

Needs typing



Mark Knight

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(TEN OF TWENTY-ONE)

A NEW YEAR... 12 MONTHS, 365 DAYS, 8,760 HOURS, 525,600 MINUTES, 31,536,000 SECONDS. A TIME TO CONSIDER DIRECTIONS, GOALS, AND REFLECT ON WHAT ACTIONS TO TAKE. I MUST MAKE SOME PLANS TO LIVE A NORMAL LIFE, BUT I ALSO MUST LIVE EMOTIONALLY WITHIN A TWENTY-FOUR-HOUR FRAME. I CAN DECIDE, "TODAY I WILL DO THIS... TODAY I WILL DO THAT." EACH DAY I CAN MEASURE MY LIFE BY TRYING TO DO A LITTLE BETTER, BY DECIDING TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO CHANGE. SOMEHOW DURING THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND THE DEADLINES LIFE IMPOSES, SURRENDERING TO CHANGE BECAME THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

MY NAME IS MARK KNIGHT, I WAS BORN IN DERIDDER, LA. 1976. I'M 33 YEARS OLD, AND ON SEPTEMBER 12th 2000, I MADE A BAD CHOICE THAT CHANGED PEOPLE'S LIVES FOREVER. I'VE HAD THE PAST TEN YEARS TO REFLECT ON MY ACTIONS THAT CAUSED THE DEATH OF ANOTHER HUMAN. MANY NIGHTS ASKING MYSELF WHY?, WHY?, WHY?. AM I REALLY THAT BAD OF A HUMAN BEING?, DO I REALLY DESERVE TO BE LOCKED AWAY AND TREATED LIKE A CRIMINAL, FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE, BECAUSE OF ONE BAD CHOICE. AND I'VE FOUND THE ANSWER "NO" I DESERVE TO CHANGE, I DESERVE A GOOD LIFE, I DESERVE TO BE HAPPY AND FREE. SO WHAT DID I DO TO CHANGE YOU ASK?.. I HAD TO MAKE ANOTHER CHOICE, EITHER GO ON STRUGGLING WITH MY ADDICTIONS OR HONESTLY ADMIT TO MYSELF THAT I WAS AN ALCOHOLIC, AND THAT EVEN THOUGH IT WAS HARD TO ADMIT THAT I AM RESPONSABLE FOR MY ACTIONS. AND NOBODY ELSE.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY WIFE DENA, SHE AND I WERE MARRIED A WEEK AFTER MY CONVICTION JULY 2nd 2001. SHE WAS COMING UP TO VISIT ME IN THE COUNTY JAIL EVERY WEEK AND, WE WOULD TALK ABOUT ALL KINDS OF THINGS, WE WOULD LAUGH AND CRY THROUGH IT ALL, SHE COULD SEE ME THROUGH THAT SCRATCHED GLASS. SO WE WAS SITTING THERE AND I ASKED "ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING??" SHE SAID "ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING??" I SAID "DO YOU WANT TO MARRY ME??" "YES" SHE SAID. SO WE DID IT, AND WHEN I FOUND OUT I WAS GOING TO BE DOING MY FIRST 4 YEARS IN CLOSE CUSTODY AT THE WASHINGTON STATE PENITENTIARY (OR AS WE CALL IT WALLA-WALLA), SHE MOVED FROM EVERETT TO THE TRI-CITIES AREA, WHICH IS ABOUT A 45 MINUTE DRIVE. I'VE STILL GOT THE PICTURE OF OUR FIRST VISIT. I REMEMBER THAT HUG AND KISS, MY FIRST HUG IN OVER 18 MONTHS. AND IT WASN'T LONG AFTER THAT THE RUMOR STARTED TO FLY THAT MY WIFE WAS BLACK. AND I'M WHITE. SO I FOUND MYSELF TORN BETWEEN MY LIVIN IN PRISON AND MY MARRIAGE.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW I'M HERE TO TELL YOU, PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE IF YOUR NOT RACIAL, YOU LEARN HOW TO BE REALLY FAST OR THINGS GO BAD. AND FOR ME I FOUND OUT WHO I COULD TRUST. HOWEVER NEVER FORGET PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS LOOK OUT FOR THEMSELVES. SO I SPENT ALOT OF TIME TRYING TO FIND OIHERS LIKE MYSELF COMMITTED TO CHANGE, AND LOOK DEEPER THAN SKIN COLOR. MY WIFE WOULD COME UP EVERY WEEK, WE WERE ALLOWED TO KISS AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH VISIT AND HOLD HANDS THROUGHOUT, AND KISS GOOD BYE. SHE HAS BEEN THE REASON MANY TIMES WHY I NEVER BECAME PHYSICALLY VIOLENT AGAINST ALL THE HATERS INSIDE THESE PLACES. I MADE A PROMISE TO HER THAT I WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING TO TAKE OUR PRIVELAGE OF VISITING AWAY FROM HER. AND THAT I WOULD NEVER PHYSICALLY ATTACK SOMEONE. AND THAT I WOULD ONLY DEFEND MYSELF. SO FAR I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THAT PROMISE TO HER.

LET ME FLASH FOWARD TO 2007. AFTER FINALLY GETTING THE HELL OUT OF WALLA-WALLA, AND ALL THE RACIAL TENSIONS, NEGATIVE THOUGHTS, GANGS, LYING, AND JUST ALL AROUND BULL-SHIT, I FOUND OUT THAT PRISON DIDN'T HAVE TO BE A SIRUGGLE. AFTER ATTENDING THE PIONEER AA MEETING FOR THE PAST SIX-YEARS IN WALLA-WALLA, I FOUND(THE LANDING PLACE GROUP).HERE AT AIRWAY HEIGHTS. AND I WAS SO GRATEFULL TO HAVE LANDED. I FOUND THAT THE NIGHTMARE BEHIND THE WALLS WAS OVER. THE CONSTANT NOISE FROM THE OPEN TEIRS GONE. THE OPENING AND SLAMMING OF CELL DOORS GONE. THEN I FOUND OUT THAT AIRWAY HEIGHTS HAS A EXTENDED FAMILY VISIT PROGRAM. I GOT ALL THE NECESSARY PAPER WORK TURNED IN, AND WAS PLACED ON CALL TO HAVE THE HEARING. AND THE (EFV) WAS DENIED BECAUSE MY WIFE AND I WERE MARRIED 7 DAYS TO LATE. THE DOC POLICY READ "YOU MUST HAVE BEEN MARRIED BEFORE YOUR CONVICTION." SO ALL THIS TIME OF STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE, KEEPING MY HEAD UP, DOING THE RIGHT THINGS, STAYING BUSY PROGRAMMING MEANT NOTHING WHEN IT CAME TO MY BEING ABLE TO HAVE EFV PRIVELAGES. THAT WAS THE ROUGHEST PHONE CALL I EVER HAD TO MAKE, WE BOTH CRIED, BUT BY THE END OF THE CALL, WE BOTH AGREED THAT THINGS HAPPEN FOR A REASON AND GOD HAS A PLAN.

WELL I GOT MY HEAD TOGETHER AND FILED A GRIEVANCE ON THE WORDING OF THE DOC POLICY, I STATED THAT WHY SHOULD DOC HAVE ANY SAY ON MY MARRIAGE BEFORE I'M EVEN SENTENCED TO BE IN THEIR CUSTODY. I STATED THAT "THEY" DOC WAS SAYING THAT MY MARRIAGE WASN'T REAL, THAT MY MARRIAGE WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM, THAT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR THEM. AND THAT MY MARRIAGE OF OVER 6 YEARS WAS BEING FLUSHED BY DOC POLICY.

WELL IN EARLY 2009 DOC CHANGED ITS POLICY, IT NOW READS THAT "YOU MUST HAVE BEEN LEGALLY MARRIED BEFORE SENTENCING OR MUST BE MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS, AND YOUR SPOUSE MUST COME TO FOUR FAMILY ORIENTED VISITS A YEAR" PLUS ALL THE OTHER THINGS LIKE REMAIN MAJOR INFRACTION FREE, AND NO DOMESTIC VIOLENT HISTORY ECT. SO WHEN I FINALLY GOT ALL THE PAPER WORK RE-SUBMITTED I WAS APPROVED, AND IT WAS SAID OUTLOUD, THE ONLY REASON IS BECAUSE OF THE POLICY CHANGE. SO MY WIFE DENA AND I GET TO SPEND SOME QUALITY RELATIONSHIP TIME TOGETHER. AND I CWE IT TO MY HIGHER POWER FOR KEEPING MY HEAD AND FEET PLANED IN MY SOBRIETY. ALOT OF MEN WOULD OF SNAPPED AFTER BEING TOLD NO ON THEIR MARRAGE RELATIONSHIP, I HAVE BEEN TOLD BY MANY STAFF MEMBERS ON HOW I HANDLED MYSELF WAS VERY MATURE AND I INSPIRED THEM... SO THATS MY MARRIAGE.

I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE OTHER PEOPLE WHO MIGHT THINK THERES NO HOPE. WELL THAT DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH YOU WANT SOMETHING, AND WHAT YOUR WILLING TO DO FOR IT. I'VE HEARD IT SAID THAT IF YOU WANT SOMETHING YOU'VE NEVER HAD, BE WILLING TO DO SOMETHING YOU'VE NEVER DONE. EASY DOES IT! FAITH THE SIZE OF A MUSTARD SEED. THE BELIEF THAT SOMETHING GREATER THAN YOURSELF IS IN CONIROL, IS ALL IT TAKES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE. YOU GET WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT. I'M NOT SAYING I'M PERFECT BUT I HAVE CHOSEN TO LIVE GOOD AND APPLY MYSELF DAILY TO CHANGING INTO SOMETHING OTHER THEN A CONVICT. I DESERVE TO BE HAPPY AND FREE. AS MUCH AS DOC WANTS TO EDUCATE, IT IS STILL AND ALWAYS WILL BE A PLACE WHERE MEN AND WOMEN ARE SENT TO BE PUNISHED FOR BREAKING THE LAWS THAT KEEP SOCIETY IN ORDER.

SO DOC SAYS PUNISH, PUNISH, PUNISH, I SAY EDUCATE, EDUCATE, EDUCATE, IF I MYSELF WAS PROPERALLY EDUCATED ABOUT THE CONSQUENCES OF MY DRUG AN ALCHOL ABUSE, I PROBALLY WOULD OF MADE DIFFERENT CHOICES. THE WAR ON DRUGS HASN'T CHANGED IN DECADES, PUNISH THOSE WHO HAVE A DISEASE OF ADDICTION, I WOULDN'T BE ALONE IN SAY^{ING} THAT 75-85% OF ALL CRIMES ARE ALCHOL OR DRUG RELATED. "HELLO" WHY IS THIS?, BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT CAN'T CONIROL THE USE OF THESE SUBSTANCES, SURE THE TAXES OFF ALCHOL GO TO SCHOOLS, ROADS, AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS THAT OUR GOVERNMENT SPEND MONEY ON. BUT LETS BE HONEST PEOPLE, THE WAR ON DRUGS WILL NEVER BE WON, BECAUSE THERES TO MUCH MONEY INVOLVED ON BOTH SIDES.

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FOR INSTANCE IF JOHN DOE WASN'T ARRESTED FOR POSSESSION, THE POLICE OFFICER WOULDN'T HAVE A JOB, THE PROSECUTOR WOULDN'T BE NEEDED, THE JUDGE AND COURT CLERKS WOULDN'T BE NEEDED, THE CORRECTIONS OFFICER WOULDN'T BE NEEDED. ALL THESE PEOPLE LIVING OFF JOHN DOE THE DRUG ADDICT, SO WHATS REALLY HAPPENING?, BIG BUSINESS THATS WHAT, ITS BIGGER THAN ME, ITS BIGGER THAN THE GOVERNMENT, BUT SOMEBODY IS RESPONSABLE, AND OUR GOVERNMENT KNOWS WHO, BUT LOOKS THE OTHER WAY BECAUSE OF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED SO WHAT DO WE DO? WELL SO FAR ITS PUNISH, PUNISH, PUNISH, AND WHO KNOWS HOW AND WHEN THIS WAR WILL END. SO IF YOUR A PRISONER OF THIS VISCIOUS WAR, I CAN ONLY SAY FIND A AA/NA GROUP AND GET SOBER AND LEARN TO GROW UP AND LIVE SOBER, BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO CONTINUE TO PAY PEOPLE FOR YOUR CONTINUED SELFISH DRUG ABUSE. THEY WILL ALWAYS HAVE A BED.

PRISON ISN'T A PLACE WHERE YOU HEAR A WHOLE LOT OF SUCCESS STORIES. SURE THERES A PLUS FOR GETTING YOUR G.E.D AND SPENDING TIME LEARNING A VOCATIONAL COURSE THAT DOC OFFERS, BUT WE ALL KNOW ITS NOT WHAT YOU KNOW, ITS WHO YOU KNOW, AND IF YOU ARE SENIENCED TO 12-60 MONIHS THATS 1-5 YEARS, MOST PEOPLE THINK THEY CAN GET OUT AND GO BACK TO DOING THE SAME THING AND EXSPECT A DIFFERENT OUTCOME, AND NEVER REALLY GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT. EVEN WHEN GIVEN A OPPURTUNITY AT A CHANCE TO GET OUT OF PRISON AND GET RIGHT, BECAUSE THEY REFUSE TO OWN UP TO THEIR PART, SO WHEN FACED WITH THAT FIRST DRINK OR DRUG THEY HAVE NO DEFENSE AGAINST IT. AND ITS BACK TO UNMANAGABILTY AND THERE FAILED DRUG TEST OR FAILURE TO REPORT, WHICH LANDS THEM BACK IN PRISON. (WHAT A CYCLE) MANY THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN GIVEN A CHANCE BUT FAIL BECAUSE THATS THE WAY SOCIETY IS SET UP. I'VE ONLY HEARD OF ONE WAY OUT, AND THATS BY STAYING FREE OF ALCHOL AND DRUGS AND BEING RESPONSABLE FOR YOUR SIDE OF THINGS. THATS WHY MOST PEOPLE WITH 5 YEARS OR MORE SEE THE CYCLE OF PRISON, AND APPLY THAT KNOWLEDGE TO GETTING RIGHT. I WILL NOT GO INTO DETAILS ABOUT MY FELLOWSHIP MEEETINGS BUT TRUST ME, THE STORIES ARE REAL, AND WHEN YOU SEE A GUY WHO'S GOTIEN OUT AND CAME BACK 3,4,5,6, 7, TIMES AND HE'S FINALLY TIRED OF IT, AND IS WILLING TO DO ANYTHING TO STIOP IT. ITS REAL, ITS LIFE CHANGING. THATS WHAT WORKS FOR ME, I BELIEVE THAT IT TAKES WHAT IT TAKES TO GET RIGHT. SURE EDUCATION IS EVERYTHING BUT UNTIL THE MAN OR WOMEN REACHES OUT FOR HELP, ITS GONNA BE A ROUGH ROAD OF JAILS, INSIUTION, AND DEATH. EDUCATE YOUR LOVE ONES, STOP THE CYCLE OF ADDICTION. WHY DO WE AS HUMANS GO TO ANY LENGI H TO GET HIGH OR DRINK? BUT WE WILL NOT GO TO ANY LENGI H TO STAY SOBER???

BACK IN 2001 WHEN I FIRST CAME TO PRISON DOC HAD THE THEORY, FEED THE INMATES AND THEY'LL BE HAPPY. HENCE, THE SAYING "FAT AND HAPPY". I CAN REMEMBER NEVER HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT BEING HUNGRY, EVERYTHING WAS AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO GET AS MUCH AS YOU WANTED, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DESSERT, AND MAIN MEAT COARSE, BUT EVERYTHING ELSE WAS FREE RUN. IF YOU WANTED MORE MASHED POTATOES AND GRAVY, WELL YOU JUST WENT BACK UP AND GOT IT. BREAKFAST MEALS YOU COULD DRINK AS MANY CARTONS OF MILK YOU WANTED. BUT AMERICA WAS CHANGING, AND DOC HAD TIGHTEN ITS BELTS, SINCE 9/11/01 DOC HAD^S DONE JUST THAT. THEY IMPLEMENTED BLIND FEEDING, BASICALLY THEY PUT UP SHEET METAL TO WHERE YOU CAN'T SEE THE KITCHEN STAFF, MADE A HOLE BIG ENOUGH FOR A TRAY TO FIT THROUGH AND WHATEVER COMES OUT IS THE ONLY THING YOUR GONNA GET. IT BECAME ABOUT NUTRITIONALS AND DOC IDEA TO CUT BACK ON THE AMOUNT OF FOOD EACH INMATE INTAKES EVERYDAY, GET SKINNY AND HEALTHIER MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. BUT WHAT THE PUBLIC DOESN'T KNOW IS, WE HERE AT AHCC WILL GO A WHOLE WINTER GETTING APPLES EVERYDAY FOR MONTHS AND THEY'LL THROW IN A ORANGE, OR KARROT STICKS ON EVERY LUNCH TRAY DAY IN AND DAY OUT(KARROT STICKS). AND GUESS WHAT WE DO DAY IN AND DAY OUT?,WE THROW THIS FOOD INTO THE GARBAGE CANS. THE DOC SAYS THEY FEED US 100 GRAMS OF PROTEIN EVERYDAY. YEA THATS WHAT THEY SAY, BUT HOW CAN THEY WITH ALL THE BUDGET^C CUTS, AND THE GOVERNOR CONSTANLY TELLING THE HIGHER UP'S TO CUT BACK. THE TRUTH IS, WE GET FED ENOUGH TO SURVIVE, I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO BE DOING PRISON TIME IN THE UNITED STATES, I KNOW HOW GOOD WE REALLY DO HAVE IT. WE GET THREE HOT MEALS EVERYDAY, WITH FRUIT, BREAD, AND VEGETABLES. SOMETIMES WE GET CHIPS, COOKIES. CLEAN, WELL SOMETIMES CLEAN CUPS, AND SPORK TO EAT WITH. SO WHAT!!! ITS PRISON AND ITS BETTER THAN 95% OF THE POPULATION WAS GETTING ON THE STREETS.

HEALTHCARE IN PRISON, TO HAVE ANY IS GOOD, BUT THEN AGAIN THIS IS DOC. MY OWN EXPERIENCE ISN'T A WHOLE LOT, IF I GET SICK I KNOW I CAN GET PILLS BUT ONLY IF ITS SOMETHING I CAN'T BUY OFF COMMISSARY. THEY DO HAVE SERVICES AT MOST PLACES, SOME BETTER THAN OTHERS, I JUST HOPE IF SOMETHING SERIOUS EVER HAPPENS TO ME THAT WHOEVER THE DR. IS WILL TREAT ME AS A HUMAN AND NOT SOME CRIMINAL. I'VE STOOD IN THE PILL LINES AND SEEN OTHERS GET OVER TEN BUBBLE CARDS FULL OF PILLS, THE DOCTOR I SEEN HERE ABOUT A YEAR AGO,ASKED IF I ATE WELL AND EXERCISED? "YES" I SAID, HE SAID KEEP IT UP AND HE'D NEVER HAVE TO SEE ME, AND THAT HAS REMAINED TRUE.BUT THE SIMPLE FACT REMAINS A LOT OF MEN WHO ARE HERE AREN'T ACTIVE, THEY LAY AROUND DAY AFTER DAY JUST EXSISTING. NO GOALS TO MEET, NO EXERCISE, JUST FALLING APART. AND ITS THERE OWN FAULT. HENCE!! THE SAYING ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE. THE STATE DOES HAVE HEALTH CARE FOR PRISONERS, UNFORIUANILY SOME DESIRE MORE THEN OTHERS.

AND I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THE MEDICAL CARE PROVIDES THE BEST IN AMERICA, BUT THATS NOT EVER GOING TO BE THE CASE. AND I HEARD STAFF OF DOC SAY IT "THIS IS PRISON GET OVER IT". SO IF YOU REALLY DO HAVE HEALTH ISSUES, COMING TO PRISON ISN'T GOING TO HELP. THERE MOTIO IS "IF IT AIN'T BROKE DON'T FIX IT". IF IT IS BROKE PATCH IT UP SO IT DON'T LEAK, HOW LONG WILL IT LEAK BEFORE IT GETS OUT, AND WILL OUR PATCH HOLD UNTIL THEN.

WHERE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN PEOPLE ON THE OUTSIDE WORLD, WHERE BROTHERS, UNCLES, DADS, GRANDFATHERS, SONS, AND NEPHEWS, BOTTOM LINE, WHERE SOMEBODY TO SOMEONE. WE JUST MADE A BAD CHOICE AND GOT CAUGHT. ALOT OF THE RULES AND CODE OF CONDUCT WE LIVE BY IS BASED ON RESPECT. IF YOU SHOW RESPECT, YOU DESERVE RESPECT BACK. AND IF YOU DISRESPECT SOMEONE YOU BETTER BE PREPARED TO DEFEND YOURSELF. THINK ABOUT THIS, IF YOU WAKE UP IN PRISON DAY AFTER DAY, WEEK AFTER WEEK, YEAR AFTER YEAR, AT SOME POINT YOUR GONNA HAVE A BAD DAY, AND SOMEONE MIGHT RUB YOU THE WRONG WAY, AND THINGS COULD GET OUT OF CONIROL REALLY FAST. SO THATS WHY GIVING AND RECEIVING THE PROPER RESPECT IS SO HUGE IN PRISON...

ANOTHER RULE IS BE IMPECABLE WITH YOUR WORD, THE ONE AND ONLY THING YOU HAVE IN HERE IS YOUR WORD. WHEN YOU SAY YOUR GOING TO DO SOMETHING, THEN YOU HAD DAMN WELL DO IT. IF YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE, THEN YOUR GONNA HAVE TO ANSWER FOR IT WHEN THE TIME COMES. IF YOUR WORD IS GOOD THEN YOU'LL BE RESPECTED. ALL YOU GOT IN PRISON IS YOUR WORD AND DOC CAN NEVER TAKE THAT AWAY...

ANOTHER RULE IS KNOW WHAT SIDE YOUR ON. THIS MEANS DON'T GO TELLING THE STAFF EVERYTHING YOU SEE, IT WILL CAUSE TENSION ON BOTH SIDES. IF WHATEVER IS GOING ON ISN'T INSIDE YOUR HULA-HOOP, IF ITS NOT EFFECTING YOU IN SOMEWAY, THEN LEAVE IT ALONE. BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO BE CALLED A TATTLE-TALE. SO IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR SIDE ON THOSE THREE THINGS, THE LIKELYHOOD OF YOU HAVING A CONFROTATION WILL BE ZERO...

OH! TO PASS TIME I'VE FOUND THAT EARNING A LITTLE MONEY HELPS ME GET THE THINGS I NEED AND IF I BUDGET MY MONEY I CAN BUY THE STUFF I WANT. I'M A OVERACHEIVER BUT THAT JUST MEANS I'M DOING THINGS TO STAY BUSY ALL THE TIME. I'M CURRENTLY AT THE FOOD FACTORY, LEAD COOK ON THE GRAVEYARD SHIFT. WORKING TEN HOUR SHIFTS. I'M ALSO SERVING AS PRESIDENT OF THE INSIDES ^R TOASTMASTER CLUB, I'VE BEEN GOING EVERY TUESDAY NIGHT FOR THE PAST 3 YEARS.

I ALSO CHAIR THE AA MEETINGS ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT AND SATURDAY AFTERNOON. I SPONSOR A FEW ALCHOLICS. I ALSO ATTEND THE NA MEETINGS EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT. AND SOMEHOW I FIND THE TIME AND ENERGY TO HIT THE WEIGHT DECK FOUR DAYS A WEEK ALSO. I'M PROGRAMMING MORE THAN MOST BUT IT WORKS FOR ME. I'M ALSO VERY MUCH INTO SCRABBLE. I GUESS IT'S BECAUSE YOU NEVER STOP LEARNING, AND THE ELEMENT OF LUCK INVOLVED MAKES IT THE BEST OF ALL BOARDGAMES. ME AND A VERY CLOSE FRIEND DECIDED THAT THE REGULAR 100 PIECE SET WASN'T ENOUGH, SO WE BUILT A SUPER SCRABBLE AND ADDED ANOTHER SET OF 100 TILES TO THE BAG. OUR GAMES TAKE ABOUT 45 MINUTES, I THINK SOMEDAY I MIGHT GIVE SCRABBLE TOURNAMENTS A TRY. WE PLAY MORE THAN MOST PEOPLE, AND WE'RE ALWAYS CHIPPING AWAY AT NEW SIX LETTER STEMS, MAKING WORD LISTS. JUST PASSING THE TIME.

IF I, GUY OR GAL, HAS NEVER READ MUCH IN THERE LIFE THEN CAME TO PRISON IT WILL BECOME A PAST TIME. MOST INMATES FIND A AUTHOR THEY LIKE AND WILL READ ALL OF HIS OR HER BOOKS WRITTEN, THEN MOVE ON TO THE NEXT. I HAVE PROBABLY 25-30 BOOKS, DOC HASN'T PUT ANY LIMIT ON THE AMOUNT OF BOOKS YOU CAN PURCHASE OR HAVE. FRIENDS OR FAMILY CAN BUY FOR YOU, SO READING IS FUN. IT CAN TAKE YOU OUT OF THIS PLACE WITH EACH CHAPTER, YOU CAN BE OFF ON SOME ADVENTURE. NOW NEWS FROM FAMILY, FRIENDS, GIRLFRIENDS AND WIFES IS MOST WELCOME, IT MAKES A MAN FEEL GOOD KNOWING SOMEBODY CARES ENOUGH TO WRITE. MY WIFE DENA STILL AFTER 10 YEARS WRITES ME TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK. PHONE CALLS? I'VE TRIED TO CALL MY FAMILY ONCE A MONTH, THE COST IS TO MUCH MONEY. SO I KEEP IT BRIEF.

SOME INMATES FIND THE HOBBY SHOP A PLACE TO GO AND BE CONSTRUCTIVE, IN-CELL ART CURIOS BEEDING CURIOS, ANY KIND OF HOBBY CAN BE ATTAINED IF YOU STAY INFRACTION FREE. DOC ALLOWS YOU TO PURCHASE MATERIAL THROUGH CATALOGS. DO YOU LIKE MUSIC? DOC HAS MADE PROGRAM CUTS AND THE MUSICROOM WAS CHOPPED OFF. NOW YOUR ALLOWED TO HAVE A GUITAR IN YOUR CELL, RADIO'S/CD PLAYER IS ONE OF MY OIHER FAVORITIE THINGS TO DO. DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF MUSIC I CAN FEEL GOOD, OR SAD, I CAN JUST BE HAVING A CRAPPY DAY AND ONE SONG CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING. I CERTAINLY NEVER HOPE DOC DECIDES TO TAKE OUR RADIOS. SINCE 2001 DOC HAS TAKEN AWAY TABACCO, PORNOGRAPHY, FIRE AND ANY AND ALL PERSONAL CLOIHING. BUT TIME JUST KEEPS MARCHING ON.

ANOTHER WAY TO PASS TIME AWAY IS SPORTS, WHETHER WATCHING OR PARTICIPATING. I WAS ABLE TO PICK UP A PRETTY GOOD HAND-BALL GAME OVER THE SUMMER MONTHS. HANDBALL IS SIMPLE. THE COURT IS LINED OUT, EACH PLAYER HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO WARM UP BY HITTING THE BALL TO THE WALL UNTIL SUCH A TIME EVERYONE AGREES THEY'RE READY TO PLAY. SERVE IS ESTABLISHED BY EACH PLAYER THROWING THE BALL TO THE WALL FROM THE BACK LINE, CLOSEST TO THE BOTTOM SERVES FIRST. EACH SERVE SCORES A POINT FOR EITHER PLAYER OR PLAYERS. SERVES MUST HIT THE WALL AND MAKE IT INSIDE THE COURT'S LINES, ALL LINES ARE GOOD AFTER THE SERVE BUT NOT ON THE SERVE, UNLESS THE LINE RULES ARE ADDRESSED BEFORE START OF THE GAME. THE TYPES OF PLAYS ARE A KILL SHOT, WHICH MEANS YOU HIT THE BALL WITH SKILL LOW ON THE WALL MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MAKE A PLAY ON. OR THE "TAXI" OR "SEND-IT" IN THIS PLAY A HIT IS MADE ON THE BALL UP CLOSE TO THE WALL BUT HITTING IT HIGH OFF THE WALL CAUSING THE BALL TO GO WITH POWER AS FAR AS YOU WANT. AND USUALLY IS FOLLOWED BY SOME CALL FROM ON-LOCKERS LIKE "YOU GOT BURN!" OR FROM THE SENDER "GET BACK THERE" OR "GET YOUR ASS BACK THERE". GAMES ARE WON WHEN A PLAYER GETS TO ELEVEN, YOU CAN HOWEVER CAUSE A OVERTIME PERIOD BY TYING THE SCORE TEN-TEN, AND THE SCORE IS RESET EIGHT EIGHT, THREE SETS OF EIGHT WILL BE ALLOWED AFTER THAT COMES SUDDEN^N DEATH FIRST PLAYER OR PLAYERS TO REACH FIVE POINTS WINS. DEPENDING ON THE LEVEL^F OR PLAYERS YOU CAN GET NEXT BY CALLING "TALLY" AND KEEPING TRACK OF THE TALLY BALLS AND LINE CALLS. SOFTBALL IS A SUMMER PAST TIME FOR SOME INMATES. IT'S MORE LIKE A BLOOPERS DRILL MOST OF THE TIME, BUT IT'S FUN IN THE SUMMER COMPETITION. I WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO WIN BACK TO BACK CHAMPIONSHIPS ON MY TEAM THE PAST TWO SUMMERS. EACH TIME SMILING TO MYSELF AS I PICKED UP MY HYGIENE PACK FOR WINNING FIRST PLACE. YEP GOOD MEMORIES EVEN IN PRISON. I SAY EVEN IN PRISON BECAUSE OF HOW LIFE WAS FOR ME BEFORE I CAME HERE. I'VE LEARNED TO GROW UP IN PRISON.

TO BE HONEST I WAS MORE LOCKED UP OUT THERE THAN I'M IN HERE, AND THAT'S BECAUSE I WAS SO CAUGHT UP IN ALCOHOLIC LIVING. I'M HAPPY TO BE ALIVE AND SOBER, MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE IS SO MUCH BETTER BECAUSE OF COMING TO PRISON. AND YEA IT SUCKS THAT SOMEONE HAD TO DIE FOR ME TO GET RIGHT AND CHANGE, AND IF I COULD CHANGE THAT NIGHT I WOULD, BUT I CAN NOT, I'M SO VERY SORRY FOR MY VICTIMS FAMILY AND THEIR LOSS. I HATE KNOWING MY ACTIONS CAUSE THE DEATH OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. BUT WHAT WOULD YOU DO IN MY SHOES? I OWE IT TO SOCIETY, TO MY FAMILY, TO MY VICTIMS FAMILY AND TO MY WIFE, AND TO MYSELF TO NEVER PICK UP A DRINK AGAIN. IT'S THAT SIMPLE, I'LL CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR THE BEST LIFE HAS TO OFFER ME WITH THE HELP OF A HIGHER POWER. TO BUILD A FOUNDATION OF SOBRIETY THAT I CAN STAND ON WHEN I GET OUT, OLD KING ALCOHOL WILL HAVE TO GO ON WITH OUT ME.

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ONE THING I CONTINUE TO PONDER ON IS THIS, WHILE LIVING AND GROWING UP IN ALASKA THE STATE PASSED A LAW CALLED "USE IT, LOSE IT." WHICH MEANS IF YOUR UNDERAGE AND UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL YOU LOSE YOUR DRIVING PRIVILEGE. EACH MINOR CONSUMPTION, THE LONGER THE REVOCATION. OUT OF ALL THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW, ALL TOGETHER WHATS THE LONGEST YOU'VE HEARD OF A SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION? SEEING ON HOW I NEVER WAS ARRESTED FOR DUI, (NEVER DID BELIEVE IN DRINKING AND DRIVING). DRINKING YEA, BUT NOT THE TWO TOGETHER. THE STATE OF ALASKA REVOKED MY PRIVILEGE TO DRIVE BEFORE I WAS THE LEGAL AGE TO DRINK, UNTIL 2003. MOST OF MY (MIP) MINOR IN POSSESSION OR MINOR CONSUMPTION, CAME FROM ME NOT RUNNING AWAY FROM THE POLICE AT THE PARTIES OR WALKING HOME AFTER DRINKING AT FRIENDS HOUSES AND SO ON. MY DRINKING GOT ME INTO SOME TROUBLE BUT MOM WOULD ALWAYS COME GET ME AND I WOULD ALWAYS GET MY WAY AND GUILT HER INTO BUYING ME MORE BOOZE. I WOULD ALWAYS KEEP A JOB, BECAUSE WORK WAS EASY FOR ME ALWAYS HAS BEEN. I KNOW MY BOSSES WERE RELEVANT TO PAY ME BECAUSE THEY KNEW ALL I WAS GONNA DO WAS BLOW ALL MY CASH ON BOOZE AND NOT SHOW UP ON TIME TO WORK, BUT THEY NEVER CONFRONTED ME ON MY DRINKING ALWAYS LOOKED THE OTHER WAY. SO AS TIME WENT BY I GOT REALLY GOOD AT WALKING EVERYWHERE, I SOMETIMES WONDER WHAT IF JUST ONE OF MY EMPLOYERS WOULD OF CONFRONTED ME? OR EVEN FIRED ME, OR HAD ANOTHER EMPLOYEE TALK TO ME ABOUT HOW OUT OF CONTROL MY DRINKING WAS TAKING, WHAT IF??? BUT NOPE NO ONE EVER DID, AND MY LIFE WAS SPIRALED TO PRISON. ITS SO MIND BOGGLING TO KNOW THAT EVEN AFTER SERVING A PRISON SENTENCE FOR 1st DEGREE MURDER, I'LL STILL NOT BE ABLE TO DRIVE IN THE UNITED STATES UNTIL 2028. THATS SIX YEARS AFTER I GET OUT .

ONE OF MY DREAMS OR WISHES TO DO IS TO GET OUT AND BE A PUBLIC SPEAKER/PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER HENCE TOASTMASTERS. I WOULD LIKE TO MOTIVATE KIDS AND TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS TO STAY CLEAN AND SOBER, TO MAYBE HELP SOMEONE WHO MIGHT BE STUCK IN THE SAME OR SIMILAR UP BRINGING AS MYSELF. JUST TO BE THAT SOMEBODY TO SAY, THERES A BETTER WAY TO LIVE THAN IN THE BOTTLE AND ABUSE OF DRUGS. TO BE THE GUY THAT UNDERSTANDS THE DIFFICULT ROAD THAT COMES WITH ADDICTION.

YOU SOMETIMES FIND YOURSELF SITTING AND PONDERING WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT, OH SURE SOME PEOPLE WANT FAME AND FORTUNE. BUT IF YOUR CONSUMED WITH SELF DESTRUCTION BEHAVIOR, ITS JAILS, INSTITUTIONS, OR DEATH. SO WHAT ABOUT ME? THE GUY LIVING IN PRISON IN WASHINGTON, WHAT DO I REALLY HAVE TO OFFER? AMBITION, DESIRE TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT, A STRIVING AFTER SOMETHING HIGHER THAN MYSELF.

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR AMBITION IS? I SEE SPONSORS COME UP HERE AND VOLUNTEER THERE TIME TO HELP US IN OUR MOST TIME OF NEED, THEY COME IN TO SHARE THERE EXPERENCES WITH US. TO SHOW US THAT SOMEONE DOES CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO US. IF YOU WANT TO HELP OUR SOCIETY OR COMMUNITY THEN GET YOUR FEET WET BUY VOLUNTEERING ON HOURS SOMEWHERE WHERE HUMANS ARE GOING THRU TAUGH TIMES. YOU CAN MAKE A CHANGE IN SOMEONES LIFE TODAY. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

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I ALSO WANIED TO SHARE A LITTLE ABOUT POPULATION CONIROL. IN MOST COUNTY JAILS IN AMERICA THEY ARE FLOWING WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE WITH ALL KINDS OF PROBLEMS. AND THE WAY THE STAFF DEALS WITH VIOLENT OFFENDERS, IS PUT THEM IN THE HOLE, UNTILL THAT INDIVIDAL GOES TO PRISON. SO WHEN DOC GETS THE INDIVIDUAL THEY ASSESS THEM ON CRIME, INFRACTIONS, ECT. AND THEY GET SENT OFF TO A TOUGHER PRISON BECAUSE,? BECAUSE THERE TOUGHER, WHILE CAR THEVES, BURGULERS, SEX OFFENDERS, AND DRUG ADDICTS GET SENT TO MEDIUM AND MINIMUM, AND CAMPS TO DO THERE TIME. SO TO CONIROL THE VIOLENCE DOC SEPERATES OFFENDERS/INMATES INIO DIFFERENT GROUPS. IT'S NOT GOOD PRACTICE TO PUT SEX OFFENDERS IN THE SAME GROUP OF INMATES, WHO HAVE LIFE SENIENCES. I TRY NOT TO JUDGE OTHERS BECAUSE OF WHY THEY'RE HERE, BUT ON HOW THEY ACT AND WHAT THEY DO. IT'S VERY TOUGH WRITING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT WITHOUT GETTING INIO DETAILS THAT WOULD CAUSE TROUBLE FOR ME WITH DOC STAFF.

IF YOU LOOK AT THE AGE DIFFERENIS BETWEEN THE MEN IN MY UNIT IT'S 19 TO 77, FROM EVERY RACE. WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS WE DO TIME TOO. AND WE ALSO RESPECT EACH OTHERS RELIGIONS. I ENJOY GETTING TO KNOW THE ELDERS, BECAUSE THEY'VE SEEN SOME STUFF AND BEEN THROUGH IT. THEIR EXPERIENCE CAN HELP ME MAKE DESCIONS THAT COULD OF BEEN DISASIERS. INSTEAD, WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THEY HAVE MY CHOICES CAN BE ON TARGET. I KNOW IT SOUNDS SELFISH BUT, I REALLY DO NOT WANT TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE THEY HAVE AT THE AGE OF 77 OR 50 OR 60 YEARS OLD. SO HOW CAN I MAKE THAT HAPPEN. BYE LISTING TO WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AND APPLYING IT TO MY OWN WISDOM. IF THE AGING PRISON POPULATION IS ANY INDICATION ON WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR AMERICA^N PRISON, IT'S THE FACT THAT OLDER MEN WHO HAVE'NT RETIRED OR WHO HAVE NO FINACIAL FREEDOM OR MEDICAL BENEFITS THEN PRISON DOESN'T LOOK SO BAD TO THEM. SO PRISON WILL BECOME A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY, SURROUNDED WITH CHAIN LINKED FENCES AND RAZOR WIRE. AND AMERICA^N TAXPAYERS WILL FOOT THE BILL, TO HOUSE THEM, CLOTH, AND FEED THEM. I'M SURE A WHOLE BOOK COULD BE WRITEN ON THE REFLECTIONS OF THIS SUBJECT. AND WHO'S TO BLAME. LIFE HAPPENS, AND HEADS ROLL, ELECTION YEAR AFTER ELECTION YEAR, NOTHING CHANGES IN HERE BUT NAMES, FACES AND DATES.

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OFTEN I WONDER IF THE COMMUNITY OUTSIDE THINK ABOUT US PRISONERS? I KNOW I DIDN'T WHEN I WAS FREE. TO BE HONEST I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. I KNEW ABOUT PRISON FROM THE T.V. SHOWS AND MOVIES I WATCHED GROWING UP. WE NOW LIVE IN A SOCIETY OF CSI AND LAW AND ORDER WATCHERS, WHO KNOW IF YOUR ACUSED OF A CRIME AND HAVE BEEN CHARGED, THEN THE STATE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT GUY AND ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT HIM. INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY "YEA RIGHT", MORE LIKE GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT. WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE MONEY CAN BUY ANYONES FREEDOM, SO UNTIL THE WAR ON DRUGS IS WON OR LOSS, AMERICANS WILL CONTINUE TO LEAD THE WORLD IN THE MOST INCARCERATED NATION. MORE AMERICANS ARE INCARCERATED NOW THEN EVER BEFORE. SO SOMEHINGS NOT WORKING IN OUR DIRECTION AS A NATION. MAYBE INSTEAD OF GIVING GOOD TIME TO DRUG DEALERS WE SHOULD MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF THEM, GO TO THE EXTREME ON THEM, MAYBE NO GOOD TIME. AND INSTEAD OF PROSUCIORS GIVING THOSE INDIVIDUALS A DEAL TO PLEA OUT, GET CONVICTIONS, AND START SENDING THE MESSAGE TO DRUG DEALERS THAT "IS THE CRIME WORTIH THE TIME". WITH THE MEIH PANDEMIC DESTROYING AND POISONING EVERYONE OF ITS USERS WHY NOT LOCK AWAY THOSE RESPONSEABLE FOR MAKING IT, BUT THATS NOT HOW OUR SYSTEM WORKS. THOSE WHO MAKE AND SELL MEIH HAVE CASH SAVED UP TO BUY THERE WAY OUT, OR FIND A WAY TO CUT A DEAL TO STAY OUT OF PRISON. I JUST HAVE TO TELL YOU HOW STRONGLY I FEEL ON MEIH AND WHAT IT DOES TO THE HUMAN BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT. I FEEL NO SYMPATHY FOR THOSE WHO GET CAUGHT MAKING AND SELLING THAT CRAP TO OTHER HUMANS FOR PROFIT. THEY'RE SELLING POISON AND SHOULD BE CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED MURDER, BECAUSE THATS THE END RESULT TO ALL WHO GET HOOKED ON THAT STUFF. SO IF I COULD CHANGE ANYBODYS MIND ON THIS SUBJECT, IT WOULD BE FOR THEM TO VOIE FOR TOUGHER LAWS ON MEIH DEALERS. THAT DRUG IS KILLING AMERICAS YOUTH.

WE INVATES HERE AT AHCC OUR ABLE TO DO FUNDRAISERS EVERY QUARTER OR SO, WE PURCHASE FOOD ITEMS FROM LOCALS RESIRAUNIS AND OUR MONEY GOES TO THOSE IN NEED,ITS JUST ONE OF THE THINGS WE AS A COMMUNITY DO TO GIVE BACK. WE ALSO CAN SELL OUR ARTS AND CRAFTS AT SILENT AUCTIONS TO HELP RAISE MONEY FOR OUR DIFFERENT GROUPS. I OFTEN PONDER WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE IN THE FUTURE WHEN I GET OUT. WILL AUTOMOBILE BE A THING OF THE PAST. WILL THE PRICE OF GAS AND GOLD STILL BE GOING UP? EVEN THOUGH I DO NOT SIUGGLE WITH THOSE THINGS EVERYDAY, I DO THINK ABOUT THEM. I GREW UP IN LOUISANNA, A SMALL DOT ON THE MAP CALLED ROSEFINE. MY GRANDPARENTS STILL HAVE THE HOME THEY BUILT AND I OFTEN WONDER IF THEY WILL STILL BE ALIVE WHEN I GET OUT. WILL I EVER SEE THEM AGAIN? HOW COULD I HAVE DONE THINGS DIFFERENT? THATS WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO WHILE DOING TIME, YOU CONTINUALLY ASK YOURSELF. WILL I BE ABLE TO DO THAT WHEN I GET OUT? I HOPE I'M GETTING ACCROSS TO YOU ABOUT WHAT ITS LIKE IN PRISON.

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SO WHAT ABOUT TOLLERANCE, MY THREE OLDER SISTERS HAVE TOLLERATED ALL THE THINGS I'VE DONE, AND STILL ACCEPT MY PHONE CALLS. I REALLY BELIEVE ALL BRIDGES CAN BE MENDED WITH HONESTY. WHEN YOUR LOCKED AWAY, YOUR SIBILINGS IS ALL YOU HAVE. SO YOU LEARN WHO THEY ARE AND CARE ABOUT WHAT THEY GO THROUGH. I'VE GOT THREE NEPHEWS I'VE ONLY MET ONCE AND ONE I'VE YET TO MEET. I'M SO GRATEFUL THAT ONE DAY I GET TO BE UNCLE MARK TO THEM, AND SUPPORT THEM THROUGH THEIR LIVES. I'M THEIR ONLY UNCLE, SO ITS MY DUTY TO HELP THEM FIGURE OUT WHAT THE WANT TO DO WITH THEIR LIVES. SO I'LL CONTINUE TO PRACTICE THE POSITIVE PRINCEPALS IN ALL MY AFFAIRS. AND TO HELP THOSE WHO WANT TO COMMIT TO CHANGE. I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, BUT I KNOW ITS GOING TO BE IN RECOVERY. LET ME CLOSE THIS WITH A BEUTIFUL POEM WRITTEN BY RUTH ANN MAHAFFEY.

MAY THIS NEW YEAR 2010 BRING LOVE, PEACE, GOOD HEALTH AND GLEE. TO YOU MY FRIENDS, WHEATHER FAR OR NEAR, MY WISH FOR YOU IS A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

YOU'VE LEFT A WARM FEELING WITHIN MY HEART,
SOMETHING I'VE CHERISHED RIGHT FROM THE START.
A FRIENDSHIP BUILT FROM TRUST AND LOVE,
ARRANGED FROM "THE HEAVENLY ONE" ABOVE .
AS FRIENDS WE'D LAUGH AND SOMETIMES CRY,
TO SOME WE'VE HAD TO SAY GOODBYE.
BUT THROUGH IT ALL, IN TOUCH WE STAYED,
REACHING OUT TO EACHOTHER AS WE PRAYED.
NOW AS THIS YEAR COMES TO AN END,
MAY YOU STILL REMEMBER ME AS YOUR FRIEND.
IF ITS IN MY POWER I SHALL DO FOR YOU,
EVEN NOW AS I BID YOU ADIEU.
GOD BLESS AND KEEP YOU SAFE I PRAY,
BRINGING YOU SUNSHINE FOR EACH NEW DAY.
WHEN YOU NEED A FRIEND TO SIT AND LISTEN,
REMEMBER I'M HERE... FOR THAT IS MY MISSION.

AS I FONDER WHAT IF???

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