



# Contact Tracing: When Game Night Turned Into A Nightmare

When an unskilled, \$17/hour “contact tracer” shows up on your doorstep, how will you respond? Will he or she be able to wreck your life in a few short minutes? Follow the saga of Henry Kron and his family.

Be sure to see all the headlines and the video at the end of the story! There’s more. Much more. That’s why it’s “to be continued...” □ TN Editor

Henry Kron and his wife Helen had just enjoyed a family dinner time with their two pre-teen daughters, Leanne and Elise. Henry headed to the coat closet to get the girls’ favorite board game off the top shelf.

He had promised that this would be “game night” and they were all looking forward to it.

Actually, life was just starting to look good again after the extended lockdown during the global pandemic. That one had cost Henry his last job and finding a new job was next to impossible with 40 million other

Americans out of work at the same time.

In fact, the lack of income for several months left them unable to make their house payment for two months in row. They came within an inch of being foreclosed. Their retirement fund wasn't large, but it took the whole thing just to get caught up.

With a lot of hard work and a bit of luck, Henry had finally landed a good job. Even though he would be on probation for the first 90 days, he was determined to do whatever it would take to keep the job.

Just as they decided who would get to roll the dice to start the game, the doorbell rang.

Henry went to the door thinking "Who would call on us at this time of the evening?" He certainly was not expecting anyone.

As he opened the door, there stood a soldier in a crisp, clean fatigue uniform.

"Mr. Kron?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Henry, "is something going on in the neighborhood?"

"No, sir," he replied, "I am here to give you and your family a coronavirus test because we received a report that you have unknowingly been exposed to someone who actually had the virus."

"What? Who was that?" Henry asked.

"I'm not at liberty to say, sir," he replied, "All of that kind of information is private and confidential."

Henry immediately thought back to the restaurant he and his wife visited for dinner two days ago. They were asking each guest to fill out a form with their name and address info, and they did. The waitress said it had something to do with contact tracing rules just implemented in their state.

The soldier explained that testing was mandatory but there would be no cost to him. It would only take a couple of minutes to take samples from

everyone in the household.

Reluctantly, Henry consented. What else could he do?

After signing the HIPAA agreement and liability waiver, the soldier took a quick cheek swab of all four of them.

“I will take these kits to the lab for processing tonight,” he said, “and I will personally get back to you in the morning with the results.”

“Oh, and Mr. Kron, until you hear from me, please remain at home, just in case.”

After this intrusion, game night was overshadowed by the fear of “what if”. Nobody really felt like laughing and Henry and Helen had a restless night after the girls went to bed.

Just after breakfast the next morning, the phone rang.

“This is Henry Kron speaking,” he answered as he picked it up with a twinge of dread in his stomach.

“Mr. Kron, I’m sorry to report that your wife Helen tested positive for COVID-19 even though she has no symptoms yet,” the caller said, “so, your family will have to make some adjustments over the next two weeks.”

“What kind of adjustments?” Henry asked.

“Well, you will all have to ‘self-quarantine at home’ and avoid contact with anyone else,” the caller explained. “We can help you with any needs you might have, like groceries or pharmaceuticals.”

“You mean my daughters can’t go to school?”

“That’s correct, sir, they will have to stay home for the duration.”

“Do you mean I can’t go to work?”

“That’s also correct, sir, but only for two weeks. We will test all of you again at the end just to confirm that you are all in the clear.”

Henry was starting to feel a sense of panic. Could they really do this to him?

“Wait!” Henry exclaimed, “If I don’t go to work tomorrow, I will be fired from my new job, and if I get fired again, I will lose my house. In any case, I just read that your COVID-19 tests are returning a high percentage of false positives. You can’t do this to me!”

“I understand how you feel, sir, but our contact tracing guidelines are very clear and your cooperation is essential to help keep you and everyone else safe and well.”

“Well, you can stick that in your ear, soldier boy,” Henry exclaimed with rising temper, “I am going to work and that is the end of matter.”

“Sir, it’s not that easy. We require daily contact with you until the two week period is completed, and if you violate the order, you will receive a citation that will cost \$500 per day.”

“Furthermore,” he explained, “if you were to test positive before the end of self-quarantine, you could be criminally charged for intentionally spreading the coronavirus, and that could mean one year in jail.”

“Oh, and Mr. Kron? We will also need to know everyone you and your family have been in contact with during the last 7 days.”

Henry’s heart sank. He knew this was the end of the line for him and his family. He was trapped. He had worked so hard for so many years to get where he was, but this would be the final blow that killed it all.

He could seek low income housing, but the application line was a mile long because unemployment was so high. Maybe they would just sell everything and start over somewhere else.

“More sleepless nights ahead,” he told Helen. Their daughters didn’t fully understand, but they knew their parents were very upset. They all hugged, temporarily oblivious to COVID-19. At least they had each other. For now...

(to be continued)

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