

"A DATE WITH DEATH"

By Ronald W. Clark Jr.

Sit back and let me take you step by step through a hideous, outrageous, unbelievable adventure that hopefully you will never experience. This is a world, and the fate of a man doomed by Capital Punishment.

As you stand before the Judge, he/she states:

You are to be taken to the Florida Department of Corrections, where you will be held until such time as a deadly mixture will be ran through your body, until you are pronounced dead. May God have mercy on your soul.

You are then whisked out of the courtroom and placed in a transport vehicle where you will be taken to the Reception and Medical Center, and immediately processed ahead of everyone else, since you're now wearing the notorious label of Death Row Inmate. Once you've been photographed, checked by medical, and processed into the Florida Department of Corrections, you're placed into an FDOC transport van where you are transported to UCI, Union Correctional Institution.

There, you will be escorted into P-dorm death row housing and placed on one of six wings, where you will be housed among thirteen other death row inmates. All are confined in a 9×7, 63 square foot cell, where you will spend a minimum of 148 out of 168 hours a week in some of the most miserable conditions of solitary confinement there is. You may sit in one of these cells 15, 20, 25, even 40 years waiting for the final decision.

Over these years, you will make friends with some of these men, and you will watch some slowly deteriorate under the imminent peril of death, and/or just the mere pressure of existing year in and year out in this tiny cage, confined like an animal. These are conditions the human mind is not meant and in some cases not capable of dealing with.

You will pass by cells going to medical and see the anguish and duress on the faces of these men whose appeals have been exhausted. At any minute, their death warrant may be signed. For once your appeals are exhausted in the United States Supreme Court, your file is sent to the Governor's office in Tallahassee, where it is reviewed.

You're then assigned some clemency lawyer most likely unqualified and just out to earn the \$10,000 fee for representing you. You're then given a clemency hearing. You will be denied clemency, you know it; clemency is not given. They're just going through the motions, setting everything up for your execution.

Once clemency is denied, the Governor signs your death warrant, placing the time and date on it: 6:00 PM April 21, 2026. The death warrant is then sent to the Warden at UCI.

The Warden and a half-dozen security staff will retrieve you from your cell. You already know you're warrant-eligible. So for months, maybe even the past several years, when you hear the electronic door buzz up front, popping the door (which happens dozens of times a day, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM), your heart races. You jump out of bed in a panic, stick your mirror out of your cell bars, looking down the hallway

and hoping not to see the Warden and his crew coming to get you. You know one day this will be your reality.

And on this day, your worst fears have just come true. They're here to get you. They've stopped at your cell. Your nerves are shot, they have been for months anticipating this dreadful day. They tell you your warrant has been signed. You can only take your address book with you.

You go through a strip search, you're handcuffed and escorted up front where the Warden will read the warrant to you, giving you the time and date of your death/murder. Staff will pack your property and send it to Florida State Prison (FSP) later.

You're escorted outside, placed in a transport van, and driven to FSP under heavy surveillance. You look around as you exit UCI for the last time, decades of your life have been spent in this horrific building that contains no air-conditioning, poor plumbing, mold, mildew, and more bad memories than good.

You are driven half a mile down the road to FSP, where you will be processed through the back gate. You will arrive at the back ramp that leads to the second floor. You will walk up this ramp, and enter the rear of the building, walking straight down the hall some 40 to 45 yards, coming to a section called "Times Square." You'll stop in front of a set of bars, an electronic gate will open, you will enter, turning to your right, entering the gate as it closes behind you with the clanging of steel on steel.

You will walk another 10 yards where you will stop at another gate waiting for it to open, then continue another 10 yards coming to another gate. The officers escorting you will push a button on the wall, alerting an officer who will step out a door to your right and open the gate with a key. You will step through the gate entering the door the officer came out of. You have now entered the medical clinic where you will be examined.

Upon your examination, you will be escorted back out the same way you came in. Only this time, you will not make a turn at Times Square. You will keep walking some 200 yards down this long hall, passing through three other electronic gates and passing twelve wings that house some 1,200 inmates at FSP.

Upon entering that third and final gate, you arrive at what's called Corridor E, and walk the final 25 yards where you come to a solid steel door, the end of the line. Above this door in black lettering is "Q Wing." The Corridor E officer taps the door with his key before sticking the key in the door and turning it. The officer on the other side of the door will stick his key in and turn the second lock as he pushes the door open.

You step inside. Over to your left is a Sergeant's desk, above it is a board attached to the wall with names written on it in black ink. The top of the board has 12 cells, listing the 12 names of the individuals in those cells. The middle of the board has the same listing, these are men who have been in serious incidents and placed on heightened security as a result.

You glance down to the bottom of the board. You see six cells, three on the left side of the board, and three on the right side. These are death watch cells, and there's your name and

number in black ink, with a date and time next to it: 4/21/26 6:00 PM, the day and hour that you're going to die.

Time is frozen. The reality of death is setting in. You have 30 days to think about life and your death. It's all coming to an end.

You snap out of this trance, turning to your right. There are stairs leading up and downstairs. You are escorted down the 8 to 10 steps, turning to your left and going down the remaining 8 to 10 steps, turning to your right where you see another board. Again, with three cells, and once again there's your name, number, and the date and time for which you will be killed.

You will pass by these boards many times over the next 30 days, seeing your attorneys, pastor, family and each time being reminded of this date and the countdown to take your life. So you're reminded and re-reminded on a daily basis of this imminent peril of looming death that hangs over your head.

You step towards the board. A gate is opened by a Sergeant sitting at a desk to your right this is the Sergeant's desk. A Sergeant is assigned here and oversees these cells, which are called "Death Watch Cells."

To your left, a gate is opened by this Sergeant with the turn of a key. You step through and are escorted some 12 to 14 feet down this hall. A cell door is opened to your left. You step through the doorway, entering the cell as the door closes behind you. The Sergeant and transport officers remove the handcuffs, waist chains, and shackles.

You turn and look around: a sink, toilet, and steel bunk with a thin mattress on it that you've grown so accustomed to over the years. But your thoughts immediately go to all the men you've known over the years who've been put to death over here, and how they must have spent their last remaining days laying there in that very bunk, counting down the final days and hours they had to live.

And now, you're going through this traumatically difficult death, where everything has been premeditated down to the last minute, where you will gasp for your last breath in this life.

You pace back and forth, remembering the names of these men, and the hell the state put them and their families through. You are now reflecting on how difficult this is going to be for your loved ones, and the strength and courage you must show for the sake of your family, the pain and anguish you must endure over the next 30 days.

Your property finally arrives and is placed in your cell with you. You no longer have a tablet to keep in touch with your family and friends, it now has to be done with pen and paper. So you take it out and start writing letters to thank them for everything and to say goodbye to all who are unwilling or unable to visit. You know they will be reading and re-reading these letters years after you are gone.

The days are getting shorter. These past four weeks turn into days, and now you're counting down the final week: 168 hours to live!

You've been measured for the clothing you will die in. They've taken your order for your final meal, like you're going to have an appetite knowing you will be murdered at 6:00 PM that night with everyone watching you take your last breath.

The last 168 hours, seven days to live. You're on phase two of death watch. Your property is removed from your cell. You will have to ask the officer for paper, pens, or any of your property that you are in need of and return it when you are finished. The officer is stationed in front of your cell 24 hours a day until you're dead.

Today is Tuesday April 14, 2026, 6:00 PM. You know at this time next week you will be in the death chamber, all eyes will be on you and your final moments of life. From 6:30 on, all you will think about is this time next week... you will no longer be here to experience life.

Your loved ones will be thinking about you, shedding tears over losing you to this state-sanctioned homicide, but you will no longer be here. Yes, the entire week, you think: this is my last Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Ninety-six hours until you're killed. Seventy-two hours until your death. Forty-eight hours to live. Twenty-four hours left in this life.

Has any serial killer ever put someone through such a mentally and emotionally traumatic death?

It's now Monday morning, April 20, 2026, your last full day of life. Today, you will have a one-hour visit with your family. It's not something to look forward to. There's going to be many tears shed during this visit. When they hug you for that final time, they're not going to want to turn you loose, knowing it's the last time they'll ever touch you. The next time they touch you, you will be lifeless in the funeral home.

After the visit, you will lay down thinking about how hard it was on everyone. You will be heartbroken for them.

You're now being relocated. You leave your old cell just the way you came in, passing the Sergeant's desk and the board with your name, number, and tomorrow's date on it. You walk another 10 to 12 feet and come to a solid door, like one on the front of a house. There's a water fountain to your left. You're focused on where you're being taken to, not drinking.

The door opens, you step through, take several steps before another door made out of bars to your right opens. You look down the hall, there are three cells to your right. To your left is a couple of windows, one having an air-conditioning unit. This hall is 12 to 14 feet long. At the end is a solid steel door, bigger than usual. Behind this door is Florida's death chamber, that has seen many souls taken, some guilty, some not, but all the same taken under the false pretense of Justice.

You're escorted into one of the three cells.

This week, you've been seeing people that you've never seen before. Most are bigwigs from Tallahassee and the central office, coming to see you, the man of the hour who's going to die in their death chamber.

You get a restless night's sleep on the last night of your life, knowing this will be the last time you sleep. The next time you close your eyes will be forever. You get a restless night's sleep with nightmares of the death chamber.

You awaken the next morning to your big day, the day you've been counting down to for the past 30 days: Tuesday April 21, 2026. You have less than 12 hours to live.

You're offered your last meal, but your stomach is in knots, knowing you're going to be killed within hours. The time ticks off, minute by minute, hour by hour.

5:00 PM arrives. They pull you from the cell, move the gurney into position, placing you on it, strapping you tightly down. You're pushed into the death chamber. You're looking around at the people participating in your death.

The medical personnel step beside you and begin trying to find a vein, hooking up the IV, as well as a backup in the event one fails. They want your homicide to go as planned.

You see the closed curtain, knowing behind it is an audience here to watch you die. The large gray door to the chamber slams. Most everyone has exited the chamber except the Warden, executioner, and medical personnel.

The curtain rolls back to reveal many faces, most you don't recognize. Victims' family seeking vengeance and closure through your death, members of the media all staring at you, here to watch you slowly die before their very eyes.

The Warden begins to read off the warrant, stating you've been found guilty by a jury of your peers and sentenced to die on this 21st day of April 2026. "May God have mercy on your soul." He then asks if you have any last words.

Upon your final words, the Warden gives a signal to the executioner, who begins releasing the deadly mixture that is now running through the tubes and into your veins.

A last thought goes out to your loved ones, who are standing outside devastated and heartbroken over your death. You look one last time at the faces staring back at you, before closing your eyes for the final time.

The medical personnel come in and take your vitals and pronounce your time of death: 6:12 PM.

The curtain closes, and the witnesses are taken out the rear door of Q-Wing to the awaiting vans that carry them back out the gates of FSP.

The cleanup begins. A white hearse pulls in to get your lifeless body. It's loaded into the back of the hearse and exits the gate heading to the morgue. Within a few weeks, a box will arrive at your family's, inside are your personal belongings and your death certificate, which reads "death by homicide," the actual crime that the state has accused the deceased man of and murdered him for.

The deed is done, and the mourning will last a lifetime, yes, until your family's final breath. They will live and relive Tuesday April 21, 2026, the most devastating day of their life, the day you were murdered by the State of Florida.

This act was committed under the mantle of Justice by a civilized society that proclaims the Roman Empire to be barbaric and ruthless. Yet what I just walked you through is the highest form of premeditated murder that has ever taken place, a murder planned and orchestrated to the precise minute, where citizens sit and observe this unnatural death.

Yes, viewing this horrific case of state-sanctioned homicide. A penalty that is arbitrarily and capriciously handed out to those who can't afford high-powered attorneys. And for that, they must die, for the only true equality in the United States legal system is that the poor equally get screwed by a system that falsely portrays equality.