

Merlin the Phoenix



A Prison Journal by Alan Pearsall



Dedicated to my wife



Merlin the Phoenix

Circumstances in life often take us places that we never intend to go. In 2010 I was sentenced to two and a half years in the Essex County Jail in Massachusetts for a car accident that wasn't anyone's fault. This is the memoir of my survival those harrowing months behind the walls of the big house told in my words and artwork.

-Alan Pearsall



One Note

All of the artwork you see in this book I created sitting on my bunk in the joint (Unless otherwise noted). I created the written portion after my release. I used nicknames for everybody, to protect the innocent and the guilty. The rest of this story is a true.

-Alan Pearsall
(Merlin the Phoenix)



PART ONE: COUNTY JAIL



Chapter One: 0686391

I arrived at the Essex County Correctional Facility late, night had fallen. I spent the day alone in the dingy holding cell below the courtroom, where everyone I cared about witnessed my life come apart. I wasn't aloud to look at them during open court, but managed to catch glimpse of the room as the bailiff shuffled me off, cuffed and shackled. It was a little like seeing who would show up to your funeral. I was haunted by the image of my wife collapsing in my brother's arms and my mother's scream as she heard my sentence. Hours later I sat in the darkness of the paddy wagon in shock with a few other noisy convicts along for the long ride to County Jail.

I was stripped searched and issued a jumpsuit, like that first terrible night a week's past. I sat in the holding cell with my bed roll. I stared into space, distraught. Everyone around me looked dangerous and I looked like fresh meat, as they say. I wasn't a tough guy by any means, but at least I boxed in my twenties and knew if it came to blows I could at least defend my self. That gave me little solace. Everyone could clearly see I was a fish out of water. The guard called my inmate number: 0686391. My new name.

The bored night shift guard grunted my cell assignment and I headed off to D Block, home of the assault criminals. A fantastic start. In the quiet darkness I walked across the empty yard trying desperately to remember the directions the dull intake guard mumbled at me. I found my building and got buzzed in. It was midnight by the time I entered the dark and quiet block. It smelled like a locker room. An old guard stood the large kiosk known as the 'bubble'. He set me up in a cell walked me over and looked hard at me. "You'll be all right here." He said kindly. The doors closed with a heavy crash behind me. An Inmate lay awake on the bottom bunk of the tiny Cell. We greeted one another. I made my bed and hopped up on the top bunk. His name was Tony Shick, a lean Italian looking kid of about 25. He arrived that day as well, but he was clearly a return customer. He stared out the narrow cell door window, watching the old guard saunter back to the bubble. With the guard out of sight, Tony went to work at something on the stainless steel desk.

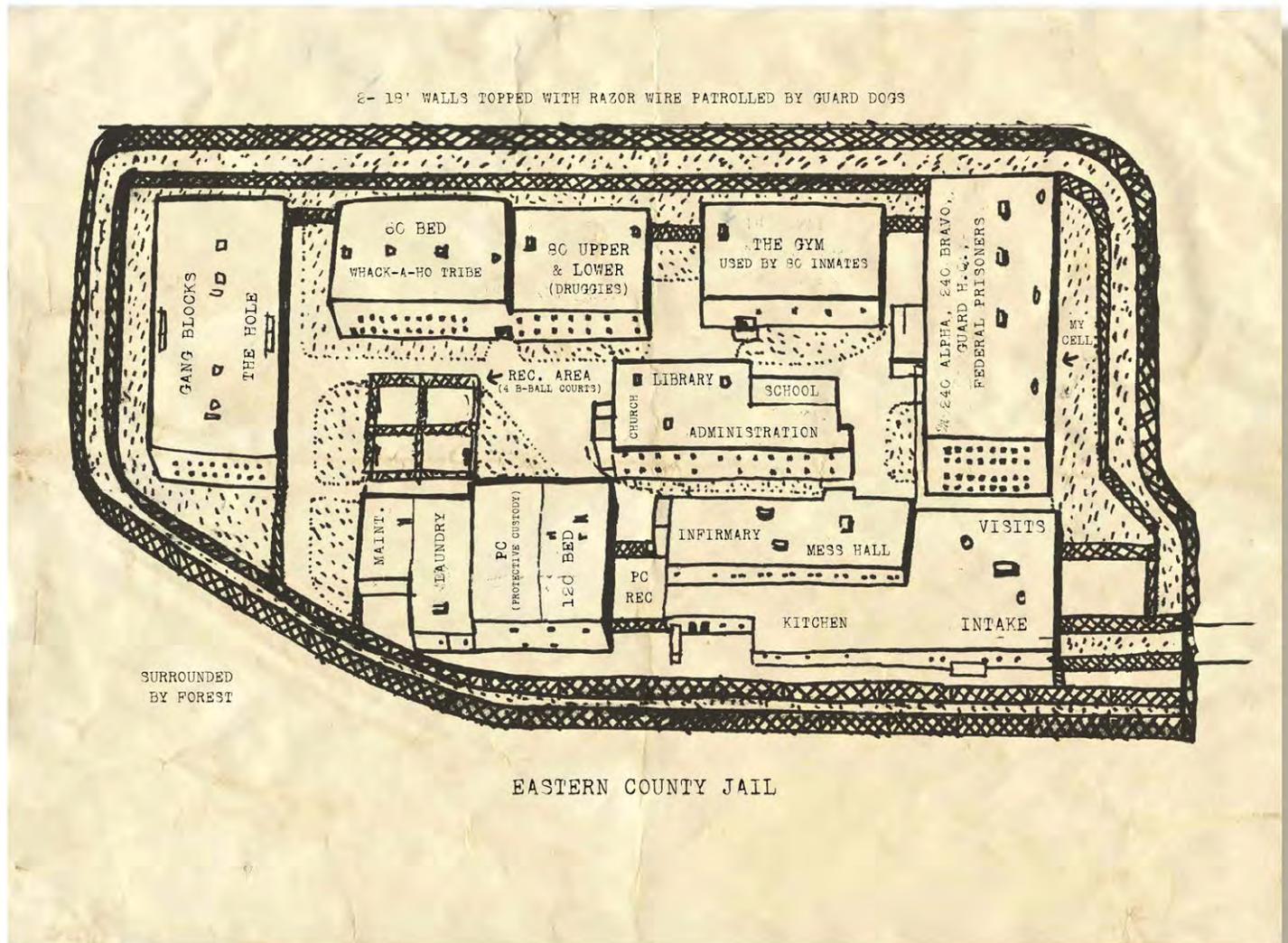
I lay there looking up at the cracked ceiling trying not to break down. The trial ripped me to shreds. I

had nothing left. The same thoughts played over and over in my mind. How would I survive this? How will my wife get through this? I'd ruined everything, my rock bottom. I drowned in a sea of self pity, guilt and remorse.

Across the darkness Tony spoke quietly. "Yo Al, you want any?" He gestured towards a large pill he crushed on the desk with a wide grin that revealed teeth like a yellow picket fence.

"Thanks man, not tonight, Tony." I said. At least he was being friendly I thought.

"More for me, bro." He chuckled as he finished crushing up the brown pill with a razor blade and then promptly snorted it, throwing his head back with his eyes closed. Exhausted, I passed out.



My new world, Eastern County Prison

The first days of jail left me lost and reeling. The shock of it all took a while to shake, but survival required me to be alert. "Keep your head down and your eyes up." The last thing a kind bailiff said as they dragged me off in cuffs from my sobbing wife after the verdict. After sentencing I went from an orange jump suit to a brown one, worn by the convicted. I spent the first days at D block, the block for wife beaters and violent criminals, known as the "Whack-a-ho Tribe" among inmates. At first I never knew what to do or where to go. No one tells you how to do anything and everyone busted on new fish, guards included.

I sat in a strange filthy cell awaiting my fate. Finally I got called to the bubble. The C.O. told me to go to upper programs with a grunt. There was no freedom of movement and I had to be escorted by a guard. I met with my case worker, Jack Donahoe, in the upper programs building. He had a habit of snapping and pointing. He looked me over, pulled out my file and frowned. I was clearly not his typical client.

Snap and point. "I heard about you on the radio coming in. What a shame." He snapped gum too. "It was in the paper too, the Sheriff won't like that. You'll have to sit tight for a while. If you want to earn good time you gotta work. For every month you work you get 7.5 days off your sentence." He looked up from the paper work eyeing me closely. "I can put you in protective custody if you feel unsafe." A seemingly routine question, but one that could mark you forever in jail.

"Just treat me like everyone else. I just want to blend in." I mumbled.

"No chance of that, Chief." He winked and looked back down scribbling in my file.

I later learned that PC (Protective Custody) housed the mentally ill, rats, perverts and pussies. Guys who couldn't handle it or were unwanted by the general population. 120 bunk beds crowded in a large hanger-like space even guards detested patrolling. PC had a stench all its own, a combination of despair and filth. In this world of miserable desperate men these were the most miserable and the most desperate.



The Worker's Block.

Snap and point. "I'll put you in 240-B, the worker's block. It's the best block. Better than 60 bed. You don't belong there. The 'D Block' can be a pretty dangerous place. Ok so, I'll see you again in 3 months. We can talk then" He closed my folder and winked.

"Tell Crawshank to come in." He didn't even look up.

Donahue pulled another beat up folder from his stack of folders, swigged his coffee and fiddled with a particularly difficult paper clip. That was it, three months. You realize very quickly that you're all alone. No one is that interested in helping you, it's a system that moves at a snail's pace, not subject to reason. When I first arrived, I wasn't able to call the outside world for a month and a half. I was definitely on my own.

240-Bravo the Worker's Block. My new home was a block built for 60, but housed 119 by doubling up cells

meant for one. Open showers faced a florescent lit block, about a half an acre in size, it was sweltering in the summer and freezing in the winter. To stay warm at night I wore both of my jump suits under the scratchy blanket, known fondly as the 'wholly mammoth'. And this was considered the best block in the prison!

Cell 628 in 240-B in the C-Building, my first cell, was an 8'by 12' cement room with two steal bunks, a stainless steel desk and a toilet. A corner cell. I could see through the narrow, sealed window, beyond the fogged Plexiglas and bars, a view of poplar trees just passed the chain-link and razor wire. I arrived to find a tidy cell, extremely tidy. Pictures of hot women cut from magazines carefully taped to small card board easels sat atop the desk and a prosthetic leg leaned against the cement wall next to crutches. OK. Neat rows of bobos (prison Velcro sneakers) sat next to neatly folded white and tan jump suits. The bottom bunk was made to military standards and the cell even smelled clean, of jasmine I think. A serious blessing in that dingy dungeon. I was curious to meet my one legged, fastidious cell mate. I was told his name was Indigo and he worked in the kitchen, so he wouldn't be back until 6pm.

I put away my few belongings in the big plastic foot locker: my towel, half toothbrush, disposable cheap-ass razor, cup, extra jumpsuit, extra tee shirt, socks and boxers. I didn't even have a picture of my wife yet. My whole existence reduced to almost nothing. I made my bed and sat on the bunk listening to the echoes of the block. It was noisy. I kept my own council and tried to keep it together despite the overwhelming feeling of becoming unglued. I awaited my cellmate with a mix of fear and hope.

Indigo returned and greeted me with a wide smile. I could tell right away he was a good guy and he laughed at me being such out a fish of water. He looked out for me right from the beginning, like a big brother. You never know who your cell mate might be. Until you got to know the guards you had zero control, they moved inmates at random. You could wind up with a psychopath or worse, someone who doesn't bathe.



Our cell

I lived among many bad characters everywhere and the close quarters made it a volatile world. My first cell mate, Indigo, was a good guy and really showed me the ropes. We got along well and trusted each other. I lucked out to have a decent guy who never took advantage of me when he clearly could have. He was a bad ass, but he protected me as his cell mate. That's one of those unwritten rules: celly's stuck together.

Indigo was a bad ass and not to be fucked with. He stood about 6 feet and had the body of a linebacker. He wore a prosthetic leg, but with his modified gate it was nearly undetectable. Sentenced for robbery and evading the cops in a high speed, drug induced car chase through the streets of Billerica, he received 17 months to do at Eastern and 8 more months in Boston on another warrant. We ate together with his friends every night and he told me his life story in the dark after lights-out. I was fascinated by his exploits in crime.

Indigo headed the Puerto Rican inmates, so his rank in the block hierarchy was top level. Each race managed their own race's issues, but block wide problems like removing rats, perverts or mediating inter-racial fights were handled by the leaders. I believe my association with Indigo saved me any trouble those first harrowing months.

My Case worker assigned me the job of janitor of upper programs department, in the Administration Building. Every week day 8-10am my responsibilities included cleaning the bathrooms, meeting rooms and offices, even the superintendent's office. I was hoping my close access with the brass might help grease the wheels for my move to something lower security, away from the murderers and rapists as soon as possible. I worked with two other inmates who did nothing. I liked keeping busy to pass the time, so I didn't mind. Fat Bobby was a waste of oxygen, a fat-ass who leaned on a mop and complained constantly. The other dude Slick Ernie also refused to work, but his rebellion was on account of higher principle. He and I got along all right. He called me 'All-Star' because I worked too hard.

One of the deputies pulled me aside one morning and told me he was dangerous character and to stay clear of him. She showed me his Corey Report (rap sheet) on the computer to make the point. Slick Ernie was convicted of second degree assault, resisting arrest and dealing meth. I wasn't there to make friends. Most inmates had an agenda or were mentally ill to one degree or another. You never knew who you were dealing with or what would make a guy snap. I kept everyone at arms length. And yet I did find decent guys to talk to or watch sports with. Ernie and I got on just fine.

I mostly hung out with Indigo's crew at first. I ate with Indigo, Hector and Matta almost every night. I played cards with Jose and Angel. My first pal was a guy known as 'Nunya' as in 'Nunya bizzness'! Nunya was the guy who knew how to get things. That's how we met. I bought a hot pot (rigged to boil water!) and a little radio on credit. He was a big Irish red head from Revere in on a gun charge. The cops pulled him over and found an M16 in his trunk, but he swore it wasn't his with a twinkle in



Our cell

his eye. We often talked and he told me the inner workings of the block and the jail. He explained the unwritten rules, he taught me the system. He knew all the jail gossip too. As the man who ran the underground jail store, he had his hand on the pulse of the block. Food at the store was sold 'two for three' or 33 percent mark up for replacing canteen items.

On top of that, he ran the only honest card table. Officially gambling was against the rules, but the guards allowed it as long as everyone played nice. It kept the inmates busy for hours and the screws liked that. Nunya's card game employed the only dealer trusted block-wide. This huge guy named Hendrix ran a second table in which only the guys he ran with won. It was a trap for new fish hankering to gamble. Guys got into serious debt. Nunya's guys would clean out a debtors cell of belongings or worse. Some deadbeats needed to be leaned on. Others just left the block to PC to avoid paying.

I drew my first comic a month or so after my arrival at the behest of my wife. Brooke knew I needed something to keep me from coming apart. Since boyhood artwork had been the main thrust of my life, it's how I made my living and in the past I always depended on it in times of stress. I had been drawing a cartoon journal since age 18.

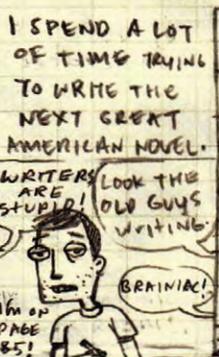
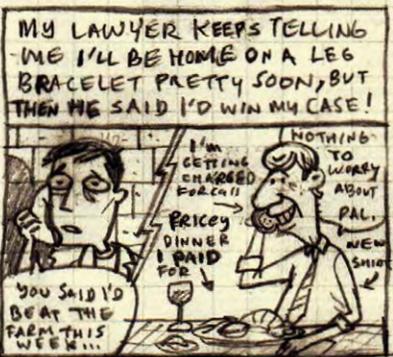
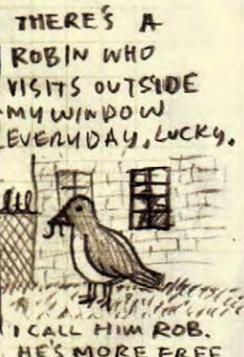
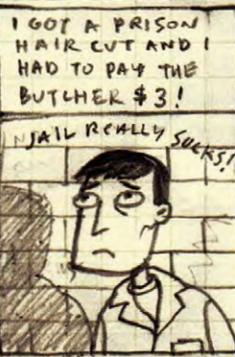
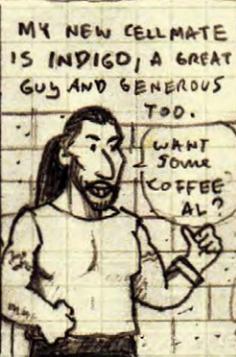
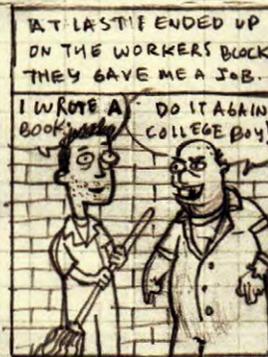
I possessed no art supplies to speak of, except a four inch pencil and typing paper. The guards were afraid we might stab each other with long pencils and pens were forbidden. I drew my cartoons during Saturday morning lock down, sitting on my bunk. Drawing in secret when my cell mate was at work. Each cartoon took about 8 hours and I kept them hidden in my cell. I stuck them with my lawyer papers to hide them. I did not want inmates or guards seeing me making fun of them. Let's face it making fun of them was my specialty. I meant to ease my family's worries about my safety and give them a laugh with my take on absurd world I lived in.

Everyone had a hustle and mine was artwork. I made greetings cards, designed tattoos and drew portraits for a small price and word of my skills got around quickly. My first sale was a drawing of the block (page 4). Making images of the block was not allowed, but I drew it one Sunday morning hoping to avoid attention. One C.O. came over during his rounds. He just watched me draw for a while. He nodded and mumbled 'not bad' and left. It was so popular, my pal Nunya made copies of the sketch at the library for me and I sold a ton of them. I made a lot of canteen money for that drawing.

I felt it was important to be involved with the prison economy. I got to know inmates by doing artwork for them. It was hard to believe where I was. Just a few months earlier I was living the dream, working as an professional artist, painting large murals about Rosa Parks at a Gainesville Bus Station, painting all day in the Florida sun. A book I wrote and illustrated had just been published. Brooke and I planned to start a family. I felt as though I was on a roll. It all came crashing down one sunny afternoon on a winding road just a mile or so from our home. Now I was drawing pencil portraits of inmate's ugly wives for five God damn ramen soups!

THE JAILBIRD BLUES OR LIFE IN STIR

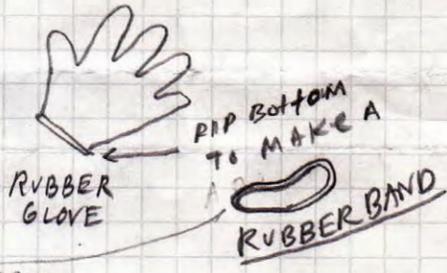
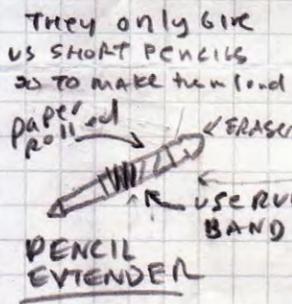
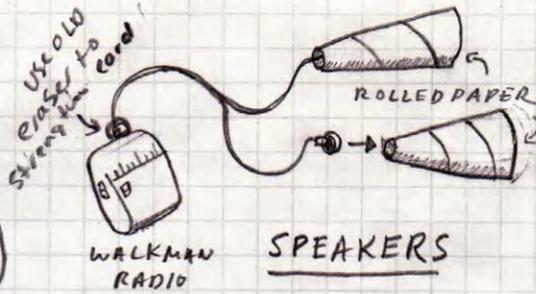
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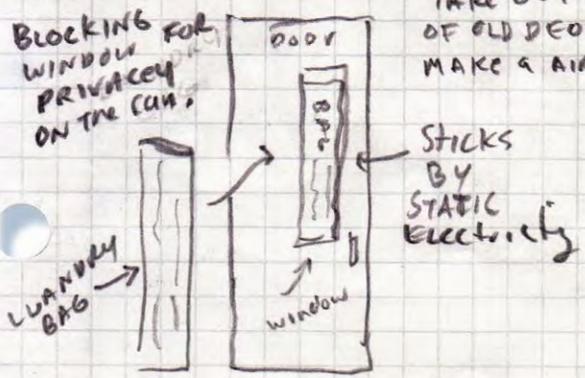
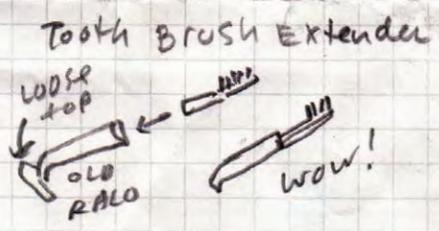
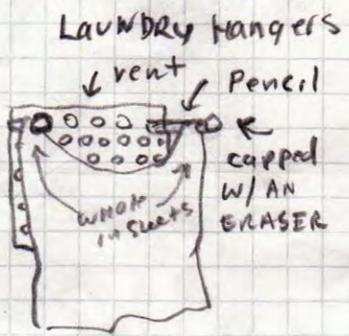
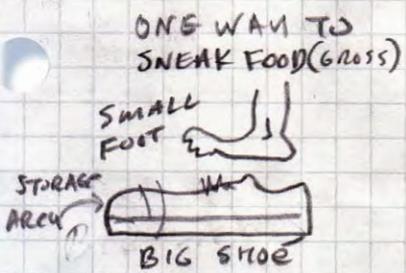
THE WHITE GUYS CALL ME 'SESSAME STREET' BECAUSE I HANG WITH MOSTLY DOMINICANS AND PEURTO RICANS SO *ONE OF THESE THINGS IS NOT LIKE THE OTHER* PRETTY FUNNY. I MAKE CARDS AND PORTRAITS FOR FOOD. IT A RAMEN NOODLE SOUP BASED ECONOMY HERE. 1 SOUP = 1 DOLLAR. I'M NOT KIDDING. I'M LONELY AND MISS MY WIFE AND EVERYONE LIKE CRAZY. I HAVE TO BE PATIENT AND WAIT FOR THE APPEAL. SO KEEP PRAYING AND I'LL TALK TO YOU SOON!

PS: IN HERE I'M REAL SMART PEOPLE ASK ME TO SPELL THINGS! LOVE - AL # 068639

McGIVER GOES TO JAIL!! SEE ALL THE CREATIVE INVENTIONS!



ANY OLD LABEL OR STICKER can be used as TAPE



Hi Guys Just a few things to use for survival here. Necessity is the mother of invention! For Real

JAIL HOUSE TRANSLATOR



Hi KIDS. TODAY I THOUGHT I MIGHT SHARE SOME OF THE NEW WORDS AND PHRASES I'VE LEARNED IN JAIL!

- SHIV : KNIFE
- BID: YOUR LENGTH OF SENTENCE
- CANTEEN: FOOD STORE, DELIVERED TO CELL
- CELLY: CELL MATE
- CHOW: LUNCH OR DINNER, A REAL INSULT TO DOG CHOW.
- GOOD TIME: TIME OFF BID FOR WORKING IN JAIL.
- HOPOFF: PLEASE DON'T BOTHER ME.
- HOUSE: YOUR CELL, ISN'T THAT NICE.
- THE HOLE: SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
- A HERDER: A NEW GUY, OR GREENHORN
- LUGGED: TAKEN TO SOLITARY OR A NEW BLOCK BY FORCE
- PISSER: TOILET
- A SKINNER: A SEX OFFENDER (TREATED HORRIBLE BY ALL)
- SCREW: A GUARD OR C.O.
- TO TUCK: TO SMUGGLE SOMETHING WHERE THE SUN DON'T SHINE!
- A 24: LOCKED IN YOUR CELL FOR 24 HOURS

PHRASES

- DO YOU FEEL ME: DO YOU UNDERSTAND? what else you do don't feel the person
- FOR REAL: I'M SERIOUS ABOUT THIS.
- FOR REAL!: YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
- FOR REAL?: YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
- TRUE THAT: FOR REAL
- I'D RATHER SANDPAPER A BOBCATS ASS IN A PHONE BOOTH: NO THANK YOU, I'D RATHER NOT

GUARDS'S RULES OF THE BLOCK

:

No more than two inmates together at anytime.
Your not allowed in any cell but your own.

4 Phones shared by 120 inmates.

Phone calls 20 mins per call.

Out going mail is read and every call is recorded.

No boiling water.

No hard cover books, only two books per inmate.

Nothing on cell walls: posters, or pictures anything.

No pornography.

No smoking.

No movement outside the block without supervision.

No gambling.

No tattoo making.

No contraband (anything from the outside world).

No stealing from the kitchen.

No communication between blocks, no notes.

Your cell must be kept neat, bed made.

When block is open your cell door can not be closed.

No pockets, hats, hoods, shirts with logos or jewelry.

Your jumpsuit must be worn and buttoned at all times.

No altering jump suits (adding pockets or marking).

No covering you cell window or vents

No pens or pencils longer than 4"

No fighting

After any fight the whole block is punished

All involved in a fight are lugged to the hole

The hole is solitary confinement, lock down 22 hours a day, allowed 1 book. One shower a week is allowed. No phones or mail is allowed in or out.

SCHEDULE

7am: cells open for breakfast
7:30-7:45: Breakfast
8am: workers go to jobs
8am-10am: everyone else is locked down
10am-11:30am: open block
11:15am-11:30am: lunch
11:30-3pm: lock down
3pm-4:30pm: open block
3pm: day shift returns
4:15-4:30pm: dinner
4:30-6pm: lock down
6pm-10pm: open block
10pm: lock down & lights out

Jump suit colors:

Orange: charged but not sentenced
Tan: convicted inmate
White: kitchen crew
Day-glo green: latin gang members
Dark brown: white gang members

2 Hours a week of recreation
(Outside ball courts or gym)

Laundry once a week

1 Roll of toilet paper a week

Two 20 minute visits a week from an approved list of visitors. Separated by plexiglas talking via phone.

No more than three visitors at a time

Unwritten rules of the block:

If your cell mate is in trouble, you're in trouble.

A sloppy cell got searched every time.

The less contact with the guards the better, get too friendly with the screws and inmates considered you a rat.

Never ask inmates what they're "in for"

Perverts and rats were not tolerated and driven from the block.

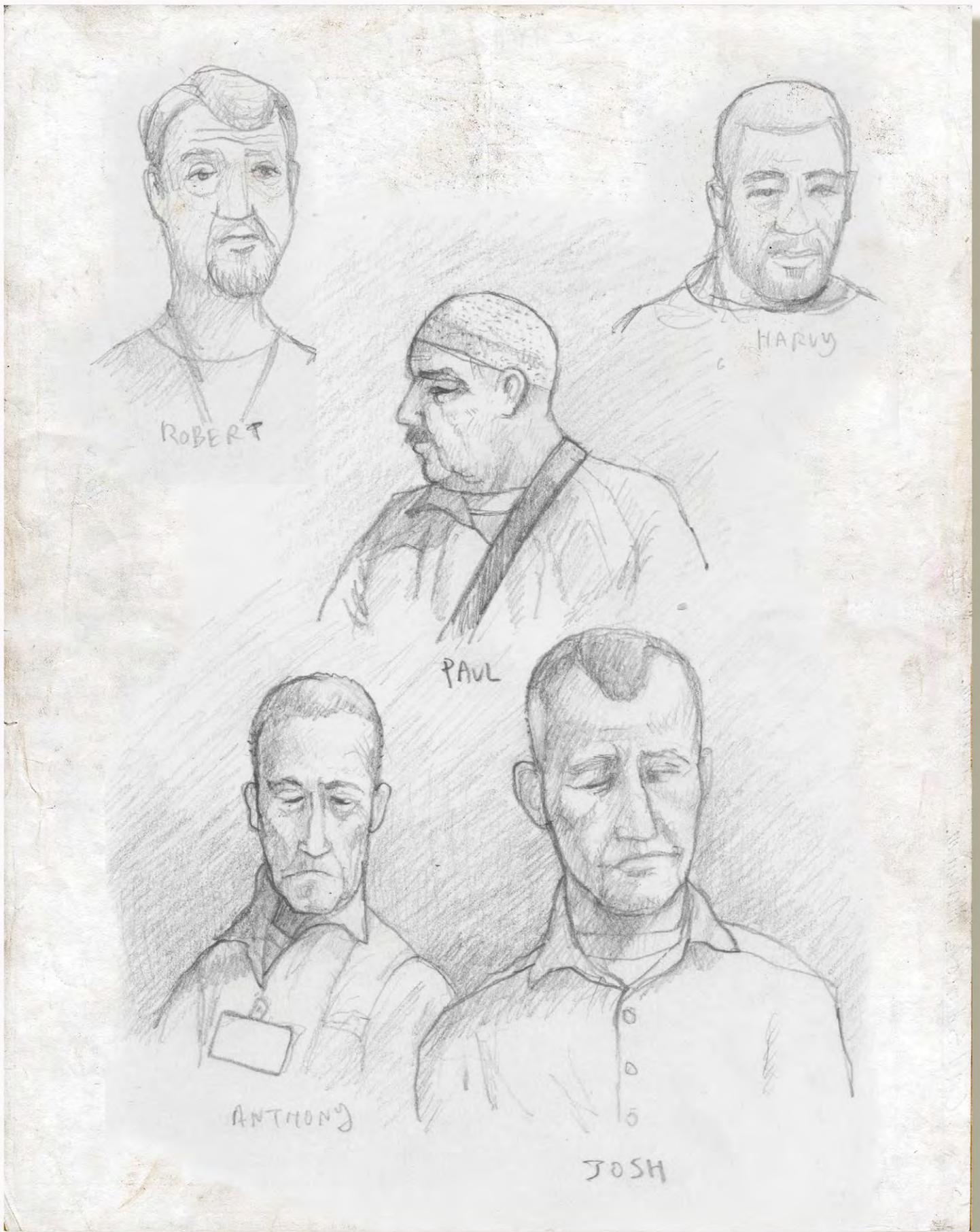
I felt ruined, the world stopped making sense months earlier. I fell so far, I didn't recognize the broken wretch that starred back at me in the mirror. I soon realized making art and writing was the only thing that could take me away from my misery. More than just killing time, it made me better and gave me purpose. Like laying the first row of bricks of a foundation. Drawing kept me in touch with the man I was before.

Business was good. I earned a lot of canteen items in trade. It was a good hustle and the C.O.'s almost never hassled me over it. Collecting pay could be difficult but my association with Nunya and Indio gave me some juice and almost everyone paid up. I made portraits, birthday and holiday cards, soap sculptures and designed tattoos for the fellas. Tattooing was forbidden. But guys still did it. It was so filthy there, guys contracted blood disease from dirty tattoo needles. They would be covered in disgusting sores. It's how most guys got caught.

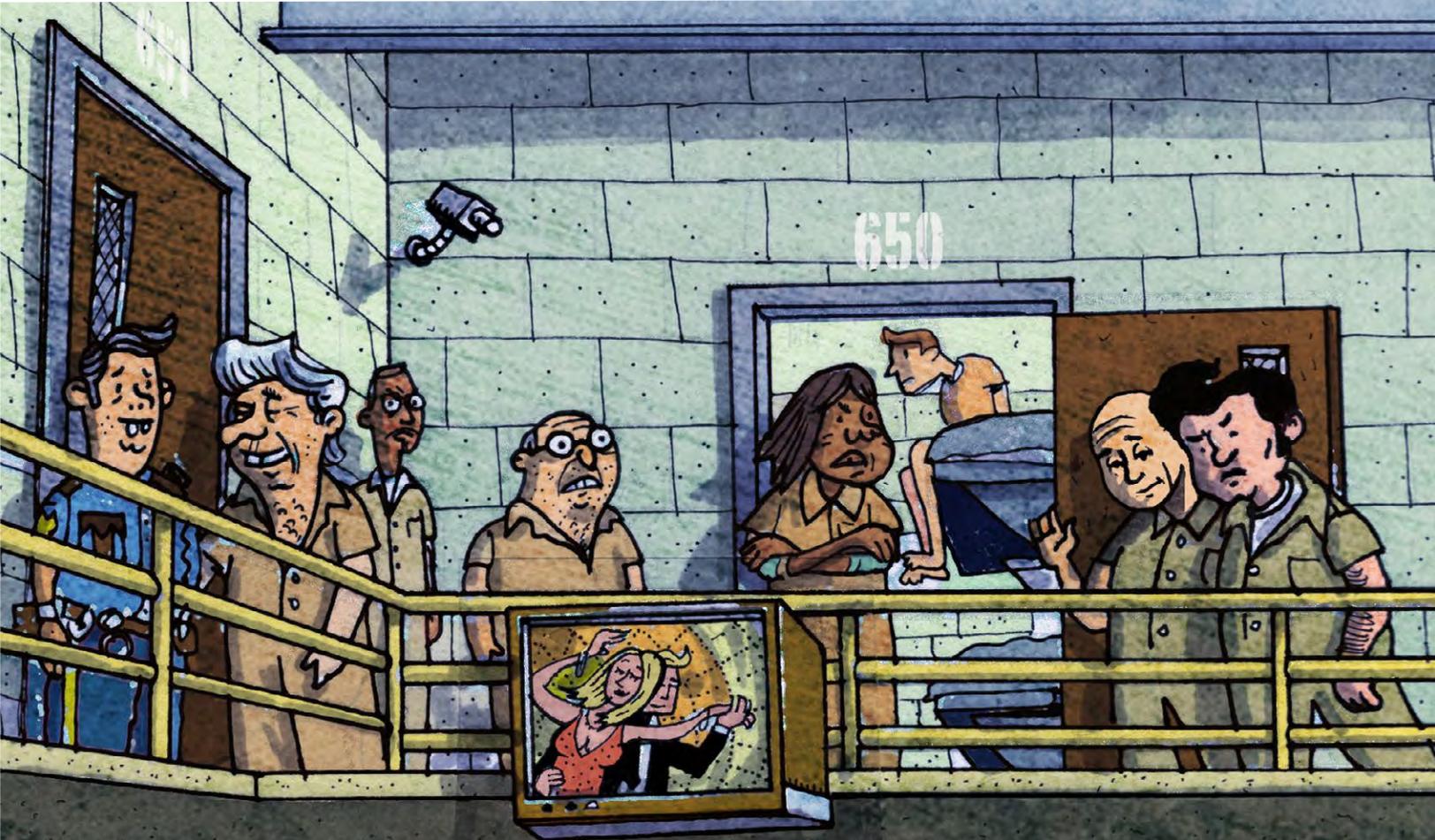
I lost myself in drawing whenever I could. I worked hard on my skills and doing work for the guys helped me get along with a variety of inmates. It sounds silly, but it gave me solace to know that even here I was known as a skilled artist.

For weeks I kept thinking the court would realize their gross error, I would be saved and returned to my wife. I lived in a state of fear and denial. I nearly cracked over my constant ruminating. The feeling of hopelessness and subjugation of your free will crippled you mentally. Finding the way to be man under those conditions took some time to discover. Some guys, the weak ones, can't calm down and break under the constant pressure.

Fortunately, I was a quick study. I watched everything and everybody. The system had a lot of unwritten rules and you could get yourself in a fix with one dumb move. I learned the way to get by. One can get used to anything in time and time was one thing I had plenty of. It was long stretches of boredom mixed with moments of intense fear. But the worst part was being away and not being part of anything. Punishment is measured by what is taken from you.



Study of inmates



240-Bravo Block

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Chapter Two: Wasted Days

WELL I'VE BEEN IN JAIL FOR 2 MONTHS AND I THINK I FINALLY GET WHAT STIRCRAZY MEANS.

I'VE LEARNED THINGS... LET ME GUESS, YOU STRANGLERD SOMEONE, RIGHT? YES, I DID. WHOA MAM. STOP. LIKE! YOUR NOT SUPPOSED TO ASK WHAT YOU IN FOR.

THE WORST THINGS YOU CAN BE IS A THIEF OR A RAT. IF CAUGHT ITS HANDLED INTERNALLY. YOU GOT THREE DAYS TO PROVE YOUR INNOCENTS. OR ELSE! RAT

FIGHTS CAN BREAK OUT OVER ANYTHING. NO WAY IS TYRA BANKS A SAGITARIUS! I'LL KILL YOU!

MAKING A SOAP CARVING TOOL FROM A SPORK TO CARVE AN ANNIVERSARY GIFT FOR YOUR WIFE IS STILL CONSIDERED 'MAKING A SHIV'. SIRRY SIR. I COULD PUT YOUR ASS IN THE HOLE FOR THIS! WATCH YOUR STEP PEPPER!

I'VE ALSO LEARNED GUARD DOGS DONT LIKE TO BE SURPRIZED!

USING BIG WORDS CAN BE DEBILITATING BAD. THIS PLACE IS NAUSIATING... OOOO COLLEGE BOY!

ALWAYS FEED MATAH ON TIME! GRRR...

KEEP YOUR CELL TIDY OR FACE AN ANGRY INDIO. THERES A SPEC ON THE FLOOR! JEEZ AL!

NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS HERE. SO WHAT I'M SAYING IS I'M SO LONELY.

IN OTHER NEWS... LOOK AL'S WRITIN' MY BOOK IS ABOUT 300 PAGES.

MY MOVE TO THE FARM IS COMING... OK ITS NOT REALLY A FARM.

I STILL HAVE NOT LOST MY FAITH IN HUMANITY SOME FACE COFFEE MAN. THANKS AMIGO. HECTOR

I MISS BROOKE LIKE CRAZY AND KEEP PRAYING TO GET HOME SOON. GOD BLESS BROOKE AND TONY AND MOMS AND JANE AND MY FAMILY AND ALL MY FRIENDS AND THE PATRIOTS...

The Farm was the county's minimum security facility and it was most short timer's goal to get transferred there. It sounded like Shang Gra La in comparison to county jail: no violent offenders, no cells, long in person visits, nature and street clothes. My lawyer assured me I would be there within a couple weeks. When I first worked in Upper Programs I thought the guards and administration would work with me if I followed the rules and acted respectfully. I imagined it would be an 'in' with the Farm Board and my transfer. Most everyone treated me well, but they mostly liked the fact that I was non-threatening and didn't steal everything not nailed down.

A couple months after my arrival, I sat before the Farm Board. The group of five cruelly drilled me about the accident. Each question designed to tear apart my version of the story and provoke an angry response. I held my own at first, I talked to guys who had been before the board and had some idea about what to expect. The provocative questions are supposed to weed out the violent guys. When they asked me about my wife, I lost it. I sobbed as I described the destruction of our simple, happy life. My shame was overwhelming. I left the meeting like a punch drunk boxer. I found out later that day the grim faced board approved my transfer.

I was sent to the Farm at last, I felt some relief. It was a dormitory style layout in a former boarding school built in the 1920's, housing 200 or so inmates. It was mass Victorian buildings of brick. It felt great to put pants on and I felt somewhat safer. On my second day, still acclimating to my new environment, I was on the phone with Bebe, when I heard my name on the intercom demanding my presents at the LT's office. My heart sank. When I arrived at the guard station they grabbed me, put me in a van headed back for Eastern County with no explanation of why.

Two days after my transfer the media-conscious sheriff revoked my transfer. I was later told that because it was an election year, the sheriff didn't want to look soft. So that was it. I was sent back to the big house.

I arrived back the at County jail at around 9pm. I sat in intake for hours while they searched for a cell for

me in the crowded prison, reliving that first dreadful night. In the moonlight I walked across the prison grounds past the growling guard dogs and to a foreign, noisy block with my itchy bedroll. Everyone eyeballs you when you arrive to a block. I had no allies in this shit hole. I felt broken and alone. I spent one night on 60-block with the violent offenders. Again.

The next day, with no explanation, my caseworker assigned me back on the worker's block with nothing but my sox, boxers, my ill fitting tan jumpsuit and my 'bobos'. The meager belongings I collected to that point sat at the Farm in a locked foot locker. Thank God for my boys. Indigo, Nunya and Hector. They set me up with a hot pot, a cup, coffee, food, tee shirts, boxers and sox. They fed me for a few days and made me feel welcome. I actually was glad see my boys again. That was some good looking out. They saved my faith in humanity after such a heart wrenching experience. I felt out of control and depressed. I knew this meant I may never get to the Farm and would do my time in County, a despairing thought.



I made my first soap carving of the 'Love Birds' for Brooke on our Anniversary in July. She loved it and then requested I carve twentyfour more, to give out for Xmas gifts for my family and friends. I spent the next few months carving away to fill her order. The shitty state soap was perfect for carving.

THE ROUGUES GALLERY · A FEW OF THE GUYS AT 240-BRAVO!



JUST A LITTLE VIEW OF MY BLOCK MATES! - LOVE AL
PLEASE SCAN AND SHARE MY LOVE ♡

I was stuck on the top tier with a new celly, a dopey kid who was in for throwing hot fried dough at an elderly lady and resisted arrest. He had an enormous head and smoked at night in the cell while I stood guard. He left after a week or so and his replacement was a young junky who paced the cell all night and babbled incoherently. I had to get a reliable celly. I was in a panic. When the junky was due to leave in a couple days I felt panicked and you never knew what mental case they might pair you up with. I chose this guy Lex who was an oxy addict in for DUI, but a decent guy. He was one of the few intelligent guys I met there and he shared his New York Times with me, even let me do the crossword puzzle.

Lex's current celly smelled disgusting and was a slob. The guards OK'd the move, so Lex moved in after the Junkie left. His pessimistic and dark view of the world was not a good influence, but he was clean, educated and I enjoyed our deep intellectual conversations on many topics. We grew tight and I helped him with his case. Lex loved taking risks and spent a few weekends in the hole for stealing from the kitchen. He relished the thrill of smuggling past the guards. We all did it, if you wanted to enjoy the spoils you had to. Indigo and Lex both worked in the kitchen and used me as a mule now and then. It was risky, but pretty easy to fool the guards and it gave us something exciting to do.

Despite what the movies may portray, fights are never solved by a 'dance off' in jail. On my second day when I went for my prison hair cut and I witnessed my first fight on the stairwell to the barber shop. No guards came, we were in one of the few unmonitored zones. I kept moving and didn't look back. Most fights happened on the block. A planned fight took place in the furthest corner cell from the guard's bubble on the bottom tier. Guys would roll into the cell between watches and quickly beat the snot out of each other. The constant din of the block created the perfect cover for most altercations. The block was huge, an acre in size. The problem was the block often went strangely quiet when a big fight was afoot. Big bloody fights on the block floor happened every few weeks like clock work. New guys were always fighting to prove themselves.

The block was a dangerous place. It felt like walking in a strange wilderness with dangerous animals. I ventured out to sit at the tables to do crossword puzzles, sketch, watch TV and get the hell out of my cell. Only the mentally ill and the real pussies stayed in their cells all day anyway. We called them Bugs. I always wanted to fit in and not be noticed. It worked for the most part. I had my share of run ins, but was able talk my way out of fights. It took a while to get used to jail life, but I got along. I was a fish out of water and everyone knew it.



Study from unknown artist's painting I found in the church prayer guide.

One thing about jail: you can't pretend to be tough and get away with it. My acquaintance with Indigo kept the big fish away and the everyday hustler's bullshit pretty transparent, lets face it, we weren't dealing with MENSA members here.

After Lex left I moved to a new cell with Sparta the Albanian Elvis. He was ok, but I wouldn't say I liked him. He was an evil man, a murderer actually. I allied myself to only a couple guys, and I got along with the veterans and older inmates. He was a vet and we were friendly around the block. I did a couple portraits of him for his wife, a greeting card for his son and I got him books and magazines from the library while he worked. When his cellmate moved on they stuck him with a big, smelly guy while he was at work. On his return Sparta went ballistic over the filthy inmate. The guards switched me to take his place that night and moved Stinky to a more deserving inmate's cell. It was a good fit. I never really trusted Sparta, but he was easy to live with. Sparta was well connected in the jail. He worked at intake and in the Infirmary. He left at 6am and returned at 3pm. So I had some privacy during the day at least. On his 20th month, he knew his way around the prison.

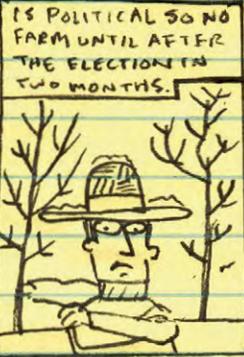
He was a Albanian native with an Elvis hair cut, choppers and all. He got me new sheets, blankets, uniforms and a good pillow. He also was sweet on this fat nurse who brought him food from the outside world which he shared once and awhile. He was neat and we kept the cell immaculate. He was in for his 5th offense of DUI. He told me he was wanted for murder in the old country and after he finishes his jail time he'll be deported to Albania by INS to face the music. You could say he had a dark side.

My association with Sparta had an immediate effect. He had the guards in the palm of his hand and got away with a lot of stuff. He was smart about his smuggling and no one was the wiser. Like Sparta, I was allowed to take a shower after work while everyone sat in lock down. My cell was rarely searched. Guards used me as a message runner often as they did with Sparta. I always liked roaming around the grounds unattended and checking out the different blocks. And Sparta could get anything if you gave him enough time. Sparta had even got the guard to open up our cell 5 minutes

SEPT 19 (4TH MONTH IN STIR)



THE DEAR OF MY DISCONTENT STILL CONTINUES. I'M TOLD MY CASE...



IS POLITICAL SO NO FARM UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION IN TWO MONTHS.

I'VE DRAWN YOU ANOTHER SMALL GALLERY OF INMATES FOR YOU TO SEE WHO I LIVE WITH. I'LL WRITE A STORY SOON... I'M TOO DEPRESSED NOW.



DOUGGY EGO

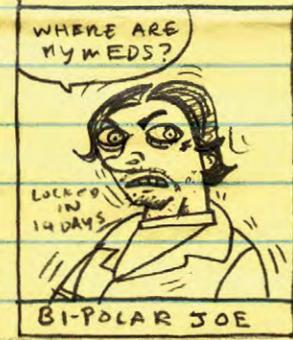
THEY SHOULD LEGALIZE DRUGS
THERE IS NO GOD!

MY CELLY DOUG!



SAD SACK SAM

I GOT TWO MONTHS
MY GIRL LEFT ME.
I CAN'T SLEEP!
I'M SO HUNGRY



WHERE ARE MY WEDS?

LOCKED IN 14 DAYS

BI-POLAR JOE



CHICKEN HAWK
HI LITTLE BUDDY



JAIL IS FUN

YOUNG YOKUM



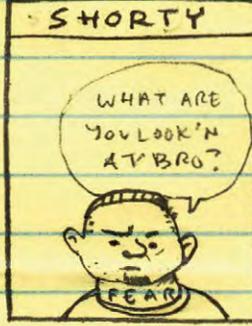
THE YELLER

N=WORD THIS
N=WORD THAT
I YELL FOR NO REASON!
AHH!



BIG WHEEL
BIG WHEEL!
GARR
BIG WHEEL
BIG WHEEL

BIG WHEEL



SHORTY

WHAT ARE YOU LOOK'N AT BRO?

FEAR



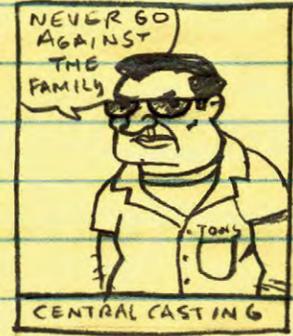
I'LL PAY LATER.

YAY LATER

STACKS



FAKE MINISTER
PRAISE JESUS AND MY MISTRESS



NEVER GO AGAINST THE FAMILY

CENTRAL CASTING



NUN YA

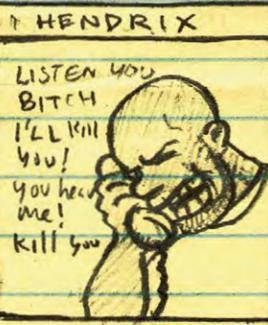
WHATS UP AL?

BANK NUNYA BIZNES



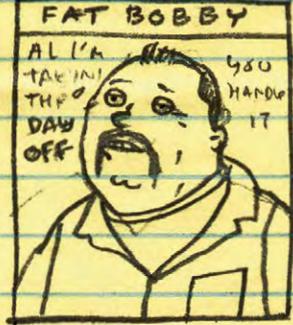
HUH?

WEIRDO DUDE



HENDRIX

LISTEN YOU BITCH
I'LL KILL YOU!
YOU HATE ME!
KILL YOU



FAT BOBBY

ALL I'M TAKIN' THE DAW OFF
YOU HANDS IT



PIRATE

AME MAN



JEEZ I GOTTA GET OUTA HERE!

THE BUG

before the rest of the block so he could get a good seat for TV and of course I followed him out there. Why he got these privileges I'll never know. Something about the thick Albanian accent disarmed them.

I stood guard when Sparta smoked every night and he even hid a lighter in our cell. He got small piece of Velcro and stuck it to the back of the toilet. Our cell was flipped once a week, but most guards don't want to stick their heads next to the toilet, so it was never found! He rolled chewing tobacco with the thin paper ripped from a little Spanish bible. Smoking or having lighter were lugging offenses, but I put up with it. If he was caught we both would go to the hole. He blew baby powder in the air to hide the smell of smoke and it actually worked pretty well. He would dry the tobacco in my hot pot during open block. We never got close to getting caught, the guards were very predictable and generally dim witted. The jail always hired the lowest common denominator in most cases, thankfully a handful of decent people made it on the motley crew.

There was a certain number of guys that were stuck there and wanted to make it as comfortable to live as possible. Those were my boys. Many so called tough guys got all wrapped up in prison drama and all it did was bring them heat. That was most of the prison. The guys I liked worked on improving the standard of living without drawing attention from the screws. These guy didn't fight unless necessary, treated me with respect and generally stayed out of any covert trouble. They had it right: good food, a nice blanket or a decent radio went a long way. The trick was not letting the close quarters get to you too much. You had to do normal things like having your coffee at the same time everyday and read the paper, I shaved every morning just to feel normal.

Everybody lost it on one day or another, myself included. I got in a confrontation over a phone and told a guy who tried to take it to "Fuck off", which I immediately regretted. I can fight, I used to box in my twenties, but I didn't want to fight over a stupid phone call. He starred at me with murder in his eyes for days. He kept telling me how he was going to kill me when he had the chance. He got released a few days later, the young thug never got to waste me. The

AS MUCH AS I ENJOY CLEANING TOILETS FOR DEPUTIES... I GOT A NEW JOB!

I PUBLISHED A BOOK LAST YEAR!

I'M NOW WORKING AT THE LIBRARY, ON JOBS!

I'M LOOKING FOR CASES ON CAT MOLESTATION?

I MEET MANY NEW AND INTERESTING PEOPLE.

THE BOOK SELECTION IS LIMITED AND IN ROUGH CONDITION.

ONE BOOK ONLY. PEARSON.

HEY THE LAST PAGE IS GONE.

THE LIBRARY HAS MANY LAW BOOKS!

THE OTHER LIBRARIANS CALL ME 'BARNY' SHORT FOR BARNY FIFE. THEY SAH I'M STRICKT, JCCZ!

YOU DONT DO ANY EXTRA TIME FOR PUSHING IN YOUR CHAIRS GUYS!

KISS UP

I HELP INMATES WITH THEIR MANY CASES AND I AM LEARNING NEW THINGS EVERY DAY! IT REMINDS ME A LOT OF TEACHING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL KIDS ONLY THESE GUYS MIGHT KILL YOU. FUN.

I WANT TO GIVE POWER OF ATTORNEY TO MY GIRL ONLY SHE'S GOT A RESTRAINING ORDER BUT SHE STILL LOVES ME.

I WANT TO FIRE MY LAWYER!

DUDE, ARE MY EYES PINNED? HUH?

ME AND MY WIFE WERE MARRIED IN A WIKEN CERIMONY IN SALEM GRAVEYARD. IS THAT A LEGAL MARRIAGE?

SHE'S GOT MY HARLEY MAN!

HOW A BOUT IF I SMASH YOU F'IN COMPUTER!

DONT BEEP AT ME!

CAN I HAVE A COPY OF EVERY MATION?

NO, THERE'S 100 OF EM.

THIS IS SO UNFAIR MAN.

I GOTTA FIRE MY F'IN LAWYER!

I'M GETTIN FRAMED

BUT YOUR PROSSAE

I WANT TO LOOK UP SHIT ON MURDER ONE, AND CAN I TAKE OUT THE JOY LUCK CLUB?

URNS OUT MOST OF THE GUYS HERE ARE INNOCENT.

I SWEAR I DIDNT DO IT! THEIR LYIN' MAN!

IT SAYS THE FOUND YOUR DNA THERE

OK I DID IT

MY NEW CELLY IS A GOOD GUY. HES FROM ALBANIA.

HEY SPARTA!

SCREEN DIS PLACE AL.

ESSEX COOK SLOP

ESSEX COOK

ITS BEEN FIVE MONTHS AND I'M READY TO COME HOME.

MY STAY AND APPEAL ARE FINALLY IN SO ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT.

KEEP PRAYING AND I'LL STAY STRONG!

I FREE AL

I love you baki!

<p>STILL WAITING FOR THE STAY, THE FARM...</p> <p>I LOVE BEING PATIENT... OH YAH!</p>	<p>YOU DRAW PORTRAIT NOW!</p> <p>I'VE BEEN DOING SOME ART...</p>	<p>IT'S HARD TO THINK ITS BEEN SIX MONTHS.</p> <p>PAPA?</p> <p>POOR TONY...</p>	<p>I'VE LOST ABOUT 15 POUNDS. I'M SKINNY.</p> <p>WHICH WAY TO THE BEACH?</p>
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<p>THE SHOWERS ARE COLD NOW THAT ITS WINTER.</p> <p>HEY LITTLE BLACK WORMS!</p>	<p>THE FOOD STILL STINKS.</p> <p>HEY LITTLE WHITE WORMS!</p>	<p>PEARSALL, YOU LOOK SKINNY!</p> <p>(SGT. SEA IS ONE OF THE GOOD ONES)</p> <p>THE GUARDS ALL KNOW ME BY NOW, GREAT.</p>	<p>I WAS PROMISED I COULD GO TO THE FARM AFTER THE ELECTION...</p> <p>JUST SIT TIGHT AL. WE'LL LET YOU KNOW. IT GIVES YOU SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO!</p> <p>YES MAM.</p> <p>I LOVE BEING A POLITICAL PAWN!</p>
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<p>THE WEIRDOS AND COOKS COME AND GO!</p> <p>I SHAVED THE MIDDLE OF MY EYE BROWS IN A SILENT PROTEST...</p>	<p>I DON'T SHOWER, THAT'S WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS YOU TO DO! THEY CONTROL EVERYTHING!</p>	<p>I BEAT UP A MIDGET AND GOT SENT TO THE HOLE... AGAIN.</p> <p>HE HURT.</p>	<p>WE'RE PERVERTS.</p>
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<p>DO YOU HAVE THE PAPER?</p> <p>I JUST NEED THE SCORES...</p> <p>I ONLY NEED IT A FEW MINUTES.</p> <p>NO.</p> <p>I DON'T HAVE THE PAPER.</p> <p>REALLY, I DON'T HAVE THE PAPER.</p> <p>YOU MAGGOT.</p> <p>STILL AT THE LIBRARY...</p>	<p>CAN YOU LOOK UP MY LAWYER? HIS NAME IS DAVE.</p> <p>I MAY NEED A BIT MORE.</p> <p>HE LOVES PASTA</p>	<p>I'M SO TOUGH I RIP COVERS OFF BOOKS AND STEAL ALL THE MAGAZINES.</p> <p>GANG A MEMBER</p>	<p>WE FIND OUT ABOUT THE STAY IN THE NEXT 2 WEEKS SO KEEP ON PLAYING!</p> <p>I MISS YOU GUYS!</p>
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maddening existence made you lose your old self. I miss that guy.

I worked as a janitor for a couple months, until I landed a job in the jail library thanks to Nunya, as a parting gesture he got me his sought after position. (I had to interview for it!) I happily left the Upper Programs job. I couldn't take anymore bullshit promises from the administration, so it came at the right time. They kept telling me week after week my transfer to the Farm was eminent, only to take it away at the last minute and add month or two. They threw months of your life around like it was nothing.

I missed Nunya's company. I only hung around with a few guys and Nunya was my favorite. A smart guy, well connected and good for a few laughs. When a good guy left it was bitter sweet. You were happy for him to move on to better things, but losing a trusted friend made an impact. Nunya had kept me up on prison gossip and I enjoyed our talks as we strolled the perimeter of the block. We shared food and coffee and played a lot of cards. The trust worthy, decent guys were few and far between, and the loss of Nunya did not go unnoticed. His pride and joy, the underground block store fell apart without his respected leadership, and the guys who took over his card table cheated and reduced the intense poker games to a crooked black jack trap for new fish. Never under estimate good leadership.

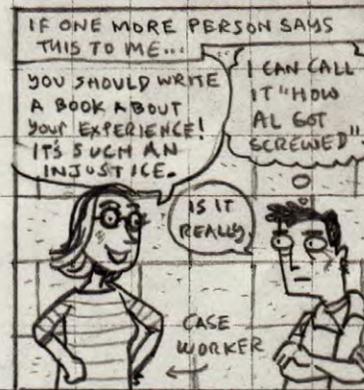
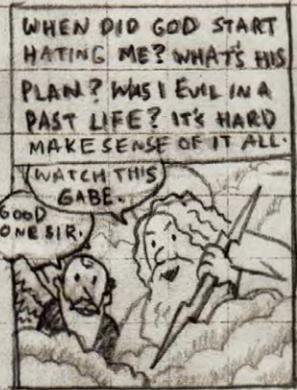
I loved the new job. Working as a janitor sucked and seeing the lazy administration of the jail everyday only made me resent them and their constant bull shit promises. The new library gig got me off the block for 8 hours a day and it had perks: copy machine access for my comics and first dibs on donated reading material. I distributed books sent to inmates from family and friends, which had been ignored for months and also helped inmates work on their court cases. I was in charge of the law library. Helping guys with their cases was the main thrust of my job. This went a long way with many of the guys. I served a different block of the jail each hour, even the gang blocks. Those were some bad men. I helped anyone who needed it to write motions to the court. Many inmates had little education and could barely write.

THE SIXTH MONTH MARK

11.22.10



IT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL ALONE BUT THEN I'M NOT HERE TO MAKE FRIENDS. I KIND OF AM IGNORED FOR THE MOST PART, WHICH IS FINE WITH ME.



The men I worked with were grateful and I gained a reputation of a guy that knew things and could untangle the confusing world of case law and court motions. Digging into their cases taught me a lot about the law and even more about human behavior. I dealt with violent felons, thieves, bank robbers, gang members, child molesters and murderers. Most faced the future of a lot of hard time. Most claimed their innocents. I got them to explain their cases and I filed their request and motions. Nothing I did ever cracked a case, most of the motions were ignored for months. A lot of it was just spinning wheels and wishful thinking. The inmates just wanted to feel like they were doing something to help themselves. I used to try to put a positive spin on even the most depraved and hopeless clients to at least give them hope.

I dreaded the weekend. Stuck on the block and the mind numbing hours of lockdown, I made the most of my time. I organized the horrible selection of books and magazines. The mean guard at the library acted pretty cool to us workers and gave me his Boston Herald every day which I circulated throughout the block. I went through the donated books that sat in boxes for months and added them to the meager collection excluding the overly violent books and true crime by the order of the jail. This allowed me choice of "new" books. I read voraciously, so anything remotely interesting I snatched up and devoured.