

Creative Essay

The buzz and crash of the gates echo in this great hollow compartment. The endless sea of concrete all seamlessly touching even when separated by corrugated steel stairs leading only to the second tier—where I inhabit—not even close to heaven. The higher up I go, it seems, the further I go down. *Down the rabbit hole.* The zoo keepers, their voices are as synthetic as a vicar, telling me what I want to hear but doing the opposite. *You have too many books, inmate, but I will not let them write you up...trust me.* Trust? It withered away like a piece of old rust long ago.

This concrete hell—I'm hot and I'm cold—like sitting on a glacier engulfed in flames. *One can bear anything, as the Romans say; it's the pain in which we cannot bear that will outright kill us.* I look at my Holy Bible, ocean blue in color with pages still smelling of desiccated ink. The spine still original due to a severe lack of trying—it's the bible; you get credit for trying, right?

Time, like my fingernails, is growing slowly in my 9x9 cell, but I am standing—sitting—still, stagnant like a rock jutting out of the ocean. I am hypnotized by the rattle of keys. The letters from loved ones, "*We love you and believe in your innocence.*" Their words are a flowing river—liquid lies.

I get a lot of mail. Some letters are as thin as a whisper and others thick with vehemence. The light burns all night as do the words in my head as they chase me to sleep. I think about the molecules in the walls and the vapor in the recycled air that we breathe. I bathe in dreams made vivid by my captivity. My eyes, chestnut brown and surrounded by eggnog white; it's all that I have become now.

Hands that cause my skin to rise—Braille for lovers to read my skin in the dark. My laughter is scorched sunshine; arid, but do not look directly at it or it'll cause permanent damage. "*I wish you were dead just so I would sleep better at night, knowing that you are safe,*" my mother once said to me. Prosaic impartiality or selfish hunger to make her life easier while I rot in the mouth of wrong. Ten more months, I can do this. I can do this.