to as a wing. This world resembled nothing I had seen on television and was not what I had expect-

ed. It had 2 levels with rooms lining the walls. On each door was a painted number. The cell number I had been given was 207. I carried my boxes up the green metal stairs to the room that had been assigned for me to live in as I navigated the process of becoming a prison inmate.

Walking into the room, the cold metal bunk-bed stared back at me. The toilet in the corner lacked privacy from my cellmate and barely avoided the sight of the doorway. The small narrow window was located behind the bed, but afforded a view of the sunshine, the sky, and at night, the moon. I was starved for the sight of all of them, having only seen cinderblock and concrete for months. I placed my boxes under my bed, and crawled onto the top bunk with my sheets and blanket in tow. After making my bed, I crawled into it, knowing that tackling the days ahead would require rest. I was ineffective at this point and physically spent.

I drifted off to sleep, thankful that it was over and this was not something I would ever have to repeat. My arrival to prison was complete, and a new day would dawn. ▲