

"Out of Time"

By Preston Gresham

I remember the stares I got as I prepared to enter the cell. The guys that stood around were whispering to each other so much so that I could not help but wonder what was going on as I took my property inside. Upon entering the cell, a guy introduced himself: Hello, my name is Ronald. After introducing myself, I continued unpacking my stuff.

While we made small talk, much to my amazement, he said: I am HIV Positive. If you do not want to stay I will understand. I knew that he was ashamed when I replied: You do not snore do you? We both laughed, and he proceeded to explain how he contracted the virus from a prostitute while addicted to crack cocaine.

He related that he had forgiven her but, was having a problem with his stupid decisions. He felt he had been delivered a death sentence. I tried to change the subject by asking about his family, and he said he only cared about getting out in eight (8) months to see his son, Ronald, Jr., graduate from high school.

Before moving into the cell with Ron, I had other cellmates, but being in there with him taught me a lot about people. Ron was a barber, an artist, a cook and one heck of a guy. I found myself hoping that he would live to see his son walk across the stage.

About three (3) months after I moved in, Ron found out he had developed full blown Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (A.I.D.S.). Ron's demeanor changed. He was transferred to the healthcare unit, and I did not see him for a while.

One day I went to see the dentist, and I saw Ron! He was smiling, but one could see that he had lost weight, and his hair was missing in spots. He also had lesions on his arms and face. I invited him to church, and he said he would think about it. Several weeks later Ron showed up at church! I prayed for him and gave him a hug.

I never saw Ron after that, and I received word that he had died earlier that week. A tear came to my eye as I thought about his one wish, to see his son graduate.

Rest in power my friend.