

I am writing this from my cell in the dark, just letting my pen guide me. My bean-hole is open and I can hear rising, angry voices coming from all directions. I-pod, the female unit at Bradley County's jail, has just received word that we will be locked down for the rest of the week. No visits, no mail, no programs and very little time spent outside our locked cells, all due to some type of "training." I guess the worst part of this for most of us is the utter helplessness we feel during times such as these.

I've been incarcerated (this time) for 17 long months, over half of which has been spent here at Bradley Co. I'm waiting for sentencing in federal court, after which I will be extradited to a federal ~~penitentiary~~ holding facility and then on to a federal penitentiary to serve out my sentence. I've already been extradited twice over state lines (this time).

Sometimes it's difficult not to consider the daily/weekly struggles

around me as petty or childish but then I remember, this is all we have right now. No matter how enticing it may be for me to consider myself "above it all," our struggles are one and the same. Substandard living conditions and the lack of human affection and comfort head the list. The idea that our "debt to society" can somehow coincide with a type of rehabilitation is hard to swallow. Just getting toilet paper has become monument in my life while a simple heartfelt hug could destroy me.

I am 44 years old and I have spent 20 years in active addiction. I have 2 grandchildren, one of which I've yet to meet, due to my incarceration. I am facing 5 to 48 years (this time).

Barbara Reeder