

"The days go slow and the years go fast..."

- Old Prison Talk

"I'm crazy, you're crazy, we're all crazy."

- "Dr. Ravi Yarid"

State Prison

Coldwater, Michigan

2018

"Primal Passions, Primal Pains"

Straddling the razor-wire of destiny, courtrooms are places where the climax of humanity has no secrets. It's a darkness flooded with greed and misery and death. Cast in a volatile emotion, it's where all roads of mankind collide, bathing in a promise of fair play, and an eclipse of justice for tomorrow.

Pursued through black tunnels of conscience as I stand in the cross-hairs of truth, for the fires-of-hell are upon me, its stinging prongs piercing my soul. Old bones absorbing vapors of ruin, its harshness and soiled tremors creeping within me.

Travelling these trails, I live like an alley dog. My socks have holes, my shoes have holes, my two pair of pants are full of patches, and my winter coat is not really for cold weather, since it has worn thin and raggedy. In

a turbulence of decay, after the food service switched to a privatized company the food menu turned wretched, and the items offered have a severe protein deficiency and overall lack of nutrition. A good example is when the menu say "four-ounces" of meat, but in reality we only get a few slivers of meat. We are commonly served rancid potatoes which have peelings on them that are still gritty with dirt. Most prisoners refuse to eat them. We get a scoop of peaches cut into small cubes. All glued together it would equal about "one-fourth" of a whole peach. I go to the chow-hall hungry, and I usually leave the chow-hall hungry...! When the privatized company finally left, the food simply remained "bad," and it greatly affects the health of the prisoners. On more than one occasion there were maggots found in the kitchen and in the food.

To soothe the cravings of these animals, each prison has an "inmate store," where prisoners are allowed to purchase food items and hygienic necessities with money sent by family and friends, or money earned by working a prison job, which usually pays "pennies" a day. I often hear prisoners on the phone screaming and cursing foul language when someone refuses to send them money, or didn't send the amount they wanted. It is usually the "younger guys" doing it, and they all seem to have this self-entitled personality of a small child.

My only income is the "yard crew," which pays \$1.14 per day. However, since I still owe the state some money for "destruction of state property," which stemmed from an escape attempt more than thirty years ago, I am allowed to keep exactly half of my meager pay, which gives me about eleven-dollars a month to survive. This is far below the poverty level, since our prison wages have not been increased in more than twenty-five years. Most guys enjoy outside support which allows them creature comforts and security,

but I've never been that fortunate. Like a broken shard of metal in a junkyard, I flounder in a wave of despair, consumed with my struggle for freedom in this pulsating world where I live.

The Health Care is also privatized, and what a disaster it became. Through medical tests, Health Officials learn that prisoners have life-threatening illnesses, including cancer. But instead of telling the prisoner it will be kept secret until the problem becomes "terminal," at which time the prisoner will be informed of the diagnosis and soon thereafter he will die. This strategy eliminates the expense of treating these illnesses. Unfortunately, this dilemma has spread through the entire prison system.

In stormy strides, this department has morphed into a "big business," which has an annual budget of more than two-billion dollars. I fail to see where this money goes, since it certainly is not spent on the prisoners.

In the late nineteen-nineties the Department of Corrections implemented a "new contract" for its employees. This new deal drastically reduced their weekly pay and job benefits, including less medical coverage. It also reduced their retirement package. All these cuts made the job less attractive, and today the state has hundreds of prison jobs begging to be filled. The shortage is so serious that officers are routinely forced to work double-shifts against their will. Then to make it worse, the new governor enacted a policy that prohibits extra pay for working over-time, thus forcing the officers to work extra hours for the regular pay scale.

The housing-units are equipped with computers which have internet access. The officers sit at the desk and play with the computer for their entire shift, then will complain when they have to make rounds every half-an-hour. Showing their colors in this jaded culture, many officers are so negligent that they fail to announce when it's our turn to go to the chow-

hall. And no superior holds the officer accountable. They all just laugh about it. There's no punishment for being incompetent in this landscape.

I once went twenty-four years without a visit, twenty-eight years without a "family visit," and as of this date have not had any visit in the past eleven years. I endure sensory deprivation and a toxic dose of claustrophobia. It is true that "most people don't want to know you unless there's something in it for them..."

There's a guy in here who "ratted" on another prisoner a long time ago. Then, about thirty-five years later the hands-of-fortune reversed when the other guy, like a fiery-eyed ghoulish stalking prey, tried to poison that "old rat" from earlier decades and ominous deeds. However, the poison was a dud, and both of these guys are still alive and in the same prison. Yes, life in here is a litany of evil. It is a treacherous place to live...!

I've now served more than four decades in prison. I did twenty-nine years in maximum-security, with fifteen years in "the Hole." The shadowy affects of those days still linger, and it almost killed me..!

Using a soap gun, in 1977 I broke out of the maximum-security unit at the county jail in Lapeer, Michigan.

In 1980, while being transported from a prison, I used another gun carved from a bar of soap as I attempted to over-power two armed prison guards. One officer and I literally had our weapons pointing muzzle-to-muzzle as the drama unfolded.

In 1986, another prisoner and myself used homemade knives to commandeer an eighteen-wheeler delivering food inside the facility. We then forced the driver to ram this vehicle through the double fences surrounding the prison. One fence was flattened to the ground, but the second fence stopped this big-rig. Shots were fired and one bullet penetrated the front windshield,

blowing a puff of glass fragments in my face. That's when I knew it was real, that I'd become a hardened desperado...

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As I near the bounds of these ramblings, you need to see the brutality of prison, the "raw sewage" in its veins. Allow me to tell a few stories, dare I say, a bag-of-bones rattling in the wind, so the reader can gain some wisdom, an insight, and an edge.

"Trust no one."
- Old Mafia Wisdom.

"I'd rather be stabbed with a knife than hit with a bowl-of-shit."

- "Corrections Officer"
Marquette Branch Prison

There was an officer inside Jackson Prison nicknamed, "Cannonball." The prisoners were wary of him because he'd developed a sixth sense for detecting drugs and weapons on people. In any event, one day he worked a gun-tower and accidentally dropped his pistol out the window. In quick response he grabbed his rifle, pointed it at a prisoner, and ordered him to place that pistol in a bucket which he lowered on a rope.

Like a disciple from Hades, an old pervert, who has served fifty years, had a penchant for raping and killing vulnerable females, with the youngest victim being thirteen-years-old. It was believed he was "playing with the bodies" after they died, and would re-visit these dead females days after each murder.

In 1982, I plotted to escape during a downtown court appearance, and intended to badly hurt another prisoner so to initiate the criminal charges and court session soon to follow. A friend offered me a knife or a hammer.

In a tangle, I first entertained the plan of getting this monster with the hammer as he sat in the chow-hall oblivious to my intent. I figured one well-placed blow to the head would do the job rather nicely. In any event, I reasoned his murder would generate so much publicity it could elevate all security around me, defeating my purpose and crushing my dreams. So I elected to attack a different prisoner, which I did.

Michigan's governor, "Soapy" Williams, visited the Marquette Prison. Inside the chow-hall he was attacked by some prisoners hoping to take him hostage. In a fierce struggle the governor put up a good fight. His bodyguard fired a pistol, hitting one attacker in the stomach. The governor was rushed to the safety of the Control Center.

The wounded attacker died, and his co-conspirators went to the hole.

In 2001, I was transferred from one prison to another. As I sat at a table on the yard an old man approached and asked could he take a seat. "Sure," I replied, and we began talking. He said that he'd served in the Army from 1950 to 1976, and reached the rank of colonel. And he'd stepped foot on more than one-hundred countries. He was a pilot, and could fly any helicopter in the world, and could also fly the smaller airplanes.

While the days passed, our conversations continued as he explained how he'd been a doctor. He told me the proper name of this type of doctor and I asked, "What is that...?"

He replied, "That's a bone doctor."

I inquired, "How did you pay for that schooling...?"

He said, "The GI Bill paid for it...!"

He owned business properties in Michigan and Arizona. He did some prison

time for refusing to pay taxes. He'd once met Timothy McVeigh at a militia gathering, but that was before McVeigh became well known.

I was talking with a prison sergeant about this old dude, and he declared that he didn't believe this guy's tales. However, a friend of mine was in the counselor's office sweeping the floor when this counselor voluntarily remarked, "What you're hearing about this guy is true, all of it."

Further, prison officials moved him to different wings and different housing units every six months. This is only done for rare cases of extra security. Apparently, the Warden considered him dangerous.

He would not indulge in either television or radio, and read only thick books of intellect. He stood erect, tall-n-straight, and was clean-shaven every day. He actually had the look and aura of someone in command, be it an Army colonel or a medical doctor.

So I fine-tuned my radar and listened to his stories of adventure, and I never caught him in a lie. Important to me was that he quickly and fully answered my questions, and never hesitated to do so. I've learned that most liars will "slip" if put to the test of knowledge, common sense and facts. But not one time did he falter, nor did he trigger my instincts of suspicion.

To this day, I believe he was the closest person to "James Bond" that I've ever met.

Last summer a comrade of mine who lives down the hallway adopted two baby birds. Both were found on the ground and abandoned by their mother. The new parent, an old farm boy called "Lumpy," hand fed them about once an hour. They had voracious appetites for night crawlers, bugs, tuna fish and

mackerel. They also ate meatballs from the chow-hall, but later refused to eat them.

They grew fast, and an officer warned Lumpy to not bring them inside the building. In the evenings Lumpy hid these birds among the flowers hoping the cats would not discover the babies during their night patrols for food.

These little creatures would sprint across the courtyard to greet Lumpy, and would sit on his shoulders as they slept. Lumpy even wiped the shit off their rear-end with toilet paper. "Corky," the robin, was full of grit, and one day flew away with some other robins, and never returned. Be that as it may, "Spike," the blackbird, was lazy and complacent, and refused to leave. So a maintenance man placed Spike in a box, put this container in the front bucket of a tractor, and took Spike far from the prison before releasing this bird to the wild.

A senator in Michigan was murdered. He had been very vocal about the corrupt politicians and other officials in the state. The "hit-men," it was rumored, were a couple criminals doing time in Jackson prison who were smuggled outside the facility to do this murder, then smuggled back inside the prison, thus creating the perfect alibi.

Both the warden and deputy warden were killed the same day in an escape attempt at the Marquette Branch Prison. A guy known as "Gypsy Bob" did seventeen years in the hole for these murders.

A warden and two parole board members were taken hostage at the Marquette prison as some desperate prisoners muscled their way out of the facility. They drove a car more than one-hundred-miles until a hard-nosed sheriff and

his deputies shot the vehicle off the road. All prisoners were captured and nobody was hurt.

Seven prisoners used a cutting torch to escape through the back windows in C-Block in Marquette. A news reporter in an airplane was randomly taking pictures and actually got a photograph of these prisoners running towards a wooded area.

All but one were captured within hours or days. The only guy to get away was a "wilderness survival expert." He was hunted through the Upper Peninsula for weeks, but was skilled enough to elude the police. He drifted to the Pacific Northwest where he robbed a store and was killed in a gun battle with lawmen.

A locksmith-n-plumber in here had a family friend named "Ralph Acton Reynolds," who was a former U.S. Marshal. He was also a locksmith who repaired the locking systems in many federal prisons, including Alcatraz. He taught this younger guy the science of locksmithing, and had roiling tales to tell.

One story revolved around two prisoners who tried to escape through a drain system, but the shaft became smaller as they neared its other end, and they were trapped inside. The warden, showing no mercy, ordered the shaft to be filled with concrete. I was told this incident took place on either McNeil Island or Terminal Island.

Ralph Reynolds also worked the "transportation detail" of the U.S. Marshal's service, and moved many nefarious characters from prison to prison, including Charles Manson and the infamous mafia rat, "Joe Valachi," whose life story was told in the book, "The Valachi Papers."

A career-criminal was about to rob a bank, so he carjacked a man at a red light. He pulled into a secluded area and forced the victim into the trunk. While driving down the street he heard the man talking to someone. Stopping the car, he opened the trunk and demanded the cell-phone. The victim replied, "I don't have a phone," and explained he was praying to God for his safety.

Not believing this story, the robber stabbed the man to death. Snagged in the teeth of misfortune, there was no cell-phone found. This victim, it was later learned, was a member of the "Knights of Columbus," and did good things for people and the community.

Forty plus years ago a black guy who had four brothers all in the same prison established a gang-of-thugs who ran rampant inside the walls. Some of them worked as "inmate nurses" in the infirmary and raped other prisoners who'd just received an operation and were still under anesthesia.

Feeling full of vigor, this thug tried to extort a large sum of money from a good friend of mine who had a "sports betting business" throughout the facility.

Like a cobra vowing vengeance, the white dude threw gasoline on the thug while he was locked inside his cell. Then, in a whisk of finality, he lit a match. The inferno blasted flames from base to the roof above fourth-gallery as the fumes roared in anger.

The thug survived, but lost his ears and parts of his fingers as he fried like a slab of bacon cut fresh off a dead hog's ass. His face looks like a rubber Halloween mask that got too close to the fire, and he has that "monster look" going on. Some prisoners refer to him as "Crispy Critter."

I've heard stories that the younger crowd now slap him and steal all his belongings. He was recently diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer, and is also going blind.

It couldn't happen to a more deserving person...!

In a thunder of justice, with the scent of rabid dogs upon them, two guys were plotting to rape a young dude who just arrived. With an overpowering urge, one of the conspirators beat the other guy to the task. Learning this news, he approached his rival and slammed a knife into the chest of the rapist.

A scream was heard as the rapist jumped over the railing. Gripping the bars of the rails, he maneuvered like an ape from the fourth-gallery down to the base floor. He then ran to the officer's desk, shouting the name of the guy who stabbed him as his attacker. Then suddenly, he dropped dead.

This is called a "Death Declaration," and is accepted in the courts as credible evidence.

I had a friend who was a commercial jet pilot. His father died in the Philippines in WWII and he was raised by his grandfather in southern Florida, including Key West. The grandfather was friends and fishing buddies with Ernest Hemingway, and later told the grandson that he'd met Hemingway a couple times as a little boy. The grandfather was also a pilot, and taught the young boy to fly an airplane.

As a grown man, my friend visited more than sixty countries and all seven continents. Hearing this, I challenged him, "You've been to Antarctica..?"

"Yes," he replied, "a friend in the military let me ride with him down

there in a '130' transport. We delivered the load and left immediately."

He married a woman who was a registered nurse, and life seemed fine. But he had a phantom lurking within. Making a grave decision, he killed his wife for insurance money. As investigators prepared an arrest he was somehow alerted to these developments. Inhaling the acrid smell of doom, he fled the state. Eight years passed until he was captured living in American Samoa.

He endured the next twenty-five years in prison until he died from a rare type of diabetes. In 2014 he received "hip-joint replacement," but was never given any follow-up therapy. In his last months he was physically bent-n-broken. Another dude and I kept a watchful eye on him due to his episodes of black-outs and seizures. He was one of the most intelligent people whom I've known, a walking library of knowledge.

Several books and a couple movies were made about this guy.

My friend had colorful stories to tell about flying those airplanes. He said that he liked flying smaller planes in Alaska, and was required to carry on board a mosquito net for each passenger and at least one gun for the pilot in case the plane went down in the wilderness. He stated that he hated flying cargo jets over the Pacific Ocean at night.

I inquired, "Could you see the water down there...?"

"No," he answered, "but I knew it was there.."

In Los Angeles, he was a flight instructor while on the run for murder. He had four retired women school teachers as students.

I asked, "Whatever happened to them..?"

In response he laughed, "They're probably all dead. None of them could learn to fly the airplane."

He also had a police officer as a student. One day the officer asked, "What kind of gun do you carry..?"

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The instructor replied, "I don't carry a gun."

Hearing this the officer countered, "You're walking around Los Angeles without a gun, I'll get you one..!"

And he did. I believe the flight instructor said it was a .32 caliber. Of course, the police officer did not know the true identity of the other man.

My friend's memories of flying held me spellbound as he told how he'd flown over Mt. Everest, but didn't know which peak it was, since there were so many mountain tops in his view.

I once asked about UFO sightings and recounted some of the incidents I'd seen on television shows where commercial and military pilots reported close encounters with strange and unidentified flying objects.

He simply brushed it aside by saying, "They were drinking too much whiskey. I've seen alot of strange things in the sky, but that doesn't mean they were flying saucers..!"

Once, while flying a passenger jet, the plane was crippled by a lightning strike. He said this was the only time he thought that he might die.

In response to the jet crash in San Francisco, he quipped, "I've flown in there many times and never had a problem."

When that Malaysian '777' jumbo jet vanished, he remarked, "The pilot did it on purpose." He also said that pilot had logged more flight hours than himself.

But the worst day in my friend's career was when the motor failed in a small single-engine airplane. He said there was no place to land, so he sat it down in a field. He was badly injured in the crash.

When located by the television show, "America's Most Wanted," in 1989,

the FBI put chains on him and placed him in the back seat of his own plane. It was in this painful moment he knew it was over. The good and simple life he'd enjoyed would now end. And the woman with whom he'd become soulmates would be in his life no more.

Preparing to leave the Samoan Islands, the agent at the controls turned to face the fugitive and asked, "Is this plane airworthy..?"

The captured murderer, sitting slouched in surrender, managed to reply, "I'm a pilot..."

In Jackson Prison, if an officer had a conflict with a prisoner, it was common for all three shifts to shit-n-piss in a five-gallon bucket until it was full. Waiting for the prisoner to be sleeping, the guards hurled the bucket against the bars of the cell, sending its contents across the entire body of the sleeping prisoner.

With a gust of defiance, a unique venture took root when a con-man convinced some people to help him escape from the largest walled prison in the world.

In a shudder of ecstasy, it was the summer of 1975 when a hijacked helicopter entered this fifty-seven acre facility, boldly retrieved the prisoner, and flew away without any shots being fired by the gun-towers surrounding this massive structure.

To my knowledge, this was the first helicopter escape from any prison in the world. I knew this dude, and he claimed that some money from a "movie deal" would have been earned, except Charles Bronson just made a movie exploring the same theme titled, "Break-out."

Living in this epidemic, my mind short-circuited long ago, firing on only three cylinders as I strove for some sanity to be found. Standing in the footprints of Friedrich Nietzsche, I ponder what happened in my life..? How did I succumb to the dysfunction of humanity and trap myself in this stench of spoil, this rancid road of defeat which I've travelled..?

In the lives of reckless people there will usually happen a change with maturity and wisdom seeping into them. Most criminals come from bad families and broken homes- -and so did I. In my young years there was no father, a wicked and pathetic mother, no money, no good role models, and nobody cared. Traversing forbidden echoes in my mind, as I now face these reflections, I know this is the time to grow a conscience and be a real man, to be accountable, and to be a good human being. Prison is a hazardous life full of sinister consequences and regrets. For the ripple affect of crime will be felt for generations, both in the family of the victims, and in your own family as well.