

## TWO FAMILY SYSTEM

we are uprooted & are placed many miles from home & the families that love & depend on us, often to remote corners of the state. Such long distances away & apart it isn't economically feasible for our families to see us like they would want to. As for us any contact with our loved ones is stolen happiness & the rare times that we can be our selves. The visiting rooms are full of grown men smiling, laughing, crying, playing games with their children. Any other day you would not even think of speaking to these men.

We prisoners have all been there & seen hard men reduced to real people with real emotions. It's not normal but we don't stare at the tears of joy on that man's face & stare at the tough guy who isn't so tough after all. He's no punk or showing a weakness. We look away & wipe our own tears away & steal our precious minutes of happiness & wholeness of our family. We have all been there we all know how it feels & we long to return to that happy place that visits afford us.

But what happens after you say goodbye to your family. After the last hugs & kisses are exchanged we suit up back into our body armor. We wipe our noses & tuck away our feelings. We pass through the portal of now. We are the hard men who nothing fazes & emotions don't matter.

we go back to the men who have become family, people who share your meals, work & yard, family that you went to who offer advice & guidance. After 18 years in prison it is safe to say that I have more family inside than outside.

we replace our real families with a new one, we have to let people in, people who have been where you are today who may have been there yesterday & know what to do & say. It takes a long time to foster this new family, but the rewards are there & tangible.

no one will ever replace my real family that I will return to, but we treat our inside family the same way we would our outside family. we stand beside them through right or wrong, good & bad times.

The odd thing happens with the two families, we don't tell our outside family how bad things are, all the horrific things we have seen. we don't want to worry them so we say there's no danger or sorrow, it's safe & comfortable. The outside family does the same thing though, we never hear how bad it gets for them, all of the struggles they go through. They don't want to worry us. somehow this works, & both worlds are separate & it works.

we DIVEST & SHARE OUR PAIN WITH OUR INSIDE FAMILY, THEY  
HAVE LIVED IT, FELT IT, THEY KNOW LOSS & AGONY. OUR INSIDE  
FAMILY SURROUNDS US & LETS US KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE ALRIGHT.  
THESE MEN ARE MY BROTHERS & FAMILY. I KNOW IF THE DAY COMES &  
IF THEY READ THIS THEY WILL KNOW THAT I REFER TO THEM. THEY KNOW  
WHO IS A PART OF MY FAMILY. I ALSO HOPE THAT THEY KNOW THAT  
I SINCERELY HOPE THAT ONE DAY MY TWO FAMILYS CAN COMBINE  
IN THE REAL WORLD. THESE BONDS ARE STRONG & THE BONDS OF  
BROTHERHOOD & FAMILY GO BEYOND THESE WALLS & CAGES. I HOPE  
TO SEE ALL OF MY BROTHERS LIVING A FREE & GOOD LIFE.