

DC Books
to Prisons
#3



Mission Statement

DC Books to Prisons works to provide a wide variety of informative, educational and enjoyable reading material, free of charge, to inmates in US prisons. We prioritize inmates in underserved regions and respond to individual inmates' requests, whenever possible including short personal notes (which are sometimes as important as the books we send). Efforts include selected secondary projects to address the gap in resources and access to reading material.

We believe that books can change lives. They can change the way people view the world, other people, and themselves, provide an education, provide a vocabulary, and open minds to new possibilities.

Our Reach

Since 2013, we've gathered and sent well over 100,000 books to incarcerated men and women and even more books in support of prison libraries. These donations provide critical resources to tens of thousands of men and women in hundreds of correctional facilities nationwide. We receive thousands of letters each year from incarcerated individuals at more than 500 correctional facilities in 35 states. Some prisoners write to tell us that our handwritten notes and books are the only mail they receive.

This zine isn't about us, though. It is about the people we serve and includes their words—their poems, short stories, and essays—and artwork, which they graciously gave us permission to share with all of you.

Cover art by Albert Palomino

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Drawing..... Back cover

Ezra Williams

Was It You I Heard Weep?

Does your exiled heart yearn for home?
Do the lonely nights make you ache for a love to hold?
Have you been to the temples
Of bitter truth and unheard pleas?
Have you walked chained down corridors
Filled with humanities screams?
Where violence is worshiped
Hatred and ignorance breeds
Have you tried to smile
But your soul only bleeds?
Have you been lost in the night
Was it you I heard weep?
Did you find your way back
Or did you play for keeps
What would you do to turn back the years
Have you realized your dreams
When you faced all your fears?
Would you give it all now
For just one last chance
To turn a new leaf
To learn a new dance?

The Hardest Stones

The blackest nights shine with the brightest starts.
And the hardest stones strike the hottest sparks,
Just as every heart bares some kind of scar,
Hurt by closed minds that can't see very far,
But I refuse to be defined by these prison bars,
I refuse to hide these beautiful scars,
I choose to open my mind and open my heart,
I choose to write a new chapter,
Today's when I start.

A Clear View to a Kill

In my world...
My loved ones are on a "disapproved" list,
And hearts turn hard as a brass-knuckled fist,
In my world tears are shed hidden in silence,
And a man is measured by a record of violence,
In my world prohibition is placed on small acts of love,
On telling a woman she's beautiful,
Most times even on a hug,
In my world if a man forgets to never lose hope
He's often found dead hanging from a rope
In my world the only oceans or rivers I see
Are the ones I read about or see on TV,
In my world beautiful nature that can nurture and heal
Has all been replaced with a clear view to kill
In my world time is a double-edged blade,
We pray for it to pass
As it slowly slips away.

Andrew Miller

The Vision

It was the hardest decision of his life, left or right, life or death, heaven or hell. James heard the muffled voices coming through the door at the end of the hall. Repeated calls of “Father heal her,” “take away this illness,” “hear our voices lord” made his palms sweat and his heart race. He knew he was expected to turn right and join the others in that room, adding his prayers to those of his mother, father, and Brother Randolph; on the other hand, this was his chance to turn left towards the phone and a surer route to salvation.

James had been ten years old when he realized that his parents had a problem. This realization had come as a result of poor Jenny Carver. Jenny had been another of the outcasts in Mrs. Rainey’s 5th grade classroom. She would come to school in slightly dirty clothes, with the occasional bruise. She did her best to hide them, but all the kids knew that her father beat her. Bob Carver, when he felt like it, worked for the city collecting trash, mowing grass, plowing snow, and other odd jobs. It was well known that Mr. Carver was rarely sober, and the meanest man in town.

James and Jenny ate lunch together in a back corner of the library almost every day. Sometimes Jenny had nothing to eat, but James was happy to share. One day, right before Christmas break, they were sharing a turkey sandwich his mother had packed, when out of nowhere Jenny started to bawl. James tried to comfort her., and hand her his napkin to use as a tissue, but she just kept crying. Finally, after about ten minutes, she started to calm down. “Want to talk about it?” James asked. At first Jenny said nothing, then in a broken voice she told him, “It’s my last day here, they are making me leave.” “Dad can’t stop drinking, he used to get to work most days and at least pay the rent.” “He’s meaner than ever, and he’s been taking out on

me.” “The C.P.S. lady came with papers and now I have to go live with Aunt Janet in Rochester.” “It’s like he doesn’t care about anything else but whiskey and beer, he spends all his time either drinking it or passed out from it.” “We never do anything fun anymore.” That was the last day he ever saw poor Jenny Carver, and also when he realized all of the changes in the last year really were a problem.

Mom and Dad had always been what they called “Church Folk”, but in the last year they had stopped going to First Baptist, and started going to Brother Randolph’s church, way on the edge of town. It was called “The Path.” It wasn’t nearly as nice as First Baptist, the buildings were an old farmhouse and barn that been turned into a sort of Church and Fellowship hall. There were other differences too, all of the people at Brother Randolph’s church wore funny clothes, kind of like that old show called *Little House on the Prairie*. Sometimes people would start speaking in strange languages and rolling around on the floor during the sermon. James used to look forward to Sunday school at First Baptist, but at the Path it was taught by Sister Sarah and all she ever talked about was sin, how it was everywhere. All popular music was sinful, according to Sister Sarah, along with most television, video games, books (except King James), and even Halloween. James wondered, “How can dressing up and going trick-or-treating with your friends be sinful?” Sister Sarah claimed that today’s children were wicked and had best find the lord before they burned in hellfire for all eternity.

The changes weren’t just at Church either, James was no longer allowed to watch T.V. unless it was a religious program. He wasn’t allowed to go over to his friends’ houses to play. According to Mom, their families were on “the road to damnation” because they didn’t get the word from Brother Randolph. James was no longer allowed to wear his jeans and T-shirts to school anymore, he had to wear black pants, black shoes, a white button-up shirt, and a dorky black vest. All of this had turned him into the recipient of some serious teasing in school. James thought that his parents couldn’t stop doing

religion the same way that Mr. Carver couldn't stop drinking whiskey.

However, the worst of it had started about a week ago. Brother Randolph had told everyone of a vision he had from the lord. God had come to him and told him that faith was the only true healer, and to prove their righteousness they should no longer rely on doctors and medicine, but rely on the healing power of the lord.

James had a baby sister, Elizabeth Rose, or Lizzy, who was just two years old. At first James didn't much care for his baby sister, but she had grown on him, and now he knew it was his job to look out for his little sister. Lizzy was a type 1 diabetic and needed insulin twice a day. That is, until Brother Randolph had his vision. Now, Lizzy was sick, and James thought maybe dying, in the back room. Mom, Dad, and Brother Randolph had been back there all night, and most of this morning, but all of their praying hadn't fixed Lizzy, in fact she looked worse than ever this morning.

Now James stood at the bottom of the stairs, trying to decide to go left or right. Brother Randolph would be furious at his lack of faith for even thinking of calling an ambulance. James knew his parents would be furious, but he felt it was his duty to call 911 and get Lizzy help. He stood there, with tears running down his face, finally he made his decision and turned...



Albert Palomino

Albert Palomino

Villain or Hero?

What does fair and balanced have to do with “Villainy”? If there truly are “two” sides to every story, then both sides must be seriously weighed out. Is being misunderstood grounds to become a Villain, or can we just be “Bad to the Bone” without having to explain why, who, what?

Being “misunderstood” can be a key to what pushed the one and only “Joker” to become both comical and ruthless. Let us be honest: the Joker is all that we would like to be. Someone who enjoys being “Bad” and doesn’t really answer for it with really exaggerated prison sentences.

Who could really dislike the “Wicked Witch of the West”? She had cool flying monkeys, bad-ass haunted castle (might have been haunted) and could hit the skyways without all that luggage check we suffer at the airport. Let’s be honest again. Those Red-Ruby-Shoes were stolen from her sister by Dorothy, so who was really the “Villain”?

In the early days, a selfless, social serving do-gooder in spandex hiding behind a mask, destroying public and private property while chasing after a free-spirited expressive individual. Banks have insurance, so early withdrawals are covered; does it really matter who made the withdrawal? At least, I can say that the Catwoman looks good in her tight black all curve revealing costume. While relieving a socially and financially secure high roller of a few well insured items. When have you ever heard it said the Catwoman evicted an unemployed mother of three kids in the streets? It’s a little known fact that the Catwoman ran a shelter for abandoned cats and was not too unkind to dogs either. She even had a few penguins.

If we really look at what today is terms as Villainy, we are not looking at both sides of the coin. A Hero in a mask can just as easily turn to the dark side if he didn’t already own Wayne

Manor and have Mommy Daddy's money. People like Harley Quinn had a harsh awakening to what was really happening behind closed doors. Lucky for her. And do we really know what transpires behind politics and those secret meetings in the basement of the White House?

Are all those labeled as "Villains" really trying to take over the world? A very early Hero of mine was part of a duet that became a cult classic mimicked by many, but there will always be just one "Pinky and the Brain." Don't take me lightly when it is a matter of world dominance you have to look seriously at "Pinky and the Brain." They didn't hide what their intentions were; they were not politicians. They just wanted to take over the world, just like every politician, but without the drama.

Villains have a heart, a soul, and they have needs just like you, me, Wonder Woman, Ironman, and all those so-called Heroes. Is it because many don't hide behind a mask and make it clear what their intentions truly are? Whether it is world dominance, a bank withdrawal, recycling precious items, or just being bad... But it is done with a smile, honesty, and having a deadly weapon don't hurt. "It's What We Do."

To Be Shared with Family and Friends

One of the most common misconceptions revolve around the religious institutional structures, the church. The church was not brought into existence to be a measuring rod of our spirituality, nor is it a remedy for all our ills. Our Spirituality is not the automatic byproduct of church attendance.

It is not enough to live in harmony within a church, nor performing all its ceremonies and rituals attuned to a specific deity. The church does have its place of importance if it upholds moral values that are beneficial to the community and the people of the community. Ceremonies and rituals can be performed without commitment, just a dry run performed to impress.

Without Faith and Love and true surrender, your attendance in a church is only a performance. Without complete surrender and acceptance of yourself as “not the master” and seeing yourself as a servant of the creator of all things and beings do we find completion. Let me make it a clear point that where I refer to the Creator, I refer to the Holy Father in Heaven. Modern text refers to the Grand Creator as GOD or Lord where the original transcripts do not hide His Holy Name, “Yahweh.” There is much debate to the use of the original Hebrew name because of current political power church.

Here is also the same to be said of the true name of the Messiah as is written in ancient transcripts where He is referred to as “Yahshua.” The conflict of a True Name for the Holy Father and the Savior can be traced back to Constantine and the line of early church members trying to hold on to power through the church and in the name of Rome.

The final authority is not of man, nor the church, nor the politics that support the church, but the final authority is of “YAHWEH.” He is Holy and has revealed Himself in scripture and

in everything that surrounds us. The Messiah referred to scripture during his ministry, not of himself but of He who sent him. Yahshua, the Messiah, whole life was structure in servitude to His Father, YAHWEH, from birth to crucifixion.



Albert Palomino14

Edward Fell

All that glitters is not gold.

All that glitters is not gold, many people's truth are untold, from beginning to the end this is how the streets unfold.

Initially I was bold and disrespectful with a point to prove, I sold drugs, hit licks and dropped out of school.

Afraid I would miss something, and I did miss every opportunity I had to do the right thing, up until twelve people said surely I put it in for the gang.

Sad I know but oh so true, even if I could rewind time there's only a few things I would undo; my past made me the man I am today, remorseful, compassionate, considerate, and a man of service.

If only you knew the shiny things, bells and whistles that drove my dysfunction and helped me convince myself that my wrongs were right and accepted by society as a whole, all that glitters is not gold. Fast money, fast women, and fast cars are 99.9% of all my past scraps.

See deceiving others is a job but deceiving oneself is dangerous. Like trying to be the MVP of the streets without heat or aggression, you tell me how do you see that life lesson? Playing out truth be told they call it a game because only children are willing to play. I was a manchild for decades before I started to work on becoming the man I am today.

All that glitters is not gold.

My Burden to Bear

Since it's my burden to bear let's get to the bear truth, like my status and reputation easily bears proof, that I submerged myself in the culture and chose to live like there's no tomorrow, the culture of drugs, gangs, and criminal activity gave birth to my sorrows.

My burden is I'm the oldest in my family with my last name so the next thing, I need is generational wealth so my unborn descendants don't experience the same things, like the lack of exposure, access, and opportunities, that had me excited and influenced by a lifestyle of buffoonery.

See my burden requires care, compassion, empathy, and compromise, my burden is to lead my family away from any and all forms of self-imposed demise.

Who are You?

I am well I thought I was someone to be feared, loved, and respected, until my reflections introduced me to me. Now I sadly admit that I was the animal that had to be tried and convicted to at least stumble the beast.

Who are you? The better question is who do I want to become because when all is said and done, I cannot achieve what I am not striving for. Who do you want to become?

A mentor. I want to save future generations from the hardships of being a "Real One", because the only things that are real is premature death, life in prison, and the addiction that left me real numb. So, who are you?

I am a man on a mission to eradicate the cycles of generational dysfunction that has been with my people for centuries, I wholeheartedly believe this is meant to be.

So I am a man that is growing into who he was meant to be.

I am Edward and Cathy's oldest child.

Edward Jr.

Ronnie Hogue

Know No Fear

“Drive faster! We have to go faster!” Share yelled as she looked backwards at the creature that was chasing them. Luckily the vehicle outdid the monster in speed as it peeled through the forest and went into the tunnel leading out the woods.

“Did we lose it?” David asked as he drove, keeping the speed of the vehicle at a constant seventy-five miles per hour, a dangerous speed even for an experienced driver in the woods.

Sharon climbed into the backseat, staring out the rear window, “It looks like we did.” The fear in her voice relaxed as she slumped over in relief on the backseat, “What was that?”

“It looked like a basilisk.” David replied as he focused on the road through the tunnel.

“A what?” Sharon asked again.

“Big freaking snake!” David said loudly, “There are ways to kill it but we are nowhere near experienced enough to try.” David pulled up his GPS seeing how much further he had to drive until they were out, “Almost there.” He could see the outside of the tunnel and he made the vehicle go faster.

Sharon started to climb back up to the front seat as they were exiting the tunnel when suddenly the vehicle stopped, both David and Sharon were knocked unconscious.

David woke from the wreck, his vision hazy and mind blurry. He looked at Sharon still unconscious, leaned against the dashboard. David looked out the windshield and saw a large tree trunk in front of the vehicle with its front smashed in. He opened the door, crawled out and collapsed to the ground. Crawling to the front where the tree was broken over, “What the hell?”

The sound of something slithering around him in the woods nearby came. The sounds of hissing and growling was heard. David made his way to the rear of the vehicle, opening the trunk then grabbing the shotgun. He racked the pump,

chambering a shell, "Where are you?" He whispered. He could hear the basilisk slithering all around him "Come on, damn it!"

"David!" a woman's voice was heard on the other side of the vehicle and footsteps.

"Sharon?" David walked around, seeing Sharon leaning out the vehicle on the tree trunk, one of her legs were broken.

"Where is it?" She asked, panic was rising in her voice.

"I don't know but keep quiet." David answered in a whisper.

"I don't want to keep quiet! I want to get the hell out of here!" She was yelling, not knowing what was around them.

David looked at her and was about to tell her again to be quiet but then he saw the steam clouds of something breathing behind her, the sound of a hiss followed soon after. Leveling the shotgun slowly, he pointed it.

Sharon felt the breath of the creature and with wide, fear-filled eyes, turned and looked the basilisk in the eyes, which caused her body to freeze in place from fear. The creature snarled and with a downward lunge, swallowed the woman.

"No!" David shouted and blasted the giant snake with twelve gauge shotgun slugs. The basilisk roared and started slithering after him, and he started running into the tunnel. He reloaded the shotgun, there was what looked to be a cave off the wall of the tunnel. Turning rapidly into it. It felt like the cave went on forever. He stopped as he was getting winded. The sound of the basilisk was growing closer and closer. He unloaded the shotgun, blasting into the dark toward the sound of the slithering until the gun ran empty.

David knelt down and leaned on the wall of the cave, reloading the shotgun, "Your Grace," David started, "I ask that you be with me. Protect me. Give me strength. Allow me to face your enemy," He racked the shotgun and got ready, "With you, Your Grace, I shall-"

"Know no Fear." A deep digital voice came from behind him and the sound of heavy footsteps approaching. The sound of something powering up. David looked behind him and into the

darkness of the cave towards the sound of heavy footsteps, a red illuminated light appeared on what seemed to be a visor. David could make out that it was a man walking towards him, wearing some sort of powered and hardened armor and an armored mask. David could only stare at the man.

The armored man carried a flare in his hand and ignited it, allowing it to burn and glow red. He tossed it forward and it landed on the cave floor between the armored man, David, and the basilisk. The giant snake hissed at the man in the armor, in turn the mysterious armored man flexed his fists and two wrist blades on each arm deployed. The man turned his head slightly, almost starting at David and said in a digital voice, “**Stay behind me.**” He then started walking towards the monster basilisk, moving in a fast sprint.

The snake snarled and rushed towards the armored man but he wasn't backing down from the monster. The only thing David could do is watch as the armored man engaged and fought the giant snake; in which a few fast, quick, and powerful moves the basilisk laid dead in the cave.

“**Go home. These are out of your league, hunter.**” The mysterious armored man said in his digital voice.

David nodded, staring at the man, he was in a small state of shock, “Wh-who are you?”

The man looked at him and his visor flashed a red line across it, “**My name is Reaper.**” He replied in his digital voice as he looked back forward out of the cave and made his way out into the tunnel.

Michael Kirk

Freedom

I took advantage of you.
I didn't realize how precious you were.
Now, I am stuck... Lost without you.
Time fades by slowly, life goes on.
Mine stays the same.
Anger, sadness, guilt, and shame.
Feelings I feel for letting you slip away.
I watch as others use and abuse you,
Not knowing the gift, you truly are.
If I ever get you back,
I will cherish you every single moment.
Please don't forget me, during our time apart.
As for you, not a second goes by,
You're not in my mind or on my heart.



Donnie Ray Miller

Anthony Scrogham

Oblivion

I love a slow end.
Just like it all began.
It feels strange in this skin.
Tripping through the dark again.
Pull them nails from my heart.
Burn it up if it don't start.
Shadows roll and black tide's low.
Remember the door where I can't go.
Mesmerizing moon so far.
Just like the wound or a scar.
I've scared the surface so I can't feel.
Can it be the end if this isn't real?
I've felt the last rays of a dying sun.
I smell the forest and oblivion.

Goodbye

Know that I face this life with pain inside.
Do you think you know the reasons why?
Happiness is something I could never hide.
But it died that time we said goodbye.
Maybe tomorrow I'll be too far gone.
TO remember the things that I done wrong.
Love is slowly leaking from life's cup.
Were you just a lie I made up?
It's so easy to say.
I don't remember those yesterdays.
Maybe I should just let go.
Of all I love and all I know.
If you weren't wrong then was I?
I think it's best we say goodbye.

Michael Railey

Life of the Sea

Sitting on the aft deck
Watching the sky blanketed with stars
Out on the horizon shore lights a speck
While the sky looks like fireflies in jars

Skirting the coast before making the turn
Crossing the ocean for visits abroad
Watching the waters of the screws churn
The lapping waves tapping the oceans code

The rocking ship can lull you to sleep
The trip so long as times passes slow
Still a vigilant watch you must keep
As the depths increase, the dangers grow

Back to the sky and the peace it gives
As the trip progresses along
Such is the life a sailor lives
Dreaming of a life where nothing is wrong

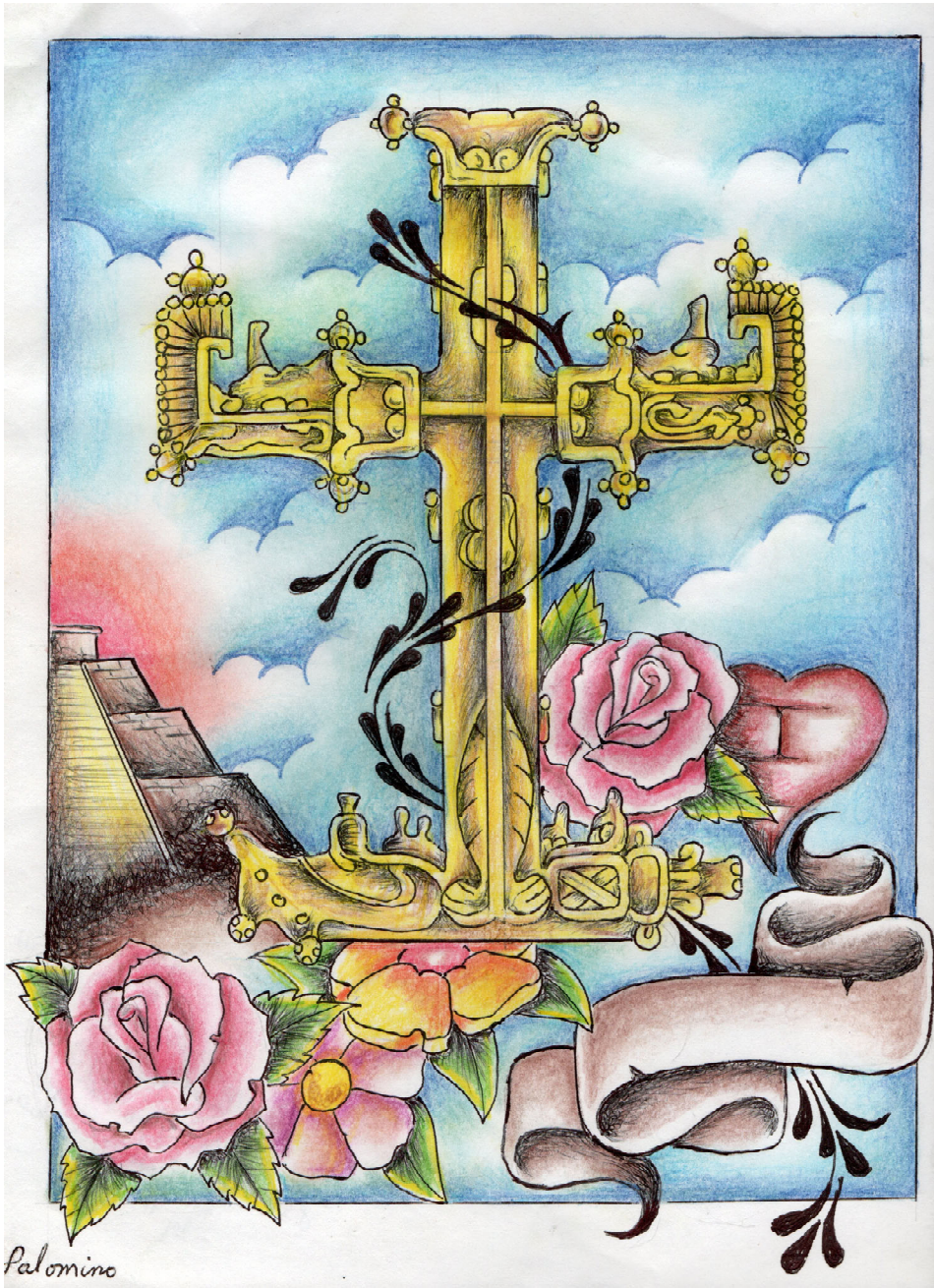
Pray

Pray for the ones who will hate you
Pray for the ones which you love
Speak only the words that are true
Of the heavenly father up above

Pray for the continued Spirits presence
Pray for every lost soul
Pray for those in need of repentance
Pray for the acceptance of Christ to make the whole

Pray without ceasing with joy in your heart
Pray for those with tears in their eyes
Pray for new creations as they start
Pray for those on the rise

Pray for everlasting peace
Sing his praises on high
Celebrate Life of sins release
Picture eternity in the great by and by



Palomino

Albert Palomino

Brian Hubbard

Silly Alphabet Poem

Always wanted to know.
Bt was too afraid to ask.
Couldn't work up the courage.
Didn't think anyone would answer.
Everyone else seems to go.
Forget I mentioned it.
Got better things to worry about.
Haven't got time anyway.
I would still like to know.
Just me know if you agree.
Knowledge would be nice.
Last time I'm going to think about it.
Maybe someone will agree.
Nobody else seems to be scared.
Or is it just me.
Probably is just me.
Questions for a later time.
Really don't want to know now.
So I will leave you alone.
Truly you don't have to agree.
Unless you really want to.
Very well, I'll tell you.
What's on my mind?
Xerox me your answer.
You really want to know?
Zoos are scary.

Q and A

Going to sleep?

No, waking up.

I love you Babe?

No, I hate your guts.

Staying in?

No, going out.

Please be quiet?

No, feel free to shout.

Sit close to me?

No, get away.

Pour out my heart?

No, nothing to say.

Want to stay together?

No, need time alone.

Want me to leave?

No, I can't let you go.

Is there any point?

No, none I can see.

Will you let me go?

No, you belong to me.

Little Boat

Little boat on a tiny stream.
Little boat, the sea is a dream.
Little boat, no sail or mast.
Little boat longs to be fast.
Little boat, not even an oar.
Little boat wishes for more.
Little boat in a child's hand.
Little boat doesn't understand.
Little boat brings hours of joy.
Little boat, more than a toy.

Steven Randolph

Christmas in Prison

Christmas after Christmas I spend behind these bars,
Looking out the window and up at the stars.
Wanting to be where my heart truly is,
Home around my family but mostly with my kids.
I dream of the day when I will be free,
To sit in my house and help the kids decorate the tree.
Around the holidays is when the time really gets hard,
And all I can do is send a picture and a card.
Hoping that these little things will be just enough,
Cause growing up without your Dad would really be tough.
Doing everything I can to show that I'll be there,
Like writing these poems to express how I care.

Rehabilitating Through Words

When I awake up out of my sleep,
I hear my thoughts in my mind so deep.
Putting together the feelings in my head,
Going through scenarios and things I should have said.
Not knowing how these words are coming to be,
Or how these poems come to me.
Isn't it funny how things work out,
It would have to be the Lord at work, no doubt.
When these thoughts and poems appear,
My mind and emotions are suddenly clear.
The words and writings is how I seem to cope,
Which help me see a brighter future and a little more hope.
So when I awake and feel the urge to write,
I'll set my mind at ease throughout the night.

My Son's Biggest Fear

My prison sentence is almost over and the time to go home is almost near.

My family is getting anxious and my son begins to fear.

“Will he really be there or was it all a lie”?

Hearing my little man say this makes me want to cry.

I want so bad to hold him and for him to hear me say,

I will be there for him each and every day.

Right now I cannot be there but I want so bad to be,

But I'll guarantee to show him the proof he wants to see.

I'll be there for the good and be there through the bad,

And although it will hurt to see it, I'll be there when he's sad.

He says he does not know me because I have been absent all these years,

And all I have ever done was cause him a tremendous amount of tears.

I cannot really blame him for how he really feels,

But thinking of life without my son gives me all sorts of chills.

So I will do what I've got to, to prove to him I'll be there,

I'll be the perfect Dad and show him how much I care.



Donnie Ray Miller

T. Wayne Lewis

Not “IF”... but “WHEN”... Amazing Grace

Kipling once wrote:

*“If you can fill the unforgiving minute, with 60 seconds worth of
distance run;
The yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, and which is more...
You’ll be a man my son!”*

Charged with... Writing a lost love, a love letter... of lost love...
No real way to deliver it, for you’re not here now.... But high, high
above.

Never thought the time would come so soon, that you and I would
part,
Never imagined such pain... never fathomed such hurt...
The wind whistling through the whole in my heart.

Words left unsaid, I longed to tell you... time robbed us unmercifully of
this chance.
There’d be no homecoming touchdown victories, or quite how to ask
her... to that first dance.

The marks on the doorframe halted, cut short by destiny’s unforgiving
call.
Lonely nights filled with frustration and anger, for you’re no longer
peacefully resting down that hall.

These chances I’ve missed, God’s taken years, eons to help me
understand.
No opportunities lost, but casted to the future, my chance to mold a
man!

Thoughts of “IF” I would have, changed to “When” ... from an ember
slowly rose....
The date we walk hand in hand once more... only the Most High
knows!

Patience, Prayer, and Perseverance now comfort me in your place,
Until the time “WHEN we are reunited...His gift of **Amazing Grace!**”



Constance Marie

Constance Marie

Vital Signs

T'was June the thirteenth and all through Orlando
the lights and the music tripping fandango
the Pulse had a pulse and to go with its beat
 revelers moving their hips, legs and feet
The music was living through thumping speakers
libations were flowing from bottles and beakers
the ambience grateful with chatter and laughter
 the hustle and flow of the nights' ever after
New friends were meeting and lovers were cooing
wishing and dreaming of good times ensuing
dancers were dancing from salsa and swing
the prince and the pauper, the queen and the king
 A haven of safety, the post in a storm
 Somewhere to be when the heart needed warm
 that safety was shattered and fear took it's place
 Seemingly missing was God and His grace
For out of the shadows came yet another coward
with so many bullets the dance floor was showered
the dance now macabre with bodies were falling
 this too my friends, was a sight quite appalling
The shooting thus started then changed to dismay
panic then followed as folks ran away
but the shooter kept shooting, both pistol and rifle
 the prayers reaching Heaven to end, stop and stifle...
The wounded were carried by both friend and stranger
to the care down the street and away from the danger
the dead were so many, but damaged were more
 imprinted forever with carnage and gore
Slaughtered and murdered are now forty-nine
brothers and sisters – theirs, yours, and mine
they had kith and kin, and each had a name
 a glow that was gentle or burning with flame

They too had intentions, objectives and goals
now those ideals fill dark looming holes
forty-nine people that stood not a chance
 liken to Belgium and Turkey and France
There's been too much killing, inflicting of pain
it's madness and crazy and too much insane
they say they are killing for country and God
 that horse my friend, been already shod
We can't be afraid of the fear and unknown
life's just a moment, a gift and a loan
death's for the dead and life's for the living
 don't let the cowards now stop you from giving
Red, white and blue – black, brown or yellow
it doesn't matter if lady or fellow
 straight as an arrow or gay as a lark
 let's live in the open and keep from the dark.
May your blessings abound, Orlando.

School's Jewels

All across this gracious land
from east coast to the west
our teachers with the toughest task
yet always ace the test

From ABCs and 123s
'til days of graduation
our mentors guide with loving care
it's more than just vocation

It's much more than all three Rs
at times it's life and death
a child saved from reaper's grasp
with teacher's final breath

They show the best in worst of times
and too they pay the price
the gift of love is life itself
and that of sacrifice

These hero's songs are most unsung
their feats not brought to light
a thousand times a day take place
with strength and grace and might...

Today though brings this song of praise
to those that make the grade
mentors, teachers, helping hands
this written accolade

Thank you for my faith renewed
Our teachers get an A
Our children too from coast to coast
Have yet another day

Good Sir (Ode to George Floyd)

Where once again cops were annoyed
this was the place to avoid
 for no rhyme or reason
 it seems open season
you can't though ask Mr. George Floyd
 It seems Mr. Floyd was accused
 and cops showing up not amused
 he soon was in cuffs
 by moron-type toughs
 then was severely abused
Not just abused and mistreated
was life's final breath he was cheated
 dignity too
 was nowhere to view
Where Senseless and Stupid competed
 Now stupid was doing the beating
 and senseless with thoughts that were fleeting
 Stupid is, senseless does
 why shouldn't have was
 what happens when morons competing
With attitude so what the heck
this shouldn't have soon became wreck
 from bad then to worse
 now needed was a hearse
from way too much pressure on my neck...
But death didn't stop the abuse
nor offered was any type of truce
 the cop rather smug
 gave violence a plug
and then offered a sorry excuse
 But someone was watching and saw
 a man thought himself above the law
 the murder was caught
 and though filled with fraught

Showed to the world in awe
Because then the cops weren't arrested
the people felt once again bested
 oppressed and too trampled
 the days of old sampled
forbearance is once again tested
 The people then took to the streets
 like day when they all took to the seats
 the need to be heard
 was more than a word
 and couldn't be spoken in Tweets
See how the streets are now filling
to protest injustice and killing
 yet something awry
 and somewhere a lie
for innocent blood again spilling.

Houston, we have a problem

It seems that our cops are competing
at who gives the more better beating
let's go to Texas
and pick up the nexus
it's Houston PD this time treating
a traffic stop somehow inspired
by joint and a license expired
indeed a misdeed
this infraction and weed
or so said the man when inquired
First was a sucker punch landed
or so said the video candid
then did he fall
to yet further maul
by jack-booted thug heavy handed
In yet another show of disgrace
and clearly disparage of race
to the ground tackled
handcuffed and shackled
then too a boot to the face
It's Griff said again and again
and got it like nine out of ten
next week another
perhaps a pregnant mother
beatin' by badge totin' men.

Contributors

Edward Fell

Poet Edward Fell has shared work from California's Central Coast region.

Ronnie Hogue

A starting-up amateur writer, Ronnie Hogue enjoys fantasy, horror, mystery, and science fiction. In his writing, he combines them all. Mr. Hogue joined the military at the age of 18 and served six years including a combat tour to Afghanistan.

Brian Hubbard

Brian Hubbard discovered that he enjoyed writing poetry through a recent writing workshop. Mr. Hubbard believes that writing provides an escape from depression and anxiety.

Michael Kirk

Michael Kirk, a 34-year-old from Parkersburg, West Virginia, has four daughters whom he loves and misses very much. Putting the words of his poem to paper helped Mr. Kirk through a rough time in his life.

T. Wayne Lewis

T. Wayne Lewis is a 57-year-old native of West Virginia. This work is dedicated to his 4-year-old son, Timmoteo Francisco Lewis-Cruz, who was kidnapped and killed in 2018. This work serves as the beginning of Mr. Lewis's journey to make peace with this.

Constance Marie

Sharing both drawings and poetry, Constance Marie has written several poems on controversial issues facing American society today.

Andrew Miller

Andrew Miller was born in Columbus, Ohio under the sign of Leo in the year of the Monkey. He is 42 years old and enjoys books, movies, and stirring up controversy.

Donnie Ray Miller

Artist Donnie Ray Miller has shared a pair of drawings from Texas.

Albert Palomino

Albert Palomino has provided both drawings and writings from Texas. The Pre-Mayan Cross Group at Palenque are the first and last set of buildings of their kind that were designed to honor the three set of gods of Palenque. In his drawing, the Cross of Palenque's symbols include an arrow with a feather, crossed by snakeskin.

Michael Railey

Born and raised in Alabama, Michael Railey joined the Navy in 1982 and retired in 2003. He and his wife of 31 years, Anne, have four children (Shauna, Christopher, Caitlin, and Kieleigh) and two grandchildren (Karigan and Maverick)

Steven Randolph

Steven Randolph started writing poetry in 2017 when his mother passed away. Writing helps Mr. Randolph to express the way he feels and to cope with everyday life.

Anthony Scrogam

Anthony Paul Scrogam was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and moved to West Virginia at the age of 13. He has six children and many brothers and sisters. Mr. Scrogam's life has been full of ups and downs, and his work reflects some of those ups and downs. He vows to always fight to be happy and have a good life.

Ezra Williams

Ezra Williams writes to create awareness about critical social issues. In addition to the work included here, Mr. Williams writes for the American Prison Library Archive, the Prison Journalism Project, and Castaway Management Group LLP.

Here are a couple of zine distributors that send free reading material on relevant issues relevant to the incarcerated. Write them a request a catalogue!

True Leap Press is a radical publishing collective that is currently located in New York and California. They promote Black intellectual struggle and advocate for the building of mass-based, autonomous projects for antiracist, anticapitalist, and antipatriarchal political education. Request a zine catalogue at:

True Leap Press (cc: Zine Distro)
PO Box 6045
Concord CA 94524

South Chicago ABC Zine Distro sends zines to prisoners, publishes the writings and art of politicized prisoners as a project of public education, and helps advocate and support prisoners organizing for their own education and liberation. You can request catalogues and titles or just contact them at:

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Homewood, IL 60430

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