

"An Artist Behind Bars"

by
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Let me see if I can try to describe what it's like to be in prison. First, it's every horror story you can imagine if you happen to run up against someone suffering from borderline personality disorder, and low self-esteem.

I like to imagine I'm only here impersonating a fake prisoner because I'm trying out for the new Scorsese film and I'm up against Jennifer Connelly, and she beat me out of the role in House of Sand and Fog. You know, like a super intense, free world problem where I'm willing to risk being infected with Covid-19 so bad. I can taste the Oscars bald little head in a moment of triumph at the after party. That came out a bit wrong - but you're feeling me on this imaginary world that I'm keeping myself insulated with, right?

I've learned about lifestyles that are incredibly foreign to me. Honestly, I think the greatest common denominator is our profound sense of loss. Something has

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been stolen, lost, taken, or broken in the blink of an eye, and I find myself tearing up with them - when they feel safe enough to let me in. And when someone who's suffered for so long in silence without ever trusting anyone to just sit and be quiet; to grieve with another human being; well - it changes you.

IT changes your perspective about a lot of things, and I've come to realize that things are just not black and white. There's a exponentially and ad nauseam amount of gray. There's so much gray that you could fill an entire ocean, and sky, galaxies beyond galaxies, because there are too many variables within a human life, and chaos is real. IT lives in mirrors, and it's ubiquitous.

So, what if I was preparing for the role of a lifetime? What if I was writing it - how would that look on paper or additionally, on the big screen? All I know is you can't make this (expletive), up. It's so raw and uncut for a super sensitive person like me - that sometimes just hearing the horrific tragedies that have played out in

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people's lives - both invited and not invited. That it's all I can do some nights to not just completely come unkninged when I'm all alone with my thoughts.

I always have to snap my brain back to this one visceral moment of being a kid. It's a memory of myself looking at the sparkling ocean from our living room window when I was about four or five years old. It would be the one spot I'd run to if I'd been upset, or crying, and I would just stand there on my Tippy Toes, grasping the windowsill to steady myself, just so I could breathe in the calm, and stare and stare at the blinking ocean; mesmerized at the way the yellow sun made it wink at me - until I calmed down. That's where I go when a scary story someone has told me frightens me - or even when I remember my own trauma...

This place will twist you up if you don't have a space like that to go to in your mind. I think it's what Victor Frankl was referring to in his books when he wrote about surviving

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The Nazi death camps.

I have a lot to write about, I want to do it with care, and compassion. I want to give women voices who have felt so marginalized, and dismissed.

These women here - beneath their tough exteriors - have been afraid almost their whole lives. Afraid to feel because if they gave in they might drown in sorrow and anguish. They are warriors more than anything because they've survived. Some more in tact than others. They're so beautiful when you get to know them. When you just sit and listen,

I've realized that even though we may have different experiences - our lives and our struggles are more interwoven than I once thought. And I am going to give these women a chance to be warriors and raise them up. Give voice to their strength and courage so that their tears give in to the light. And the gray that may have seemed senseless in their lives is given meaning and purpose.

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