

Reality Bites

By Infant Kharon E. Waterman

Nobody woke up and said, "Hey, I'm going to head to prison — and stay there for life."

I'm reeling from dealing with my 24th year in prison, and that all my hope was on my clemency being granted. If I don't get it... I'll probably kill myself. Brutal honesty has been a focal point of personal growth for me — and it's the only way to share my pain.

You see, it's 2022, January, and I'm in my cramped cell, listening to Adele's "30" album. That was my gift to me as I turned 45 years old yesterday (Dec. 31, 2021). I can't do anything else to escape my time in here, because it's noisy, congested with men that... prison was the worst thing man has ever created.

I stared out my cell door's window, watching men gamble on football

games, watching them talk of yesteryear and acting like kids on a sugar high; we poke each other, run up and down the stairs, chasing a guy who had done 40 consecutive years in prison; he's what they (inmates) call a snitch, so they harass him daily.

We have a transgender who lost her man in a fight, so she blast her music from the top tier, serenading the men — who wished she stop. Her idea was to appear open for a new love, but nobody dared to cross that threshold.

Now mental health, damn, that has become as worrisome as COVID-19. We have this man who goes through the trash for food. He found a cookie and said, "This will go good with the milk I have in my window."

You have six stainless steel tables that we occupy with chess, card games, cooking meals — and shooting the breeze. That table was always occupied by men that had been in prison for

decades. They're always discussing their heyday — from the 80s!

These men have health issues, drug habits, were known rapist and can't — an I mean can't — spell the word "why." They're homeless men in this environment who always begged for a Ramen noodle, or want too bombard you with war stories they survived.

The prison system in Virginia has made strides to assist us, but you (the inmate) have to ask for help — and that never occurs. So you have a stable of problems that only manifest when something tragic occurs: Violence.

The 90s and early 2000s you witnessed rapes, stabbings and gang violence rampage its way through one prison to the next. They (the Department of Corrections) opened up supermax prisons for us, but that pooled all the mayhem into one spot. So walking through the vestibule, you had to have your guard up, or you'd get cracked upside

your head with an adapter, stabbed with a plastic shank, or someone's fist.

Prison hasn't ever been fun. We cry more than anybody would believe. Our lives always shift from helpless to suicidal in one second; I timed it when a lifer lost his mother in a tragic car accident. His reality transformed a harden convict into a man that had to be consoled by the entire pod; the prison wanted to isolate him in a cage, like that helped him with his loss.

We do Suboxone, Spice, Meth, Heroin, Molly, Marijuana and prescription pills — and make love to paper women. These vices blanket our biggest regret: that we hate ourselves for what we did and those we hurt along the way to a prison cell.

(I'm not a scholar, but I can share this: Prison can't change the normalcy of a man/woman's conviction, it only makes us want that

damn DeLorean to transport us back in time to that dreadful day and erase our path to prison.

Fear. That's what plagues me when 3 men assaulted this physically fit man, because there's strength in numbers. I'm a 45 year old man that has back issues, no affiliations to any dominating gang of the week, only my wits and respect from years of surviving a landscape that embody one ideology: Only the strong survive... until they get too old to defend themselves.

That, in itself, sucks, because I can bench press a pen all day. Funny, but it's not, because nobody cares for a fiction writer, just as much as fighting for their release.

Prison does have one thing going for itself: It can shape you into something lasting... but that might not get you freed. Sad.

#BandOfBrothersBehindBars #FreeTutanKhamenWaterman