

IN PRISON

I hate prison, but I have always been a prisoner.

For most, because they have or had a family, friends, and possessions, prison is a "culture shock", denied everything they took for granted, forced to live on the very basics to survive. "The Unlearning" I call it, and from this, one never recovers.

Some create a hatred for the "outside" world to adjust to life on the "inside" world. A defensive maneuver, but you can never really forget, because your memories are all you have to prove you ever existed at all.

These words cannot describe or express the reality of prison, because there are all kinds of prisons, and therefore relative and relevant to the prisoner, no matter how much time you have. Imagine, if all you had to give are your words. That's me, but then, when was the last time someone gave you all they had to give?

The highest position on the outside is nothing IN PRISON, and the highest position IN PRISON is nothing on the outside. IN PRISON, you are known by what you have, how strong or smart you are, not by what you had. My "social status" IN PRISON comes from how I carry myself, my appearance, the tattoos that tell the story of my life and where I've done time, "earned art", and my reputation as a violent ex-gangster that simply does not play.

A "number" replaces your name, and everything I do and see is in complete context to the fact that I am IN PRISON.

When you first arrive IN PRISON, you must be aware of everything, even your posture, because a low self-image can be a sign of weakness, and someone is always watching. How you see yourself is very important, because everything is violated, there is no privacy, so you have to know who you are, or you will even lose yourself.

As soon as I get locked IN PRISON, I immediately know I must for myself find out certain things; when is "chow", "showers", "laundry", "Commissary", and "Rec". The KEY to doing time IN PRISON is to create things to look forward to, to act like you have a choice.

The fact that I have maintained my dignity in a living nightmare where most minds snap is a slap IN PRISON'S face!

No one on the outside knows how it is to be me, a prisoner long before my first arrest. Raised in an orphanage, no family, no children, every birthday and every Christmas alone. I have done over 35 years in the worst prisons and jails from coast to coast, now with 21 straight on a 3-strikes Life sentence, and a diagnosis of Terminal Cancer, which means I will die in a cell. Someday we all go Home.

Prison is a machine, and the prisoner fuels it, is fed by it, and sometimes, is eaten up by it. From the moment you are arrested, something inside you dies, and a withdrawal, a "desocialization" starts. "Fingerprinting", "strip-searching", "assigning numbers", "disinfecting", "issue of institutional clothing", "rules", being shaped into a prisoner.

You are not allowed to fully feel, that protects your heart. You can laugh, but with less than joy, and cry, but only inside yourself. I am aware of all this, but am at best, unconcerned. I have always been a prisoner.

I have no anxiety about the rules or the consequences of breaking them, because punishment cannot increase my stay, I was sentenced to Life, plus 9 years.

In exchange for obedience, we are allowed to have the basics people on the outside take for granted. Punishment, therefore, is not a consequence, but a lack of privilege. You must build a world out of suffering IN PRISON, these minor rewards your incentive, and you learn the value of everything.

I apply adaptive techniques from a lifetime of institutional experience to survive IN PRISON. But it's not second nature, I am a prisoner.

Prison is a huge sea, and every now and then, a prisoner finds an island, a moment to listen, and share. For me, since I get no visits and make no phone calls, it's mail. There is no greater feeling than seeing the guard stop by my cell at "MAIL-CALL", and shout my prison number. But, there is nothing sadder, than watching him walk by in silence. Loneliness remembers, what happiness forgets.

I really don't care about the criticism or acceptance of staff or other prisoners, because the level of my individual productivity is inspired and judged by me, for me. It is very hard not to just rip someone's face off just to get the Death Penalty and end this slow motion sorrow. But it's up to the prisoner to keep his integrity and somehow show it is possible for a man to change.

I viewed my time on the outside as "visits" to collect memories, and I collected a lot. The only emotions I showed were RAGE and LUST, and I considered Love of any kind a weakness I allowed nowhere near me. I have always been a prisoner.

You cannot become attached to anyone or anything IN PRISON, especially for a Lifer, for soon, everyone and everything will leave. That's just the way it is. A prisoner's reaction to the reality of prison often depends on their ability to adjust to a cell. But prison is and always will be The People. Constant noise, violence, rape, robbery, lying, selfishness, the different personalities, religions, that are forced to dwell together.

No matter what you hid behind on the outside, your true self will be exposed IN PRISON, and you are never safe, there is no place to hide, you simply must fight back, or you will get beat, robbed, raped, stabbed, or die. I hate prison.

I have always been a troublemaker, a bully, a macho maniac that knew no law. I simply didn't care. I have never been in love or allowed anyone to love me. I try to make a conscience effort to avoid certain situations I looked for in the past. Prison, or my sentence, didn't cause the changes in me, it is pure remorse, honest self-evaluation, and God. I have spent years dissecting every area of my life, the reasons and motives behind the decisions I made, considering the contributing factors, such as a broken family and being raised an orphan, but in repentance, accepting full responsibility for my past. I faced everything, and did something I didn't even do when my Mother died; I cried.

Nothing I do can erase my past or balance the evil with any good I do now. But, I have actually stepped in between knife fights, stopped rapes, and cried with the suicidal. It's not because I'm "good" or am trying to convince

anyone of anything. I know I still have the potential to take someone's last breath. I just don't want to cause any more pain, having left no evidence but hurt that I ever existed at all. I know that soon I will die IN PRISON, never walk in the rain, or hug again. So I vowed to be REAL, completely honest, and to care without condition on every level ~~for~~ anyone who dares to believe a man can change. I have made my peace with God, from hell.

Surrounded by gun towers, eating every meal with a plastic spoon, sleeping on an iron slab welded to a concrete wall, hoping for a letter, is just some of my reality IN PRISON. I don't feel remorse to rationalize the pain of prison, I'm really sorry.

I was never very good at making decisions, so I adjust to the institution making them for me, so then, any pain is not my fault.

I am very distant, institutionalized, the ultimate product of an environment built on sorrow. I hate prison, but I don't hate myself. In a way, I am proud of myself, not for gaining a reputation as a prisoner without fear, but for surviving hell on earth. I don't ask for sympathy, but I demand respect, and that's what I give. The loss of all things has taught me the value of everything, and I know the meaning of a tear.

Long after I put my pen down, I have to deal with the reality I tried to explain in these words. My heart is in them, and I remain, IN PRISON. But maybe someday, after my number is labeled "DECEASED", someone will find something I wrote, and see that after all, I too was free.

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Revelation 21:4.