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by

Danny Cherry

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My thirty-seventh birthday - February 18, 2020 - had been quite memorable; All things considered. The goddess Audrey Hepburn and I had eaten "Breakfast At Tiffany's" five days before. The pass I received on my birthday to the infirmary provided an opportunity for me to promote my work published in The Archive. The dentist entered urgent care just as I was exiting.

"Did you enjoy reading the piece I gave you sir?"

He had made a copy of my essay - Modern Day Minstrels: Authentic Black-Face In Real Time.

"Yes! Yes, I did!"

"Here is the information for my currently published work."

The dentist smile enthusiastically as he took the paper from me.

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I knocked on the dentist's office door knowing fullwell he was not there. His assistant appeared and opened the door.

"Is the dentist in?"

"No he isn't."

"How unfortunate. I really wanted him to read my currently published work. Well maybe next—"

"I want to read it too!"

"Well visit apw.dhinitiative.org, or Google American Prison Writing Archive. From the organization's homepage select author, then search Cherry."

"Wait here for a moment."

She left, then returned after several minutes.

"I pulled it up on my computer; I'm going to read everything and show the dentist when he returns."

"Awesome! We will discuss my work when I come for my annual dental check-up; It

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Should be soon, since my birthday is today."

"Happy Birthday Cherry!"

"Thank you ma'am!"

The nurse greeted me with an infectious smile as I entered the door to Chronic Care.

"That 'glob' of tolnafate cream you suggested worked; These feet are athletic no more - Hallelujah!"

She and I were dying laughing. Her remedy had been proven long ago through personal experience.

"I want to refuse telehealth."

"Alright."

"You must read my work in pursuit of prison reform."

"Please write down where I may find it."

She gave me her pen - I wrote down the information at once, then gave it to the

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nurse with a sense of humility.

"This will be the greatest literature that you ever read in your lifetime - Carceral reform is absolutely necessary."

She nodded in agreement.

When I returned to J-Cellhouse Joey was cleaning the showers for ranges three and four; He was an utility worker.

"Happy Birthday Cherry!"

"Thank you honey - I love you!"

"I love you too!"

"Folgers and food - my place after count?"

"I'll be there!"

I ascended the stairs to my cell-13-6F.

Joey arrived punctual as usual.

"Hey girl!"

"Pop a squat honey!"

Joey slid the trash can in front of my

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Cell and sat on top of it. I took his mug and filled it with water from my hot pot, then scooped a ton of Folgers' into liquid.

"Mmm - Delicious!"

Joey licked his lips after having drank one sip of the mixture. He and I chatted about many things, while I mixed shredded Beef, Ramen Noodles, and various spices in a bowl.

"I've decided to write for dying persons!"

"What about your studies?"

"They're vain - unable to fill the void in my heart. I need to serve other people; This isn't the Danny Cherry Show!"

"That is a great idea!"

"Unfortunately for me, three of the ten letters I sent to the hospices' addresses Mr. Frame gave me were returned and confiscated by the mailroom!"

"That piece of shit - How dare him give

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you fake addresses!"

"Welcome to Hollywood!"

We both burst into uncontrollable laughter at once.

"Bitch - You're so damn crazy!"

Joey brushed away tears of Joy. We spent hours talking about cute prisoners, officers, celebrities - Girl stuff. Time flew by - before we knew it evening count had arrived.

"April twenty-sixth!"

I smiled as I handed Joey another plate of food to take with him. He had not the slightest clue that I had already planned his birthday celebration; It was going to be epic.