

The two-hour ride to Rancagua (rumors were correct), chained up in the paddy wagon, was uneventful. John was allowed three bags instead of the usual two: a duffel, a backpack, and a black trash bag stuffed with his clothes, pillows, bedclothes, medications, blood pressure checker, electric shaver, toiletries, Bible, Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), his book *Llevando la Cruz*, paper, pens, and a clipboard. All his creature comforts were left behind: toaster oven, electric tea kettle, shower bucket (*tarifón*), space heater, cell phone, chairs, most plasticware, and his remaining food. He had a hard time lugging the bags over to the departure area near the statistics section, pausing thrice, and was checked out by the infirmary attendant along the way. The two *pacos* were treating him well in general, but threw all of his things on the floor in front of the holding cell and confiscated his two kitchen knives (a paring knife and a steak knife). One hassled him a bit about having 160,000 pesos, claiming that only 20,000—not 115,000 (or two Chilean UTM)—could be entered by a visitor. He was mistaken, but still let John take it with him. However, the *pacos* in Rancagua took 130,000 and left John with 30,000 and no coins for the pay phone. Thus, he could not call Pamela the next day. No *gendarme* was going to contact his wife or friends. The night crew that received him in Rancagua, notably *Suboficial* Vidal, recalled John's case, and all of them became very much his anti-communist fans. But their support did little to alleviate the hell that John was about to face. He was given a cart to wheel his things to the quarantine *módulo* 45—full of rows of empty cells with toilets clogged with excrement that often would not flush. Few cells had illumination at night, and none had a working electrical outlet. They were modern dungeons. The *pacos* let John find a whole piece of a thick foam mattress and lay it on a concrete bed. He was given shampoo, toothpaste, a toothbrush, and soap, but no food or water. A piece of bread and a cup of tea would come around the next morning. It was called “breakfast” since a splotch of mayonnaise was placed inside the bread. The sink fell off the wall, leading to water troubles the next day. The *mozo* and the *pacos* found another cell for John with a sink installed that trickled water, but the toilet did not flush, accumulating urine and feces. For survival, John started throwing trash and paper towels used to wipe himself out the window slit. The wintry cold, below freezing at night, rushed through the broken windows in both cells. Almost in vain did John stuff towels into the slits. The bedbugs bit him at night for the seven days of solitary confinement, without *patio* time, that he was forced to endure. He didn't know that it would soon be extended to fourteen days. He was also lucky to have a little stick to shove in the holes in the bathroom walls that made the sink dribble and light “shower” water come out—which John collected in a cereal bowl and poured over the excrement in the toilet. Nurse Cristina had inventoried all his medicines upon arrival and given John a supply; the rest would be given as needed. It was unclear if Pamela, or anyone else, would be allowed to bring replacement medications bought from the pharmacy. Cristina had painted fingernails and a pretty face, and the two *pacos* with John noticed that she was attracted to the *Gringo* and mentioned how pretty they thought she was. One of them called her a “MILF” (in English). John said, “I agree that she is a beautiful, thin, yet shapely woman, but I am an Evangelical Christian and my eyes are only for Pamela, my wife.” There may have been natural chemistry there, and she treated John well, even though the scale that weighed him as 132 kilograms was obviously broken since that was close to his weight when he first arrived in prison in 2019. Indeed, he had lost a significant amount of weight (and two belt notches) since then. John was taken to see Doctor Franco, reportedly a Venezuelan, the next morning, who looked at his medicines and prior prescription, noting that a full blood work-up would be needed and that something special would have to be done to get his pharmacy-bought medicines brought in. Then, finding his blood pressure to be 128/82, he registered the same pharmaceutical regimen John had beforehand into the prison's treatment plan. He also looked at the red area on John's tailbone and upper left buttock, swollen and tender, and taped up a bloody knuckle. John had fallen hard on the *módulo*'s wet steps on his way over, causing such significant pain to his buttocks, upper back, and neck that he cried out and burst into tears for a few minutes. The doctor said he would send pain medicine to his cell, *ibuprofen* (“Tylenol” is what the label said), which arrived at 4:35 p.m.

Once in the cell, John surveyed the anti-fire sprinkler in the ceiling, figuring it was probably strong enough to sustain a makeshift noose for suicide purposes, and he considered it along with the *correo* cord, made of strips of cloth tied together, that the *mozo* said would be used to send him and receive things through the helpless *Gringo*'s third-floor window slit. To focus, John read parts of Psalms 23, 55, 142, and 146 out loud through one of the slits. The *patio* was sparsely populated, and only one *machucado* made snide remarks about John after asking why he was in prison. One *paco*, however, announced to his colleagues that John was in prison in Valparaíso but was transferred to Rancagua after writing a book wherein he snitched on a bunch of *pacos*. John asked him if he could read and offered to lend him the book so he could find the offending passages, which shut up the befuddled guard momentarily. The same offer was made to *Suboficial* González, who brought John back to his cell—where the *Gringo* placed the book in his

hand. González had read the court order allowing for John's transfer that the *Gringo* had in his pocket. González wasn't interested in the book. The *mozo* said he would get John some bottled sparkling water the next day when the "econo-mato" came by. Two *pacos* said that *encomienda* could be delivered to John, post-quarantine, even by unvaccinated people without a Mobility Pass, and that Pamela would likely be able to arrange a fifteen-minute special visit with her husband in the administrative area. Cristina had said that visitation by unvaccinated people would be allowed, too, but the *pacos* that John later spoke with disagreed. At any rate, getting money to John was difficult and, unlike 118 and 109, there was no daily kiosk run. John pawed through the *rancho*'s foil container, like those that come with Chinese home delivery, and found five fingertip-sized pieces of meat amidst some raw cabbage and carrots. He ate it despite the risks, throwing most of the nasty vegetables out the window. Thankfully, he still had the ham, cheese, and tortillas, plus sauces, that travelled with him from 109.

The Rancagua section of terrestrial hell, located 215 kilometers southeast of Reñaca and 830 kilometers north of Osorno (where Jana lived), provided a constant reminder of why it is sometimes better to be dead than alive. Some aspects of the Covid-19 quarantine cells were better than 109, but most were worse. There was no door portal, and cold air rushed into the grimy, filthy cell, torn apart by *machucados* who thought they would harm *gendarmería* by damaging water, lighting, and electrical systems, not realizing that their prison was a private concession that didn't affect the guards. To bear it, John tried to fantasize that he was camping outdoors in the mountains in the late fall. His strategy didn't have much effect. The problem was that he couldn't see the stars. Someone wrote "God is love" above the concrete bed, which was just long enough for John to sleep comfortably. There was a concrete desk with two concrete shelves molded around the right side and bottom of the window slits. There was no metal in the cell whatsoever, unlike those in Valparaíso. Until noon, John could see his breath—a feature quite different from the heated offices and warm infirmary occupied by the professional staff. John's cell was designed for one man, although González said that some cells in other *módulos* were double occupancy. As it turned out, the second floor of the quarantine *módulo* 45 also had double occupancy cells. Even though John could read his watch (barely) by the hallway light coming through the plexiglass above the cell door, he had to wait until sunrise to read, write, or do cell chores. Knowing the water used for making tea or coffee in the morning ration was boiled, John let the sludge he received cool for several hours before drinking it down. He estimated the total calories given to a prisoner to be between 700 and 1,000 daily—far fewer than Negro slaves got in antebellum America (3,500) and closer to what prisoners in Auschwitz or Dachau received.

The food and bottles of water the *mozo* could acquire twice a week were expensive. John spent 20,000 pesos (USD 21) for four 1.6-liter bottles of sparkling water, eight mini bonbons, four packages of three cookies filled with sweetened condensed milk, and two coconut mini candy bars. The *mozo* took (without asking) his "service fee"—a pack of cigarettes (4,000 pesos or USD 5) off the top, plus a package of cookies after delivery. He attached a shopping bag to the *correo* cord that John pulled up to the window. The same bottle of water costs 800 pesos in the supermarket, 1,000 pesos at the Valparaíso kiosk, and 4,000 pesos in Rancagua prison's quarantine area. John needed *encomienda* badly; he wasn't sure he could ration enough water for six more days. Another *mozo* offered to rent John his cell phone for 20,000 pesos per day, noting that it cost 400,000 pesos to buy one—double, triple, or more than the cell phone price in Valparaíso. John spent 3,800 pesos at the payphone—the guards and *mozos* chipping in 800 that hardly got him ten minutes of talk time—John wasted 500 pesos trying to call Pamela, who didn't pick up. Jana, whom John called after Valentín, had said his wife was too sad and grieving to talk to him. Everyone knew that the leftist judges had placed John in one of the worst prisons in the country, after the rash (if not idiotic) and bungling attempt of lawyer Gonzalo Morales to get him transferred to Casablanca. The Judge seized the opportunity, no doubt, convinced by Morales that John was in danger on account of his book, which was not true, to punish the *Gringo* in a lower part of terrestrial hell. John knew the proper course had been to take the offensive and start attacking the system. María and Pamela's ideas, shared by Jana and Alejandro 4 (ex-healthcare worker), of keeping quiet, low-key, and on the defensive, had only made John's circumstances worse. Volume one of *Bearing the Cross* (Spanish) should have been in bookstores and circulating widely while John was in prison, with John speaking out about injustice and abuse, hoping to make a deal with the authorities to secure his release from prison. "That's my best chance now," mused John, "but those outside who love me are refusing to follow through—making my situation more miserable—and refusing to accept the idea of the sovereign hand of God working mightily on my behalf."

John quickly told Valentín and Jana, who was planning to bring up *encomienda* in a week from Osorno, that he needed money, peanut butter, wrapped meat, and cheeses, plus copious liquids as soon as possible. He also needed them to turn in copies of his university diplomas soon, so that he could qualify for his needed "very good" *conducta* score—his third one—required to obtain *gendarme* early-release benefits.

González told John that the technical council meets once every two months, with the next meeting coming during the first two weeks of September. To be considered for benefits, John must have applied from within a normal *módulo* during the last week of July. Pamela or some lawyer needed to be in Santiago every week, pleading with the Justice Ministry and Italian Consulate to get John transferred to Italy—now more than ever, an urgent need. There was little that John could do from his cell, but he did give the *módulo* chief three *escritos*: (1) to receive his confiscated 130,000 pesos back in four installments over six weeks, (2) let unvaccinated Pamela have a monthly conjugal and special brief visit, and (3) allow the entry of three plastic armchairs. John asked Valentín to change his Gmail password again; his loyal support was precious to John and brought tears to his eyes. John informed him and Jana of the barbaric hardships he faced, with which González concurred, and Valentín encouraged him by saying he had spoken to María and would speak to Pamela, adding that John was deeply loved and not forgotten. John wept a little as he pondered how God was working in the lives of others outside. Accordingly, he and Pamela needed contributions more than ever to survive. Jana spoke to González in the middle of John's cell's administrative office to find out how and when to get her pastor supplied. John was sure Valentín and María would be doing the same, and hoped that his supporters in America, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Dubai, and Chile would quickly send financial support. Saving John was now going to be more costly than ever. As daylight faded, John ate his half cup of flan, tried and tossed out his half cup of nasty beets, and opened his main course to find sticky rice, four carrot specks, and two thumbnail-sized pieces of chicken. Mayonnaise helped him get down most of the rice. Then he ate a filled cookie. He rationed out three pieces of candy, three slices of cheese, one tortilla, and one liter of water per day for the next five days, too. Breakfast never came on July 22nd, reducing by half or more his drinks and bread for the day. A cold shower served to wash his face, hair, underarms, and private parts. The *gendarmes* brought him down to see the nurse administering the PCR test, which John politely refused. The female guard said he would not get out of quarantine and solitary confinement until he did. In vain did John try to explain the dangers of nano-particulates on the cotton swabs which had just given a seriously bloody nose to thief Rodrigo 4 (age 30, called "*RoRo 4*", not to be confused with the *reo* with the same nickname in Valparaíso mentioned in volume one, chapters XI and XII). "If you want to continue persecuting me, that's just fine," said John. Another guard jumped in to say he would ask the boss what to do in John's case and let him, *RoRo 4*, and other *reos* walk out on the *patio* for twenty minutes. *RoRo 4* offered to let John use his cell phone, delivering it via the *correo* system later, since his cell was located directly below John's. When locking John in, González said he had seen the La Firme musical video and enjoyed it. After singing many hymns and praying outside, John reflected on either how innocent and naïve, or how stupid, his lawyers Guillermo Améstica, Fabiola García, and Gonzalo Morales had been to believe in the quixotic or romantic view of the state, believing that Justice could be obtained by unjust Judges—especially those devoted to communist or hard-left ideology. If it were not for the sovereign Lord and faithful friends, his situation would have been hopeless.

John had tried to do another *escrito* in which he explained why he did not want to do the PCR test, stating scientific and religious reasons. It came back approved so long as he showed his certificate of having received release from his Covid-19 sickness in July 2020 with the recent *escrito*. His two *escritos* pertaining to visitation and the return of his funds were returned unsigned or approved, noting they would have to be given again once classified into a new *módulo* in five more days. John expressed his concerns to González that he was going to run out of water and needed money to buy more. That matter would be addressed on Monday. Lentils with cabbage and flour with chunks of meat arrived, which John gobbled down and then promptly vomited for some unknown reason. He was hungry and thirsty on the 22nd, but had some of his last bits of peanut butter and jelly to make a sandwich, and probably enough to make a few more if stretched, besides a tortilla with cheese and salsa. The *mozo* said there were no *micróns* in Rancagua prison and, therefore, John could not cook the dozen sealed sausages he had brought along. Then *RoRo 4* came through with the phone, which John reeled up with the *correo* cord. He used WhatsApp to send an image of the two handwritten pages of *Bearing the Cross*, volume six, to Pamela, Valentín, Bob, David, Joe, and Alejandro Rogers, managing to speak with Pamela briefly. Unfortunately, the images were too blurry to read, due to the poor quality of the phone's camera. Moreover, the coverage and connection were terrible. Pamela told John that, upon seeing the court notification he received while in 109, on the 18th, that some mid-level officer in Valparaíso had ordered John to be shipped to Rancagua—not a leftist judge—and that Gonzalo Morales would be fighting in court on Wednesday the 27th to get him back to Casablanca or Limache prisons. The *pacos* seemed rather sympathetic with John's cause, although not enough to make them want to do much in the way of special favors—beyond a few payphone coins and exchange of pleasantries: no extra food, no offer to help him get money from Pamela, no additional water. The PCR test scandal that was generated when John refused to be tested might have amazed them and given them appreciation for John

being a man of principle, but they certainly weren't going to go out on a limb for John or put their jobs and security in jeopardy for him. Meanwhile, John's bruised and tender bottom and back were still painful, and he suffered listening to the Indian drums and chanting outside along the highway *Ruta 5*, as well as the babbling-brook-like flow of sink water that was impossible to shut off. Breakfast, a piece of round bread with margarine and a liter of milky tea, was hoisted up via the *correo* system to the *mozo* waiting on the *patio* below. An hour later, lunch came the same way. That time, there was no meat at all, just sticky rice, a handful of corn and carrots, a slice of beet, and a half cup of red gelatin. John could only stomach half the rice and sent his beets down to *RoRo 4*, who would send the phone up later. John needed to remind Pamela to tell lawyer Gonzalo Morales that Limache prison was a bad choice since Rigoberto Castro, the main villain of *Bearing the Cross*, volume one, was now stationed there. As bored John, bedazzled by silly daydreams during his twenty-four hours of solitary confinement day in, day out, muddled through his daily routine of prayer, singing, reading, studying Italian words and phrases, and writing as he reflected upon his utter uselessness and helplessness. Preaching and ministry opportunities were not even remotely possible.

John managed to get images of a few handwritten pages of *Bearing the Cross* off to Bob and his son after David for conversion (voice to text) so that Spanish speakers like Pamela, Jana, and Valentín could use Google to translate the text. However, *RoRo 4*'s LG phone was so old and shattered that the image quality was still blurry. Without thinking about how much it hurt his dad, David fired off a curt message that it had taken him fifteen minutes to decipher half a page, meaning the whole job would require up to an hour and a half of his time. In short, he wasn't willing to do it. John desperately wanted his children and friends to know how he was doing and to provide help if they could, but David, his best and golden child (as Pamela called him), acted like he didn't care and was unable to relieve his own father. It wasn't even worth an hour of his time. David had turned 33 a few days earlier, but John was unable to send his always-faithful birthday greetings due to his predicament. The same was true of Matthew's 28th birthday, the day after, but that agnostic son never responded to him at all. The last thing that John heard before *RoRo 4* disappeared—along with his phone—into the general population. With the quarantine completed, Bob was going to try to undertake the deciphering task.

Obstinate Pamela, upon seeing John suffering and images of his wretched cell, decided it was best to remind her husband that he was in his dungeon-like situation due to his own bad decisions and choices. "They are what got you to where you are today," she said, faithlessly. John replied to her exasperation and chagrin that God himself was permitting this affliction for a reason, Isaiah 45:7, noting also that doing the right thing is never the wrong decision, despite the consequences. John, too, had his own limitations and failings, but was still under the care of Providence, just as she was. Burglar *RoRo 4* pleaded with John the night before for some food and to send a little money to his baby son. Pamela transferred 10,000 pesos to *RoRo 4*'s wife, but John was only willing to reel down some leftover rice clusters, which would have been thrown out in any other circumstances and probably resulted in John's diarrhea on the 24th, instead of some of his allotted food rations. John was hungry, too. Thinking in economic terms, John realized that he lived in a place where even garbage became valuable: its negative price turned positive in solitary confinement. He was sad that David didn't seem to care, but cut him some slack since his wife, Anthia, was due to give birth on the 26th. (Adelaide was born on the 4th.) The Lord's Day breakfast reeled in from the *patio* "slough" included a half-liter of tea with powdered milk and a round piece of bread with a bologna slice. John felt a little guilty as he doctored up his sandwich with a slice of cheese, mayonnaise, barbecue sauce, and oregano, while *RoRo 4* had to eat the victuals raw. He was sympathetic with his neighbor's plight, while he himself dined relatively sumptuously, wondering why he had been so selfish not to show the love of Christ to the criminal housed below him. Lunch came without meat again, other than a piece of sea urchin or other sea critter mixed with squash in a thin plastic cup. Adding a little cheese dip sauce, the sauce he used to make his fabulous *burritos*, John gobbled up the hollow noodles united with white goo in the aluminum bin, along with the half cup of flan. Before reading and studying Italian, he made a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich to be eaten at 10:00 p.m. and a tortilla wrapped with cheese, salsa, and oregano for 5:00 p.m. He laid aside a little candy bar for midnight, meaning he might hit 2,000 calories for the day. Then, unexpectedly, a second *rancho* distribution appeared on the *patio*: cold cups of gelatin and beets plus mashed potatoes with twenty-three peas and a few bits of onion and carrot, along with sea sponge or something like it. John ate the potatoes, peas, a piece of carrot, and gelatin.