

WHAT IS PRISON LIKE? IT'S NOT THE SAME FOR EVERYONE. THE PRISON I KNOW IS DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE YOU KNOW OR HEARD ABOUT ON THE TV OR ON THE TWO MINUTE SOUND BITE ON THE EVENING NEWS.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE THE FIRST PERSON YOU SEE LOOKS LIKE AN ALL AMERICAN COLLEGE BOY AND YOU'RE SURPRISED. LATER ON YOU'RE DISGUSTED BECAUSE THE PEOPLE ON THE OUTSIDE STILL HARBOR PREJUDICES ABOUT THE PRISONERS THEY ONCE KNEW ABOUT, SUCH AS FAMILY, RELATIVES, FRIENDS, OR NEIGHBORS WHO WERE INCARCERATED.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU WRITE LETTERS AND CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY; WHERE YOU WRITE FEWER AND FEWER AS TIME GOES BY. FINALLY YOU STOP WRITING ALTOGETHER... BECAUSE YOU RECEIVE FEW OR NONE IN RETURN.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL; WHERE EACH PAROLE APPEARANCE MEANS A CHANCE FOR FREEDOM... EVEN IF THE ODDS ARE HOPELESSLY STACKED AGAINST YOU.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU FIND GRAY HAIRS ON YOUR HEAD, OR WHERE YOU FIND IT STARTING TO DISAPPEAR. IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU GET FALSE TEETH, STRONGER GLASSES AND ACHES AND PAINS THAT YOU NEVER FELT BEFORE. IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU GROW OLD BEFORE YOUR TIME... AND YOU WORRY ABOUT IT, SOMETIMES A LITTLE, SOMETIMES A LOT.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE THE FLAME IN EVERY PERSON BURNS LOW, FOR SOME IT GOES OUT, BUT FOR MOST IT FLICKERS WEAKLY, SOMETIMES FLASHING BRIGHTLY, BUT NEVER TO BURN AS BRIGHT AS IT ONCE DID.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU HATE THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH; WHERE YOU KICK, BEAT THE WALLS, AND SCREAM AND WONDER IF THE PSYCHOLOGISTS KNOW WHAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT WHEN THEY ACTUALLY SAY THAT YOU HATE YOUR OWN SELF.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU LEARN NOBODY NEEDS OR LOVES YOU AND THE WORLD OUTSIDE OF PRISON GOES ON WITHOUT YOUR PRESENCE.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR MONTHS OR YEARS WITHOUT FEELING THE TOUCH OF A CARING HAND OR HEARING A KIND WORD. IT'S A PLACE WHERE MOST OR ALL YOUR FRIENDSHIPS ARE SHALLOW... AND YOU KNOW IT.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU HEAR ABOUT A FRIEND'S DIVORCE AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THEY WERE MARRIED. IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU HEAR ABOUT SOMEONE'S KID GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND YOU THOUGHT THEY HADN'T EVEN STARTED YET. THEN THE LAPSE OF TIME AND LOSS OF MEMORY EATS AT YOU, UNTIL YOU LEARN TO REPRESS THE THOUGHT SO WELL... AS THE DAYS AND YEARS BLEND TOGETHER, AS ONE...



PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU WAIT FOR A PROMISED VISIT. WHEN IT DOESN'T MATERIALIZE YOU WORRY ABOUT A CAR WRECK OR SOME OTHER SERIOUS PROBLEM. THEN YOU FIND OUT THE REASON YOUR VISITOR DIDN'T ARRIVE, YOU'RE GLAD IT WASN'T SERIOUS. THEN YOU BECOME DEPRESSED AND DOWNCAST THAT SUCH A LITTLE THING, IN YOUR WAY OF THINKING, COULD KEEP THEM FROM COMING TO SEE YOU.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU MAY FEEL PITY TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLES LIVES WHILE FEELING ANGUISH OR REGRET FOR YOURSELF, THEN YOU BECOME MAD AT YOURSELF FOR FEELING THAT WAY, THEN YOU ATTEMPT TO MENTALLY CHANGE THE SUBJECT, SOMETIMES YOU CAN...SOMETIMES YOU CANNOT.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU ARE SMARTER THAN THE PAROLE BOARD BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHICH ONES WILL GO STRAIGHT AND THE ONES WHO NEVER WILL. YOU'RE WRONG JUST AS OFTEN AS THEY ARE, BUT YOU NEVER ADMIT IT... AND NEITHER DO THEY.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU FORGET THE SOUND OF A BABY'S CRY. YOU FORGET THE SOUND OF A DOG'S BARK OR EVEN THE SOUND OF TRUE LAUGHTER AND JOY.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE A LETTER FROM HOME OR YOUR ATTORNEY CAN BE LIKE A TELEGRAM FROM THE WAR DEPARTMENT. WHEN YOU SEE IT LAYING THERE ON YOUR BUNK, YOU'RE AFRAID TO OPEN IT. YOU DO ANYWAY AND USUALLY END UP DISAPPOINTED OR ANGRY... THEN YOU WONDER WHY YOU WERE SO SCARED OF RECEIVING A BIT OF GOOD NEWS FOR A CHANGE.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU GAIN A NEW FAMILY IN LIEU OF YOUR OLD ONE AT HOME. YOU'LL SOON BE COERCED INTO THINKING YOU HAVE NO NEED FOR PARENTS, AUNTS AND UNCLAS, OR COUSINS, NIECES AND NEPHEWS. YOUR NEW FAMILY WILL CONSIST OF KING PINS, SHOT CALLERS, CAPTAINS, LIEUTENANTS, SARGEANTS, THUG LIFE HOOD RATS, AND PROSPECTING WANNABE'S. THIS FAMILY WILL INITIATE YOU WITH OPEN ARMS THROUGH ITS RIGHT OF PASSAGE RITUALS AND BLOOD LETTING. IF YOU SURVIVE THE BEATING, RAPE, OR KNIFE FIGHT, YOU MAY RECONSIDER YOUR NEW FAMILY'S MEANING OF SHOWING "BROTHERLY LOVE" TO YOU. YOU'LL SOON REMINISCE OF YOUR OLD FAMILY'S PAST AND AMBIVALENCE. YOU'LL PONDER WHICH FAMILY LOVES YOU MORE THAN THE OTHER. ONCE THE DENIAL AND WARPED SENSE OF REALITY WEARS OFF, YOU'LL SOON SEEK OUT A NEW SET OF RELATIONS, IF YOU LIVE THAT LONG. IF YOU'RE ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES, YOU'LL USE YOUR INTELLECT OR STREET SMARTS TO REMAIN SOLD OR ALONE REGARDLESS OF THE CHALLENGES YOU SHALL FACE.



PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE, IF YOU'RE MARRIED, YOU WATCH YOUR MARRIAGE DIE IN VARYING DEGREES AND SPANS OF TIME. IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU LEARN THAT ABSENCE DOES NOT MAKE YOUR HEART GROW FONDER AND YOU STOP BLAMING YOUR WIFE FOR WANTING A REAL MAN INSTEAD OF A FADING MEMORY OF ONE.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU GO TO BED BEFORE YOU ARE TIRED, WHERE YOU PULL THE BLANKET OVER YOUR HEAD, WHEN YOU'RE NOT EVEN COLD, TO HIDE THE TEARS AND THE PAIN.

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU TRY TO ESCAPE... BY READING, PLAYING GAMES, BY DAY DREAMING, OR BY GOING SLOWLY AND SO SUBTLY INSANE.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU TRY TO FOOL YOURSELF, OR OTHERS, WHERE YOU PROMISE YOURSELF YOU'LL LIVE IN A BETTER PLACE WHEN YOU GET OUT. SOMETIMES YOU DO... MORE OFTEN THAN NOT YOU DON'T.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU SOON DISCOVER YOU'VE BECOME A COMMODITY OF THE STATE AND A RECIDIVISM STATISTIC FOR SOME POLITICIANS AMBITION AND ELECTION.

PRISON IS A PLACE YOU MOST LIKELY LEAVE ONE DAY. WHEN YOU DO, YOU WONDER HOW EVERYONE CAN REMAIN SO CALM WHEN YOU'RE SO EXCITED. WHEN THE CAB DRIVER GOES OVER 25 MPH YOU WANT TO TELL HIM TO SLOW DOWN, BUT YOU DON'T BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT SOUNDS FOOLISH. SO YOU JUST THERE TRYING TO TAKE IN ALL YOU'VE MISSED OF THE CHANGES YOU SEE OUT OF THE WINDOW.

\* IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU LOSE RESPECT FOR THE LAW BECAUSE YOU SAW IT RAW, TWISTED AND BENT; IGNORED AND BLOWN OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO SUIT THE PEOPLE WHO ENFORCE IT. YOU'RE GUILTY BECAUSE OF SKIN PIGMENTATION, BEING IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME, POVERTY, YOUR INNOCENCE IS FOR NAUGHT !!!

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU SEE PEOPLE WHO YOU DO NOT LIKE OR KNOW AND YOU WONDER IF YOU'LL UP BEING JUST LIKE THEY ARE IN THE FUTURE. YOU ASK YOURSELF "DID THIS PLACE MAKE THEM THAT WAY OR DID THEY ARRIVE ON THE BUS IN THAT MENTAL OR PHYSICAL STATE OF BEING"? IS THIS THE PART OF BECOMING WHAT IS TERMED AS "THE INSTITUTIONALIZED"? SOMETHING NO ONE WANTS TO ACCEPT NOR TALK ABOUT, EITHER IN PRISON OR THE FREE WORLD. AN INSTANCE OF OF COMPLACENCY OR DENIAL HELPS TO RESOLVE THIS DILEMMA.

IT'S A PLACE WHERE YOU STRIVE TO REMAIN CIVILIZED, BUT YOU LOSE GROUND. THEN YOU REALIZE THE CHANGE THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE WITHIN YOURSELF, IN YOUR HEART AND SOUL. THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR BECOMES A CONSTANT REMINDER OF WHAT YOU NOW RECOGNIZE



OF THE STRANGER YOU'VE BECOME,

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU DON'T TAKE THINGS IN LIFE FOR GRANTED; LIKE YOU DID WHEN YOU WERE FREE. THEN YOU WONDER WHY FREE PEOPLE STILL DO, BUT YOUR INNER VOICE TELLS YOU "YOU WERE ONCE FREE."

PRISON IS A PLACE WHERE YOU START TO REALIZE YOU NEED TO DRASTICALLY CHANGE YOUR WAYS... FOR THE BETTER. YOU HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED AT THAT POINT IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU HAVE GOTTEN SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED. SO YOU TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT... YOU REACHED OUT... YOU CRIED OUT... TO GOD, ALA, THE SPIRITS IN THE SKY, OR SOMEONE ELSE'S NAME DEAR TO YOU...

... THEN YOU COME TO KNOW...

THAT "PRISON" IS REALLY

ONLY IN YOUR MIND...

THE QUESTION YOU MUST ASK YOURSELF IS "WHEN WILL YOU FIND THE **COURAGE TO BREAK FREE** FROM THE PRISON YOU HOLD WITHIN YOUR OWN MIND?"

\* DEDICATED TO THE TRULY INNOCENT IN JAILS AND PRISONS.

DARRELL LIMBOCKER

RT. 2 BOX 4400 378848

GATESVILLE TX 76597