



## Success Story

*Carolyn Kinnare*

She was being so careful. Her favorite mask had stains from her makeup that refused to come out in daily washings, her fingers were dried and cracked from overuse of hand sanitizer. When her co-worker told her she couldn't taste the delicious cookies they shared a lunch, a small alarm went off in her head.

"You know that's one of the symptoms of Covid?"

The alarm registered in her co-worker's eyes.

"You probably should go get tested."

"Really?"

"I would if I was you."

Her heart raced with fear. I was wearing my mask, she thought. Well, not while eating lunch. Were we lax in our precautions? She thought, I wasn't unmasked, talking to her for more than fifteen minutes, and normally we stay six feet apart. Or is it three feet? I know I keep that rule, she thought. Other interactions that day raced through her mind. I stood at her desk getting a signature. Was that fifteen minutes? Were we both wearing our masks? She decided there was nothing she could do at this point.

Three days passed. She checked her email every day for some sort of notification. Nothing.

Today her co-worker called her.

"I'm positive, I'm sorry, I don't know how I got it. I named you as one of my close contacts."

HR called and told her to go home and quarantine for 14 days. I have no symptoms, she thought, but that's OK. It'll be nice to stay home for the next two weeks. And as long as she was feeling good, she could work from home. She went to the nearest testing site and got tested. It wasn't so bad; they didn't jam that Q-tip into her brain like she feared. Just one inch in and a swirl. It almost made her sneeze, but she held it in for fear of reaction from those nearby. She went home stopping at In-N-Out. Can I taste this, she thought as she took a bite? Yes, delicious as ever.

Her dog, Sassy greeted her as she came through the door. I'm so tired, she thought as she sat on the couch and turned on her recording of the Ellen Show. She rested her head on a pillow.

The loud political advertisement woke her up. She fed Sassy and took her on a walk. She didn't remember going to bed. The night sweats woke her up. She was shivering and pulled her blankets up over her shoulders. Her feet still felt cold. She

reached for her extra blanket and pulled it over herself. She looked at the clock. 3 AM. Luckily she remembered she was quarantining. She shut her eyes. The shaking prevented her from falling back to sleep almost as much as the worry. Forget it, she thought as she got up. Maybe a shower would help. She took her temperature first just in case. Was she reading that right? 102? She popped three Tylenols as she turned on the shower. The heat made her woozy. Maybe turn it cooler. Yes, that helped. She was so tired. Never mind covering herself in lotion. Too much work. She pulled on a pair of sweats and went to the kitchen. Sassy wanted breakfast. She fed her and thought it was OK to skip breakfast. She pulled out her laptop to check her work email. Her cell phone rang before she had a chance to open the first email.

It was her supervisor, and he asked how she was feeling, and if she had anyone to help her in case she needed it. She thought she could call her ex-husband. They were still friends. She knew he would help her. She was the mother of his children after all. She hung up with him and dialed her ex.

“Hey, Jack, I think I might have Covid. If I need your help would you take me to the hospital? I don’t need it now, but just in case, I need to know you are there for me.”

“I’m OK right now, but just in case.”

She hung up. Good old reliable Jack. She knew she could count on him.

She heard the door jiggling. It swung open and there he was. What was he doing there?

“How long have you been out?”

“What? What do you mean?”

She didn’t even know she was on the floor. Sassy had been barking. Her neighbor, Frank called Jack and he rushed over. She noticed he had a mask on and gloves. Frank peered over Jack’s shoulder. He was also masked.

“Can you take the dog?” Frank happily complied. He always loved Sassy.

Jack carried her to his car and put her in the back seat. It felt good to lay down on the cool leather seat.

She opened her eyes. A woman in scrubs and a mask and shield was standing over her. She couldn’t move, couldn’t speak, although she tried desperately. She thrashed and realized her hands were tied down. She was intubated. The woman talked to her with soothing, soft words. She gave in and slept.

She woke up coughing. The doctors were removing the intubation tubes. She had slowly been weaned off them. It had been touch and go. She looked around the room and did not recognize any of the masked and PPE covered people in the room. She remembered her family couldn’t be there.

She tried to speak and nothing came out.

“It will take some time for you to speak. Would you like a whiteboard?”

That was encouraging. If they thought she could write then she must still have her brain cells! She nodded and the nurse handed her a small board and marker. She wrote, “How long?”

“It’s been just under four weeks.”

She started to cry.

“No need to cry, honey, you made it. You put up a good fight. It’ll be a long road to recovery, but we all believe you can do it. You’re now one of our success stories.”

