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A Day On Florida's Death Row

By Ronald W. Clark Jr.

You open your eyes after a rough nights sleep on a thin mattress that's laying on a steel platform that's slightly slanted. So when you wake up your back hips and other joints are sore. You usually are awoken by the slamming of a door an officer yelling, " FEMALE ON THE WING!!!" or maybe some officer letting out a blood curdling scream at 5:00 am of, "CHOW TIME !!!!" So you open your eyes to come face to face with the reality of another day of solitary confinement in this tiny 9 × 7...63 square foot cage. You set up in bed and look out at the steel bars, that have about 3 foot of mesh wire covering them with a food flap that has a lock on it. That and the mesh wire is there for no more than psychological effects. And even the officer's constantly complain about having to lock and unlock a flap that has no security measures whatsoever. In fact they've said it over and over, while fumbling with this key and flap their head is unprotected. For see there's no mesh wire at the top or the bottom of these bars. So we can pass things in and out from up top and down low. So its just one of many idiotic security measures that's not warranted. So you get up and your meal is slid through the food flap, that's slammed shut. You look at the food they've served you, hoping that its been properly prepared. And most of the time its not. For its being prepared by inmates in population who are subject to slave labor. Their forced into doing these jobs for no pay. So there's no pride in the product that their putting out. Yes raw sausage, chicken etc is common, as is biscuits that are hard as a rock. Grits and oatmeal that's runny and potatoes that are either raw or overcooked. When you do get something that's cooked right you count your blessings. And then you ask yourself why can't they do this at every meal. When you know the answer. Someone from Regional was here looking over their shoulder. So after you eat and turn the tray sideways sticking it out through the bars and sitting it on the floor so the officer doesn't have to fool with the lock. You go struggle with the sink. You need to fill the sink with water in order to wash up. There's two little little buttons that you've got to hold down, to get the water to come out. You can run one or the other. You can't hold both and get warm water. So the simple task of rinsing your soaped up hands and face, is a task in and of itself. And these little buttons are rough on the fingers and wrist, especially if you've got arthritis. There's no stopper in the sink. So you've got to put a piece of paper or plastic over the drain. And if you flush the toilet while your doing this, bubbles will come up through your sink drain. So you wash up make your bed and wipe your floor down with an old rage. If you don't, you'll have ants crawling all over your cell. And cell clean up is three days a week. Now every 30 minutes all throughout the day and night, you will hear this loud electronic click from the officer in the control room opening the doors, and then the officer coming through making rounds slamming the door shut, coming through one door and going out the other as they walk by and look into all 14 cells on each side of the wing. The building has six wings, two floors and two sides to each wing for a total of 336 cells. You will be fed lunch around 11am and dinner around 4:30 pm. You will be required to be up and dressed in paints at 9:30 pm for master count where you will give your name and DC #812974 to an officer carrying a clip board. They say your to be dressed due to female staff. Yet during showers hair cuts and shaves your made to walk on camera and in front of female staff in the control room in your underwear with no shirt. The stupidity of these people alone will keep you frustrated!! And

throughout the day you pass time trying to keep your mind occupied so this cage doesn't drive you absolutely crazy!! There's 168 hours in a week. Out of that there, you will spend about 162 of those hours in this cage. We're suppose to get 2, 3 hour recreation periods a week. At times we will only get one. Which is the only time that natural lighting is available. The window located approx 10' foot in front of your cell is tented. And even when its opened all the way, it only gives you a slight view through a crack at the bottom of the window. So its fluorescent lighting all the time. If your bless to have family and friends to visit you, then you can get out once a week for visits. Its the only time you feel like a normal human being. Its the only time your not handcuffed and shackled up. Each time you leave your cell, whether it be for the three showers you get a week, which is located at the front of the wing, or going to medical, legal visit or to see the psychologist, you're to get completely naked and go through a strip search. You are then handcuffed, a black box and waste chains are put on as well as shackles. You are then escorted to your location. Yes it is a degrading and dehumanizing experience like you can never imagine!! You are treated worse than an animal in a zoo. And that's the way you feel at times, like an animal in a cage. You have people coming by gawking at you. A fraudulent cell inspection, where your required to be in class A uniform standing at attention. And this can be done at any time during the week. So it limits your ability to escape the insanity of this place by sliding under your headphones listening to music and painting, exercising etc etc. And god how you need to get away. For you've got men talking, arguing toilets flushing doors slamming and you are in a constant fight for your sanity! You have to deal with mentally ill inmates talking to themselves and cussing at you and other's. And these are men that never go outside. This is your world your life your reality.

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