

Covid Assignment

They quarantined my Unit because a couple guys tested positive for Covid. For 14 days we were locked in our cells. After a week of sleeping, watching TV & listening to the radio, I went through my photo album & threw away pictures I didn't need anymore. I cleared my phone book of old addresses, threw away unnecessary paperwork, and caught up on my reading. Then the Superintendent dropped the bomb. "Due to an increase in Covid cases, we are shutting the institution down for 72 hours." Fourteen days without sun and fresh air is not that bad. Now, we were going into a 72 hour lockdown and according to the announcement, we didn't know when that would end. Word came that Al Joyner had died from Covid. I talked to Al two weeks ago at the microwave. It had to be a mistake. Not Al! The thought of dying in prison started to weigh on me. Covid was real and now had a face and name. The cell began to close on me. I found it hard to breathe. My heart literally thumped in my temples. For the first time in my life, I felt that I was losing control. I dropped to my knees and begged God to help me. That was a first for me. Until that point, I didn't believe in God. I cried! I hadn't cried in 22 years. I splashed cold water on my face, thought about masturbating but couldn't focus. "You are alive!" The voice in my head shouted. "You're healthy! You have an adoring family! You have purpose. People need you." At that moment, I felt an abundance of love and a profound appreciation for life. I could be next. Tomorrow isn't guaranteed, not even to children, so why waste time thinking about death when I could celebrate life? I got off my knees, laced my sneakers and exercised as if training for a titled fight, which I was. I was fighting to be better than I was yesterday. I needed to be in shape to fight complacency, boredom, and negative thoughts. I needed my strength and energy to enjoy people I love and to live! Life is short!

Sometimes in life an event or crisis will shake us to our core. The death toll of Covid 19, the isolation of being quarantined, not seeing our loved ones and the real possibility of getting sick and dying or losing someone close. All this can cause unnecessary anxiety and can leave us feeling helpless and overwhelmed. The beauty of it all, we have a choice. We can allow Covid to define us and take away our power or we can use Covid to bring about change. I tend to focus on the glass being half full. We have gotten so comfortable in America that we take life and living for granted. Sometimes it takes a crisis to help us appreciate the freedoms we enjoy. If you're stuck at home, maybe you can clean out that basement or garage- something you have been putting off because you had to work and couldn't find the time. If you're a student, maybe you can catch up on your reading or plan out your future. Families can really get to know each other during this time. Yes! Covid is killing people. At the same time Covid is forcing people to redefine themselves. One woman is laid off from work. She's depressed. She tries to eat and sleep the pain away. She gains weight and gets more depressed. Another

woman is laid off. She's also depressed, wondering what her future holds. She tries to eat and sleep her pain away and then something clicks. "*This pandemic will not last forever. They will come up with a vaccine. When the restrictions are lifted, I want to be ready.*" She tells herself. She starts exercising, something she never had time for. She goes online and orders jewelry making kits. She sells a few pieces of jewelry to friends. Others like her workmanship and her prices, and her business and a new beginning takes shape. There are blessings even in tragedy, if we open our hearts and minds to see the beauty of the rose instead of focusing on its sharp thorns. We will all die someday. When your turn comes it will come. Life is too short to waste on being sad.