

A Covid Affair

By JA Gueniat

The year 2020 left us spinning; pandemic raging, messy politics, grabbing onto hope even as the holidays seemed to twist by.

I entered January guarded and defensive, feeling that Covid was going to rage. My nature is to protect, make safe for others. The uneasiness at times approaching paranoia as family members became infected, now have recovered, none severely affected. I felt like I was dealing with winter allergies then something changed; harder, then incredible chills, then the aches and pain. By mid-day, a Rapid test would prove what I felt... Corona... or Rona as my friend calls her, was making herself my unwanted mistress.

She will call you in the heat of the night, an illusion of beauty beckoning from up the beach. I saw her walking towards me from the distant beach, backlit by a soon setting sun, each step propelling grains of sand in the breeze, distant beauty. When you reach her, the look of her visage is stark, her embrace is cold and once she has had her way, you awaken in a chill back in your bed.

Soon enough, she captures your senses... of taste, smell and appetite. Oxygen levels drop, she is cutting the air...one slides to surrender, just worn out.

Thankfully, our sons recognized that their parents were in trouble and needed to go to hospital. We were missing it, to use to being the caregivers. Each of us needed something different. The wife needed hydration and nourishment and returned home in two days.

After a couple of days here I could feel the improvement. I had a very satisfying meal. Surely the mistress was letting go, things were going to change...and change they did. Not for the best.

Rona grabbed on with a new vigor, with enhanced strength. She does not take you, but instead convinces you to surrender. It is all she needs. Only she is more

fearful of being deprived. The oxygen level in maximum, she must pull harder but breaks in her are starting to show. She causes pain to rip the gut, normal function ceases. This is the day of the last give up moment.

Not only must she go, but I also must help push her out. I breathe in more air every time she tries to squeeze it out. I now disallow her will to suppress. She works harder to stay, but I know she is seeking someone else. Stopping her will become somebody else's battle. I pray that his be easier. I would not wish Rona on my darkest enemies.

Each day I get a visit from this smiling young lady, who must get blood from a challenged body. A big pinch is the term she uses, calming until the moment is not. The pain sometimes is overwhelming yet subdued by her smile and demeanor. We joke and the blood flows. Yes, she too despises Rona, as she is a daily battle. As for today, I should be resting as I must deal with my real world. Those goals will help pull away, pushing Rona further away. My strength grows as hers fades.

I am humbled by the support and love of my kindred, my family, my friends and community. Lastly, but not least these folks here at Covid ground zero who pushed, embraced, poked and often just listen as one groans, screams or cries. Yes, there was plenty of that. Coming through the door a week ago a stranger, soon I will leave with some new friendships, some solid connections and others as friendships in the heart.

There are those who helped especially above and beyond the call who I will do my best to see that they get their needs met if not assessed. I can help now that I am embracing my power, not relinquishing it any longer.

I look at the clock, seeing that it is 3:30 a.m. I have spent the past two hours laying down words when I should be sleeping. I am not a writer, but a person who should be sleeping, but must write. So the words will not be lost for tonight, they will be shared with a friend. Do not know if there will be more to draw out easily... or be pushed. It is fluid always. And now maybe some sleep... only 4 hours till breakfast then meeting.

I am busting back into world! I must let her go!

Rona Corona was far from done with me. She was possessing my breath, making work out of simply living. The harder the fight, the even harder she embraced, squeezing out oxygen not to kill, but control. She needs the host to live, she will feed off you, you are hers... and she is happiest when she is hurting you.

This day, a visit from Physical Therapy assesses abilities that have weakened. Lost strength in left leg. She does not like to dance, just take but I will bring myself to my feet, dragging her up with me if needs be... dance or leave. This affair needs to burn out, not me.

I cannot say enough for the men and women of the Covid Unit. They help many fight Covid daily, with patience and caring. These are special people who know how to battle. They are holding her at bay, allowing me to collect my breath and say goodbye to the virus that wants to possess me

Half past midnight on day eight on the 4th floor, Rona's tight caresses have lessened. I feel I am working hard for my breathing, but my technology that has guided me tells me otherwise. She has been shown the way out. She either makes a choice to beg my submission and possibly expire at the lack of it or parts through the door to find a new host to give her strength. Rona's life faces new challenges as vaccinations are part of the play.

Last evening, I shared the start of my journey of Rona on the beach with one of those who had helped me navigate my days and therapy. I was surprised as she shared feelings of chill at my words.

This to many may be a work of fiction. It is certainly not a fantasy as this has been my life. Please accept it as it is. I have lived in the story too long and must focus on recovery.

With my eyes focused on going home and moving my health and life forward. It is my turn to let go of Rona's hand. Perhaps I have held her tighter than I should have, for fear of what she could inflict if I let her go. As I turn, she releases

her caress, my lungs expand. Time will shrink with each strong breath; in days I will leave the comfort here to go home and rebuild me.

As for Rona, she looks back, that is not a tear flowing from her eyes, but perspiration from her new desperation. Our bond is broken. I will not miss her nor will I forget her. In the larger scale of life this will become a dance of the mind. As bad as a dance can be something will bring a positive memory.

So, with these words I let go of my unintended mistress, unlock myself from my wordiness and finally allow collaboration. I am on way to being free again... and feeling safely embraced by those who love me! It is meant to be.

Today, the plan is to be discharged to home to finish my healing. It was decided that I test walking without oxygen supplement, breathing on my own. The 20 foot walk to the wall felt fine. Turning toward the bed, I felt the tightness, stress and duress. It is a feeling of distance to the bed, to oxygen to breathe. And it is not enough. I pull deep in breath, recovery evading. My heart rate elevated, which I feel along with stress shakes. My helper turns up oxygen, I start to feel relief and relax to the bed to rest and recover.

Rona grabbed when vulnerability allowed getting hopefully her last squeeze and now disallowed my release to home, I am convinced that I need to recover under support, not on my own. I am done with Rona she must leave.

Tomorrow I will leave to go into a Covid Rehab Nursing Facility. I have work to do, free of Rona. I am on my own and it feels right. With this it is time to release this mean mistress and pray for the next host she or he latches onto. Beware!

I have journeyed to another facility. Rona was too weak to follow, but at times I think I can hear her from the distance. Maybe she yells in frustration or maybe her memory is a bit in my head. There will not be a dramatic separation ending. This was never about love or anything like it.

You can call bullshit on me or whatever you would like. I have spoken of this affair to those who have dealt with this and know this is our truth. This is real and in it is the resolution. So, I turn to others to help me through the last part, to my wholeness, my life.

She is out of my life after taking from me all she could. There was nothing shared, but I am left with a memorable experience. Certainly not good, but good will come of it, forward movement, with mild pauses only.

I have survived and lived Covid... I am on my way! Rona, you had your way! GOOD BYE !

Return Home

Day 16 of rehab brought a meeting at the health center. My rehab has gone very well, and I would return home to complete my rehabilitation. A pit formed in my stomach. I would arrive home 4 weeks to the day we were taken to the ER. It would be the first time I had seen family since that day.

I was excited to be going home that last morning. I said my see you somedays, not goodbyes, to those who for the last 2 and a half weeks, had been family and I walked through the door to hug my son, Chris.

On the ride home I spoke of my feeling of apprehension. Something was feeling uncomfortable in this return.

The house looked and smelled clean, not the dark mess that my mind had made it the day we left the house almost a month prior. That mess had been my expectation for days. I smiled at the new stair railing that would support my climbs to the bathroom.

Rona's former presence, though no one else's reality, was taking its toll on my life. During that time away things had changed, maybe even I had changed. There certainly going to have to be adjustments.

Though not an actual affair, the wedge that one would create has been interjected into life. The why of the separation was not of consequence...only the separation itself.

How all this shakes out down the road, only time will tell. This virus, which I have referred to as Rona, has inflicted some seemingly long term affects as would an actual affair. Time will tell, no doubt.

Epilogue

This should be the end of A Covid Affair. It will never be finished as the Character Rona will live on as virus' do.

Her affects are still felt, sometimes daily. Waking up finding one's feet swollen, stomach irritation after eating things that should create no problem. That little discomfort when drawing a deep breath now that I am breathing on my own. Building back stamina and muscles atrophied by a very long hospital stay. Yet, I stand here to tell you about it... Life is good.

I leave you with this thought; do not let anyone minimize this virus or scream conspiracy theory. This is as real as it gets. There are those of us who battled and survived and there are those who fought valiantly and perished. Stay well, my friends.

Acknowledgement

My story was difficult to write, unlike anything that I have written before. This was written as I journeyed through the hell of a virus, bits nearly every day, . But this story also an extraction. Many times, I said the story was finished. I wanted it done, feeling that I put forth all I could. I am grateful for the friendly suggestions to keep it going.

I also want to express my appreciation to those caregivers who read and urged me to publish this story. I now know what they have gone through for over a year caring for those struggling with Covid. Thank you.

