

Kevin J Marinelli

"Learning to Live,
Living to Love"

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Nonfiction - Poetry/Essays

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When I started writing this material I was defeated, wore down, ready to give up. Not a good thing for a guy on death row to be, whether mentally or emotionally. I'd come to the point in my incarceration where I've spent more than half my life in prison. I thought I had reached my end and was ready to sit down and die. Then a wondrous ray of light awakened me. That's when all the love poems came flowing out from a heart once thought dead. To this Angel of mercy, my eternal muse, I owe my continued existence in this physical world. To her I dedicate this work, without whom it would never have been written. The only one I owe an even greater debt of gratitude is to the One who created such a magnificent creature, the Creator of all, Hashem, who also sent her to me, to save me from a living hell. At first I was not going to publish any of this, some of it being so personal, (some poems are written about the death of my brother to brain cancer last year, while doing a life sentence.) but when I received some very encouraging words from somebody who read my previous books I thought to leave it to G-d to determine if it's at all helpful to anyone. The depth of feeling I found rising up within me when I was moved to write the contents of this book was a surprise to me. A lot of my previous writings were concerned with learning to live in prison, on death row, as a human being NOT as a convict; the vast majority here are how I've come to live only so that I may love one person, for whom I've endured everything for these past two years. May these poems inspire others to love and be loved.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Soulmate and Angel of mercy-Kelli Bonnell
Also to the memory of my brother-Mark Marinelli, may his soul rest in the shalom
of Hashem our Creator

Acknowledgments

I'd also like to thank Mark Spotz for the use of his typewriter to type
part of this. May Hashem always be on his side and look upon him favorably

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Within Without

I look strong on the outside
but within I just weep
Showing the world wolf's clothing
that covers this wounded sheep
If I wore my scars
outside for all to see
Then you'd know why I hurt
and all the pain within me
You'd wonder how I bear
all the torment and grief
My wounds fester and ooze
with no hope of relief
Tis the past written in flesh
but carved deep in my soul
That which will never heal
leaving me all but whole
All that hurt I carry within me
no medication can erase
A past I have to live with
unlike any other must face

Destined to Be

The face of death is a joy to behold
after living in a world so cold
I am the monster you've created
And yet the one you've so hated
How else can I be than how you made me?
You get what you see as I've always been me
I've made mistakes as we all do
For that I'm heartily sorry, it's true
But I was fated to be by circumstances beyond me
And my flawed personality a ruin for all to see
No love was to be had,
For one destined to be bad
Raised up as destined for evil
Conveniently made the world's devil

Seeing the Real

Who is the creeper of death	Always on the defense
come to steal my waking breath	From those I take offense
I'll stare in his face	It's not as you may see
And plead my case	For you haven't really seen me
A life of suffering I've had	I am what you created
Though I wasn't born bad	Manifesting all you've hated
And unequal hand was dealt	I am the reflection of you
As all this misery is felt	Shining through and through
My defiance is true	Punish me not for your mistake
My fear not of you	I only reveal what is fake
As I came to this life	Now death haunts me no more
I found only strife	A member of the societal whore

My will is stronger than steel
Seeing & believing all that's truly real

Reality Is...

Reality is what we make it
With the good and bad we take it
Whether we embrace it or fake it

We can make life worse if we want
With the complaining and a grunt
Furthering a negative front

No use in increasing your misery
Distorting all mental imagery
Nurturing your pain internally

Focus on the sun, not the shadows
Avoid the puddles, run thru the meadows
Look not to the storm but the rainbows

Put a smile on your face
Through tears you want to embrace
Run for all you're worth in this race

"Fake it til you make it" they say
For this too shall pass away
Bringing the dawn of a new day

Concentrating on the pain magnifies it
Mulling over the misery enlivens it
And solitude only strengthens it

Nurture the light in your night
Hold every piece of good tight
Don't let the evil blurr your sight

Cos after the storm comes the sun
After the hard comes the fun
Reality is how the race is run

Vulture Culture

Meet the culture of the vulture
Picking the body's clean, for all to be seen
All that's fake is praised, everything pure razed
Good & evil gone awry, leaving the rest to die
Immersed in popularity's filth, bringing originality's death
Where can we find a cure for the blind
Awaken to what's real, relearning how to feel
Heaven-ward we turn our eyes while our neighbor dies
Caste down culture's gods, defying the odds
Extending an altruistic hand, gathering in brotherhood's band
Bringing peace by your might, giving each their right
Wiping away all sorrow for a better tomorrow

Live Again

There is a pain deep within
The description of which I can't begin.
When will it end, and healing G-d send?
I cry out with rent spirit, can he even hear it?
How can I remain, to live once again
With wounds so replete, will I ever be complete?
Yet I cry out once more, as you slam the door
Just as was done many times before
"Take away this pain, that I may live again!"

The Best in Bad

Nothing is all good with no bad
Nor anything as good as you've had
Our present is compared to our past
And the future will never last
Nothing is so bad without any good
Look for the positive as we should
Even in the depths of night
There still shines the moonlight
In the deepest phathoms new species are found
And lessons are learned beneath the cloud
Harsh environments breed new life
Growth happens amid the strife
The good times are for rest
Calm and peace between each test
Periods of healing from the storm
The soul adjusting to its new form
So in the dark look to the light
Embracing new growth with insight
From the struggles don't take flight
Stand your ground and fight!

The Tyranny of Decay

I watch in dismay as the tyranny of the day brings our mind's decay
Politicians without conscience line their pockets as we witness
The masses have been duped and their backs stooped as the rich regrouped
With their public schools making our kids fools used as a political tool
Cogs in the machine grinding in between the economic & political scene
Come embrace the light, stand up for what's right
Take it by your might or be engulfed in night

Breeze with Ease

I watch the snow fall, floating on the breeze
Landing where it will, with such grace and ease
There's a lesson there, if it will be had
When winds blow hard, don't be sad
Take the changes in stride
On the currents we must ride
As the winds bear us aloft
Our cooperation makes the landing soft
Things are out of our power
Every day, every hour
Finding the rhythm in this strife
Is how we achieve harmony in this life
"Go with the flow", "roll with the punches"
Are more than hollow words or feeble hunches
Float gracefully on the breeze
That your life may be with ease

Numb

After all I've been through
And that's been done to me
After doing all I can do
My numbness is all that can be
A calloused heart, it is true
Caused by over use
What else can I do
After suffering all the abuse
My heart is over worked
Battered, bruised, and bleeding
My emotions have been corked
Cos right now I have no feeling
Tis weird to say, I know its true
Worse to experience, all I go through
Knowing my numbness is real,
So wounded I can't feel
All my tears are cried out
Leaving me with nothing but doubt
Is it a monster I've become?
Why do I feel so numb/
Another hit I just can't take
For my soul will surely break
In this life I must live,
Having given all I can give
Now there's nothing left to be done
Save to feel O so numb

My Day, My Life

On a dreary morning
I raise my head
Not alive
but not dead
What is life,
what's its purpose?
Where to find it,
will ~~it~~ it ever surface?

Living in this limbo
no death to mourn
between life and death
wishing I wasn't born
No end in sight
days without light
no way to take flight
existing in this perpetual night

Positivity's Waste

Pie in the sky, hopes and dreams
And all the unseen, sunlight and moonbeams.
Nothing but pain and misery are alive in me
Even breathing makes me weary, death is all I see
I can hope and I can pray
like taking dope, my mind's decay
Here I sit no change in sight
in this pit without any light
I sleep without rest, I eat without taste
no hope for the best, a life gone to waste
All the ways of positivity are nonexistent to me
products of futility, hope is for the free.

Life's Burden

We struggle day in and day out
scream, cry or shout
No one knows what's in another's breast
How they've suffered life's test
Unique is the pain of each one
Scorched by life's fiery sun
Judgmental are the forgetful
When their suffering was full
Compassionate are the merciful
Of their trials they're mindful
Life is hard for all
We will trip, stumble and fall
It's made easier to bare
When our burdens we share
Giving each other a helping hand
That in the end all may stand
Seeing yourself in the other
Loving them as sister and brother

Goth Goddess

Mistress of the night
Queen of death
My beloved breath

Your alabaster skin
and ruby red lips
I desire your bloody kiss

The moonlight's glow
illuminates your raven hair
shimmering in your flaming eyes of despair

I want to consume your heart
in order to make you mine
that for me you'll pine

Still I'd worship at your alter
to you my heart would bend
and to you all my love send

You are the mistress of my night
The Queen of my death
The Beloved of my breath
My Goth Goddess.

Helping Hand

Wallowing in despair
with none to care
though I didn't see
you reaching for me
finding there comfort and strenght
to take one more breath

When life overwhelms me
drowning in negativity
none can understand
but still give a helping hand
as I struggle to be
desparately free

You Found Me/You Found Us

You sought me in the dark
and gave me your hand
found me at my weakest
You helped me to stand.
Drawing me close, warmed me
from the cold and misery,
a dying heart you made beat
by a love so complete.
The depth of beauty I've found
a love that does so abound,
in the heart of one like you
casting away all that's blue
(making all things anew)

Light shines in my breast
as we take this gravest test
for a love burning so bright
must be fed with all our might
Our ties shall never sever
as this love will live forever;
giving shelter in the storm
in the cold, keeping us warm,
during the night, shedding light
when weaking, giving us might
A phenomenon so supernatural
Our love must surely be eternal.

Desire and Fire

What is this yearning, this desire
from where has it come, this fire
a longing great in size
seemingly without demise
a flame that cannot be quenched
to feed it is to fry
to starve it is to die
a wound burned so deep
a hurt for which I weep
it is now a part of me
a secret for none to see

from this pain never to be free
continuing to live in misery
I can only hope for relief
from that celestial thief
only to see another life
absent all this strife
knowing that in life's test
there's very little rest
beginning with what's right
loving with all my might.

God is love/Love is God

To the winds I cry your name
the voice returning wasn't the same
but in another voice not of my choice
yet I yell once more
hearing the voice from before
"it is true, god is in you,
He's the love given to you
and that love returned anew"
Be as god as god is in you
to love one another and yourself too
as god is love, sent from above

The Phoenix

I soared the hights
And descended to the depths
I've glided on the winds
And been consumed by the flames

What was today
shall be tomorrow
yesterday's here to stay
The future we borrow

Live for the now
Because later may never be
Unbeknownst when and how
If another day we'll see

Here you reside
Then you're gone
In the grave to hide
Before a new dawn

Only to rise again
And a new life begin
From ash born again
Transformation from within

Appreciate not ingrate

Who are we to ask
Our Creator to do a task
The creator gave all we need
for our mouths to feed
Whehter animal or seed
Our bodies to protect
Illness to detect
And souls to reflect
Who are we to say
To complain every day

Against our spirit's Maker
Whose a giver, not a taker
And a lover, not a faker
The Great Spirit gave us family
And those who are friendly
And all those who act kindly
All gifts do appreciate
Don't be one of the ingrate

The Voice

I long to hear the voice
of my lonely heart's choice
the mistress of my soul
the one who makes me whole,
Her words echoing in my heart
awake me with a start
only for it to begin
feeling the loneliness within,
With the sound from her lips
my heartbeat skips
and her breath upon my ear
casting away all fear,
Her kiss upon my neck
puts my heart in check
her voice reverberates in my soul
where lived the heart she stole,
What shall become of me
this I cannot see
with blackness all around
I focus on the sound;
The flutter of bat wings
the howl that a wolf sings
the whispering of autumn winds
and the song my dark princess sings

Brother

We grew up rough
but when times were tough
we stuck together
brother and brother

When distance increased
our love never ceased
brotherhood wouldn't part
as we had a brother's heart

When I suffered you did too
you came to my rescue
as a brother must do
when a brother is true

Even with hurtful words said
still ringing in my head
never would you part
from this brother's heart

Over these many years
beyond the many tears
I couldn't ask for another
for in you I have a brother

Under the Surface

Behind my smile lies the truth
of a lost and misspent youth
I cover the hurt with a laugh
though blown about like chaff
scratching the surface to see
all that lies within me
A horror in a shell
a story I shall never tell
Poke me in the wrong place
I'll show you another face
little did you know
cos my expression doesn't show
all the turmoil in me
dying to be set free
As I smile and pass on by
know the reason why
for all you can tell
I'm dying inside as well
everything else I hide
showing only the happy side

Lies to Fate

The houses of worship are full
but their words are hollow
they are used as a tool
so that all may follow
Pollution of man's thought
delusions for our future
corruption of our lot
as the powerful we nurture
while our lives are a living death
their doctrines we fear
they steal our hope's breath
as our end draws near
Within us our souls rot
neglecting the here and now
as their message is bought
to their lies we passively bow
Til truth raises its head
casting off all that's dead
rescuing man's fate
before its too late

To Be Freed

You are the joy of my soul
that which makes me whole
you are the life I need
from this hell to be freed

To your light I'm drawn
because mine is all gone
in this life I must lead
from this darkness to be freed

Of your happiness exuded
I must also be included
to plant a new seed
from this sorrow to be freed

In your love there is hope
that I may somehow cope
and despair never to heed
from this hopelessness to be freed

You are what uplifts me
from this sea of misery
you are all I need
from this desire to be freed

Open Heart

Every hand a raised fist
Every foot ready to kick
when abuse is all you've seen
when love has never been

Lashing out in defense
always seeking vengeance
love I cannot receive
to my wounds I cleave

Even when love comes
by caress or compliments
that's not what I see
all is filtered through my misery

Will it ever change
my emotions rearrange
that an open heart may be
what resides in me

My Raven

You are my raven
my blessed haven
with crow black eyes
where my bliss resides
A black veil of hair
casting away my despair
skin so smooth
to lighten my mood

A form so soft
raising my heart aloft
succubus of my desire
consume me in your fire
as we go higher and higher
until we finally expire

A Tear

I no longer see it
it's no longer in sight
while here I sit
in this endless night

Hopes for a better end
dreams of the good
prayers that I send
to all I could

My purpose isn't clear
why I am here
there's none, I fear

As I shed a tear.

What was Naught

When I thought what was not
My pain filled soul was distraught
Then agony consumed my heart
Because I thought we would part
My sanity was all but lost
Overcome by this gravest cost
But the sun shone once more
And my love for thee to adore
When the healing began
The birds sang again
Healing what was sore
Deep down in my core
What wasn't before
Will be no more
For the truth shall always stay
While all else fades away
That's why our love shall last
Even beyond all time past
This promise I shall make
My love shall never be fake
Yours I shall always be
Now and for all eternity

I Was Able To Understand

You came to me in the darkness
A ray of beautiful light
You found me in the blackness
Wandering about without sight

You cared enough to reach out
And offer a loving hand
Though I was surrounded by doubt
Then I was able to understand

Love was not dead
It was only obscured
That was all in my head
A product of loneliness endured

I'm happy for the time we have
For every precious moment
Its my heart's healing sav
Erasing every disappointment

Cutting through the darkness with your light
Soothing this tormented heart
Making everything alright
So from this heart you'll never part

Joined Heart

What is this I cannot see
This ominous forboding in me?
Its a pain so real
Unlike any other I feel
Good or bad I can't say
Present every night and day
Tis a healing pain
Of a heart growing again
Darkness dispelled without a trace
Light put in its place
Your voice is music to my ears
Casting out all my fears
At your softest touch I bend
All I am, to you I send
My heart ripped from my chest
Joined with the one in your breast
As this passion we share
Purest of desires so fare
The agony of seperation
Leading us to desperation
Such a seed thus sown
Must surely become full grown
Patiently we wait to see
And send out this plea:
Remove the distance from this joined heart
That love's flame may never depart

All Around

Your love is like the breeze
That rustles the leaves
And the rays of the sun
Surpassed by none
As well as the moon's light
Penetrating my night
And the bird's mating song
With desire so strong
Everything reminds me of you
And your love so true
Which does greatly astound
As its all around
Maturing like a fine wine
Even in this heart of mine

My Only Beauty

In wonder I gaze
With a heart so amazed
At the beauty I see
Right before me
For that sweetest smile
I'd walk a thousand mile
For that purest soul
Its happiness is my goal
From that kindest heart
I never wish to part
This ardent frown
You turn upside down
All your laughter is my own
Filling this heart so grown

With that brightest soul
You make me whole
Just by knowing you
And your love so true
My blood boils with desire
My soul you set on fire
With every heartbeat
Our souls do meet
We are one
Seperated by none
You are the awe
In my awesome
You are the bliss
In my blissfulness

My heart is yours forever yours forever
Without you it'd wither you I'd wither
You're my only beauty my only beauty
For now and eternity

If I Only Could

If I could, I surely would
As I really should
To you all my firsts I'd give
As surely as I live

The first I hold tight	The first body I caress
The first I love with all my might	The first tears I kiss
The first I passionately touch	The first with whom I get wild
The first I miss so very much	The first to bear my child
The first kiss I taste	The first to whom I give everything
The first woman I embraced	The first for whom I'd do anything

To you I'd give the beginning
And to you I'd give the ending
I most certainly would
If only I could

All I Am & All I Have

The thousand hugs, here in these arms
The million kisses, here on these lips
The great love, here in this heart
The endless desire, here in this soul
All I am is for you
Every beginning, every new
All you need is here for you
Everything I am, all that's true
All I am & all I have is for you

Today/Tomorrow

Today I woke up in love
but will I be tomorrow,
should I discard this love,
because of worries for the morrow?

Today I desire her embrace,
will it ever be tomorrow,
only by G-d's grace
even if today is sorrow

Today I long for her kiss
though tomorrow may never be,
Should I give up all this
in case she hurts me?

Today I yearn for her voice,
what will tomorrow bring?
this love is beyond my choice
but for now our hearts sing

Today is the eternal "now"
to tomorrow's gloom I won't bow
Today to love I'll cling
and see what tomorrow shall bring

Luna

I am the wolf in the night
who howls at your glorious light
at the end of the day
to you I shall bey
Bewitched by your spell
a desire I cannot tell
in you I find delight
as you shine so bright
Making of the predator a pet
tamed when we first met
by your hand to be fed
a pelt to share your bed
A rug beneath your feet
would be so painfully sweet

As long as I feel your embrace
And gaze into your beautiful face
kissed by your pale beams
and all which gleams
No escape from your hold
entirely by you controled
I've surrender to you my will
for you I live still
In this eternal night
with my beloved shining bright
enchanted by this lunacy
with you for blissful eternity

The Stand

When surrounded by the dark
a sun is seen of every spark
With every beat of my heart
I thought you the one from the start
Through my thoughts sped
and hopes danced in my head
Of embracing that light
which burned in this night
She could unburden my soul
with a love made whole
For a beast like me
only the good did she see
But complications became clear
to destroy a love so dear
Nothing more could I ask
then strength equal to the task
Sometimes we think we are strong
but sometimes we are wrong
During those times of doubt & sorrow
over a love that might not be tomorrow
I saw the truth of just one thing:
"when you've lost all you have
you've lost everything"
Because of her love I still breathe
For her love I'm still me
Without the splendor of her
would there be anything left anymore?
Then a glimmer of hope was made known
to enliven this heart she does own
Strength rose from the depths of her soul
to encourage this love made whole
Because of a love rooted so deep
for this man she would keep
My heart leaped in my breast
to see her past that test
That life throws at us all
to see if love will stand or fall

We Became (Broken to Fit)

I found a soul
ripped and torn
deflated and worn

I embraced a heart
blessed and beautiful
cherished and wonderful

I found a heart
battered and beaten
broken and bleedin'
I embraced a soul
~~I embraced a soul~~
beautiful and true
wonderful and new

We became a soul
complete and whole
We became a heart
that shall never part
Broken to fit together
joined never to sever

Wedded in Death

In a cemetery near
and a night so clear
I called my love here
before me to appear

I performed an ancient right
to restore my love tonight
under the fullmoon light
manifested in the misty night

Back from G-d know's where
I draw my love near
embracing the one held dear
on this night so drear

Before long, G-d must return
that for which I yearn
to its sacred urn
leaving my desire to burn

For her soul could not stay
but for only one day
now on her grave I lay
with determination, I say:

"I know what I must do
to be reunited with you
my beloved so true
I shall come to you"

At the next fullmoon I sought
My heat's resting spot
and drank that fateful drought
to join the one I had not

In the realm of the dead
to my desire am I led
to be with her instead
in death we are wed

My Purest Dove

Shall I rage against the storm
Or embrace the shades form
'Tis easier to cease to be
Then to live in this darkened sea
'Tis harder to fight the night
Then to go into that blessed light

But how and why to try
To go on and not to die
But for your love
My purest dove
Filling me with joy
And my loneliness destroy

For one so sweet
The birds do tweet
And the sun doth shine
In this wounded heart of mine
Because of your love
My precious dove

What can I give
To my reason to live
Nought but a heart
Broken and torn apart
To be sown together again
That a new love may begin

G-d's Angel

I asked G-d to send me an angel
to make my darkened skies blue
To brighten my day with it's smile
to keep me company for awhile
That it's voice I'd long to hear
and only it to have near
The Angel G-d sent is you
A soul so beautiful and true
A life without you I construe
Would be dark and Oh so blue
With you I can see all possibility
That someone can love even me

You Found Me/You Found Us

You sought me in the dark, and gave me your hand
Found at my weakest, you helped my to stand
Drawing me close, warming me, from the cold and misery
A dying heart you made beat, by a love so complete
The depth of beauty I've found, a love that does so abound
In the heart of one like you, making all things anew
Light shines in my chest, as we face this gravest test
For a love burning so bright, must be fed with all our might
Our ties shall never sever, as this love is forever
Giving shelter in the storm, in the cold keeping us warm
During the night shedding light, when weak giving us might
A phenomenon so supernatural, our love must surely be eternal

Undone

I lay upon my bed
with thoughts of you in my head
Hopes, wishes and dreams
riding upon moonbeams
And an ache in my chest
yearning for that blissful rest
In the arms of my beloved one
because of whom I've come undone

Tis strange for this to be
to have this love for thee
Residing in this heart of mine
which is truly thine
A heart once thought dead
brought to life instead
The oddest desire in me
is my undying devotion to thee

Dreams give my desire form
far beyond every norm
Then I can indulge the passion
for my soul's obsession
Enfolding her in my embrace
kissing her beautiful face
Joining our two souls as one
for her I shall gladly come undone

Live Another Day

The cobwebbed crypt of my heart
Rusty hinged and falling apart
The cemetery of my soul
The ruin of my mind, whole
Alone and broken in the dust
Only in death did I trust
My Angel descended from above
Resurrecting me with her love
Drawing me from the grave
Resuscitating my soul to save
A life given to decay
Residing in this tomb of dismay
A burned out and hollow shell
Being loved in this hell
There is none else who can see
That which is the real me
For the dead there's no pain
Only when life we regain
Now this heart of mine aches
For love of her it breaks
'Tis she that makes this heart stir
Desiring nought but her
This hurt I'll gladly take
As all other loves were fake
Now this heart is filled with love, not dismay
For her love I'll live another day

Thank You

Thank you for all you are
And for all you do
For everything wonderful
that makes you, you
Thank you for making it
through pain and sorrow
Struggling through every bit
creating a better you for the morrow
Thank you for all the beauty I see
deep down inside of you
That secret part you share with me
A wonder I can't construe
Thank you for all I hear
your laughter and words of love
Which I hold so very dear
greater than any I can think of
Thank you for the heart
you opened up to me
Loving me from the start
seeing what others can't see
Thank you doesn't fully express
but only the smallest part
So this I shall confess
You'll always have my heart

Grieving for Freedom

There are five stages of grief; denial, anger, bargaining, depression & acceptance, not necessarily in that order. When we were put in prison the grieving process started. Of course, once confronted with this new reality shock and disbelief followed (denial). As we come to understand why & how anger welled up within us, whether at others or ourself. Just the limitations of confinement that frustrate us everyday, in every way, at every turn, is enough to anger the calmest of people. There's hurt from when our loved ones, or good time friends, abandon us and feelings of disappointment at our beloved country that seems to let us down and the perceived injustice of a system we once supported or thought to be fair. But then we come to the point of fantasizing about what we'd be willing to do to be freed from the cause of our misery. We might even say "I'd do anything to get out of here!" (bargaining). Some use that to seek out ways to free themselves of their incarceration, through the law or escapism in recreational activities, some constructive others not so much. We end up playing the "what if..." or "if only..." game, the worst thing a prisoner can do. It only breeds regret and despair. Nothing constructive there.

It's difficult to just give in and accept this as the final result, the end of your life. If we accept this as our ultimate reality then we abandon all hope of it ever changing, of ever being free again, of having something better. For those on death row this signals the end, as for anyone without a release date. I've seen guys there, they just give up. They have no reason to go on, to get out of bed in the morning, to take another breath. I've felt this way myself, it was the darkest time in my already dark life. Without accepting this as our fate we can't fully grieve. We get stuck in the depression phase, or cycle through all the other stages repeatedly, without end. It's a torturous merry-go-round at the very least. We are, at best, stuck in limbo.

The best way I can see to deal with this dilemma is to "hope for the best, prepare for the worst". We must accept that we have to live our lives in prison, day in and day out, for the foreseeable future. We can't/shouldn't be blind to the reality of our situation. We must live with the hope of a better tomorrow, no matter where we find ourselves. Hope buoys a man in hard times and these are the hardest of times. Like a long distance runner, who does the best he can with the terrain he has to work with, while looking to the finish line, we too must accept our current circumstances and make the best use of them to get where we want to go, keeping our eye on the prize. In the end, these accomplishments made along the way are what you'll have to show for your life, no matter where you end up.

Discovering my Insanity

In 1995 I was in SCI-Camp Hill, in a cell in the hole; not the nicest place to be, even for prison standards. Looking around, I had to ask myself, "how did I get here?" I was 23 years old, a former Boy Scout, volunteer fireman, high school graduate, then a veteran; but none of it mattered. My case is a commonly occurring robbery gone awry, for which I'm accused, which would result in a 10-20 year sentence just about everywhere else except a tiny town in a remote county. It was big time news there, during an election year, so it was made out to be a horrid crime of torture by the worst monsters to live since Charles Manson. However, now it has come to light, well actually years ago, that everyone lied, there were backroom deals, and fabricated evidence. Yet, here I sit, despite all that's come to light.

The "how" of my question wasn't my focus, but the "why". Why did I end up in this situation, or in this position which led to this horrible end. Over time it became evident, although for the longest time I refused to admit it. In 1995, the prosecution's psychiatrist diagnosed me with "suicidal ideation", meaning I had frequent thoughts and fantasies about committing suicide. In 1996-97 the D.O.C.'s psychiatrist diagnosed me with PTSD, and later on, with severe depression. My lawyers send some psychologists and psychiatrists to evaluate me around 1998. They discovered a host of mental disabilities and disorders/diseases. I've even lost track of how many, it's not something I'm proud of, though I shouldn't be ashamed either, since it's not something I did to myself but was done to me. I do recall being diagnosed with ADHD, intermittent explosive disorder, and fetal alcohol exposure in addition to what the others found. That's a lot to be carrying around, for sure, especially with never receiving any treatment til that point. In 2015-16 I was declared borderline Bipolar, even though there technically isn't any such thing, but they don't know what else to call it.

At first I didn't want to believe any of this was really going on inside me. Ever think that the rest of the world sees things totally different than you? How scary is that? What if you were told that the world is flat after all you've known is a round earth? How could you accept that? Well, I couldn't, at least not at that point in my life. I thought "I'm young, healthy, strong. That aint me and even if it was I don't need meds. I can muscle it through." It something like that. I wasn't the kind of person to excuse bad behavior because I had a rough childhood or "the devil made me do it". Knowing this the lawyers gave me info on fetal alcohol exposure. It told me how my brain works, literally; that I wasn't stupid, just that my brain worked different, and in some ways better. This was in direct contradiction to what I've been told my whole life, that I was stupid, an idiot, useless, etc. Using this information I was able to educate myself in prison. At 25 my brain became fully developed unlike other people's, and I was feeling it. I wanted to read and learn everything. I became very curious and inquisitive about all types of things I never cared to even think about.

Still I didn't want to take medication, to identify myself as a mentally ill person. I thought "I'm a man. I'll tough it out!" but mental illness cares not how tough you think you are, no more than gravity cares how strong you think you are. It's just a chemical imbalance, there's no fault in that, and it won't fix itself. Chemistry isn't overcome by will power or positive thinking. My foolishness and stubbornness caused me a lot of suffering and pain, frustration and even money. I think of all I could have avoided if I got help, accepted help, earlier. I came to the realization that I can't beat it without help, technology is used to overcome physics and that fact won't change just for me.

After a few years of recovery, using a combination of holistic approaches and medication, I've been able to see through the fog that clouded my mind. Clarity is a two edged sword though. I see the hurt I caused others and myself, but also understand why it was like that and how to prevent it in the future. My mental illness pre-natally and continued through childhood from sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment, which all went untreated and undiagnosed. Mentally ill people don't fare well in society without treatment, thus my current predicament. We don't put people in for having the flu or cancer let alone kill them for it. Society needs to wake up and realize, prisoners who are mentally ill &/or addicts are in fact the victims and treat them as such.

Coping With Death

As a death row prisoner I live with death. I often say that the reaper is sitting on my lap all the time. When you're constantly anticipating your own demise it's difficult to not become stoic about death. When loved ones die it's hard for everyone, wherever you may find yourself. Prisoners have to deal with everything people outside do, but on top of dealing with all the hardships and deprivations of our living environment. This makes it particularly difficult. When you haven't seen somebody in 20 years and they don't write, talk to you on the phone or visit, their absence is so greatly felt. Knowing intellectually that we should feel certain things we don't we feel guilty. We ask ourselves, "what's wrong with me? Why haven't I cried? Have I become an unfeeling monster?"

In the 24 plus years of my incarceration I've lost 2 brothers, 2 uncles, 1 aunt, 1 grandmother and a cousin. Before prison I lost 2 uncles, 1 grandmother and 2 grandfathers, so I was familiar with loss. Therefore I'm able to see and feel the difference in these two experiences. When my grandmother passed, I hadn't seen her for over ten years. Her hearing loss prevented me from talking with her on the phone, and the arthritis in her hands prohibited her from writing. My brother David was in prison when I fell and got out only two years before his death. When he left prison the letters stopped. When my grandmother passed I consoled myself with the thought that she was better off since all her organs were shutting down at 86 years of age. My emotions got stuffed down and caused me to over react to a

stressful encounter with a guard. While in the hole my death warrant was signed and my brother David died of an overdose. All that I had stuffed down concerning my grandmother was released with my grief for my brother.

Ten years later I had to deal with this situation again. On March 10th, 2017, my brother Mark died from brain cancer which started in his neck, while doing a life sentence. My anger over the medical staff's incompetence and neglect, even malpractice, may have masked my feelings, but I felt guilty for having no other response. I hadn't seen, nor talked to him in 23 years, and had no expectation of ever being able to (despite that the prison approved a special call between us but I was never given it). The few letters a year between us left much to be desired and much unsaid. His loss is felt, memory honored and death mourned but not in the "usual" ways, without the usual signs of grieving. I'm on the watch for stressful triggers, knowing I may freak out, but also that that wouldn't be what he'd want either.

What I realized while trying to understand all of this is that this situation isn't normal so my response isn't likely to be a normal one either. All we can do is cope the best we can, in whatever way we can. Loss hurts but time heals; we live, we love, we move on. I also find comfort in the thought that all matter is energy, which doesn't die, only changes, thus our loved ones are still with us just in another form.

Abuse in Exile

Prisoners are presented to the public as the worst of the worst—whether in for a violent or nonviolent offense, we're all lumped together. They put us in prison, seemingly forgetting that we are still human. Everything that makes us human is attacked, even though we're not sent to prison to be punished as the imprisonment itself is the punishment, i.e. removal from society (a veritable exile.) Everything done to us has a well known name—emotional abuse. Shocking, isn't it?

In the American Medical Association (AMA) Encyclopedia (2003) it defines emotional abuse as "The internal use of psychological force to hurt or destroy another person". The term "use of force" is usually thought of as night stick, pepper spray, tasers, etc. Psychological force is more painful, in my opinion, because it doesn't heal as fast nor as well. You can't put an ice pack on it, a band aid or any of the usual means of first aid to ease the pain. The emotional pain of a loss of a loved one, the break up of a relationship, and similar things all attest to the reality of such pain. Anyone who has gone through such things would gladly take a punch in the face over the mental anguish caused by those other things. But, this is what prisoners suffer this everyday, day in and day out, without reprieve or respite.

The actions considered as emotional abuse are: withholding affection; failure to provide love, affection, warmth and security (e.g. denial of contact/conjugal visits, limited & expensive phone calls, unnecessarily complex and costly emailing process, prohibition of colored envelopes for greeting cards, etc.); using threats or terror to control the other; coercive & erratic discipline (constant fear of going to the hole on a bogus misconduct, being assaulted by staff or prisoners, denied privileges &/or necessities, and the rules aren't always applied equally); scapegoating and rejection (every time you

file a grievance the response consists of blaming the inmate somehow; the constant feeling of being rejected by society at large as well as family and friends who have abandoned you); failure to meet basic necessities such as food, water, sleep (sparse meals on dirty trays, tainted water, 24/7 illumination in cells

"Emotional abuse can have severe psychological consequences", the AMA CONTINUES, such as "eating/digestive disorders, sleep disturbances, compulsive attention seeking, feelings of anxiety and despair, self mutilation and suicide attempts." I see these in the vast majority of prisoners, from over eating/binging, insomnia/extreme lethargy, depression, PTSD, suicidal ideation, obesity (self mutilation?) and the classic attention seeking in trying to appease their abuser.

Of course, criminals can't be left to roam the streets. I believe in Law & Order. However, the great increase in incarceration shows that what is currently being done doesn't work and may even make things worse. I've seen a revolving door, weighing 5 tons, move with the slightest touch. In the proper circumstances much effort isn't required. May society remember that criminals are human, too, and seek the proper circumstances to effect positive change in a humane way, ending the reign of emotional abuse.

What A Prisoner Needs

When a person comes to prison they essentially die. That may seem an exaggeration but consider what death is. It's not just the cessation of the body's vital signs, it's also the end of all potential good in this world. It's the separation from family and friends, from the world of the living, the end of all possibility for a change in one's state of being. It's a stagnation of growth, the loss of a future, the destruction of hope. The only thing that can necessitate the dead is a compassionate heart.

About 2 years ago I was in utter, complete, total despair. 23 years on the row, appeals stalled in the courts, deteriorating health, and insanity taking hold. In an act of desperation I had posted an ad on a pen pal website called Lost Vault. My only hope was to find somebody to help me endure this torturous existence and give me a reason to go on living. Nobody was more surprised than I was when I finally heard from somebody six months later.

Kelli, my saving grace, an angel of mercy, took a chance and befriended me. Despite my criminal past and current circumstances she opened her heart to me. It was like I had come back from the dead. I felt things I thought I was no longer capable of feeling. The withered husk that was my heart came back to life again. I could see beyond my misery. This awesome friendship developed that obscures every horrible thing in my life. Pen pals have come and gone in the past 2 decades, but I've never experienced anything like this in my 46 years on this planet, in or out of prison.

Most (if not all) prisoners have never been truly loved. They never experienced it, they know it when they see it. The difference is between being told about a sunset and seeing it. You can recognize it from the description, it'll be unmistakable, but at the same time know it was beyond all you imaged. Everyone in this world needs love, (a love without boundaries), but the worse your reality the more you'll need it. The only reason one has to live is love, to give love and receive it. We endure the daily grind,

day in day out, for those we love - be it family, friends, spouse, or children.

On the most difficult days breathing is a chore. I'd rather lay down and die. But for the love of this woman I'll take another breath, I'll endure another day. I've found light and joy in this darkest of pits.

To know that one person cares so much, means everything. There's no boundaries, no conditions. It's not "I love you, until you need something" or "until I have a bad day", etc. etc. It's "I love you always." And, of course everyone isn't me. I'm NOT a user. I'm not saying to check your common sense at the door, but don't withhold a helping hand either, nor a loving friendship. What a prisoner needs most is a reason to live, somebody to love and be loved by; a reason to greet tomorrow a smile and not a curse. You could be that reason, you could be that person.

TRUE SIGHT

Poverty is oppression
can't you see
The one you really oppress
is looking at me
For with your thoughts
of power and greed
You're the one
who needs to be freed
With judgmental eye
you gaze at the world
Thinking everything
can be bought or sold
Little do you know
its already owned
By whom it
was created
Release your mind
and polluted heart
From all such desires
and make a new start
Don't see the world
thru the eyes of fraud
See the world thru
the eyes of G-d

ACKNOWLEDGING THE COST OF INCARCERATION

The system knows that its broke but just doesn't care. In this self serving society our culture has created apathy is rampid. Its the "me me me!" era. "As long as the status quo works for me - great!" is how they think of it. That is until that person gets sucked into the machine of which they were once a willing cog, now the fuel.

After a century of making laws, punishing offenders, then making more laws, its quite obvious its not working as intended. Crime is up -all sorts of crime- convictions are up, the length of sentences are up and longer than ever, priosns are bigger and more populous. This is not the sign of a successful system, nor a successful society. Well, not if its meant to rid our communities of crime, prisons and the need for a judicial system at all. However, it appears the system is very successful at achieving its desired goal, fueling the economy and making the rich richer, (there are more millionaires now than ever).

As we incarcerate the poor, mentally ill, and those suffering from addictions, as well as the under (or "un") educated, it accomplishes a two-fold goal -reducing the number of 99% and making the 1% more rich and powerful as it sustains the system already in place which works well for them. In the days of Rome the slaves became so numerous that they rose up and were able to overcome their oppressors.

The 99% are little more than slaves, shackled by mortgages, debt, high sounding ideals the 1% don't adhere to, ignorance, internal strife, addiction (whether to drugs or alcohol, tobacco or fast/junk food) and whatever else holds one down. Our culture tells us to "buy! buy! buy!", even if we have to take out a high interest loan, use high interest credit cards, or sacrifice money best spent elsewhere (e.g. a college fund for one's children). We hamstring ourselves with health problems from living a lifestyle that is more a death style. Then there's no escape, the banker or the health insurance company has you.

We work to pay bills, earn to spend, giving time up that could be best spent with our family. Money that could be better saved to improve one's lot in this world, or our children's chances at something better is frittered away. We perpetuate the cycle by buying into the lies of politicians who use the masses as pawns in their bid for power. They will never allow us to think our own thoughts and make our own decisions uninfluenced by their spin, their "alternate facts". We fuel the system with every frivolous expenditure, keeping up with the Jones', or whatever fad is popular today and gone tomorrow; never satisfied, always looking for the bigger, better and more expensive. With every commercial, magazine and newspaper ad, they tell us what we have (or who we are) isn't good enough -"upgrade!"- just to improve their bottom line.

While we continue to serve our masters faithfully they make the guns that kill our children, the drugs that fuel addiction, miseducate our children to walk in our footsteps with more financial, intellectual and cultural slavery. When all else fail they create a war again some impoverished, back woods country that couldn't real hurt up on their best day and our worst. Those who don't play along? Well, there awaits an entirely different hell where humans are warehoused, tortured, driven insane only to be released upon the unsuspecting populous, because the industrialized prison system does NOT rehabilitate. What does it do then? What could it possibly be doing but creating worse criminals? Why would they do that, if not to achieve their goal of population reduction and power control? The "just us" (rich folks) system and "corrections" systems are a must to our economic survival. Tell me, if anyone can, what would all those employed by siad system do for work if not their current jobs? Rehabilitation prevents recidivism, which keeps prison populations low, so then prisons will have to close, people will be laid off, start collecting unemployment. That's alot of people, not to mention vender's that supply the prisons whose businesses will be greatly effected. Worse yet, these rehabilitate

individuals will keep their children and/or siblings from becoming criminals. Well, before you know it, in a couple generations crime will be a memory of a bygone era; while all employed from it will be collecting "entitlement" checks from the government, after bankrupting unemployment insurance companies. What a drain that would be on an already fragile economy, a whopping \$20 trillion in debt (last I knew.) For this reason alone I don't ever see the prison system disappearing. The economy would bleed out and our country go belly up.

One thing not usually considered is the effect, the human toll paid for all this. We usually focus on prisoners, and rightly so since we are the most effected by it and its target. However what about the staff, the guards, that live here 8 hours a day, minimum. I've heard about some of the effects upon them from being witness to the horrors of this manmade hell. Having to watch people be brutalized by each other and by those entrusted with their care, watching some go insane just as I have. The public may not care about us, but what about them? In this day and age of enlightenment and human descency, don't we have a better way to deal with these unsavory characters? Must we stick with the barbaric tactics of 100-200 years ago? With all our technology, all our advancements and insights, we cant improve on such an antiquated system? If it woeks so well there'd be no need for it now. We outen fire with water and overcome hate with love, so why do we think brutality and inhuman treatment will cure those claimed to be brutal and inhumane"? When an animal is mistreated is gets viscious, as with human beings. The vast majority of offenders (if not all) are poor, uneducated, suffered abuse or injustice of one kind or another, tried to drown their misery in booze or drugs, had (or has developed) mental problems, etc.etc. They've become one big festering sore and lashed out at society in general, not knowing anything else, not knowing who specifically was to blame. Yes, the perpetrator should take responsibility but so should everyone else invovled. "No man is an island unto himself" and "it takes a village to raise a child" demonstrate we already know that nobody is sojely the product of their own thoughts and actions. Healing, rehabilitation, comes from the medical and mental treatment, addiction therapy, being taught life skills and coping skills, addressing the actual problems and their causes. This is not to be found in our modern corrections system. Even the services akin to these, which are offered, are subpar at best, mostly a cruel joke, a token gesture, that only fuels the problem while acknowledging the solution. These programs and institutions are run by compassionate, insightful, humanitarians. They don't care about a success rate, there's no bonus for a job well done. The problem is vast, the solution complex, but the first step is to acknowledge the problem.