

April 21, 2012

Hello World!

How does the slogan go? "If you're going to be there for a while, have a Snickers." Well, in my case it's both sides of the slogan, meaning, I will be here for a while and it took a long, long while to get the Snickers.

Allow me to elaborate. Every three months, inmates are allowed to receive a care package. These used to come from friends and family, but too many inmates tried to smuggle drugs and other contraband. Stupid inmates. Now, packages are ordered through approved vendors. We can receive clothing, radios, CDs, and tasty treats.

When the package arrives at the institution, it takes one to two weeks for staff to issue ducats (passes) to R&R (Receiving & Release) where the boxes are searched and issued to the inmate. Inmates who receive a ducat line up on the recreation yard near the gate to R&R.

My ducat was for 9:00 AM. When my building had yard call at 8:00 AM I ran to get in line. I was number eleven. I should mention that today the temperature was expected to top out at 92 degrees, the first hot day of the year. Not conducive to chocolate. My hope was to be escorted in the first group of 15 and be back in my building at the 11:45 AM unlock. It wasn't in the cards. Discourteous, rude, and pushy inmates broke from the rear of the line, which numbered 45, to cut in front. When the officer counted out 15, I was number 16. So close.

The heat grew from a tolerable 70, to 80, to the mid 90's. Wearing long sleeves, jeans, and boots, the required prison garb, I began to bake. Nine o'clock became ten. Ten turned to eleven and then twelve.

The officer finally returned with his happy charges, each carrying their bundle of goodies. He proceeded to inform the waiting crowd that he would be taking a short break. How nice for him as sweat ran down my forehead and drew wet patches under my arms and up my spine.

Twelve turned to one o'clock and the restless inmates threatened to storm the sergeant's office to demand action. Stupid inmates. They would get action alright. At 51, I've gained a measure of patience and resignation. If I can't change it what's the point in becoming upset. Nearing five and a half hours standing in the sun I repeatedly reminded myself to be grateful. I am in line to receive a wonderful and generous gift from family. Many inmates who never receive care packages would readily change places with me.

The R&R officer appeared at 1:45 PM. Check out time for him was 3:00 PM so he only took ten. Sadly, that left 15 inmates who would have to wait another week. They walked away trailing curses.

Waiting in R&R's holding tank, we 10 took turns splashing water over our heads from the stainless steel sink/toilet combination.

Ah...out of the draining sun. With his work day coming to an end, the officer's pace quickened. He efficiently searched and distributed the 10 packages with seven minutes to spare. Carrying my goodies through the yard gate at 2:57 PM, I was grateful. I endured in quiet contemplation and succeeded in a quest for something delicious.

As an unexpected bonus, the housing unit officer took pity on the three of us who stood panting, and allowed us in 30 minutes early. I had time to shower before the dayroom closed at 3:30 PM.

Was my ordeal a test from God? Was it to practice my hard-earned patience? I don't know and frankly, as I stuff my second Snickers into my mouth, I do not care. God, this tastes great!

Thanks for checking in on me.

Cordially,



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Novel: A Thundering Wind (Amazon.com)