

women loving women



TOUCHING PROHIBITED

in prison

Publisher: Sinister Wisdom, Inc.

Managing Editor: Alexis Alexander

Guest Editor: Judy Greenspan with the assistance and moral support of
Beth Feinberg

Production Editor: Susan Levinkind

Layout and Design: Carla Volpe, Elana Dykewomon

Board of Directors: Gloria Anzaldúa, Susan Levinkind, Joan Nestle, Alexis
Alexander, Carla Volpe, Catron Booker

Volunteer Coordinator: Susan Levinkind

Bookkeeping: Catron Booker

Typists: Annie Osenga, Cindy Shu, Jenny Trevino, Jessica Fields, Judith Black,
Suzanne Joi, Vickie Zettler

Proofreaders: Catron Booker, Deborah Trontz, Pat Tong, Susan Goldberg,
Susan Levinkind

Mailing and Moving Crews: Hadas Rivera-Weiss, Laura Munter-Orabona, Laura
Stern, Michelle Nichols, Mady Shumofsky, Susan Levinkind, SJ Kahn, Joan
Annsfire, Elana Dykewomon, Marlane Cook, Susan McAllister, Marianne Hewitt,
Teya Schaffer, Sarah Carroll, Jane Marhanka, Susan Goldberg, Frieda Feen, Carla
Schick, Fan Warren, Casey Fisher, Karyn Sanders, Caryatis Cardea.

Cover Art: Laura Whitehorn

SINISTER WISDOM, founded 1976

Former editors and publishers:

Harriet Ellenberger (aka Desmoines)

and Catherine Nicholson (1976-81)

Michelle Cliff and Adrienne Rich (1981-83)

Michaele Uccella (1983-84)

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz (1983-87)

Caryatis Cardea (1991-94)

Elana Dykewomon (1987-94)

Akiba Onada-Sikwoia (1995-97)

Margo Mercedes Rivera-Weiss (1997-2000)

Copyright ©2003 Sinister Wisdom, Inc.

All rights revert to individual artists and authors.

ISSN: 0196-1853. Printed in the U.S. on recycled paper.

A Journal by and for Lesbians

 Contents

- 4 Judy Greenspan. *Notes for a Magazine*
 5 Linda Evans at SF Dyke March 2000 (photograph by Jane Cleland)
 6 Announcements
 7 Upcoming Issues
 8 Linda Evans. *Speech to SF Dyke March 2001*

§§§

- 10 Darlene Dixon. *I Never Knew* (poem)
 11 Holli Hampton. *The Best of Lesbian Sex* (poem)
 13 Holli Hampton. *The Chase* (poem)
 14 Marashette Burks. *Heaven's Gift* (narrative)
 18 Marashette Burks. *My "Angel"* (poem)
 19 Sherry Vincent. *Rhonda & Sherry* (drawing)
 20 Christy Marie Camp. *Curse the Day You Met Me* (poem)
 20 Flaca. *Erotic Things On My Mind* (narrative)

§§§

- 22 Lorrie Flakes. *Hi Gals* — (narrative)
 24 Laura Whitehorn. *Cell Portrait for 3* (drawing)
 25 Rhonda Frazier. *Untitled* (narrative)
 26 Charisse Shumate. *This is Not About Me. This is About We* (essay)
 27 Charisse Shumate (photograph)
 28 Yavonne M.T. Anderson. *Romance Confined* (poem)
 29 *In Front of Central California Women's Facility (CCWF)* (photograph)

§§§

- 30 Sara J Kruzan. *The Storm of Life* (poem)
 31 Celeste "Jazz" Carrington. *Untitled* (poem)
 32 Theresa Martinez (photograph)
 33 Boo Boo. *Sinister Wisdom...* (narrative)
 34 Miss Purity and Doddie. *Lesbian Relationships* (essay)
 35 Danielle Garner. *Passions of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (narrative)

§§§

NEWARK, DELAWARE

FEB 12 2004

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF DE

- 37 Carmen Nuñez. *Making Love!* (narrative)
38 Bella Donna Night Raven. *With The Goddess* (poem)
39 Bella Donna Night Raven. *Trans-Les-Sister and Sappho* (poems)
40 Rose Halley. *A Woman Understood* (poem)
41 Joann Walker (photograph)
42 Joann Walker. *The Worst Day of My Life!* (essay)
43 Sandy Hamilton. *14 Years* (poem)

§§§

- 44 Tiffany Jackson. *It All Went Wrong and Strictly Sexual* (poems)
45 Tiffany Jackson. *The Thing Called Love Virus and How Can I Forget You* (poems)
46 Tiffany Jackson. *Don't Be Joyed* (poem and drawing)
47 Sheena M. King. *Two Old Heads* (poem)
48 Sheena M. King. *In Memory of: Your Skin* (poem)
49 Barbara Barnett. (drawing)

§§§

- 50 Sheena M. King. *Why?* (narrative)
51 Lisa Kuffel. *Sofia* (poem)
52 Lisa Kuffel. *And the Wicked Wind Blows* (poem)
53 Lisa Kuffel. *Any Other Time* (poem)
54 Brandy Maynard. *Missing Her* (poem)

§§§

- 56 Hihan Ska and Kimimela Winyan. *Making Up* (poem)
58 Hihan Ska and Kimimela Winyan.. *Children of Magic* (poem)
59 Michelle. *For Beb* (poem)
60 Kathy O'Donnell. *I'm Currently...* (essay)

§§§

- 61 Ruth Bravo. *In My Dream* (narrative)
65 Roxane Roberts. *Believing...* (narrative)
66 Roxane Roberts. *No More* (narrative)
68 Stephanie Narro. *Sick of Tally Ho's* (essay)
70 Valessa Lyn Robinson . *Reversed Seduction* (narrative)

§§§

- 75 Beverly "Chopper" Henry. *A Plea For Rosemary* (essay)
- 76 Beverly "Chopper" Henry (photograph)
- 77 Dimetrius Kimble. *My Reality* (poem)
- 78 Aids Quilt Panel (graphic)
- 79 Gretchen Schumacher. *The Ganky Jo* (narrative)

§§§

- 90 Amy Stout. *Getting Free* (narrative)
- 95 Maria Talag. *What Can I Call This Time* (poem and drawing)
- 96 Maria Talag. *Blessed Are You Woman* (poem)
- 97 Melanie Vicheck. *Love Without Fear* (narrative)
- 99 Bella Donna Night Raven. *A Letter From Donna* (essay)
- 102 Victoria Angelica Voaden. *Hope...* (narrative)
- 103 Jessy Luanni Wolf. *Daddy's Home* (narrative)

§§§

- 109 Susie Day. *In Handcuffs Smiling* (narrative)
- 112 Laura Whitehorn (photograph)
- 113 Laura Whitehorn. *To My Love* (poem)
- 114 Laura Whitehorn. *In Memory* (essay)
- 118 Marilyn Buck. *Clandestine Kisses* (poem)
- 119 Kathleen Allen. *Where Has the Time Gone* (poem)
- 120 Kathleen Allen. *Peeking at Hiding* (poem)

§§§

- 121 Contributors' Notes.
- 127 Some Current and Back Issues.
- 128 Subscription Form.

NEWARK, DELAWARE

FEB 12 2004

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF DE

I know that this issue has been a long time coming (even longer than I have been working on it). I want to apologize. I bit off more than I could chew. Being a long-time prisoners' rights advocate, lesbian activist, and fighting for the rights of women and men prisoners with serious illnesses like HIV and hepatitis C, I should have known better than to volunteer for such a huge (and important) task as editing the "Women Loving Women in Prison" issue of *Sinister Wisdom*.

I hope when it is finally in your hands that you will read it and use it to fuel your energies of love and survival behind the walls. I embrace all of my sisters inside who have the courage and determination to break the rules and love women in prison. I dedicate this issue to all of you locked away in this nation's jails and dungeons.

I am an advocate for lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender women inside prison but not the expert. To my sisters inside, I say, "You are the experts, don't let anyone tell you differently." I began this anthology with the speech by my friend and sister Linda Evans. She much better than me defines the human tragedy of the continuing massive incarceration of poor women, particularly women of color, in this country.

To my sisters on the outside, I hope that this issue of *Sinister Wisdom* inspires you to embrace our sisters in prison and to work together to fight the brutality, discrimination and abuse of their incarceration. We need more advocates for women in prison.

I wanted to leave you with a short list of resources. In the process of putting this issue together, I was reacquainted with two important resources for LGBT women in prison.

Women's Prison Book Project
c/o Arise Bookstore
2441 Lyndale Avenue, S.
Minneapolis, MN 55405

Att: Debbie Prison Book Program
c/o Lucy Parsons Bookstore
110 Arlington Street
Boston, MA 02116

The Prison Activist Resource Center publishes a comprehensive directory of organizations and publications focusing on prisoners:

Prison Activist Resource Center
P.O. Box 339
Berkeley, CA 94701

For those of you seeking information about HIV and hepatitis C, the following two listings provide publications (and other information) free to women prisoners:

WORLD (Women Organized to Fight Life-Threatening Diseases)
414 13th Street, 2nd Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

Hepatitis C Awareness Project
P.O. Box 41803
Eugene, OR 94704

I wish to personally dedicate this issue to Charisse Shumate, a woman I loved and respected, who died inside the Central California Women's Facility on August 4, 2001. Charisse was a woman who loved women and who touched and inspired many women prisoner activists and advocates on both sides of the walls.

Finally, I would like to humbly thank Susan Levinkind of the *Sinister Wisdom* staff for her support, determined nudging and tireless persistence in making the "Women Loving Women in Prison" issue really happen.

Judy Greenspan



Linda Evans and others leading the Dyke March 2000.

Jane Cleland

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Editors Needed

From Alexis Alexander and Susan Levinkind: It has taken two years for us, even with our guest editor Judy Greenspan, and much help from volunteer typists, proofreaders and bookkeepers, to put out this issue of *Sinister Wisdom*. The next issue, #62, is also on track and will appear in a few months.

After much soul searching and hand wringing, we have decided that after #62, we two cannot continue running SW —

SO- we are looking for new editors for SW. You need to have lots of time and no expectation of any income from her, as well as a devotion to lesbians, their writing and art. Fund raising and computer skills are a plus.

The rest is easy, fun and very rewarding!

If you are interested, please contact Susan Levinkind: levinkind@netscape.net.

Lesbian Review of Books

The Sinister Wisdom staff acknowledges and regrets the passing of *The Lesbian Review of Books*, one of the many casualties of the current economic landscape. We want to let lesbians know that we're still hanging on and want to continue as a source of serious literary and art work and engaged political discussion. We will be happy to consider in-depth reviews of lesbian books and are always looking for new writers and readers! Keep women-controlled publishing alive.

Contact:
Sinister Wisdom
PO Box 3252
Berkeley, CA 9470

email: sw@aalexander.org

website: www.sinisterwisdom.org.

Upcoming Issues

#63 Lesbians Writing and Reading

Special guest editor: Fran Day

We are seeking submissions for a special issue exploring our passion for words, the magic of language, and the power of lesbian literature to shape the world.

Why do we write? What inspirations, support and obstacles have we encountered along the way? How do our lovers and friends respond to our taking time, energy and space to write? How did we find our voices? Do we write for ourselves or others? What is it like to be the lover of a writer? How has the publishing industry influenced what and how we write?

What do we read? How has lesbian literature impacted our hearts, minds and communities? Which pieces changed our lives? What role has this body of work played in the development of our consciousness as individuals and as a community?

See submission guidelines on the inside back cover.

Please help us spread the word about this upcoming issue. It will come out!

Deadline for submissions is: March 1, 2004

Send your submissions to:

fran@sonic.net

or mail to:

SW c/o Fran Day

POBox 1180

Sebastopol, CA 95473-1180

For more information and deadlines visit
our website at www.sinisterwisdom.org

Linda Evans

**Speech by Linda Evans, lesbian anti-imperialist political prisoner
to**

The Dyke March held in San Francisco on June 23, 2001.

I am really happy to be free and to be here with everybody tonight! Thank you so much for inviting me. I just want to talk for one moment about some of the women who can't be here with us. There are a lot of ways that this is liberated space — it's women's space tonight.

In prison, where I was for 16 years, it is also all women's space but so different because we don't run it. There women are constantly under the thumb of this government. The conditions that we have to live under in prison are something that I want you all to think about for one moment. How many people here have been in prison or have someone they love in prison? I hope that after I tell you a story or two tonight that you will share your stories with the women around you and remember what it was like to be there or remember what it's like to visit people you love who are locked up and can't come home with you. And who can't be with their children or their lovers.

Most of the women in prison don't belong there. Maybe they got involved with drugs. Maybe they got involved with some kind of petty crime. Maybe they're poor. Maybe they're Black, Latina, Asian and Native American, poor. That's the reason they're there and nothing else. They are locked up for longer and longer periods of time and they are isolated from our community because the government wants it that way. They want to disappear women in prison. They want us to forget the hundreds of thousands of women who are locked up. There are over 2 million people in prison and many more under the jurisdiction of the justice system right now and so many of them are women. As they stay in prison, their families fall apart. Their kids have no mothers, sisters lose their sisters and the social fabric of our society just deteriorates. So I think it is really important for us to take a moment and remember all the women who are locked up and realize what it is like to live in a cell no bigger than a toilet with three people. To recognize that every minute you are under surveillance by the police.

If you hold somebody's hand you can go to the hole and get locked up in solitary confinement. That if you give somebody a hug because they get bad news you are going to get a disciplinary report. And that women loving women is the way that we survived — that I survived for 16 years and that women survive for much longer periods of time. Inside, we took care of each other and we had to because we had nobody else. I think it is really important for all of us here to think for one moment about what we can do to extend our love and our support from out here inside those walls to break down the bars — tear them apart to whatever extent we can and try to help the women in prison.

There are a lot of groups here in the Bay area that are doing work around women in prison and to change conditions to make sure that women stop dying because of lack of medical care. In Chowchilla, the state's women's prison, just in the last six months, ten, eleven people have died because there isn't medical care in prison, there isn't dental care in prison and as long as we are silent, this will go on. The only way we can ensure that human rights are extended to women in prison and to all people in prison is to stand up and take action. I know that the Dyke March is going to be carrying a lot of signs — dyke rights are human rights, dykes oppose the death penalty, dykes defend immigrant rights, dykes defend affirmative action. I really hope that this comes from everybody's heart and that we realize that it is in our power to change things. Just like this march does not have a permit, we have to make sure that we don't let the government decide what we do to try to change things. And we can.

I think that there is nothing more powerful than looking out and seeing all of you. It is mind boggling for me and overwhelming after being in prison for all those years to feel our power. And we've got a lot of power but we have to use it to defend the vision of liberation that we all have in our hearts. That's what this gathering is all about. That's what Pride is about. I hope that you will take those feelings out of your heart and put them to practice in the streets. And remember our sisters inside.

I want to share with you a message from my comrade Laura Whitehorn who was also invited to come here. We aren't allowed to be on the same stage or to see each other or to talk to each other because they are afraid of the political prisoners coming out and organizing and talking to people and learning from all of you and your experiences. So they wouldn't let Laura come but she sent a message and I would share in her feelings and what she expresses.

This is from Laura Whitehorn: "I was invited to speak at this year's dyke march and sadly could not accept because of our parole restrictions. Nothing would have given me more joy than to stand in freedom with my dear dyke sister co-defendants Linda Evans and Susan Rosenberg who also was not permitted to come. I wish I had been able to be there to thank everyone for all the support you gave us for all those years. I send special respect and love to the Bay area queer community. I think you lead the way in demonstrating that all human rights issues are queer issues from Palestine to AIDS in Africa to working class struggles to anti-racism to calling for the release of all political prisoners. Since solidarity strengthens resistance, I hope the experience of giving political prisoners that solidarity helps all queers to fight harder for human rights."

I too want to say thank you to everyone here who supported all of the prisoners' — "Fight AIDS Walkathons" that we did while we were inside, who sent programs inside, who visited, who sent letters, who gave money — thank you. And I really hope that you will extend that love to all women prisoners and find out how you can get involved. And really stop the government from their determination and their strategy to isolate women prisoners. Remember them because they are all of us.

Darlene Dixon

I Never Knew

I never knew ...

how much I loved my family,
until they wouldn't accept my calls, or even visit;

how reassuring a hug could be, until I had to risk confinement to enjoy even one;

the joy in watching children, until it was years since I heard their laughter

I never knew ...

how priceless my quiet time could be, until it no longer existed in my world;

the warmth of a sofa, until I spent years on cold steel and cement;

the beauty in a horizon, until all I saw was the razor wire around me.

I never knew ...

the value of a friend, until I was locked away, afraid to trust anyone;

what a privilege to speak my mind, until I was forced to bite my tongue;

the enormity of being free,

until I lost it all ...

I never knew.

Holli Hampton

The Best of Lesbian Sex (in prison)

I see you across the chowhall
 as you stand in line for your rations.
 Staring you in the eye,
 I lick the greenbeans of my next bite, seductively.
 If you're a player, you'll detect the innuendo.
 On the inside, we have a language
 all of our own, spoken with our bodies and eyes.

When I return from the pill line, a
 few lines of intimacy wait under my pillow.
 I knew you were a player!
 Not very romantic, our first date is in the yard.
 We walk, we talk. All we have are our words.

Thirty days of library, A.A., church and
 recreation pass. We've chatted one another
 damn near to a frenzy. The few times I've
 been able to press my body against your
 backside, smell your hair and cup your
 breast in the clothing line have
 built up my nuts. Somehow I'll have you.

At long last, they transfer me into
 your dorm. A few more opportunities to
 touch, kiss, and learn one another.
 We're making plans for the world
 To be together always.

I sneak to your cubicle in only a gown.
 You lie on the floor with me. Finally I
 can hold you, kiss you, touch you there
 in the dark, all the while, listening
 for keys. I climb on top and open us
 both. My bone ramming yours. Ever
 so quietly we explode, unable to express
 the magnitude

Saturday arrives, as well as your husband.
 My mom visits at the same time. You
 look so happy. It dawns on me that
 there will be no "world" for us. The
 next time I come creeping, feels empty.

No wonder I've not allowed you the
 privilege of examining my skull.
 Damn bi-sexuals! Damn queers!
 Back to the chowhall

TDCJ DISCIPLINARY REPORT AND HEARING RECORD

CASE: 20000330602 TDCJ NO: 00803303 NAME: HAMPTON, HOLLI ANNE
 UNIT: 6C HSENG: DA 066 JOB: CLOTHING SORTER
 CLASS: 53 CUST: MI PRIMARY LANGUAGE: ENGLISH HHRN PERIOD: 1500
 GRADE: NA / AD OFF. DATE: 07/07/00 11:54 PM LOCATION: 6C A-DORM
 TYPE: ID

DEFENSE DESCRIPTION

ON THE DATE AND TIME LISTED ABOVE, AND AT DORM-A CUBICLE #67, OFFENDER: HAMP
 HOLLI ANNE, TDCJ-ID NO. 00803303, DID ENGAGE IN ORAL SEX WITH OFFENDER WILLTA
 LISA

CHARGING OFFICER: WASHINGTON, J COIII
 DEFENSE COUNSEL: 3 P
 TIME & DATE NOTIFIED: 7/29/00 DEFENDER NOTIFICATION BY: APPLICABLE INTERPRETER
 YOU WILL APPEAR BEFORE A HEARING OFFICER 24 HOURS BEFORE AVOID DELAY OF THE
 NOTICE DO YOU WANT TO ATTEND THE HEARING? YES NO IF NO, HOW DO YOU
 PLEAD? GUILTY NOT GUILTY
 DEFENDER NOTIFICATION SIGNATURE: *Holli A Hampton* DATE: 7-29-00
 BY SIGNING BELOW YOU GIVE UP YOUR RIGHT TO 24 HOUR NOTICE AND AUTHORIZE THE
 HEARING OFFICER TO PROCEED WITH THE HEARING.
 OFFENDER WAIVER SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

HEARING INFORMATION

HEARING DATE: 7/29/00 TIME: 11:00 AM TAPE: 1015 SIDE: A START: 3:18 END: 3:28
 EXPLAIN BELOW BY NUMBER: (1) IF COUNSEL SUBSTITUTE WAS NOT PRESENT DURING PART
 HEARING, (2) IF ACCUSED OFFENDER WAS CONFINED IN PRE-HEARING DETENTION MORE
 THAN 23 HOURS PRIOR TO HEARING, (3) IF ACCUSED WAS EXCLUDED FROM ANY PART OF THE
 EVIDENCE STAGE, (4) IF ANY WITNESSES OR (5) DOCUMENTATION WAS EXCLUDED FROM
 HEARING (6) IF OFFENDER WAS DENIED CONFRONTATION AND/OR CROSS-EXAMINATION BY
 WITNESS AT THE HEARING (7) IF INTERPRETER USED: (SIGNATURE)

OFFENSE CODE(S)	120.0				
OFFENDER PLEA (G, NG, NONE)	NG				
FINDINGS (G, NA, DI)					

REDUCED TO MINOR (PRIOR TO DOCKET OR DOCKET) (HEARING) BY: (INITIAL)
 IF GUILTY, EVIDENCE PRESENTED, CONSIDERED, AND REASONS FOR DETERMINATION OF
 GUILTY: A) ADMISSION OF GUILT, B) OFFICER'S REPORT, C) WITNESS TESTIMONY, D) OTHER.
 EXPLAIN IN DETAIL: *B. Officer's Report / 5/11/00*

PUNISHMENT

LOSS OF PRIVILEGES	REPRIMAND	SOLITARY (DAYS)
* RECREATION (DAYS) 0	EXTRA DUTY (HOURS)	REMAIN LINE 3
* COMMISSARY (DAYS) 0	CONT. VISIT SUSP THRU	EDUC. CLASS FROM TO
* PROPERTY (DAYS) 0	CELL RESTRICTION (DAYS)	GOOD TIME LOST (DAYS)
* (DAYS)	SPECIAL CELL RESTRICTION (DAYS)	DAMAGES/FORFEIT

SPECIFIC FACTUAL REASON(S) FOR PARTICULAR PUNISHMENT IMPOSED: 20% of 20 days

CREDIT FOR PRE-HEARING DETENTION TIMES YES (DAYS) NO / NA
 DATE PLACED IN PRE-HEARING DETENTION: HEARING LENGTH: 20 MINUTE
 OFFICER SIGNATURE FOR RECEIPT OF FINDING REPORT: *Scott A Hampton*
 HEARING OFFICER (PRINT): WARDEN STATE CLASS/COMMITTEE MEMB
 (FORM 1-4) (CONTACT COUNSEL SUBSTITUTE IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THIS FORM.
 (REV. 06-98) CONSIGUESE CON SU CONSEJERO SUBSTITUTO SI NO ENTIENDE ESTA FORMA.

Disciplinary Report and Hearing Record

Holli Hampton

The Chase

I love the lady living 3 cells down
But she doesn't know it.

I watch her all day at work.
But she doesn't know it.

I wait for a shower so I can see her body.
But she doesn't know it.

I fall in line so I can devour her scent.
But she doesn't know it.

I touch myself, wishing it were her.
But she doesn't know it.

I hear her cry every night until the wee hours.
But she doesn't know it.

I love the lady living 3 cells down.
And she's gonna know it.

Marashette Burks

Heaven's Gift

This is the story of two women from different worlds, both searching for the same things in life. Someone who would love them for the love that each one possessed; someone to grow wiser and older with.

Neither one ever thought that one day she would find someone to share all her wants, hopes, needs, desires and true love in a place filled with so much discontent, Prison.

One of the women, Sugar, was a dominant, strong minded, good natured woman who was a bit spoiled and very mischievous. Sugar had been involved in a relationship that was fine for the first 2½ years (of the nearly 4 years) they'd been together. Communication was shaky between them. Sugar's woman was sweet but too passive, and even though they tried to make it work, something was missing. There was no challenge, motivation or ultimate fulfillment to keep Sugar faithful to this union. She wasn't happy, but stayed anyway.

Then one day as fate would have it in October of 1999, while walking past her woman's job, Sugar laid eyes on a woman she knew could change her life forever. This wasn't the first time Sugar had seen her, but there was something different about the way she looked at this woman now.

This woman was beautiful. She had shiny blonde hair, a smile which could light up any room she entered. The face of an angel and a body sexier than Aphrodite or Venus. In Sugar's eyes she was a true goddess of beauty and love. There were a few problems with what Sugar thought about this woman. She belonged to someone else; she worked with Sugar's woman and lived on a different housing unit. Worst of all, the Goddess didn't even know Sugar existed. So Sugar kept all her thoughts about this woman to herself and tried to put her out of her mind.

Weeks flew by and all seemed to be quiet with Sugar caught in the same old routine until November 22, 1999 when an officer told Sugar she would be moving from 2 house to 8 house. This was the House her dream woman lived in. Even though the two of them would be on separate wings and still with other people, Sugar knew that she could at least get to see her.

Coming in from work at the end of the day was always something to look forward to because there was a chance Sugar would see the woman she yearned to know more about.

Sugar knew that a woman this beautiful had to be just as beautiful on the inside as well. How could Sugar get a little closer to her so she could explore this woman's mind and world in all its splendor without being obvious about it?

About a month later, something happened and both Sugar and her mate were allowed a room move and although they moved into the same room foot to foot, it was a welcome opportunity since it put Sugar across the hall from the woman who had captured her attention.

Once moved, Sugar continued to watch this woman's every move from a distance but didn't like what she saw. The other woman really was just someone's mistress instead of their "one and only". Sugar felt that her dream woman deserved to be treated much better than that. It was hard on Sugar seeing the woman of her dreams in this situation and knowing she couldn't have been very happy under the circumstances. There was nothing Sugar could do. This wasn't any of her business and who's to say this woman wanted to be rescued or would even consider being with Sugar. What about Sugar's woman? She didn't deserve to be hurt. There was nothing to do but wait the situation out.

Sugar went on day after day watching this woman be full of spunk and sassiness; sexy, strong, confident and just so vibrant. In time, Sugar got the woman's routine down pat, from pictures (which were a joy to watch) to sunbathing, to exercising, showers and even what time she went to sleep. Sugar was a silent observer.

By August 2000, Sugar's woman and her dream woman had become friends, doing things together like talking, exercising and sharing "fem" secrets. This wasn't bad because it meant the woman would be at the door often.

Then came a request from Sugar's woman that Sugar didn't know how to handle. She asked Sugar to do something for this other woman. Sugar wanted to do it, but would she be able to conceal her thoughts and feelings for this other woman? No problem, Sugar thought to herself, I'll just act stand-offish and a little cold. Wrong answer. The more the other woman came to the door the weaker Sugar became.

Finally she could hold her secret no more. She had to tell someone, but who? Who could she trust? Sugar decided to tell another inmate, Peggy, who was the woman's roommate. For months Peggy kept Sugar's secret. Whenever Sugar felt the need to talk about the woman she craved, she would talk to Peggy.

Peggy would constantly tell Sugar to be good when Sugar would tell her how much she wanted her roommate and how she'd be satisfied with just a kiss. Every day that Sugar saw Peggy she would tell her how fine she thought her dream woman was and how good she would treat her if she got the chance.

Then one day fate performed its magic again. Sugar and her dream woman were side by side (one at the sink, the other by the microwave) and Sugar decided to see where this woman's head was at. Sugar asked her bluntly, "If my mate, your friend, wasn't in the picture would I have a chance with you?" She replied, "I can't say, because I have someone who is supposedly waiting for me on the outside." Sugar just smiled and said, "Okay".

Most people would have taken that for what it was worth and stopped right there. Sugar couldn't let it go; this drove her harder and made her want this woman even more, especially since she didn't say no.

It seemed that this encounter had an effect on the dream woman as well. She and Sugar seemed to be drawn to each other like magnets. All the while they flirted, the dream girl would be saying to Sugar, "We can't do this, we have to stop". But not once did she try to put space between herself and Sugar.

One day Sugar decided to see just how serious the woman of her dreams was about what she'd been saying. Sugar went to the dream woman's room and stepped inside. Peggy was there along with the woman who was sitting at the table eating. Sugar had intended to kiss her oh those full red lips, but since she was eating Sugar pulled the woman's hair back off her neck and gently kissed her on the neck. The woman sat there, then Sugar said, "Here, let me wipe this off", and as Sugar did the woman responded, "You didn't have to do that". Sugar knew then that she had a chance.

As the days flew by Sugar and this woman went from innocent flirting to high gear flirting. They played with one another constantly. Sugar was doing things from tickling her to snatching pieces of her clothing so the woman had to chase her down.

The two of them knew that what was happening between them was wrong since Sugar still had a mate who was also the friend of the dream woman, but they couldn't stop themselves.

Whereas Sugar knew from the moment she saw the other woman that she wanted and needed her, the woman started to realize that she also wanted and needed Sugar as well.

Everyone around the two of them could see that they seemed to glow whenever they were near each other. This included Sugar's mate. Sugar and her mate had a long conversation about their situation. Both agreed it was time for a change and ended their relationship, parting as friends.

The atmosphere was filled with a bit of stale air for awhile with the three women. But with understanding and patience, the air soon cleared. Sugar and the other woman continued to get to know one another and soon found out that they had much in common.

Sugar finally asked the woman of her dreams to be her “woman”. On December 14, 2000, Sugar was blessed with a gift from Heaven. Her dream woman responded with, “Yes”! That is why Sugar calls this woman, not by her given name, but instead by the name that fits, her best, “Angel”.

Marashette Burks

My "Angel"

My "Angel" wasn't born in Heaven, but she to me is heaven sent.

My "Angel" doesn't have wings, but she does have a spirit which soars high as the clouds.

My "Angel" doesn't walk with a halo about her head, but she does seem to glow when you look upon her face and see her pretty smile.

My "Angel" doesn't play the harp, but I hear music each time we meet, no matter where we are.

My "Angel" is special, it's shown in all she does. She doesn't always wear white, but her love for me is always pure. She doesn't always wear gold, but with each beat of her heart I know it too is always pure. Her smile will and can light the darkest room.

My "Angel" is the perfection of gems, a diamond in the rough and a pearl of the greatest culture. Lace is her temper and like silk and satin her mind operates.

My "Angel" is forged of every woman's dreams. She is my destiny, my fantasy; her aura stronger than steel.

My "Angel" is all that I need like the morning needs the dew or the flowers need the sun. I need all that my "Angel" gives. For it is her that keeps me growing stronger and wiser. It is her that fills my veins, not blood, and her that inflates my lungs, not air. It's the blanket of her love that keeps me safe, secure and feeling warm.

Without my "Angel" I will never be ...for although she isn't heaven born, she was sent from heaven on a bed of stars, sent with knowledge of a love I've never known ...

Sent here from heaven especially for me. I love you Laurie, my "Angel"!



Rhonda and Sherry

Christy Marie Camp

Curse The Day You Met Me

Curse the day you met me
when you smiled so politely
and invited your company with a wink.

Said I got something for you
and I'm sure I could adore you
would you care to go out for a drink

How could I decline such a fine line
between living above and below
Said "surely you're charming"
and being so disarming
"Take me where the moon glows"

Oh your face seemed to brighten
when the sky lit with lightning
yes, what a beautiful night.

And as the wolves howled
things ran afoul
I devoured you in one bite.

So curse the day you met me
You'll remember this face
I couldn't help but wonder
how you'd taste.

Erotic Things On My Mind

Hello my name is Jade. I'll be your mistress tonight. I'd like to put you in a trance. If I take you from behind, push myself into your mind. When you least expect it. Will you try to reject it? If I was in charge. Dominating your body. Will you go wild? Let my mouth go where it wants to. Let me blindfold you. Give it up, do as I say, give up let me have my way!! I'm gonna be more than your lover. I'm not the same. There will be a lot of satisfaction and a little bit of pain. I see you understand me. I can tell you are the same. Let me give you pleasure. How bad do you want it? I want you to be my baby. I'm not gonna hurt you, so lie back and relax. I want to do you in all different ways. A yearning pain that I can't take away. Would you mind, if I took my time, to touch you? Tie you up because you're not ready to touch me. I'm in control, remember? Make you feel sexy. Do you want to feel me all over you? I want to feel you from the inside. My hot breath grazing across your breast. Are you ready? Rub you, caress you, touch you, tease you, and play with your body. I just want to kiss you, lick you, suck you, taste you, ride me feel you from behind as you open to me. How freaky can you be? Show me? So what are you gonna do? Talk to me. Tell me your dreams, am I in them? Tell me your fears. Are you scared? Tell me your stories. Don't be afraid of how you feel. Kiss me, that's right, kiss me. I want to be your baby. I'm wanting, needing, and waiting for you. I will be ready! My life is not complicated because I'm here to please you. Are you mine? Just close your eyes, and I am there in time with erotic things on my mind, and nothing to despair.

Lorrie Flakes

Hi Gals —

I'm writing in regard to your request from women who have loved women in prison. I guess where to start now is the question. Wow, I never thought I'd be writing about it.

I was arrested in March of 1998 and finally got to prison November of 1999. I had many mixed emotions going through my spirit. Loneliness was a major one. Soon, though, I adapted to the situation and found good people here. Watching and observing I found a different kind of life here. When I say different, I'm referring to the ones that hang the slogan, "Commissary is necessary" around their neck. What I felt most was sadness for the ones that had "NO clue." Anyway that is a whole other topic.

I was married to a "man" for almost 18 years, had it all in family life so to speak. Never did I think I could love another woman.

However in January of 2000 I noticed a "new one" that came into our unit. When I asked about her, I was told that she wasn't new, just back from a writ.

I was drawing a new background one night for the unit bulletin board when I felt someone standing behind me, over my shoulder she says, "Oh, we have an artist in the house huh?" Well I had also noticed that she had a girlfriend, and was told I truly didn't want to get mixed up with that one, that she was a "player." A player? What the hell was that? I was soon to find out. Damn, the drama that takes place here is unbelievable.

O.K. so nothing else was said between us. A hello here and a hello there. Then her girl leaves and goes home. She starts visiting me, we had good long intellectual talks, she was funny, serious and possessed a calm spirit within her that attracted me even more so to her. Even though she had the outward appearance of a "hard thug" she was gentle and kind, and very smart. But she stayed behind that "thug" wall to keep up her status as a hard person. Anyhow one day she asked to see me after a visit I had with my family, and she announced to me her feelings. She said for sexual reasons she found herself very attracted to me. I confessed mine to her also. From there it was like living on the fine line of pleasure and pain.

After her girl left, bitches came out of the woodwork after her.

I freaked out, thought oh my, I can't do this — I stepped back. She never once let up. Even though she was sorta with someone that just happened along her path in the middle of "us." She wooed me with sweet letters, she came to my job. She would sit with me at lunch. And that all started World War III.

Anyhow between the dramas I felt something for this woman that I had never felt in my whole life. Long story short, she and I are still together. She's been home for about four months now and when I get out we are going to try to "play house" together.

This woman has changed my life forever. She found and moved into a place within my heart that I never knew existed. Oh don't get me wrong there were days that I've felt in the beginning were horrible, that's when she realized that she had this fear of a true relationship with commitments attached. She fought it, she fought me, she fought herself, and I allowed her to go through it all and to realize it's not about other people, it is you. She found a comfort zone with me and she ran at first. But I'm 40 years old, and I didn't play the games she wanted to play. Then one night as we are walking outside, she tells me that she thinks she has fallen in love with me. I knew then that things would be O.K.

Being in prison is a hard pill to swallow. It gets lonely here. I think a lot of the relationships here are based just on that. It's O.K. to be lonely as long as we can do healthy things within ourselves to overcome it. It's hard to wake up here every day and not be with your loved ones. You go through so many emotions on a daily basis. When "K" and I finally put aside our fears and allowed destiny to run its course we both found an inner happiness not only within ourselves but with each other.

There were times I felt as if my heart were going to break into a thousand pieces and that I couldn't make it a day without her. (Those were during the moments of drama.) But I persevered — if it was meant to be it will be.

Loving a woman is so very much different than loving a man. I've found something I now feel I've been looking for all of my life. We understand one another; we respect each other and most of all we are both gentle loving creatures that want no more out of life than a life of joy.

Sure, I can't say that we won't have stormy days, but I now feel that everything, every episode, every moment that we went through here, has set a strong foundation for our future relationship. I think loving a woman in prison has been one of many trials that I will encounter in my journey of life. I do know that "K" has changed my life. And even if I don't ever see her again I do know that she will forever own my heart. I gave it to her freely and that's where it shall stay.

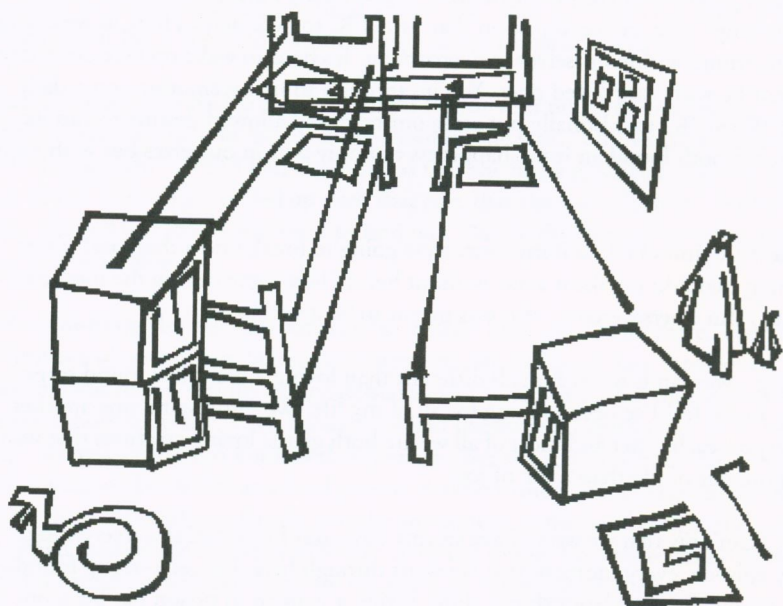
I know many women here that go through bullshit for the sake of “compound status,” just to be with someone. I guess each of us deals with it in our own way. For me it was real, not a game to play.

“K” told my roommate once, “I wish I would have met Lorrie a long time ago.” That has stayed with me, the sweet cards I get from her now, stay with me, her voice on the phone telling me she misses me and loves me — that stays with me.

I’ve still got a year to do, and if it’s both of our destinies then she and I will be together. But if not I can leave all this behind, except for the truth of my love for her. She and I will forever be alive within my heart. She gave me many good memories of us together, and when I think of her, my spirit smiles, my heart flutters and I feel joy.

It was not even hard falling in love with “K,” I mean never did I have a thought of “Oh, this shouldn’t happen,” it felt so very natural for me to allow myself to love her. And love her I do. Forever and always.

Thank you for letting us have the chance to tell our stories. Yes you can print my name. I’m not ashamed that I love a woman.



Rhonda Frazier

As the Goddess...

As the Goddess has forever walked the earth in bliss, and power; so stands my love for you. Eternally, and equally strong, willful, solid. No woman of mortal means can separate that which she has sewn together.

Our hearts as one; my heart to your heart, my breath to your breath. The same blood coursing through our veins, same air passing through our lungs. She sees my visions, and I dream her dreams. Each of our hands holds the other's life strong, bold, fabulous, new!!

The lightning and thunder serenade our lovemaking. The sea our foamy pillow. The cold clay earth our marriage bed. We entwine our bodies like those of serpents ... one around the other in protection. The sun is our waking diamond; the moon our sleeping sapphire. The warmth of love is our blanket.

Let us rest — rest in the beauty of the earth. Let her enshroud us with her glory. For we shall forever find our love in the beauty of nature. I love you Beverly.

Charisse Shumate

This is not about me. This is about we.

As I sit here trying to express these sad but true facts about the issues at CCWF — First of all, thanks to an inmate named Joann Walker, may she rest in peace, who put her life on the line to make the California Department of Corrections (CDC) know how important it was to reach other inmates about the hard cold facts of HIV behind these walls. She spoke out loudly and clearly. She was a “we” person not a me person. Now CDC believes in conquer and divide and they are experts in it. When will inmates work in unity? When will they stop backbiting and brown nosing for selfish reasons?

When I first came behind prison walls at the California Institution for Women (CIW), lifers worked in unity. They were big sisters to each other. We fought for the betterment of all inmates. We explained to the short timers on parole violations the importance of helping one another. Here at CCWF, inmates do things to hurt others that will and can have an effect on them for the rest of their life. All of us with terminal illnesses have no one to talk to. Oh yes, there are peer counselors who have forgotten the cause Joann laid the groundwork for. Joanna, I know you have turned over in your grave many times. You said, “Give them hell in memory of me.” Well, some of us are still trying while others think only of themselves.

Bunny Knuckles fought as we
Patty Contreras fought as we
Beverly Henry fights as we
Davara Campbell fights as we
Mary Shields fights as we
JuJu Ricci fights as we
Lisa Tablette fights as we

Charisse Shumate knows no other way but we. Will you please join the we and get the hell off of me. The real warrior is on a never ending battle. Pray for us as our lives are on the line.



Charisse Shumate

Yavonne M.T. Anderson

Romance Confined

I crept beneath your bosom
Longing for a place I could call 'home'
Familiar ... sweet ... & sound
I needed someone to comfort & console me
 In my time of need
Someone to remind me of the affection & attention
 I've once received from loved ones
In a place I knew that my secret attraction
 Towards women would not be taboo
I yearned for a woman's touch
Soft & gentle — feminine
Like two vases base to base
For a voice like the embracing sound of
 Hummingbirds
For a kiss that felt like 'I love you'
And eyes that said this was so ...



Demonstration to protest the unnecessary and unexplained deaths of many women at the Chowchilla California Women's Facility

Sara J. Kruzan

The Storm of Life

Dance in the shadow of the storm,
Allow your inner self to create a magical form—
of wonder
of trust
of passion
of lust
of beauty, all caught in the dust.

As you dance in the valley of the storm,
Allow your mental self to feel the mourn
of rage
of hate
of disappointment
of sad fate
of distrust
of confusion, all caught
in the dust.

Feel yourself dance in the center of the storm
Allow your sexual self to feel the innocent porn
Of ecstasy
Of pleasure
Of satisfaction
Of wishing it would last
Forever—
Of an act of love all caught in the dust.

Now stop, pause and feel yourself as the storm,
Happiness, contentedness, strife, listen . . .
That's the storm of life.

Celeste "Jazz" Carrington

Untitled

Death
and dying
Membership
in the
Sisterhood
of the
Living dead
Loving madly
Living fiercely
All we can
While we can
Filling every moment
Knowing her / myself
Now
No thought
or gesture
Will gather
Dust ...



Theresa Martinez

Boo Boo

Sinister Wisdom ...

I'm a confident Hispanic, who is HIV+ and in a current lesbian relationship.

(Unfortunately in Prison)

My relationship is based on communication, truth and choice.

My significant other who is HIV negative has taught me that life still goes on, and sex is not eliminated because of a simple risk.

I say simple because, if you are well educated, and truly in love, then choices are made together as one, regardless of how prejudiced your surroundings are.

My opinion to any women who have been looked at as low grade, dangerous, dirty, or simply way out different because of sexual preference, I SAY

Women to women, is unique and beautiful, keep the Pride !!

HIV infected, life DOES NOT END, it only begins all over again!! And to my wonderful woman who taught me that I'm still normal — and that it's ok to be cautious, BUT — remain the same.

I Love you and Thank you.

P.S. L. C. Thank you for making Love Possible.

Miss Purity and Doddie

Lesbian Relationships

Jailhouse or prison relationships are no different from free world relationships; if the love is genuine it doesn't matter where the relationship takes place. For example, in a female and female relationship, the aggressive and more dominant one would play the role of the male.

Which allows the relationship to balance out as if it were female and male; in the intimate area it's more intense because each of the two women knows how the other wants to feel, those special spots and most sensitive areas.

Don't get me wrong, we argue just like in any other relationship but we tend to create a greater harm to one another once it has been discovered that one has been unfaithful.

There's a strong, divine love among two women, unlike female and male.

Don't knock what you haven't tried; sometimes the same sex will be a better friend, lover, mother, father, sister, brother, etc.

Why? Because we are quite gentle, sensitive and loving to someone's need; not to mention that we understand and we love to listen to problems.

That's why men love us so much, don't you?

Danielle Garner

Passions of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Even from when I was a little girl I can honestly say I was different. In my infinite mind I wanted the white house with the picket fence and a dog. I knew that was not my destiny. As I became more aware of my surroundings, family life, situations, and expectations I knew that there was something peculiar about my oldest sister. I thought that it was the ordinary thing for little girls to play with other girls, because boys somehow just didn't seem to fit in. My oldest sister, to my surprise, was a lesbian. She was sexually attracted to women. I observed my sister being affectionate with her lover. She would pamper her, help her put on her coat, and I even saw her giving her lover back rubs. This was both a surprise and a shock for me, but within my own inner soul I wanted to be different just like her. Yes, a lesbian too.

I have two other sisters and they are both attracted to the opposite sex. Although I have seen the pain and heartaches that these men have caused in their lives, I've also seen sexual acts between them. All my friends had boy friends, and I thought that I wanted to be apart. When I was growing up I was chubby and I thought that I wasn't very desirable. I did have an experience with a boy; we were necking, fondling, and kissing. I heard rumors about the penetration and how painful it would be. Yet, thoughts of my virginity being broken existed. No I didn't lose my virginity at that time but I did start fondling, kissing, and necking with my next door neighbor who was a girl. She was two years older than I was and already into dating men. This girl paid attention to me and I guess that was enough for me. Actually just enough for me to meet her in the bedroom.

Eventually, I did get myself a boyfriend; he was popular and I was a part of that. He eventually used me — he was a drug user. I was vulnerable and he took advantage. He was robbing me and my family. He was involved with a young lady before he met me; she was away at college, someone that he had been with for years. Still I waited patiently for the day I would lose my virginity to this man. And I did! There was no foreplay, no back rubs, and no quiet talk, just the television on with Wonder Woman playing a flute for ants. I was in high school during these times. I really wasn't into school because I was hanging out with the crowd just to fit in. I went to an all girls' high school; they picked up right away that I was different. And of course there were gay girls in the crowd and they hung out on the corners.

The neighborhood bully and I were friends; she was so much of a terror that my mother didn't approve of us hanging out together. But I did at school; she started questioning me about my boy friend, at this point he was really strung out on drugs — of course I didn't tell her. She had girlfriends and I was jealous, but she and I continued to hang out anyway.

She started giving me that look like I have been talking about throughout this brief story. It became excitement from there; I was experiencing a relationship, needless to say sex. I knew that I wanted the intimacy, the romance, and the foreplay. So, I took a chance and wore sexy night gowns, cooked meals, and just became very passive. I felt the solace I craved in the company of this woman. She waited a long time to perform oral sex on me but she did stimulate me with her fingers and with the hugging and kissing that I loved so much, I was satisfied and also I became aware of who I was as a sexual being. I was so aware I became addicted to masturbation. I can remember when she finally performed oral sex on me — we were at her mother's house. Her mother was away and it was our house! We were a couple! She laid me on the floor and we went to work and I had never had the shakes like that before in my life. I just couldn't comprehend the feeling of release to the point of me crying. We lasted another three years and parted. I have been in several relationships with the same sex all around the world.

I am an addict in recovery today; my past active addiction landed me a 6-12 year sentence in prison. When I reached Rikers Island Jail I was tired, I didn't want to be bothered. I was kicking heroin and crack. I needed just to rest. I had abused my body so much on the streets. I kicked my habit, rested my body and started to function, then I started craving attention. Of course I got involved with a woman. She was everything I liked in a woman, she was light-skinned and pretty, smart and a good dresser. We shared a lot of emotions, but she was an addict. I should have never gotten involved, but I wanted attention and we got high together a few times, with heroin. And with heroin the orgasm does prolong so therefore we had great sex. But when there were no drugs, there was no relationship!!

A Puerto Rican girl moved into the housing unit and she is what this girl was used to. Her likes or to say her preference was Puerto Rican or white women, I was her first black woman. She chose this girl over me. I walked into the shower and they were in there, she treated me so cruel and I was hurt.

I got sentenced in June of 1999 and was then transferred to the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for women. And there I became friends so I thought with two women and it ended up that I was attached to them. The first one said we should just be friends, the second one who I really liked had a girlfriend, but she and I lived on the same housing unit. She was popular, she paid me attention by looking and writing me letters. We even went to school together, but she was only out for what she could get. I learned that about her after losing several packs of cigarettes and several plates of food.

Since that time I have moved to two other prisons but I haven't gotten myself involved with any more women. I am working on myself and exploring the me that no one knows, not even ME!

Dedicated to the woman that I love behind bars... Michelle, who knows just how
to ring my Bell

Making Love!

By: Carmen Nuñez

To Make Love is to become like this infant again. We move with our mouths towards the hidden treasure which is the body of another woman. I trust this woman and as she takes me in her arms, we rock together to the beat of our Music called Lovemaking. We move in rhythm beyond compare. Our bodies move past the rules of this place. We start to cry out in ecstasy, in this feeling of animalistic behavior.

Then we are back in this world that tries to erase our sexuality; what comes natural to us is a disgrace unto their ignorance. In this world, to touch each other is like a sin - but to us is an act of Love. Loving a woman in Prison and making Love in here is like a big secret, we must keep to ourselves. The moments of pleasure ring through our bodies and our souls all out once!

It is not the sensation of pleasure alone that we look forward to, but the idea of feeling whole and complete by the idea of making love to a woman alone. Making Love to a woman is an experience beyond compare.

After it's all over, the compromise. Our bodies resume their position and we must go to separate wings. These arms that embraced the woman I love, I take back in. Your legs become yours once again. Our lips, our fingers, used on each other now resume and admit their proper ownership.

We are still imprisoned, captives of the love we hold for each other in our hearts and nothing has changed, except there was a moment when we became one, yet now we lay down separately and sleep and dream of the miracle that just took place when we made Love.

Tomorrow we will be making Love again... Making Love!

Bella Donna Night Raven

With the Goddess in My Life

With the goddess in my life,
I can face all the sorrow, pain and strife.
No matter what changes or misfortunes come my way,
I will be loving, warm, and gay.
She shows me the path that I must take,
She gives me a spirit that will never break.
Wisdom and Beauty are mine to keep,
She walks with me by day and when I sleep.
She gives me strength when my challenges come,
She gives me peace when my day is done.
I am one with her and She is one with me,
Maiden, Mother, and Crone: We are all three.
You are with me in every thing I do,
Oh Blessed Goddess I so want to be like You.
Through my body and soul do you flow,
All Your divine ways I long to know.
Soft and smooth as silk, strong and hard as steel,
So many sensual and exquisite things you let me feel.
As your Daughter I come to learn,
With all the passion that you give me do I burn.
I now and forever dedicate myself to You,
May I always follow Your ways, steadfast, loyal and true.

Written on:

Imbolc or Lady Day February 2, 2001
as part of my self dedication to Wicca

Bella Donna Night Raven

Sappho

You lived on the island that gave our love a name,
 You worshipped Aphrodite and wrote poetry that brought you fame.
 You celebrated the Sisterhood of all Women and Girls,
 Your words had value beyond diamonds, gold and pearls.
 We need you and Your Goddesses even more today,
 There is so much that holds us back and stands in our way.
 Every Woman who Loves another Woman owes you a debt,
 We have come a long way baby but it's not over yet.
 Until all Women are equal and free, able to love unchained
 As eloquent and determined as Sappho we must remain.
 We must claim our love as our Goddess given right,
 Against all forms of oppression we must fight.

July 27, 2001 C.E.

Trans-Les-Sister

I am a Trans-Les-Sister,
 Don't shut me out because I used to be a mister.
 When I make love with my mate, she knows I am her girl
 The Goddess made us this way, she put us in this world.
 I am not trying to take any thing away from you,
 So please be understanding and give me the right to choose.
 Even though it was hardly a choice,
 Cause deep inside of me I heard her voice.
 I have been swimming up stream for so long,
 Oh my Sisters please don't tell me I am wrong.
 Judge me only on my acts, not my bio-gender
 Please don't call me a pretender.

Rose Halley

A Women Understood

This Woman takes on the Weight of the World, Knowing that in the Depths of her Soul, she is a little girl.

Oftentimes being Misunderstood.

Why do you treat me as an outcast?

A Woman Misunderstood,

This Woman picks up your Shirts, Keeps it all together somehow, this same Misunderstood woman that melts with your touch wants you to feel what she is feeling right now.

Why do you think the Doctor can fix me? My sister saying MOM why does my sister look like that?

A Woman Misunderstood.

The Elders, saying something's wrong with that child, this woman needs the Inner Peace of this Wondrous Land.

This Woman needs the Gentle Touch of a Warm, caring hand.

I am a Loving Woman that Desires to be loved and knows how to love in Return, loving passionately, from the Depths of my Soul to Connect with another Soul such as I, or having someone to lay my head on and just cry. Do you hear the drums?

It's the beating of my heart. I often times find myself being Exploited for wanting to be Accepted and Approved of, when others try to make me feel Inadequate or Ashamed.

The Intensity of my Uncontrolled Spirit.

I am a Woman Misunderstood.



Joanne Walker

Joann Walker

The Worst Day of My Life!

I thought the worst day of my life was when I was told I had the HIV virus. I was wrong!

When I became incarcerated at Central California Women's Facility, that was the worst day of my life! I never knew people were so narrow-minded about the virus. When the judge gave me four years and four months, I said to myself, "Well, it's over." I was wrong again.

There was another sentence waiting for me. A sentence of persecution, depression, discrimination, stress, poor nutrition, poor medical care and stupidity of the other incarcerated women, because there was no education here on the virus. That included the staff because they weren't educated either and frankly, most don't give a damn.

A person incarcerated with HIV is just another added problem for the California penal system. I can't see why correctional officers make the large sums of money they make for walking around with a bunch of keys. Maybe an officer will walk down a hallway once or twice a week. If a prisoner makes them mad then the staff will get back at the prisoner by tearing up their room. The title "correctional officer" should be changed to Overpaid Baby Sitter.

Central California Women's Facility is said to be the largest human warehouse for women in the world. It is also the worst run warehouse in the world. When one runs a conglomerate as large as CCWF, you must be equipped to give fairness to the officers and the incarcerated. There is none here. I will not even write of the treatment that HIV/AIDS prisoners get. I would have to publish my own paper.

True horror stories of the HIV/AIDS incarcerated women are many and painful. There are very few like myself who will write, speak out, and act up. I will not die in the hands of the system. If I do, the world will know who my murderer is - The California Penal System!

I realize the public can't imprison the whole penal system. But because of the power the public bestows on officers, most think they are above the law. So please give them hell in memory of me.

Sandy Hamilton

14 Years

The first time I saw her, I knew I wanted to be her friend, and be with her.

The first time we really spent some quality time alone, it was because I had been sent in from rec for kissing a man. (We lived in a coed prison at the time.)

We watched Disney Duck tales and thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

That was almost 14 years ago. Over the years our relationship has grown.

Together as friends or as a couple, we have weathered many storms.

Tears of happiness, tears of pain; laughter, sadness, hope and the lack thereof.

Desire, anger, hurt, jealousy and even a broken heart.

We have loved, lost, fought and found. It has been the two of us against the world at times; but never against each other.

As the years have passed, our friendship and love has grown into an unbreakable bond. A melding of hearts as well as souls.

She loves me, as I in turn love her. To imagine our lives without each other is unthinkable.

The burden of doing time has occasionally separated us, as it will do again in the future.

We have always stood by each other; supported each other.

Today we have a friendship that will last until both of us draw our last breath. It is as unending as time itself.

Our life together has been as gentle as a summer breeze, and as furious as a raging storm.

But out of stormy darkness arises a new light, and a better understanding of one another.

She is but one person, but she has changed my life forever and has become the other half of me.

Tiffany Jackson

It All Went Wrong

Everything was cool until we had that fight
I'll never forget what happened that night ...
The cops came with their pepper spray,
They ask what happened, but my love didn't let me say ...
They handcuffed me, did you the same,
I couldn't help but call out your name ...
This prison love is one hard thing to handle,
With its stress, cops and scandals ...
Well they took you one way and me the other,
That's the night I was separated from my lover ...
I forgive you for taking your stress out on me,
For the harsh words and painful beating ...
I love you girl more than life itself
But now our relationship is a mess ...
I'm on the C.I.W. bus,
I'm crying, I scream, and I fuss ...
I don't know if I'll see you again
But you'll always be my woman ...

Strictly Sexual

Our love life is so intense,
You stretch me out and give me a kiss ...
You spread my legs, knees up and wide,
You crawl between and deep inside ...
You taste my wetness as I'm going insane,
You use your mouth to make me yell your name ...
You slip a finger deep inside.
You put breast to breast and grind up and down, side to side ...
You bite gently on my nipples as I pull gently on yours,
You fill me with wonder, pleasure, and joy ...
The pace speeds up and I meet my climax
You kiss me breathless and I wonder what's next ...

Tiffany Jackson

The Thing Called Love Virus

You didn't tell me you were sick,
 You didn't tell me I get it ...
 You never said you'd soon die
 You never told me it could happen one night.
 Oh God what will my family think,
 Will they still want to be around me ...
 A is for Always living inside,
 I is for It never dies ...
 D is for Deadly weapon,
 S is for She caught me slippin' ...
 Why, my love, did you do this to me, the one you loved?
 I guess we'll go together to the heavens above.
 Love virus is its name,
 And unprotected sex is to blame ...
 I'm lonely without you
 Stuck and sick at C.I.W. ...

How Can I Forget You

Every day I get sick I think of you,
 Think of my life turning cold, inside out, dark and blue ...
 Every pain in my body from head to toe,
 Reminds me of you, your promise, and how you let me go ...
 When my head's hurting oh I know it's because of you,
 You got me in prison young, vulnerable and ready to love,
 Then you gave me your illness and shoved me under a rug ...
 I'm scared you know? You left me all alone
 You came, stole my love, my joy, my life, my strong back bone.
 How could you when you knew I cared for you,
 You said for life it would be us two ...
 I guess you lied, but in the end I'll win and see you again,
 Cuzz we both have this disease and will both die within ...

Tiffany Jackson

Don't be Joyed

Drawn by Tiffany Jackson

Written by her too,

Just a little something to explain the words I-love-you

There's no such thing as black and black or white and white,

But there is a thing called love at first sight.

Jungle fever, I never understood that word

But I understand being adored ...

Love has no limits, not any rules,

Any two people can have it provided the right tools ...

So if there is someone who gives your heart a tug,

Remember opposites do fall in love ...



Sheena M. King

Two Old Heads - A tribute to Peachie and Roddy

There were two old heads
 that equally touched my
 life in two different ways,
 with the same result,
 they helped to grow me

TWO OLD HEADS:

SAME COLOR

SAME SIGN

SAME HEIGHT

SAME CRIME

FROM THE SAME CITY

DOIN' THE SAME TIME.

These two, both of them
 taught me in two different ways

THE RULES

THE GAME

THE PLAYS

TO BEND

TO NOT BEND

COMPROMISE MYSELF

OR NEGATIVELY DEFEND

Those two, through their separate
 but equal, positive and negative
 experiences, taught me

TO LIVE

TO LEARN

TO LOVE

TO RESPECT

TO FIND MYSELF

IMPROVE MY DEFECTS

They taught me the meaning of
 family without blood ties, blood lines
 and blood types.

TWO WOMEN

TWO OLD HEADS

TWO LEADING

LADY LESBIANS

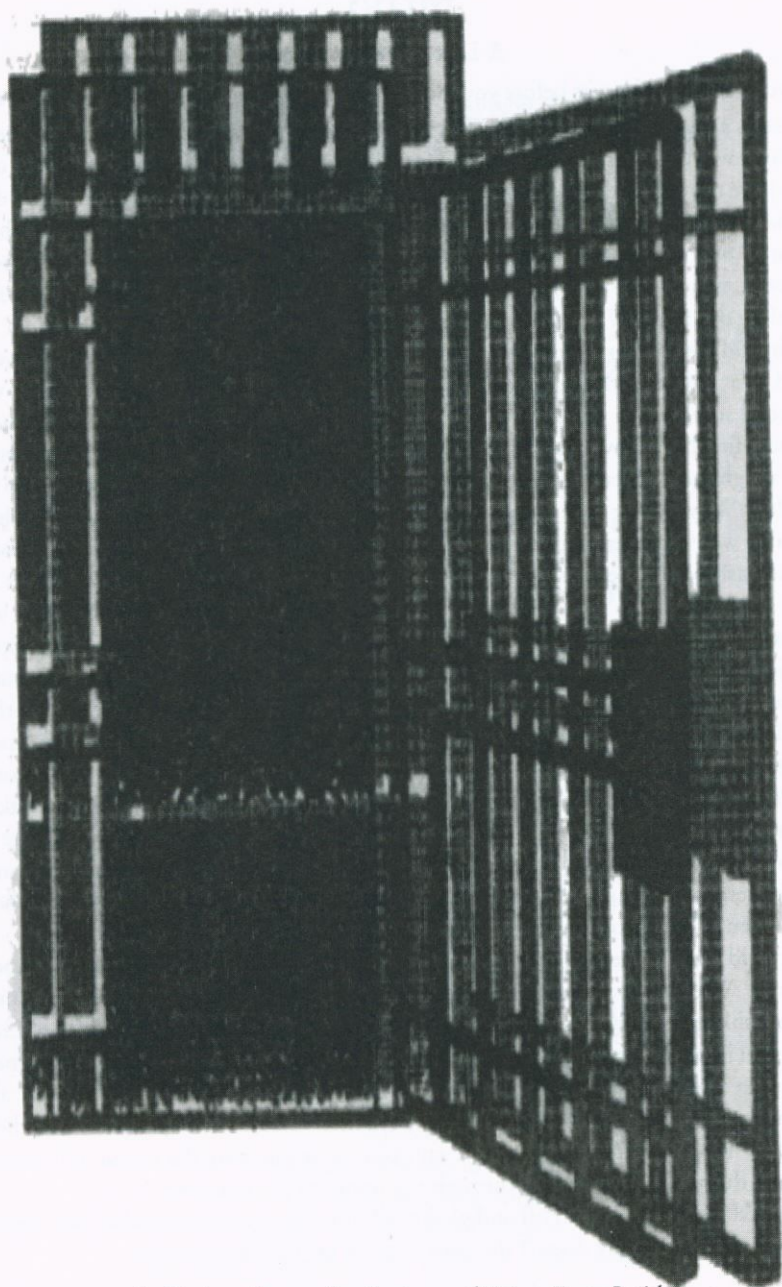
I LOVE THOSE

TWO OLD HEADS.

Sheena M. King

IN MEMORY OF: YOUR SKIN

I lie here
eyes closed,
Relishing my
Remembrance of:
the feel of you
your touch
the sound of your voice
the laughter, the
sight of you
your beauty
your tears, your
obvious love
the light in
your eyes
your fears.
I remember the
taste of your
tongue
the heat of
your mouth
with mine
I reminisce on your skin:
the sight, sound
taste and smell
of it
as you lay next to me
under me
Over me
around me.
I've brought into memory:
the wet, scented
feel of it
the smack of it
as you
Rise up from loving me
Your skin is on me —
You're inside of me —
Yet I miss you —
Your skin —
all of you —



by Barbara Barnett for the cover of *Voices From Inside:
Prisoners Respond to the AIDS Crisis*

Sheena M. King

WHY?

A Letter To My Lover

I've had so many lovers before you, both male and female, so why did *you* touch me in such a deeply profound way? Why did you cross my path at that crucial moment when I was in therapy trying to heal from the past and learn for the future? Why did we have to meet and fall deeply, madly and ridiculously in love, in prison? Why did it have to happen here? When we could no longer deny what we felt. When we had shared our minds, hearts, hopes, dreams and desires and decided we were best friends, why did we enhance it by exploring each other's bodies? Merging our souls? Sealing our fates? Why couldn't we deny the mutual attraction?

Why did we have to make love in closets, bathroom stalls, in secret rooms, showers and over toilets with quick touches in corners? If we lay in my cell or yours, we needed someone to watch for us while we quickly but passionately quenched each other's fire. No pillow talk, no extensive cuddles or falling asleep in each other's arms for a night, to awaken to your beauty by sunlight. Why? Why was our relationship so stifled? Why did we have a visit together, only to be forbidden to talk to each other like we were strangers because of "Visiting Room Policy"? Why did we pretend our relationship didn't exist so we could live together — not in the same room, just in the same building? Why couldn't I hold your hand and smell your face when we were walking around the yard or the dining room? Why were unhappy, lonely people so jealous of our obvious love and adoration of each other? Why did the staff watch our every move, as if we were going to strip naked and taste our love in the middle of the floor? Why were they so against our being together when our marriage was so nurturing, positive, loving and progressive? Why did our fellow convicts and inmates think it necessary to tell, like children, whenever we could sneak a moment to touch, kiss, explore or make love? Why? How was our private life a public nuisance when we kept our personal life to ourselves? Why was our love and joy disrespected though we weren't disrespectful? Why are prison officials homophobic when so many of their staff are loving the same sex?

Why did we complement each other in our external beauty and also in our inner beauty? Why are we so similar in every aspect? Why did you complete me and unselfishly give me the best three of my life? Why did I have to be sentenced to Life and you leave me here to yearn and burn for you while you yearn and burn for me? Why do I walk through this institution with feigned happiness as if I'm not an empty shell, attempting to continue in wholeness while we live spiritually together but physically apart? Why do people say your name knowing the sound of it drives a knife through my heart and through my bones to the marrow?

Why did we jump off the cliff and gladly fall into the abyss of love when we would have to separate? Why doesn't the pain stop? Why, Charlotte? Why?

Lisa Kuffel

Sofia

Sofia blows across my midnight skies
 echoing Her whispers deep inside the caverns of my being
 Her unspoken promises of the secrets of Her passion
 dark, astral eyes speak to me with no words spoken
 my ears hear them as strains of melodies
 written by Goddesses, and sung ... sweet refrains
 from moon to moon ... falling stars to rising sun
 as if it has always belonged to the universe...
 as we have made into caresses, cast of firelight
 by my Sofia...as she tiptoes to my bed
 magnetic passion ... shooting sparks from Her eyes
 Inhaling, I become an electric storm, and
 I hold out my arms...

We light up this prison with one kiss alone
 She is lightning painting Herself deep inside of me
 with one touch from Her the heavens will open
 and etch our magic with bolts of power
 that thor never dreamed of possessing
 My Sofia ... cosmic artiste of an ancient time in my dreams
 erupts with sensuality ... volcanic
 she wills explosions — and I explode
 with maniacal craving ... a hunger so deep
 that nothing will feed it until Her touch
 Her body is pressed against mine tongues on scorching skin
 Wet, boiling, dripping down sweaty thighs
 and with an endless thirst, we drink of each other's sweetness
 unquenchable, unslakeable . . . then
 the ethereal mists of my vision vanish
 with the dawn of day when the dark shadows
 possessing badges have their little boy games to play
 with the sunrise — a slight repose
 until the moon, once again brings
 My Sofia
 Where she'll whisper in my heart
 her breath touching mine
 softly, like hummingbird wings then,
 she leaves me in shattered pieces of contentment...
 a puzzle left to be put back together again
 and she will over and over again.

Lisa Kuffel

And the Wicked Wind Blows

Entombed within these concrete walls
Apparitions of a long-haired, midnight-eyed beauty
Floats at the highest corners of my confines --
Still, she eludes me...

The breathing of four other lungs stagnating already
stale air strangles my chest...

Two other hearts tattoo the silence making my own
tempo erratic...

In darkness, my life force searching through
the pollution for the ancient rhythm that matches my own —
and, she's nowhere to be found.

My want turns to need

My need to hunger

My hunger to madness

My madness to rage

And the beast within crawls that much closer to the surface
and pulls my self that much farther down
as I prowls back and forth

Back and forth within my cage

Snarling, foaming at the mouth

Eyes glazed over

Clawing the welded steel

As I thirst for my beloved Sofia

And lust for the blood of those that hold me captive

And force feed me their humanity —

The man with the gun, the badge

I rage on.

Lisa Kuffel

Any Other Time

Any other time in my life
 I would turn my head
 And walk away, knowing
 That after the passion, and laughter
 And the feeling of freedom
 That the pain would last that much longer
 Prison bars to haunt my hours
 To fight the pull of your shadow
 That will silently stand, beckoning to me
 behind them... .
 Any other time in my life
 I would be able to walk away
 from the dark pools of your eyes
 That draw me down, deeper and deeper
 into their very depths and sucking me under
 until I feel I am losing control... .
 Any other time in my life
 I would not feel the lightning touch
 Of your fingers playing my body —
 Electricity dancing over my skin
 even when you're not around
 Tracing the memories of your kisses
 with my fingertips
 Over and over and over, again ...
 Any other time in my life ...
 Any other time in my life ...
 Any other, Any other time in my life
 Time in my life ... my life my life

Lisa Kuffel

And the Wicked Wind Blows

Entombed within these concrete walls
 Apparitions of a long-haired, midnight-eyed beauty
 Floats at the highest corners of my confines --
 Still, she eludes me...
 The breathing of four other lungs stagnating already
 stale air strangles my chest...
 Two other hearts tattoo the silence making my own
 tempo erratic...
 In darkness, my life force searching through
 the pollution for the ancient rhythm that matches my own —
 and, she's nowhere to be found.
 My want turns to need
 My need to hunger
 My hunger to madness
 My madness to rage
 And the beast within crawls that much closer to the surface
 and pulls my self that much farther down
 as I prowl back and forth
 Back and forth within my cage
 Snarling, foaming at the mouth
 Eyes glazed over
 Clawing the welded steel
 As I thirst for my beloved Sofia
 And lust for the blood of those that hold me captive
 And force feed me their humanity —
 The man with the gun, the badge
 I rage on.

Brandy Maynard

Missing Her

Simple living
awaken each morn to my angel
complication
comes with separation
awaken now to emptiness
missing her
in the eye of the heart
there's sight
a sleepy smile at five a.m.
The heart
softens still with
remembered whisper
of "I love you"
Butterflies flutter
with thoughts of a sensual bite
on her lip or the
innocent way she pushes
her hair behind her ears
her shy smile
when I say she's beautiful
Intrigue comes
the artistic moves of her hands
and hidden talent of song.
Hours drag on
when missing the sharing of
dreams goals values of life
Tightening of the throat
comes with memories of
the feel of her body in my
hands and the taste of her on my lips
My ears ring with moans of ecstasy

There's fire
recalling the pleasure
of her kiss
my body shudders
with the feel of
her desire on my skin
pains past cause so many
unfavorable reactions
but she understands
she is patient
missing her
in the way she shares her
pain with me
missing her every move
her every sound my very heart

Hihan Ska
Kimimela Winyan

Making Up

Words flung in anger
accusation; mistrust
shattered harmony
between hearts

Silence follows
the slamming doors
only frustrated tears
break the silence

A body shaken
by broken sobs
flung hopelessly
upon the bed.

A familiar hand
brushes the tears away
“I’m sorry”
barely spoken.

Arms open
in forgiveness
embracing desperately
tenderness comes

Gentle kisses given
behind “I love you”
“I don’t want to lose you”
expressions of heart

Sudden passion rises
fingers intertwine
pulling the kisses
to intense fire

A move so natural
 to oneness
 a whisper erotic
 "oh, my God"

A burning trail
 laid down the body
 traced by desire
 satisfaction's reach

Hands still tangled
 leading by passion
 to the center
 source of pleasure

With apologetic tenderness
 a taste of sweetness
 raging inferno of love

in the strength of tongue

Beautiful in the hands
 as bodies move
 gracefully in time and space
 alone — together
 Heavens reached
 back arches
 ecstasy moans and runs
 apologies satisfaction

slowly, gently
 return to the lips
 share the precious nectar
 "I love you"

In embracing arms
 redemption
 passionate apology
 accepted.

Hihan Ska
Kimimela Winyan

Making Up

Words flung in anger
accusation; mistrust
shattered harmony
between hearts

Silence follows
the slamming doors
only frustrated tears
break the silence

A body shaken
by broken sobs
flung hopelessly
upon the bed.

A familiar hand
brushes the tears away
"I'm sorry"
barely spoken.

Arms open
in forgiveness
embracing desperately
tenderness comes

Gentle kisses given
behind "I love you"
"I don't want to lose you"
expressions of heart

Sudden passion rises
fingers intertwine
pulling the kisses
to intense fire

A move so natural
 to oneness
 a whisper erotic
 "oh, my God"

A burning trail
 laid down the body
 traced by desire
 satisfaction's reach

Hands still tangled
 leading by passion
 to the center
 source of pleasure

With apologetic tenderness
 a taste of sweetness
 raging inferno of love

in the strength of tongue

Beautiful in the hands
 as bodies move
 gracefully in time and space
 alone — together
 Heavens reached
 back arches
 ecstasy moans and runs
 apologies satisfaction

slowly, gently
 return to the lips
 share the precious nectar
 "I love you"

In embracing arms
 redemption
 passionate apology
 accepted.

Hihan Ska
Kimimela Winyan

Children of Magic

Chosen by creation
to powers born
children of magic
different
knowing
old in spirit
§

Creation or curse
damned or blessed
to hear spirit lost
angry pleading
in their world
§

Knowledge creates choice
in life's journey
damned or loved
choices decisions
decide your fate
§

Ghostly existence
draws magic
from creation's children
whisper convince
naive innocence should remain
§

No, not magic
tis life's force that
pulled by spirit
drawn
corruption
the magic of innocence
§

Creation chose magic
not innocence
for young ones powerful
challenged
Destiny's perfect union

Michelle

For Beb

Gazing starry-eyed into the pouring rain ...
I want to feel the cold, stinging drops on my skin.
I want to feel something beautiful again.
In the window's reflection I see myself ...
an illusion,
I don't remember who I was before you came.
I've buried within myself the imprints of you and me ...
Our bodies that are so alike, yet different ... the taste of your skin,
The night you asked for forever with those silly braids in your hair.
I can't stop the echoes of the laughter
and the hushed sobs of anguish.
I'm too cold and paralyzed to block the
memories that ambush my thoughts.
Where do I hide when I don't want to feel
what my heart has not forgotten?
The emotions we shared as the world
beyond the razor wire blurred, and
the need was so strong that we absorbed each other.
The lazy days and turbulent nights eased the sorrow of this life.
I shared with you the secrets from years
of empty dreams ... we shared our blood and drank each other's tears.
We created fantasies and gave each other hope.
You changed my world, and then you changed.
How could I blame you ...
I played the music — and you danced away.
Your soft, silky hands that soothed me
now hold my heart in an invisible grip.
The emotional destruction I inflicted on myself
is too intense for tears.
My life laid bare is
so confusing,
so distorted ...
Fragments are floating away,
until there is nothing ...
no pain, no joy, no anxiety or insanity.
Only the feel of my face against the glass.

Kathy O'Donnell

I'm currently in the Texas prison system. My neighbor gave me *Sinister Wisdom #59/60 Love, Sex, and Romance*. I fell in love with it and read that whole book in one night. The poem called "Dictionary of a Closeted Wife" really struck home.

I have always known that I've been attracted to women; coming to prison has let me open up and admit to my feelings for women. And I'm one of the lucky ones. I have found my soul mate — Irene is everything I've ever wanted in a relationship and we're open and honest with each other.

I'm totally in love with her and she with me. We spent one year together here; now she's gone home. And she has kept every promise she ever made to me. She is my future; March of 2002 we've been together two years. She's the strongest person I've ever met. She works and does drawings for business on the side to make a home for us. She also sends me poems that she writes for me. She is very talented where I'm not; I'm very proud of her. She's the reason I can hold my head up high. I've been very lucky; my mother, a really cool Mom, has accepted Irene to parole to her. I'm really glad I met Irene later in life when I wasn't scared to say, yes I am a lesbian. I'm 35 and Irene is 43; we'll finally have a good life.



Irene and Kathy June 23, 2001

Ruth Bravo

In My Dream

A long time ago, on an island far, far away, lived a young native woman with a lot of strength and courage to be able to survive alone in some strange faraway land. Her name was "Raven"; those who knew her well and were close called her "Baby." She was very beautiful with long dark hair that shone in the sun; her eyes were intense with an exotic look, almost hungry for passion. Her body was golden brown, velvety smoother to the touch. Baby's family was slaughtered by a band of pirates while she escaped alone in the jungle. Since then, she had survived on her own; lonely for love she never had or felt, a different kind of passion that would grab hold of her soul and never let go.

One afternoon while Baby was adding on and repairing damages to her camouflage shelter in the dense foliage of the jungle, she glanced toward the ocean and spotted a ship. The sight of the ship brought shivers of excitement throughout her body until she realized that they might not be friendly. She grabbed her periscope and climbed the tree she used for a look-out. Her breath caught as she watched the huge magnificent ship sailing toward the island. Hope glistened in her eyes as well as fear. Baby looked around, farther out to sea at the endless and vast waters of the tremendous ocean.

She looked to the edge of the island and almost fell out of the tree as the familiar Pirate ship also sailed into view. Fear coursed through her as it headed toward the other ship. Memories of her family flooded her thoughts as she looked on with hate.

Closer and closer the huge ships sailed toward each other, both ready for battle. The first ship slowed and dropped anchor, the crew rolling the cannons into place at the side of the ship, ready and prepared. Baby looked on, her heart pounding in her chest as she watched the beginnings of the fight. Suddenly cannon fire erupted with loud explosions as they hit their mark, tearing through the pirate ship. Another explosion sounded, coming from the black pirate. Back and forth planks flew across, connecting the vessels as pirates armed with swords ran to do battle with their rivals. Swords clashed and clanged against one another in a bloody, futile fight for control and possession. Baby watched on as the slaughter progressed, unable to tear her eyes away. Bodies were falling, engulfed by the hungry waiting sea as the water turned red from the bloody massacre. A loud snapping sound penetrated the air as the black ship went down to its final resting ground in its watery grave . . . defeated. Baby sat stunned, the deaths of her family avenged as she watched.

The remaining vessel was motionless; no movement could be seen or heard. "Was everyone dead?" Just as the thought crossed her mind, a dark figure stepped into view at the ship's stern.

Curious tingles of excitement fluttered though her body as she realized that this lone survivor of the vicious attack was a woman, clothes torn and bloody from the fight, sword still clutched in her hand, her wavy dark brown hair trailing down her back in disarray, head hung with exhaustion as well as pain and hurt for the loss of the friends and allies that were the only family she knew.

The mysterious woman let her blood-soaked sword slip out of her hand as she dove into the depths of the sea toward the island. Baby was excited and wanted to meet this stranger in order to show her gratitude as well as share her sorrow for her losses. Baby watched the beautiful woman swimming strong, sure strokes. This woman was masculine in a feminine way. She swam and swam until finally she crawled onto the sandy shore where she dropped unconscious from exhaustion.

Baby quickly climbed down and ran to the shoreline, where the woman was lying unmoving. She made a quick assessment of injuries and pulled the woman farther up out of the water. She pushed on the stranger's chest, trying to revive life into her. She placed her soft full lips over the mouth of her savior and breathed her own life's essence into this incredibly beautiful woman who sputtered and choked and sat up abruptly, searching for her sword until she realized she was not in any danger. She looked to the woman who had saved her life, put a soft hand to her cheek, and asked, "Who are you?" Baby looked into the woman's deep gaze and said shyly, "My name's Baby, and you?" The woman ran her fingers through her wet hair and replied, "I'm Rikki, how can I ever repay you for saving my life?" With a seductive look in her eyes, Baby countered, "We'll think of a way."

It was late afternoon, and the air was moist as Baby helped her newfound friend to her makeshift living quarters a little way into the jungle. She fixed Rikki something to eat and gave her fresh-squeezed juice from earlier in the day. Starving from exhaustion, Rikki controlled her manners, watching Baby with deep interest. Baby offered her bed with a promise of a beautiful place to clean up in when she awoke. Rikki's sleep was almost instant, but Baby was far from tired. She crept in beside this exciting woman's soft body and watched her chest rise and fall in a deep sleep. Baby fell asleep with wild dreams of adventure and passion floating through her thoughts. She had never been with a woman before and knew this would be an experience she would never forget. She craved the attention and love she knew she would receive from this exotic woman. She awoke with the feeling of being watched and was rewarded by the sight of Rikki watching and waiting for her to wake up. Rikki stretched and yawned and reached for the juice offered. "Good morning, beautiful. What about that promise?"

As these two beautiful women walked through the jungle, they talked and laughed and enjoyed each other's company. Baby confided in Rikki and told her about her family and thanked her for avenging them. Rikki insisted that it was her duty to protect and fight for her crew and that it was unfortunate that everyone had to die.

They walked in silence for a few minutes, both in deep thought. The silence was broken as Rikki asked, "Have you ever been kissed by a woman before?" Baby's heart raced as she flushed from head to toe. Before she could respond, Rikki pulled her close. Feeling her breath against her full, soft lips, "Kiss me," Baby whispered as their mouths slowly touched. Their first kiss was long and sensual and left Baby breathless, wanting more. "Why did you stop?" she asked, "because I want to take my time and show you love like you've never felt before; be patient, my beautiful one." Baby's head was spinning with the thought of being loved by this woman. She wondered what this woman's body felt like — smooth skin like silk, her beautiful breasts trailing her body . . . Baby's body ached deeply for this woman's touch.

They approached the lagoon a few moments later, breaths slowing to a normal pace, eyes still glazed with desire. Rikki's breath caught as she took in the sight of her beautiful surroundings. Water streamed from the cliffs above, falling into the crystal blue pool below, a thin mist hung in the air, and tropical flowers of every variety were everywhere you turned. Lush green grass covered the banks of the lagoon, inviting. Rikki bent to pick a delicate white orchid; with a sly smile she placed the flower behind Baby's ear and kissed her softly on the mouth teasing, "I want you to crave me," as she slowly backed away, removing her torn clothes revealing her voluptuous body, her gaze still locked on Baby, whose heart was beating erratically, watching her new lover with exciting unknown feelings.

She walked slowly toward Baby, her hands caressing her own breasts as she stood inches away, matching Baby's uneven breaths with her own. "Do you want me?" she breathed. Baby took Rikki's hands and guided them up her own tummy and over her beautiful, full breasts, nipples erect and straining. Rikki slowly removed Baby's barely there clothing, lightly caressing each exposed area as the clothes fell away, their bodies melding together passionately. Baby threw her head back, breathless sounds escaping from deep within her soul. Rikki let go and laughed wickedly as she dove into the lagoon, leaving Baby alone with want, watching Rikki swim across the pool to the cliff where the water streamed down.

Rikki climbed up and stood under the cool water, letting it cascade over her. Baby dove in after her, following the same route, coming up behind Rikki. Her full breasts pressed against Rikki's back, reaching around massaging Rikki with her soft hands, kissing her neck while she moved her touch up and down her silky smooth body, her breasts pressed enticingly against Rikki's taut back. She was breathless with desire and a hunger she needed to satisfy. She grabbed for Baby's hand as she

turned around, only to feel it slip away as Baby dove from the small cliff, emerging from the water with a burst of satisfied laughter.

“Now we’re even,” she said and swam toward the moss-covered bank where she crawled up to sun herself. Rikki watched for a moment before she dove in. Baby’s breath once again quickened as her lover crawled up the soft moss toward her. She could feel her hot breath moving her legs, her breasts caressing her thighs. Moving slowly up her body, she grabbed the back of Rikki’s hair to pull her up to taste her kisses and feel her soft full lips against her own. She rolled her over and straddled her tummy, trailing kisses and the tip of her tongue down her neck to her full breasts, taking one nipple, circling and suckling with her hot mouth, and then the other. Her back arched, her own soft moans escaping. This excited Baby even more that she could have such power over a woman like Rikki. Her own instincts guided her as she moved down slowly to the center of this woman’s desire. Rikki’s body trembled with every caress until she felt Baby’s tongue trailing the sides of her lips, teasing. Rikki was lost in sensation. Baby gently spread her soft lips to taste and explore every silky fold. She felt Rikki’s hands scratching at her shoulders as her body trembled and convulsed, crying Baby’s name aloud. She watched her lover feeling her own wetness building. Suddenly Rikki pulled her up, kissing her madly. She pulled her back on top of her and sat Baby up, straddling her shoulders as she slid between her legs, tongue sliding in, tasting this sweet nectar. Baby looked down at her lover massaging her own breasts as she sat astride Rikki’s hot mouth, moving uncontrollably as she climaxed, tears running down her face as waves of sensation coursed through her body. She fell forward exhausted . . .

Rikki moved up beside her and pulled her close, embracing her possessively. She liked the feel of this woman holding her, and she never wanted this feeling to end. Her thoughts were interrupted by Rikki’s voice. “I’m never letting you go, not ever.” They fell asleep entwined in each other’s arms, content, not caring they were alone on this island as long as they remained together forever...

Roxane Roberts

Believing...

I guess it was my fault to believe — I truly believed that what has happened to me couldn't. In April 1998, I believed the police wouldn't lie on just anyone; I believed that my friend was wrong and that I would not lie if asked; I believed that our detention was a ruse to scare her and that soon it would be over and I'd be in my new apartment ready to claim stability and comfort yet again. When I saw that the policeman had also charged me with "Delivery" I almost laughed — I believed that when she repeated that I "... had nothing to with it," they'd make a quick phone call and it would be over — I believed when we were charged that the judge heard her say it again — I believed I could defend myself especially when I gave my three reasons: One: I believe in God; Two: I've been to law school; and Three: I'll tell the truth; I believed it was legal when the judge told me, "No!" I believed as long as I called the conditional release man every day and went to court with my ragged attorney the truth would set me free — I believed it was just delays and I believed I was being kind when I signed a continuation to allow my lawyer what he said was his "much needed vacation." I believed that I had a choice that first day of trial in September 1998 when my lawyer ran to me flushed as I started to enter the courtroom and out of breath almost pleading, "OK, they said misdemeanor, zero to twelve."

"Hell No!" was my reply. He asked me, "Why?" I stated as simply and adamantly and honestly as I believe any vow.

"Because I didn't do it." I believed in Perry Mason so I was put off by his appearance — I believe I was dressed exceptional — except for my damn Afro — I believe my De Ann had tried her best — I believed my lawyer when he told me I couldn't say a word in court and then disbelief set in. My transcripts reverberate — my words comparing the start to Amtrak — I watched and listened too stunned to cry — cry out or run from the absolute destruction of myself — It was a runaway situation with destinations even now imprisoned in 2001 I can only guess. Sometimes snatches of testimony come back — verbatim — mostly I remember my emotional detonation — from ready to fear to anger to devastation — I lost only because I played fairly — truthfully and my autonomy then and now is really what solidifies my victimhood — there was no one to reach out to and it was my own fault that I live by the rules I set — that is what caused me to believe —

Roxane Roberts

No More

What comes to mind this time? The last time — I know because I'm finally downloading to you — as I always feel a need to summarize — summate if there's such a word; ah, but I procrastinate. For so many reasons I'm afraid to start this dissertation — the reasons are so unlike me/basically I give up! I can't understand and I won't stand for this phenomenal sadistic carousel — not one more time and not perpetrated in the name of Love and a sprinkling of God — yet totally sacrilegious concerning both. My heart has broken up a little over her behavior and the pain of her "striking out" every day; but the undeniable fact this Sunday is there is nothing I can do for us anymore. For the sake of not failing yet-again — I would not let us go down for the count — I have internalized all the blame at her insistence and then in relieved glee — just to not lose again, to not feel tears pressure my eyes for release. I have ignored fatal signals; to not let the prophets, concerned and envious win — by our not loving no more — the catharsis began when I returned Thursday. My heart knew; but I would not let it be felt. My eyes could see it — yet I would not acknowledge the sights. My mind tortured me with validity and analytical proof but I would not accept the data. My ears heard what verified my fears — but I would not listen. My soul questioned my sick reality but I would not follow it until I could not, not no more!

My dear friend asked me this afternoon, "Why are you being so nice to her - I mean you've always been nice but what are you doing?" I asked her, "Which one of us is wrong?" Because she expressed interest in her friend now broken many times? I would not change. My personal spiritual advisor said, "Why — why do you keep forgiving her; I don't believe what she does! Why do you take it?" I told my advisor — "she forces me away and forces me back and I feel fear to follow her forces." I did not explain Love. My old roommate asked "Why are ya'll together?" Assessing that I can walk away — I did not explain — throughout I have tried kindness — confrontation — understanding — ignoring — analyzing — denying; but all I knew was what I felt: that familiar bolt strike my heart — it was different, better — each day something about her was more beautiful — each time I forgave her my life was brighter — my mood was lighter — every time we found a different or new way to say love to each other — I find that I can't take me through it again — trying to find the

fork and retrace my errors — perhaps there wasn't a wrong fork — just too many —
suffice it to say:

You broke my heart
You broke my dreams
You broke the dam inside my soul
that holds back the tears —
Lastly I'll give you
these words
So you'll know
How I'll live
For many many years
you keep my metal
I'll hold fast your cross
I know now
you will one day
Our incredible loss
I was caught unaware
I guess it's meant to be
this — the end of you and me —

Stephanie Narro

Sick of Tally Ho's

I have currently ended a four-year relationship. That may not seem like a long time to the average person but to an incarcerated lesbian, it's a lifetime.

I'm not one to spread myself too thin. Which isn't very common in prison. It seems that everybody has sex with everybody and when that's all finished, no one is worth having. You would think a lesbian in a confined area with 900 or so females would be in heaven. NOT! In fact, it's quite the opposite. Torture! It's almost impossible to find anyone in prison that isn't playing a game. Be it for commissary, head or whatever. There's usually a motive behind it that has nothing to do with loving women or being a lesbian.

We both know that when it's your life outside, it's like any relationship. Don't get me wrong, you have gold diggers and headhunters in the free world. However, you're less likely to find it out there than in here. It's so common in here I won't even waste my time. It's not that serious.

I have been incarcerated for nine years now, and have had three girlfriends. My first girlfriend was in March of 1994. Pretty good relationship, but what relationship isn't in the beginning? That's all it seems to have been because three short months later, she was transferred to another institution. My next relationship was August of 1995, another good relationship. Yet once again, this was cut short, but this time it was me who was transferred two months later. Reluctant to try it again, I got into another relationship; at least that's what it was to me. We got together April of 1997 and yes I don't even have to say it, I was transferred four months later.

However, this relationship wasn't like the other two. I was at an institution that was converting to a men's facility. Therefore my friend would be transferred to me eventually. Eight months later she showed up. While waiting for her I focused on her completely. Therefore I placed a false image of her in my head and she could do no wrong. Boy was I wrong about this. It has taken me four years to see that, sad but true. I thought she was as true as I am. She fed these thoughts, which made it seem right for me to think as I did. One year before she went home she left me for someone else. A very painful experience in here, but a real eye opener. One I needed to go through in order to see her for what she was. Just like the rest of them.

It's very hard, if not impossible, to find someone in here that is faithful, although about 85% of the population is H.I.V. positive or has AIDS, not to mention hepatitis and TB galore. You would think these facts alone would keep one walking a straight path. One partner and one only. That's far from the truth.

I thought I had that in my last relationship, that's one of the reasons I put up with

as much shit as I did. Faithfulness is one factor that would make anything balance out in here. The thing is just because you think your chosen partner is faithful, doesn't mean she is — 99.9% of the time she isn't.

If you're lucky enough to be in the same unit you have a greater chance of a faithful relationship. If you're not, you can almost hang it up. I've learnt this the hard way. There isn't one relationship I've seen in 9 years where both partners have been 100% faithful. Not one! I'm not just talking about mine and that's no exaggeration. Loving women is more intense period, but in prison it's 10 fold. I feel it's because in prison we've had everything we love yanked from us. Therefore when we do find someone in prison we cling to them. Sometimes it's unhealthy and painful if you don't find the right one.

The majority of these females have never had any desire to be with a woman until prison and when they get out they will leave that life behind. So you know that most only do it to make time go by a little easier — if they're lucky! They look at like "no one at home will ever know so I'm going to play." I guess they've never been taught that you shouldn't play with other people's feelings. Just because their feelings aren't real doesn't mean the next person's aren't. A very dangerous game.

I still have over 4 years left so I'm not going to say that I won't or will be with anyone else. I'm not going to look for it and I hope like hell if it does happen it's with the right somebody. I've had no luck thus far even when I thought I was the luckiest woman in prison. The joke was on me.

I guess if you're OK with multiple partners, be it you or your partner, if you don't mind the games, the dishonesty or the superficial relationships, you would be just fine in a "relationship" in prison. Me, I'm a little more serious about who or what I allow in my life. I don't get into the prison BS, nor will I start. I'm definitely in a class of my own in this torture chamber I'm confined to for the next four years.

I came to prison 6 months out of high school and have been here since. My co-defendant/Girlfriend and I were together two years prior to our incarceration; my one and only gay relationship outside of prison. Although we traveled to prison together, that lasted only a brief moment. Yes we were in different units; needless to say in two months she found comfort in her own unit. It's as if there isn't very much real in prison, particularly in relationships. Whether you come in with them or develop them here. It all seems to be one very big nasty GAME.

One gets the wrong idea about what it's really like loving a woman and what it really means to be a lesbian if they have their first experience with a woman in prison. I'm grateful that I was not one of those and was able to enjoy the fulfillment of loving a woman at home.

Valessa Lyn Robinson

Reversed Seduction

When I first met her, I never even entertained the idea that this older woman would eventually have my entire body hot and yearning to be explored (to the furthest depths imaginable) by her, and vice versa. I was introduced to her by someone in my prison family, and saw her frequently. We got to know each other and I enjoyed her company, but it was strictly platonic. We got to know each other with a friendly hug and kiss – nothing sexual. But as time passed by, feelings inside of me began changing. That's how it all started...

After knowing her for about a month, I became anxious to see her, and it startled me at first. Unconsciously, she was seducing me with her dark, deeply bedroom-set eyes, and mischievous grin. Her presence unnerved my very core in such an erotic way; I thought I would lose my mind. But I had to maintain a proper composure, for she was completely unaware of how she made me feel. To me, age is just a number, but I couldn't be sure that she felt the same way. So, I didn't reveal my feelings to her, in fear of losing the contact and communication that we had established.

Her unique individuality had me mystified, and I became determined to learn everything that I possibly could about this woman. Her touch was gentle, and her innocent caresses ran chills down my spine. At night, I would masturbate and imagine that it was her hands on my body. Oh, how I wanted her – just imagining that her hands were playing on my clit, would get me so wet and excited, it was unbelievable! I would fantasize what we would do together, what I would do to her, if she was there with me at that moment.

When I slept, I would dream about making hot, passionate love to her. My dreams were very vivid and detailed, like I was really making love to this woman. The intense feelings that I had for this woman were driving me wild. I didn't know how long I could go on like this – suppressing my feelings only to fantasies and dreams. I had never had an orgasm before, and when our conversations got more personal, I had to confide this information to her. What I didn't tell her, was how I wanted her to be the one to bring me there. She would know soon enough though. I decided I couldn't take it anymore, I had to have her. I needed to feel her hands all over my body, inside me, exploring every inch of my body. I needed to discover every aspect, every curve – explore her body in great detail, in its entirety. Nothing else mattered anymore, my hunger was too intense, and needed to be satisfied. My body ached, but not for too much longer. It was time....

It was raining very lightly that evening, after an unusually pleasant day at my assigned job in laundry. She had been on my mind the entire day, and I had planned this evening to perfection. The officer that was working in our dorm never paid any attention to who was coming in or out of the dorm, so I knew I had no problems with that. I had talked to her early and asked her if she'd mind spending a little quality time with me privately, and she had no objections. I told her that I'd like her to come down to my dorm, once her dorm was released for dinner, and I'd make something for us to eat. She looked at me quizzically, and I told her that the officer wouldn't do or say anything and my bunkie would be out – it'd be quiet and we'd be able to talk privately. Her eyes were filled with suspicion, but she agreed to come down.

When I met her in front of my dorm, she greeted me with a friendly hug and kiss. I gave her a sly grin that made her look at me with curiosity. I walked her in the front door and directed her upstairs to my room in the corner. I fixed up a light meal, and we ate with jazz music playing softly from my walkman, and the rain drizzling lightly outside the window. After we ate, we engaged in small talk for a few minutes. I asked her if she'd like a massage, and she told me that she'd love one. I began massaging her neck and shoulders, then asked if she'd like a full-body massage. She just shrugged indifference, then nodded her head in affirmation. I told her to remove her clothes and lay on her stomach on my bed. She looked at me uncomfortably and I explained to her that it's easier for me, and it'd probably feel better to her if her clothes were off. She relaxed again and complied with my instructions.

I started massaging her shoulders again, but this time I was straddling her ass. I worked slowly, but with just the right amount of pressure. I massaged her from head to toe, while she was on her stomach. When I got to her ass, she teased, but I told her to relax and she did. I moved my hands down her thighs (squeezing and rolling the skin) until I reached her feet. I told her not to worry, then I proceeded to roll her over myself.

Starting at the soles of her feet, I began massaging her front side. Moving up her legs, I took precious time massaging her inner thighs. That's when I heard a moan escape her lips. I looked up at her face and her eyes were closed, completely relaxed, and she was smiling. I smiled too, but she couldn't see me. I looked at the beautiful mound between her legs, while I worked on her inner thighs. I wanted to dive right into it, but I restrained myself.

Before I drove myself crazy, I moved my hands up her body, continuing my exploration. I squeezed one of her breasts and she gasped. I squeezed the other one, and she opened her eyes. I was still straddling her and I told her to relax. She held my gaze and I leaned forward and kissed her lightly. She put her hands up and pushed

against my shoulders. I took her hands into mine and she told me to get up, this wasn't right. I pinned her hands down to her side.

"Why? Why isn't this right? Because you're over 15 years older than me? Because you're worried about what people would say if they found out? These stupid, gossiping inmates? Why should it matter what they think? Age is just a number! What I'm feeling and what you're feeling is all that matters! Is it me? Is there something wrong with me? Tell me — I want to know!"

I looked into her eyes, but she didn't say anything to me. She was deep in thought, and then she smiled. "This is insane!" At that moment, I had her — she was mine! "Good! So let's be insane together. Nothing matters but right here, right now. I can't explain how you make me feel, nor how you've made me feel for weeks. But if you'll let me, I can show you exactly what you've been doing to my mind, and everything else."

I didn't know how that sounded coming out — I didn't care, for at the same time, she pulled me to her and kissed me with such warmth — such love and passion, I thought I would melt right there in her embrace. I returned her kiss with a forcefulness that drove us both crazy, but her force matched my own. It was then that I realized how much she had desired me as well; but like me, she had made no attempt to explore into her desires. But tonight was ours, and we were unleashed, about to make a night that no woman could possibly ever forget.

She slid her hands slowly down my back, until she came to my waist. Just as slowly, she began sliding her hands up my body, taking my T-shirt with them. Ever so gently, she slid my T-shirt off my body. She studied my body, taking in as much as she craved, then removed my shorts. She maneuvered her body out from under me, and quickly took me and pinned me to the bed, moving on top of me. When I tried to object to her dominating, she simply smiled and said, "It's my turn to explore you now." She massaged my entire body, not only with her hands, but her mouth and tongue as well. Her tongue sent chills down my spine, making my clit throb with urgency. I closed my eyes and she kissed both lids tenderly. She kissed my nose and my lips, and I opened my mouth to receive hers. Our kiss was deep and long. She moved down to my neck and nibbled on it, sucking and kissing — I let out a moan of pleasure. Grabbing one of my breasts with her hand, she took the other into her mouth and bit down. I gasped. She made a circle with her tongue around my nipple until it got hard with excitement. Then she took it into her mouth and sucked on it. Not to deprive the other, she moved her mouth onto my other breast, and repeated her tongue dance. At the same instance, she put her hand behind my neck and pulled at the nape of my hair. A jolt of lightning spiraled through me to my moist center, making my clitoris thump intensity. I purred to let her know that I was enjoying her every touch.

I tried to sit up and get back on top of her again, but she restrained me and told me that she wasn't through with her exploration. She turned me onto my stomach and ran her tongue from my neck, down to my ass crack, massaging my sides the whole way. She squeezed the cheeks of my ass, then used her hands to spread them open. She blew in my asshole, and the air passed over my clit, making my pussy extremely wet.

She turned me over onto my back again, then grabbed my waist and pulled my body down to meet her mouth. The backs of her hands slowly moved up my stomach then grabbed my breasts. She was enjoying every second of this, as was I. Using her thumbs, she massaged my nipples for a little while. Before her hands retreated, she gave my breasts another squeeze.

Moving her hands back down my stomach, she stopped in between my legs and spread them wide. She licked one of her fingers and tapped it against my clit, which made me arch my back. My body was hot with desire – I wanted her to take me now. She circled her finger around my lips, avoiding my hard clit. Gently, she slid one finger inside of me, then withdrew it and put it into her mouth. Teasingly, she sucked on it and moaned. I looked at her and she held my gaze with these deep, bedroom eyes that turned me inside-out. Leaning forward, she gave me a tender kiss, then ran a line from my chin to my belly button with her tongue. She circled her tongue around my belly button, spiraling into it, ever so slowly. She moved lower, between my legs, making circles with the tip of her tongue around my wet lips – still avoiding my swollen clit.

She parted my lips with one hand (the other, gripping my ass) and drove her tongue inside of me. I grabbed her hair to keep her there and allowed my body to relax. Her nose rubbed against my clit as she moved her tongue in and out of me. My body met every thrust of her tongue with forcefulness. I watched her head move with each thrust of her tongue, running it up between my lips to my clit, then inserted one finger inside of me. Moving her finger in and out of me, she continued the rhythm, while flicking her tongue up and down on my clit. As her thrusts quickened, so did my breathing and she put another finger inside of me. Her tongue moved faster against my clit, and she moved her fingers rapidly in and out of me, faster, harder ... My body began bucking with anticipation.

She entered a third finger inside of me, and I thought I would rip open, but I didn't. My pussy was relaxing and opening — welcoming her fingers inside me. Though I had never experienced one, an unusual sensation came over me, and I knew I was close to orgasm. I began moving in pure ecstasy and she inserted her finger inside of me. She took her mouth away, but she rubbed my clit with her thumb. I bucked, and rode her hand as her thrusts deepened...harder... faster... my pulse was racing.

I moaned her name as I reached my climax, and she was gazing into my eyes with a wicked grin of satisfaction on her face. My body bucked violently a final time, and my juices poured out over her hand and down her arm. My body convulsed as my orgasm continued to come. She pulled me into her arms and held me until my orgasm ended and my body exhausted. She kissed me tenderly on my cheek and told me to go to sleep. I tried to protest, but she stopped me. As if she had read my mind, she assured me that I would get my turn, and I'd be able to do whatever I pleased. With that, I nodded my head in acceptance, and fell asleep in her arms.

Beverly (Chopper) Henry

A PLEA FOR ROSEMARY

Rosemary (Rosie) Willeby died on October 22, 1999. Rosie was one of many female prisoners diagnosed with both HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV). On February 28, 1998, Rosie came here to serve a short sentence and return to her mother and children.

My peers and I watched as earlier this year Rosie's health began to decline, her abdomen was swelling inch by inch, which gave her the appearance of being nine months pregnant. Her legs and feet were swollen tight; walking became a task and regular shoes no longer fit on her feet. Rosie went from dressing herself to being assisted by friends in her cell.

During my talks with Rosie I learned that she needed the fluid in her abdomen drained. She was confident if she could get to Madera Hospital in a timely manner; treatment and a compassionate release were in order — but her fear was “they may take too long getting me out of here” (CCWF).

Well, Rosie was RIGHT; she finally left here for Madera Hospital but it was TOO LATE! Anyone could easily see Rosie needed emergency care and a compassionate release, but for reasons unknown/inhumane (or whatever) no one in CCWF's Medical Department could find it in their heart to request emergency treatment or expedite a compassionate release for Rosie!!!

So how many more with Chronic HCV do we add to the HIV/AIDS quilt panel before doctors and CMOs (chief medical officers) within the prison system understand that HIV/AIDS AND HCV ARE LIFE- THREATENING DISEASES?

Watching Rosie's life slip away is very personal to me. WE NEED BETTER MEDICAL TREATMENT AND COMPASSIONATE RELEASES FOR EVERY PRISONER IN NEED OF SUCH AND THEY MUST BE GRANTED IN A TIMELY MANNER.

To Rosie's mom and family, Rosie was an absolute joy; her spirits stayed high and she fought for better care for herself and her peers. I will not rest my pen or quiet my voice because Rosie would want "the next Rosie" to receive what CCWF Medical Department denied her; the dignity of dying at home, NOT ALONE!

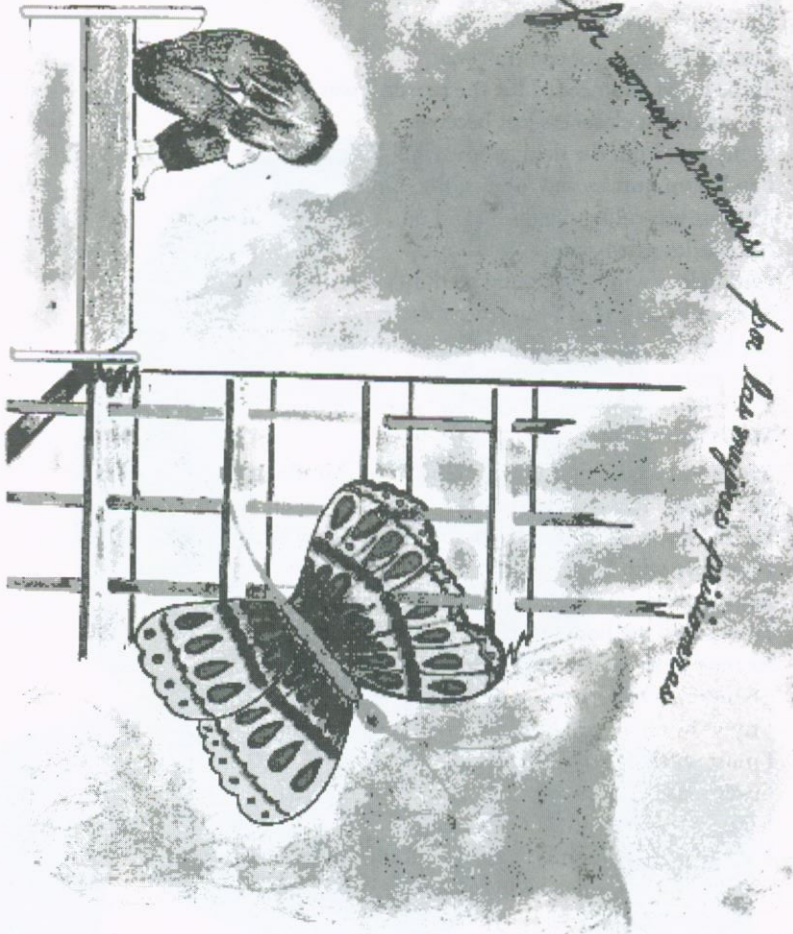


Beverly "Chopper" Henry

Dimetrius Kimble

My Reality

Once upon a time in 1998,
I once lived and just couldn't wait
To be loved and needed for the person I was,
I wanted that closeness just because.
In my past I ran the field and played life's games,
I ended up hurt by the fun just the same.
My past was ruling me inside and out,
No one knew what this was about.
I fell in love with a woman who didn't care,
She was beautiful and was always there.
We both had drug habits but dealt with them well,
One steamy night our passion couldn't tell.
The difference between "safe" or "right" or "wrong,"
Now I pay the price my whole life long.
My mother was upset by the thought of this illness,
She asked, "How could you give in to such unsafe willingness?"
I didn't know what to tell her and didn't know what to do,
I now live with HIV my whole life through.
My kids were confused and it scared them the most,
How could my body have such a dangerous host?
As time went by I ended up in jail,
On my way to prison was my next time in hell!!
I try to live long and healthy and not miss my meds,
I must watch what I eat and rest in my bed.
Sustiva, Epivir, Retrovir now rule and dictate,
My every emotion and control my fate.
I'll love myself and fill the world with laughter,
Only then will Dimetrius live happily ever after.....



One of the AIDS Quilt panels sewn by the women prisoners at FCI-Dublin

Gretchen Schumacher

The Ganky Jo

My past slipped by me, but always I would remember the year when in my youth I was sold to the Japanese Yaku sa (mafia) for the purposes of whatever they wanted. I grew up quickly from then on. Sometimes, I don't recall yesterday but I remember Marianne.

I had been in Japan for awhile before I ran into Marianne. I had experienced some rough times with the Japanese attitudes towards "aliens" in their country — especially Americans. After all, we did drop a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, and it did leave horrible scars for this generation to see. Due to this attitude, I was learning to be tough and to fight.

Yet, when I met Marianne, I no longer felt alone and unprotected. She was what I needed in my life, a soft and sweet companion. We met at a ganky jo (theater) in Shinju ku. She was headed up the stairs, and I was headed down. I stopped to look at her and to catch my breath; she was such a beautiful woman. Her skin was tan, and her hair with streaks of blonde was styled so that as she moved, it moved with her never falling out of place.

"Hello," I said.

"Hi," she smiled with perfectly white teeth—Dazzling!

"Whoa, you speak English!" I wanted to follow her anywhere. Maybe just to talk. Maybe just to be seen with someone as out there and WOW as she was. Mostly, I just didn't want to be alone anymore. The isolation of being me, blonde hair, blue eyes, and female in Japan was just more than I wanted to be.

"Of course!" Her voice laughed at me. "What did you think I would speak?"

"This is Japan, you could speak anything." I quickly said, even though I was happy to be the cause of her laughter. "I'm glad you speak English. Would you go out with me sometime?" "Yes."

"How about dinner?" My heart raced and I was hoping that she could not see my nervousness. "Okay."

Excited, I started down the stairs again. "Oh, I'll meet you back here in a couple of hours!" I turned back as she turned back to see me.

What I was doing at the Ganky jo, was picking up Rose to take her out to lunch. She was from Manila. She was saving her money for her poor family. Rose was on stage doing her closing number when I reached the stage dressing room where I waited for her. Stage shows were off limits to watch, and none of us needed to be a part of someone else's act.

"Hi!" Rose came off the stage in a little outfit that barely covered her young and vibrant body. "I didn't think you would come today?"

"I said I would." She changed while we talked. "How was your stage?" "It was packed!"

"Well at least this business is good." I looked at Rose. She looked sexy in her half shirt, jeans, and sandals. "You ready to get out of here?" "Yeah." She grabbed her purse. "Just let me drop this stuff off."

Together we walked down to the nearest all Japanese cooking dive where I ate pot stickers and drank beer. Rose ate a big lunch as if she hadn't eaten in days. I watched her eat and thought about other girls like Rose who were trapped into this business in order to support their families. How different her situation was from mine.

I was tricked into going to Japan, and for a minute, I wondered if that was really what happened in Rose's case as well. How I became the property of the Yaku sa is something that happened because I was so unaware of so much. When I got off the airplane, I discovered that I was bought for only a thousand dollars. I was picked up by two funny looking gentlemen, and my first impression was that this would be alright. I guess what fooled me was the green pants and blue girl shoes that my manager was wearing. His assistant wasn't dressed so carelessly, so I assumed he was the one in charge. I just couldn't be right. Maybe it was because I was only eighteen years old, and so very inexperienced.

The Ganky jo that owned me was also located in Shinju ku, but I was currently on vacation. This was not normal. The Yaku sa didn't give us vacations. I got my vacation because I broke the rules, and they didn't know how to control me. Sometimes I think that Marianne was the weapon they used to gain back the control they had to have. I stepped out of line when I left ten thousand yen in the dressing room of my Ganky jo, and walked out. Automatically my manager Shorty was able to collect for my sets, which was a 130,000 yen. I had to take that chance. I had to run.

What I was running away from was "the glamour life". As an American, I was the star attraction. It didn't matter what I did on the stage, I was a novelty, and what we did on stage was live sex shows for twenty minutes, four times a day (six times on

weekends). Mostly what they paid to see was nakedness. In Japan, it was illegal to show certain body parts. We showed them all.

When I ran off, I thought they couldn't find me. Being their star, and their property, they had my return air ticket. They collected my money. I was broke and I couldn't leave, I couldn't afford to. I didn't go to the government, and I didn't know where the American Embassy was, but I was afraid to find out anyway. I knew full well that the police were bought and paid for by the Yaku sa, maybe they were in control of all the governments. I just tried not to draw attention to myself. I had a plan when I left the Ganky jo that day. I had a job in a bar. They call it a snack, we call it a bar. My job would be to drink with the customers. I was still entertaining the people but I didn't make nearly enough money so I lived on the streets.

"I'm going home soon." Rose interrupted my thoughts. I noticed it was time for Rose to get back to work. "You've got enough money?" I asked. "Oh no. I'm coming back." She sighed. "I just need a break from all this." She gestured to the surroundings and got up. "Are you ready to walk me back to my lusting customers?"

I stood up, and we left the restaurant. The street was narrow and we found ourselves walking comfortably in silence. When we arrived back, Rose kissed me quickly. "Thanks for lunch" she told me before she went inside.

With nothing else to do, I stood waiting for the beautiful girl I met on the stairs earlier to come out. "Hey! I forgot to introduce myself." She came out. "I'm Marie. I'd like to take you to this restaurant just across the street." "Okay, and my name is Marianne."

We crossed the four-lane street, the widest street in all of Tokyo, by taking the overhead pedestrian bridge. I was taking Marianne to the fiftieth floor of one of the new tower buildings to a place called "The Top Hat". Only the rich could afford to go there, but I was rich. Dressed in rags but rich. I had gone back to the Yaku sa and ended my run by negotiating a different contract. The new arrangement with the Yaku sa included giving me more money, and the current vacation I was on. Meeting Marianne became the highlight of my time off.

"So, how long have you been in Japan?" I asked as we walked on. "Oh not long."

"I have been here for quite awhile now and seen quite a few cities. I especially enjoyed Sanyo. There're green trees, and mountains surrounding that small town. It's like stepping into a whole other world! You can just imagine that was the way it was back in the days of the Samari. It's really laid back, and the people are all nice too, even though they know that we are with the Ganky jo." I was nervous because

I had never been in love before, and I just knew that I was in love with Marianne. It didn't matter that she was a woman, and so was I. "I'm just rambling."

"No, I'm interested in knowing all that I can, really." She made me feel less nervous. "Okay, see those buildings?" "Of course."

"It's the latest. What the Japanese tend to do is borrow ideas from around the world, and improve on them. You'll find out that on this island, there are a lot of natural disasters, and so buildings are now being built to handle earthquakes."

We stepped into another world when we entered the second building of the three tower buildings. We took an escalator to the second floor. As a kid escalators fascinated me, and as an adult they still did. However, on the second floor we had to take an elevator to get to the top. At the top the elevator doors opened, and right there you were at the entrance to "The Top Hat".

"This is it," I told Marianne. "You're not dressed right." She looked at me. "Are you sure this is where you want to go?" "Yes!" I smiled, "I am an American, it doesn't matter how I am dressed."

As if on cue, the Maitre D' was there, "Ah, it is you. Come." He gestured for us to enter. "Welcome." "Domo," I politely bowed. "No food — too early for food." We were seated.

"So when is it not too early for food?" I knew the Maitre D' wanted to practice his English, and my Japanese wasn't all that wonderful anyway. "Later — maybe — and nay ah, wakina ni! Roko go ah, wa ka do?"

"Waka do, I understand, Hai!"

"A bottle of red wine maybe?" It was a custom to drink a lot and I would have the wine. Also in keeping with the custom, we would leave our wine glasses half full for a glass is to never be empty.

"Shall we go to the Ginza?" I asked Marianne, after we drank a glass of wine.

The Ginza was packed with shoppers, all in a typical hurry to get somewhere. Everywhere in Japan is packed. The island of Hokkaido is about the size of Montana, and the population was half the size of America in comparison. We strolled slowly, and checked out various shops. I stopped to play Pac Man at the first video arcade. As we walked away from the arcade, I saw a woman who obviously didn't belong to Japan, having a struggle with five Nipponese young men. This concerned me because when I first arrived in this country, I was beat up right outside the Ganky jo and while I was down on the ground being kicked by my assailant, I watched two

cops just walk by laughing. I could not allow this woman to be harmed.

I walked over to the woman. "Are these guys bothering you?" She just looked at me. "Do you want them to stop bothering you?" The woman replied in a language I didn't understand, but Marianne did, and she was right beside me ready to translate. "No she doesn't want these guys bothering her, they have been following her. She says, they say stuff to her that she doesn't understand. She can't get rid of them, and it has been going on now for three blocks."

I can get rid of them, I thought, as I stepped up to the closest one, and kicked him right in the stomach with all of my strength. "Baka"—"Gai jin," they proceeded to call me names.

"Come on assholes! You wanna play?" I taunted them. I spoke only English just to remind them that I would not pretend to be one of their passive women. They all decided to run away. "Now, I'm hungry." I looked at Marianne, "would you ask our new friend here if she'd like to join us for dinner?" "Yes," she answered before Marianne could translate.

We walked down the Ginza to the entrance. I was leading the way back to the Top Hat when Marianne asked me, "do you know what they were saying?" I laughed. "Oh just that I'm an ugly fool." "Is that why you wanted to take on five guys?" "No, I was only needing to scare them." I laughed some more. "I've been beaten up before, and I didn't like it. They don't play." We walked on in silence for a moment. "They would have raped her." Again the silence settled in.

"But there were people everywhere," Marianne pointed out, and her innocence showed.

"We don't belong here. No one will come to a gai jin's rescue if we get into a jam. Do you think some little nip woman will even look when her boyfriend wants to fuck one of us? Only if he wants her to!" I was getting a bit angry. "They think we want to be treated like that because we are foreigners, and we work at the Ganky jo. They all know we are there the minute we roll into town. Besides, we aren't virgins. If we were, the Yaku sa took care of that, and you know it."

Silently we walked for awhile down and through the underground city because it is less congested, and rather fascinating. You can go down under at any point in the city, and unless you know your way around, you will get lost. In the underground city there are shops and stores just like up above. The difference is you never get rained on while shopping underground.

"Did you know what you were getting into?" Usually we didn't talk about the circumstances surrounding how we came to be in Japan. I had to ask, "did you

have any idea when you got here?" "No" was all she answered, then hung her head as if in shame, and the silence slowly crept in.

"Yeah," I hung my head too, for suddenly it was just too heavy to hold up.

Chapter 2

At the table for four we were seated by the window with a view of the Shinju ku Buddha Temple. A fascinating view, but I was more interested in Marianne. She was gorgeous with her light brown hair, brown eyes with long eye lashes, and short like me.

"I want you to know that you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my whole life!" Suddenly I felt brave.

"Thank you." "She," I pointed to our friend, "can't really understand me can she?"

"No, she can't." She paused. "Her name is Juanetta."

"I want to be with you." "O.K." was all she said.

"I don't think you understand, I want you as in for my partner." I looked into Marianne's deep brown eyes, "as in, I'm sexually attracted to you. I don't quite understand it myself, but I want you!"

"O.K."

"Have you ever been with a woman before?" "No."

"Am I scaring you?" "No, it's O.K. I like you too." She went on eating the food that arrived during our conversation. "This is really good." And she smiled that beautiful smile.

Marianne communicated with our companion. She learned that the Damsel in Distress was staying at a hostel beyond the Ginza — I knew the one.

"Would you walk Juanetta back to where she is staying?" Marianne asked me.

"You can't come too?"

"No, I have to go back soon."

"Yes, I will." I laid on the most charming smile that I could. "Can I come back for

you?”

“Come back after my last stage — I have two more left.”

“When?”

“I’m last, I close the place down. So you know when?”

“I’ll be there!” I would never forget when the show closes having been the last act many times.

When we got up to go Juanetta tried to give me money for her food.

“No, it’s on me.” She giggled as I smiled. “Marianne did you tell her I’d walk her to the hostel?”

“Yes, and she thinks you are her hero — but I told her that you are only hitting on me, and wished to impress me.” Her voice laughed at me again. She knew my intentions, and I did not scare her. Yes! My heart jumped.

Outside it was still daylight — and in America it was still yesterday. Sometimes I missed home. I would listen to midnight radio just to hear the Star Spangled Banner — I would never cry though.

After I dropped Juanetta off I went to my snack. The bar was located in the basement of a building not far away from the Shinju ku Ganky jo. At one time I was foolish enough to believe it was my best hiding place. It was where I felt at home, and had family.

I remember when I used the entrance pay phone to call an American friend who had a small apartment just outside of Tokyo. Usually she wasn’t home.

“Mushi Mushi,” Janet had answered the phone.

“It’s me. What’s the damage?”

“They’re looking for you. Why don’t you come back? It’s not too late.” No. I felt I had to make my break — and ran away.

“I can’t.” I hung up.

The memory faded. So much had changed since that phone call. I was back. When I entered the bar, it was as if I had never left, and nothing had changed. My

Japanese family was always happy to see me.

“Marie!” Ori San my beautiful sister rushed me. She seemed butch but I had never seen her with a lover, so I never knew what she was into. She pushed me into the bar and announced something in Japanese. The music from the live band stopped. The band consisted of four guys who taught me dirty words. I was home again!

I took a seat at a table with the Mamma San, an older yet very attractive Japanese woman. Unmarried, so still a virgin — as was custom. The band members loved it when I’d try my new vocabulary out on her, cause sometimes she would slap me.

“Marie!” Mamma San put her arms around me. “Doko Anata?” (Where were you?) She didn’t speak very much English, and I didn’t speak too much Japanese.

“The Ganky jo.”

“Domay!” No good she told me. Everyone knew the Yaku sa was my master. We didn’t talk about it. One night the master of this Snack ordered me to sit with an older Japanese man.

Back when I had been on the run and worked at the Snack it was my job to dance and sit with the customers. The men would grab my breast so I danced mostly with the women who would giggle but never refuse cause I was an American. For an American cup of coffee they paid higher prices, how could one refuse to dance with an American?

I didn’t want to sit alone with the older Japanese man, but I had no choice. He was unusually big for a Japanese, and he was dressed typically professional.

“Hello.” He offered me his hand. I took it. “I was hoping you’d sit with me so I could practice my English.”

“You don’t need practice!” I said as I poured more whiskey in his glass and filled my own from his bottle.

“Yes,” he took a drink and I wondered if he would ever take the gloves off his hands. “I wanted to tell you a story.”

“O.K. I’m all ears.” I smiled and thought, “but keep your hands off my body please.” For some reason this customer was an important one so I knew I couldn’t do anything about it if he wanted to touch me.

“There was this young guy who was with the Yaku. He killed a few people because

he was told to, and he didn't like to have to do it. So he ran away. They caught him. They were very angry with him, so you know what they did to him?"

"Did they kill him?" I asked.

"No, he was important to the Yaku sa. They would never kill him — but they needed him to learn a lesson, so they cut off his pinky."

"Interesting story, thanks for telling me. Now I should probably dance with another customer so I don't get in trouble for sitting with you too long." I got up.

"Please sit, you won't get in trouble." He downed his whiskey. "Besides I am a customer, and my glass is empty." I filled his glass and sat down. "There is more to the story."

"I'm sorry. Of course I want to hear it all."

"Now the young man went back to work for the Yaku sa but he didn't have to kill any more people. Instead they had him running pay-offs to the police and other parts of the government." He drank more whiskey as if he was totally enjoying the whiskey. "But he still didn't feel right about what he was a part of — so he ran away again."

"Did they catch him again?" I hoped not.

"Yes, they did. Do you know what they did to him?"

"No, did they kill him?" I asked.

"Do you want the young man to die?"

"Absolutely not, but what else was left to do with a guy who doesn't want to stay?"

"They cut off his other finger. And he ran away again. And they caught him."

"O.K. And they cut off another finger?" I asked.

"Yes." He seemed pleased with me. "You are now catching on. And the young man went back to work — a few more killings — a few more pay-offs, you know how it goes — so he ran away again — to be caught and lost another finger."

"That's all his fingers on one hand. So did he learn yet not to run away?" I had to ask.

"No."

"After all that he ran away again?"

"So you've heard this story?" He drank some more.

"No. Just guessing." I smiled and drank til my glass was empty, then filled it back up. On the table in a glass were chocolate covered pretzel sticks that I began to munch on. Feeling at ease with this man because he never laid a hand on me once during the course of the evening. It didn't look like he would.

"O.K. so he ran away and got caught. Now do you know what they did to him?"

"This time they killed him."

"No. They cut off his other pinky."

"He got another chance to lose more fingers?" I was shocked at the news.

"Yes. As I said, he was very important to the Yaku sa, so they would not kill him."

"So did he stop running away yet?" I really was interested in this story, and didn't really see the connection it had to me — yet.

"As a matter of fact, he ran away one more time." He told me.

"Why?"

"Because he hoped the Yaku sa would lose interest in him, but they never did. They caught him again, it took longer, but they always find who they're looking for. And again he lost a finger.

"So tell me, how do you know this story anyway?" I asked my customer.

"Well, you see, I am that young man."

"No you aren't — you have hands with all the right fingers."

He took off the glove of his left hand and showed me — it was fake. "I got a new hand. I don't remove my gloves so you can't see how I'm missing some fingers."

"Marie!" Mamma San interrupted the memory. "Bonsai Marie, Bonsai!" She raised her glass.

"Hai Mamma San, Hai! I lifted my glass to hers. "Domo Arigato." We drank to the toast, and laughed to life. Yes, Bonsai! I had survived the test.

I looked at my watch, it was late, in fact I was late. I ran out of the snack, up the stairs two at a time, and down the road. I was afraid Marianne would be gone. She was there. The closed Ganky jo was dark and locked up, but she had waited for me.

"Hey!" I smiled. "I'm sorry I'm late. I was seeing some old friends. In fact, I just ran out of there to see you."

"It's O.K. I was talking to the stage boss until he had to lock up." The purse she carried she handed to me. "So, what do you want to do?"

Oh I wanted to run away with you, and marry you — but it's probably too soon to tell you that. I turned around and started to walk back the way I came, Marianne had to follow, I had her purse. "Let me introduce you to some people. You'll have fun! I promise." I stopped to look into Marianne's eyes. "They are my Japanese family. You'll love these people." I smiled all the time when I was with Marianne. She was all I wanted, and she liked me too.

We went back to the Snack where everyone made Marianne feel like she belonged. I could tell they loved her — maybe they could tell I loved her.

Amy Stout

Getting Free

I come here about six months ago and I'll be here a while longer. Longer than that if I trip up. But so far I've gone along with the program so I think I'll be out on time. Ever since I come in I've had such a hole in my heart you wouldn't believe. Something just eats away at me. It's there when I wake up and there when I go to bed. I'd sleep it away if I could, but I'm nervous during the day and so I can't sleep. I just try to get through every minute even when the minute feels as solid as a brick inside of me.

Ralph comes to visit me every month. I don't know why he comes half the time, to tell you the truth. I tell him he doesn't have to come just because I'm his mother. Most of the time he just sits and stares at me, not saying anything. I don't know what in the world to ask him, so I ask him the same thing every month. How's work? How's the kid? How's anything? He gives me his answers in one word or less and then we're back to staring at each other again. Sometimes I sneak a look at the other inmates to see what they're doing with their loved ones, and I see them talking away like I think Ralph and I should be. But we never did have much to say to one another. Not since he grew up anyway. He was very sweet when he was small. He really was. He's laughing in almost every picture I have of him. I don't know how he got so shifty as an adult.

Seeing as Ralph is the only company I get that I don't seek out — because I am stuck with three other people in one room — I do get a little lonely. Actually, I get very lonely. I'm not much of a reader, though Lord knows I have tried to read in this place. I went straight to the library when I arrived, all ready to check out books, but I just couldn't find one that would hold my attention very long. The noise in here is constant and unnerving. Doors slam, people shout at one another, the prison machines turn and turn endlessly.

Then I got the idea to put an ad in the paper for a pen-pal. I wanted something a little romantic, too. The kind of letter I'd really look forward to reading, you know? It would be much better than a book because, of course, it would be real. The hard part was writing the ad, because I wanted to attract just the right sort of person. I didn't want someone who wrote to a lot of inmates because then I wouldn't be special. And I didn't want some old lady who was just doing it to be charitable and would ramble on about her flower garden page after page. I wanted someone I could really talk to, someone who could remind me of what life was like on the outside. I crawled out of bed where I was lying, holding my gut because of that hole inside of me, and worked on an advertisement for myself.

“Middle-aged woman seeks romantic friendship with person not currently incarcerated. All races welcome.”

I liked that part of the races. It would show them right up front that I was open minded. There's a lot of racism in prison and people always seem to know that, but I'm different. I always taught Ralph different, too. All races really were welcome. I didn't care if someone from China wrote me back, just so long as she spoke English. So I sealed up my ad and mailed it off to the newspaper.

When Ralph came to visit I told him about the pen pal idea. I hoped he'd be pleased. But he just said,

— What kind of lunatic would want to write to someone in prison?

I reminded him that he never did like writing letters, even thank-you notes, and that a lot of women liked to write letters to one another.

— Yeah, well what kind of friendship are you looking for?

He looked at me with those rat-eyes of his father's. He never liked me going with women, probably because I didn't start until he was old enough to have an opinion about it. I told him I was just looking for something nice, maybe a little romantic, but harmless. I tried to explain that I was all alone in here, that I was starved for a little human understanding. I didn't get through to him, as usual, and he just rolled his eyes.

It took forever to get a response. The letter came from Michigan, which I've never been to. It was neatly written on paper that had little flowers etched on it around the edges. That was very nice, I thought. I set it carefully aside waiting for the other letters to come so I could select the one that I liked the most. I waited a month, expecting letters every day. But I only got the one response. Can you believe it? I thought surely I'd get more, but I only got one.

“Dear Dawn,

I liked your name, so I chose you to write to. Your ad was too short to say much. How old are you? Why are you in prison? What kinds of things do you think are romantic? I am 23. I just finished college last year, but I couldn't find a job so I am cleaning houses. Did you go to college? If so, where? I studied sociology. It's pretty useless but I studied hard all the same.

Romantic for me is watching a good movie. Do you get movies in prison? I also like walking along the water. Where are you from? Do they have beaches there?

OK, I've asked you enough questions for now. Please write back soon. Yours is the only ad I answered, but if you don't write back I'll probably try another. Why do you want a pen-pal? Is it hard to find people to talk to in prison?

Sincerely, Wanda"

That was her letter. Just full of questions. Still, it gave me somewhere to begin. This was a brand-new friendship with nothing screwed up about it. Why did she want a pen-pal? I wondered. Well, I would ask her. I worked on my letter for days. I told her how I'd been in for six months, and that Ralph came to visit me every month. I told her I'd cleaned houses for a job once, too, but I didn't go to college. In fact, I wasn't quite sure I knew what sociology was. I didn't tell her why I was in here; I just skipped that question.

I told her the important stuff — that I was 5'7" of medium build with blond hair and blue eyes. I told her I liked movies, but that the most romantic thing for me was making dinner for someone special. I asked her what she looked like and could she send a picture? I ran out of things to say pretty quick, unfortunately, so I kept working on the letter. One day I wrote a lot. I wrote about how lonely it was in here, how I missed the sunshine and the sky, and doing what I wanted, and cooking for myself. I told her I missed having someone next to me, waking up next to someone and having someone to kiss in the mornings. I mailed the letter before I was too chicken to follow through.

Wanda wrote back right away, full of stories. She didn't send a picture, but she said she was small and dark-haired with glasses. Glasses! I hadn't expected that. She told me about the bar scene where she lived in Michigan, about some of the characters that hung out there. Her letter was the closest thing to love I'd felt in a long, long time, and I began working on a new one right away. I told her about where I was from, my brothers and my grandmother who'd grown every kind of vegetable imaginable. I told her about Ralph's dad, how he was no good, but how I'd loved him anyway for a while. And I told her how I wanted to get out of this place and get a job, and this time I would just enjoy living and not ask for too much, not get into trouble.

We wrote back and forth for months. I worked so hard on those letters! I even went to the library to get information for Wanda. I wanted to tell her about my hometown, so I looked it up in a book about industry and found out that soybeans and hogs were the main sellers. I knew she'd like this because she went to college. I filled my letters with information about me, everything I'd ever thought about saying to someone but never had anyone to say it to. Wanda's letters worked on me like the tide, pulling out emotions I never thought I'd share.

After a while Wanda asked if she could visit me here. I didn't know what to say. I was excited and scared at the same time. What would she think of me? She was near Ralph's age! I'd seem so old to her. And I didn't look so good having been in here for a while. I was pale and the food wasn't good. I'd lost weight and the skin was hanging on me a little. But the thought of seeing her, so young and healthy, and after all we'd shared! I asked Ralph on his next visit what he thought.

— Your pen-pal? Who the hell is she?

Just a girl, I told him, about his age, who wants to come all the way from Michigan to see me.

— Michigan? Who would drive three states to see someone they never met in prison?

I tried to tell him that we'd been writing letters, that we'd gotten to know each other real well.

— You'd like her, I pleaded, knowing full well that wasn't true.

— Why're you asking me? he asked, bored.

I told him I wanted his opinion, to know what he thought.

— Yeah, I don't care if your girlfriend comes. Is that what she is, your girlfriend?

— No, not really, just a friend, I told him.

So I'd tell her to come — I was so excited. I didn't care what Ralph thought anyway. He only visited out of habit anymore. After he left I began a letter immediately inviting her to visit.

Wanda's response came quickly. She'd drive to see me in a month and stay somewhere nearby. The days went by so slowly. I couldn't wait for Wanda's arrival. People must have noticed a difference in me. I started caring more about my appearance, combing my hair and washing my face in the mornings. I even tried to eat a little more of the food, mostly soggy soy products and limp vegetables, to fill out before she arrived.

Finally, the day came. I hated that I was in prison clothes, which were so humiliating. I tried to look my best that day. Out in the visitor's waiting room I sat patiently waiting for someone small and dark, with glasses. Just after visiting hours began she came through the door. She was just as she'd said; I recognized her right away.

— Wanda! I said. Over here!

And I waved my arm frantically, getting her attention. She smiled and took the chair across from me.

— Dawn. It's you. Wow!

She reached out her hand and shook mine.

— It's nice to meet you.

I just looked at her, mute, marveling at our meeting and wondering what to say.

— I got your letter, I said.

— Yeah, I got yours, she replied.

And we both sat in silence not knowing where to begin.

* * * * *

That was three years ago and Wanda still came to visit me whenever she could. We wrote letters even when we'd run out of things to say. It's a strange feeling, being so close to someone you've barely touched and never even kissed. She gave me a piece of the outside every time she visited or wrote me a letter.

We talked about getting together when I got out. Wanda wanted me to come to Michigan to stay with her. But what about Ralph? I wondered. The idea of actually building a relationship on what we had scared the devil out of me. We were so close, don't get me wrong. In some ways Wanda knew me better than anyone. But she didn't know the life I'd had. The real life — the stuff you have to contend with day to day — not just what makes sense in a letter.

Still, I thought I'd go to Michigan with her. I couldn't stand the idea of saying no, after all this time, to her sweet openness. Moving away would give me the chance to start a new life. I knew her friends must think she was crazy for inviting me to live with her. I wanted to prove her right for believing in me. I wanted to show her she'd done the right thing by writing to me. Wanda said she'd be waiting at the gate when I got out. Ralph said he wasn't coming if Wanda was going to be there.

— What's the point if you're just going to run off with your girlfriend? He asked.

I tried not to care, and just thought about Wanda in her glasses ready to take me home to a place I'd never been.

She was there at 11:00 a.m. alright, standing in front of a midnight blue Chevy across from the prison gates. I couldn't believe it was really happening. Wanda looked like she'd just stepped out of the sea, unencumbered by any of the heaviness that had been dogging me those long years on the inside. It was like I'd known her forever and this was any ordinary day. I stopped two feet from her and just stared, dropping my bag on the ground.

— I got your letter, I said. I thought I would cry, but before I had a chance she took my hand and pulled me close to her, giving me the most long-awaited kiss the world has ever known.

Maria Talag

What Can I Call This Time?

What can I call this time ????

Away from the world of freedom

Sequestered in a cell ... a cold box

human storage place...

like unwanted furniture ...

unfit, different and awaiting remodeling ...

awaiting a space that would accept such altered beings ...

What can I call this time ... ????

is it a time of penance ...

is it time to grow up ...

or is it just time to kill the old self and be reborn to a new life ...

is there an answer to my question ... ???

I guess for now, only time can tell ...

thereafter I would know what to call this time.



Maria Talag

Blessed Are You Woman

Blessed are you woman...

... from your womb comes life...

Blessed are you woman...

... caretakers and nurturers of the earth...

Blessed are you woman...

... often used, abused and unjustly slaughtered ...

Blessed are you woman...

... despite of all the odds against you, your spirit lives on ...

Blessed are you woman...

... forever...

Melanie Vicheck

Love Without Fear

I feel like I am going crazy. Everywhere I went I searched for you. Looking, just to catch a glimpse of the face of the face I've studied for so long ... trying to memorize each line, each soft curve. The gentleness of your beautiful smile, the slight cockiness of your eyes after you have brought me to my knees.

I saw you today. Up on the stairs, just watching. I ached to run to you. It took everything I had to keep walking. I longed to race up beside you, to hear your voice ... your thoughts. To once again hear that you feel the same, that I am not alone in this longing. To know I am not crazy, this need to be near, the wanting more than time can allow is shared.

Pretending not to want you, to need you like this — is tearing me apart. I know it has to be like this, have accepted as much. A single wrong move could have both our worlds, together and separate, crashing down around us. A single slip and my chance of a life outside of here would be gone and your life, your chance would be lost also. Neither one of us forgiving ourselves for the danger we placed the other in. And yet, like the moth of a flame, we are drawn to one another.

You are here, my life, my love. I only hear your voice and I ache with the need of you, wet with wanting you. Remembering your lips and hands from the other evening. At first so sweet and gentle as if I were your delicate love. Showing without words how you feel. Then hungry with desire. I can still feel you, still see the look in your eyes.

After all my searching, you are here. It seems as if all my life I've been searching for you. Only to have found you here. My heart soared from the sight of you. I ran to the door just to catch your eyes, that secret look we share—one that needs no words, no interpretations. You gave me that smile. You know the one, you say you don't, but you do. That one that goes straight through me, makes my blood flow, my breath quicken. So much control you have over my body, my soul.

I was caught in your eyes as you stared of me. I saw the longing that mirrored my own. It made me want you more than I thought could be possible. When your name was called your expression changed. You were torn between fulfilling what you have to do and staying here with me.

This heart that you hold in your hands aches for you, wishing things were different. Is it too much to be allowed to let us love one another. To love without fear of repercussions. I see the longing in your eyes — those beautiful blue eyes that have captured me.

I want to scream out my love for you. Never having to hide it. Never again to search for only the merest glimpse of you and it never being enough. Missing you even when you are here because we never seem to be close enough. Never having to see that longing because I'll always be there or to hear your desperate whispers of us to be careful or your plea to me to remember I am always on your mind.

I want ... I want so much ... so much to be different. For us to have a normal life. Why can't we have this? All because I had to protect my young? Should my punishment be not to be able to love you openly? Isn't just being here enough?

I love you so desperately ... I need you. It's torture not being able to be close to you, knowing you feel the same.

Please my love wait for me. One day it will be different for us. To myself, I promise you this. I'll find you outside of these walls. One day, my darling, we will love without fear.

Bella Donna Night Raven

A Letter from Donna

I am a 43 years young male-to-female transgendered prisoner doing a life sentence in the prison system. None of my fellow prisoners know I am transgendered, but that could change at any time. My case and transgender status got a lot of attention in the media and has also been mentioned in a few books. I have been aware of my transgender feelings all my life. When I was 15, I got sent to an adult prison, where I was raped and assaulted several times. Somehow, I got tough and made it out by the time I was 21. I didn't get any help for my gender dysphoria back then, and, as a result, I was very confused. I tried to fit into my assigned gender role, living on the streets, but there were many side trips to my female side. I bought and got rid of a lot of clothes, makeup, etc.

I got married, had a child, and got divorced, in short order. I was a custodial single parent for a long time, and had to suppress my true gender identity to keep custody of my child. I stayed out of trouble for a long time, but my life was a wreck, and I was so unhappy. By my mid-thirties, I could no longer suppress my transgender self, and the dual life I was living was causing me legal and mental problems. Eventually, I became a fugitive, and while on the run, I joined a support group and started my transition. I got black market and herbal hormones, and I was building a history under an assumed name to get the rest of the package, including the surgery.

My legal problems caught up with me, and here I am. While I have been locked up, I continued my quest to become me, Donna, get the proper treatment, find safe living conditions, and the freedom to be who I am. I have tried to contact many transgender groups and persons, without much luck, and it has been a long and lonely struggle going it alone. I read with great hope of the recent developments in Canada and elsewhere regarding gender reassignment surgery. I have also explored the spiritual side of being transgendered and become a Wicca or Witch. I have found a great deal of acceptance in the Wicca/Pagan community towards transgendered persons. I have also found a lot of historical and mythical transgendered figures in many different cultures. Being Wicca has given me a spiritual outlet for my inner self.

I am a member of the IFGE (International Foundation for Gender Education), and I plan on joining Interweave, a branch of the Unitarian Church that promotes gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) concerns. I would also like to join the AGIC, especially if you have a low-income membership available. I don't want my being a prisoner to keep me from becoming an active and positive member of the transgender community. I also do not want to just be a crybaby and wait for someone

to rescue me from my troubles. I know that to get anything done, we have to get up and do something about it. I want to write articles and maybe a book on gender issues. I want to challenge the *status quo* and the lack of treatment, and most especially the mistreatment, of GLBT prisoners and people on the outside. I write regularly to Roni S., who used to publish a newsletter for incarcerated transsexuals, but she had to give it up due to expenses and lack of help. I could write a lot more, but I don't want to ramble on too much. Then again, I hate to waste a stamp, and some of the information might prove useful to the other readers and subscribers. For example, the information that was published about the Farmer v. Hawk case, regarding treatment, has been superseded by a later case, in which the court ruled that treatment issues for prisoners suffering from gender identity disorders was not limited to just the hormones and surgery. I will try to look up the citation later and include it in this letter.

I believe that there is the potential for a class action suit on behalf of all transgendered inmates on the treatment issue. I have read in great detail the Farmer case, and while she has some very good arguments she was also vulnerable to certain positions taken by the government. One of their strategies was to move her around a lot, with the intent of rendering her claim moot, or no longer relevant to the facts as they were originally presented. This is a typical legal ploy that they use to avoid the issue. A class action suit would avoid that pitfall, and it would attract more supporting testimony, revealing a systematic pattern of abuses. That is just one idea.

We also need to mandate better safety and security policies for at-risk prisoners and seek ways to ease the overcrowding in general. A lot of the so-called protections that are supposed to be in place are circumvented or ignored in the shuffling and the warehousing that goes on in our prison systems. And the practice of throwing prisoners in the "hole" when they ask for protection has got to stop. In my prison and most other facilities, more prisoners are assaulted, raped, or killed in the hole than in the yard. The prison authorities need to know that someone is looking over their shoulders and will scream bloody murder when it happens. I have seen with my own eyes how openly gay prisoners are treated. I wouldn't treat a dog the way they are treated. They are constantly subject to being abused, assaulted, and harassed.

Predatory behavior is often overlooked and unofficially tolerated, to the extent that some of the more vulnerable inmates are bought, sold and traded like chattel. If they resist or fight back, they are punished and sometimes killed. The question becomes, what can we do about it? Whatever can be done, it has to start with our brothers and sisters on the outside getting the word out. We, as prisoners, are limited in what we can do, beyond reporting the abuses and the lack of treatment. Sometimes, it is all we can do just to survive another day.

I found my copy of Farmer v. Hawk, 991, F. Supp. 19. The rest is Case No. 1 (s) Civil Action No. 192-1690 (GK) US District Court, District of Columbia. I do have an extensive collection of case law from transgender related cases, but at the moment, it is rather disorganized. I would be willing to share it anyone who can have it copied and sent back by an attorney using legal mail. It represents many hours of research and a lot of problems getting copies made. At one time, I was a very busy preparing for my lawsuit, but I got bogged down and distracted by the appeals process for my criminal case. I had to put the other on the back burner. I am ready and eager to get going on it again, and with a little help and organization on the outside, we could accomplish a lot. Well, sister friend, I hope to hear from you soon. In the meantime, take care and keep up the good work.

Victoria Angelica Voaden

Hope...

Hope! Four letters that changed my entire life from the pits to paradise!

Been “locked” since September ’91... YEP — worked ten full calendar years already ... Loving women in prison has been the best AND the worst experience of my life. Many women are in the “wanna be” class. They come to prison and “wanna be” had — something NEW to do to pass the time ... so SAD!

Then there are those of us that come to prison ... Those with hearts full of tragedy, pain, remorse and regrets. Accused and convicted long before we EVER have a trial or the “alleged” day in court.

In years the pain of sheer loneliness was the only “game” in town ... Then WOW Hope came!

HOPE...

Happiness

Opportunity

Peace

Endurance...

Not the false Hope of so many “sisters” promises, aspirations and alleged dreams. REAL Hope — based on love, acceptance, understanding, honesty and trust. The lifeblood of future dreams to base forever on!

My Hope is my knight in shining armor (OK — she drives a red car.) My hope is the fulfillment of longings deep in my soul (OK — she LOVES me.) My Hope is five feet one and full of fun!!! (OK she’s petite!)

Hope brings sunshine and happiness to my dreary prison cell. She rescued me from the depths of despair and depression. Hope shared the amazing life’s breath to my decaying soul. Hope rendered me capable of again loving, living, and dreaming of a REAL future.

Just as in the REAL WORLD (as we call the outside from within), loving a woman in prison depends on the quality of the woman you love. I want to thank Hope for being my everything — for showing me love, acceptance and peace within the razor-wire world of doubt, despair and depression. Hope YOU have brought me from the depths of a black hole to the rainbow of happiness. THANK YOU throughout eternity AND longer. May all of you find a woman to be YOUR Hope. Peace and Much Love.

Jessy Luanni Wolf

Daddy's Home

I was sitting on the floor scrubbing the cracks between the bricks of the wall in front of me when she asked me the question. She was a big, strong girl, with short, curly, dark hair and rather sad looking, very dark brown eyes. She didn't look mean. She was sitting on the floor, as I was, scrubbing cracks in the wall a few feet to my right. I thought maybe she was Italian, or Greek, or maybe even Armenian. The sad quality of her heavy-lidded eyes was really sexy. When her glance caught me watching her, she smiled and I felt the hairs along the back of my neck stand up. I forced my eyes away from her and looked at the wall.

"Are you Gay?" she said.

Just as I always had, in all the other places, I said, "No." It was always the first question the other girls asked. It made my belly tense up; I felt as if I was under attack. After years of living the necessity of keeping my thoughts secret, it was second nature to lie. I felt the prickly feel of her gaze on me while I stared at the wall and kept on scrubbing. My fingers were starting to lock; I was double jointed, and the scrubbing was making them lock into the wrong angle, the joints pressing hard against the inside skin of my fingers. Stupid cracks, I thought; stupid woman that gave us this job cleaning already-spotless cracks. I hated the woman, I could hear her gossiping and laughing in the other room with the rest of the staff. She had red hair and a lazy southern accent.

She liked to joke around and try to make us like her, with her easy southern friendliness, but she was a hard woman and she carried the keys. She didn't like to see a girl sitting quietly, lost in the contentment of reading a book. She thought we were all too stupid to read a book and we should be talking, kidding back, playing the game, or working. It was funny, but most of the staff had red hair, even the snotty Mexican one who treated us as if we were too filthy to touch. "Babies," she'd call us, and say, "if you were the big girls you pretend to be, you'd know how to behave and wouldn't be here," and the old one, the head lady, also called us babies. But she said we were *her* babies, as though that would bring trust. There was one with long brown hair who looked like a kid; she didn't have any power. She was nice, she sympathized; she didn't know anything about living. Some of the meanest girls gave her a hard time; they said, "She ain't nobody, she can't tell me what to do; fuck her." She cried, sometimes. Eventually she worked only the late night shift, when we were all asleep

That first day, at the Youth Authority Girl's School, I wanted to read a book. I

wanted to be alone in my room. I wanted this girl to mind her own fucking business and leave me alone, to get her sad eyes off of me. I glanced out of the corner of my eye at her and I saw she was smiling, watching me and smiling. I turned and glared at her. "Anything else you want to know?" I demanded.

"No," she said, still smiling at me, "I just like to look at you. I think you're cute and I'd sure like to squeeze your body ... I think you'd like it too."

I felt my face flush red and I hated it for giving away my feelings. I let my hair fall to cover my face as I bent towards the wall and scrubbed, and I thanked God, if there was one, for my long hair. I felt her watching me; her eyes sent heat to my body and the side facing her burned. I was sure she realized just what she was doing to me but I kept silent and waited for her to stop, to leave me alone. After awhile she did. They let us stop scrubbing just before lunch.

After lunch we went over to the school and got our classes assigned. Sad eyes wasn't in any of my classes. From now on I'd be able to go to school and wouldn't, I hoped, have to scrub any more spotless cracks. I fit into the routine of the place, as I always did, kept quiet, read when I could, and watched the politics of the unit. I hated Fridays. We had group therapy. All fifty of the girls on the unit sat in a circle, along with the staff, the two teachers assigned to our unit for groups, our unit psychologists (we had two), and any guests the facility invited. It was torture. It lasted a couple of hours. On the better Fridays one of the psychologists would lecture about something. Once it was even about LSD; he'd been in some experimental drug project, and he told us how drugs rot your brains. He wasn't too bright; a couple of black girls played a game on him, and he spent the whole time telling them what LSD felt like; he didn't even notice their sly grins.

Other times we had to discuss any girl caught breaking a rule; in turn we each gave an opinion as she sat in the middle with all our eyes on her. Sometimes she cried. Girls coming up for parole said all kinds of phony, "correct" things, putting the girl down for breaking a rule. Usually it was for smoking in her room. We all did that. I did it every night; I never got caught. The youngest girl on the unit got caught several times; her name was Jackie. She was 15.

"Jackie," they'd say, "why do you do it? Why do you keep breaking the rules? Don't you want to get out of here?"

Jackie would cry. It made me sick. All the girls in turn would ask, "Why do you do it? You shouldn't do that, Jackie; you know better." And they all did it too and the fucking staff knew it and would smile approvingly as each girl in turn became a hypocrite; they were breaking our loyalty, our family feeling; they thought it was unhealthy to be loyal to each other. Not one girl said, "Why did you get caught

Jackie?" When my turn came, I said, "No comment." My parole was denied five times, the maximum allowed for a girl on the regular program, because I always said, "No comment." The one time they put me in the middle, I refused to say anything at all. They said I refused to participate in the program.

I was there because I kept running away from home; I was a "chronic runaway." I ran away because my parents were crazy, my home was unpredictable, everyone was on drugs, and I couldn't learn the way to act to avoid getting beaten; the rules changed all the time. It was safer being locked up, but I hated the games, and I just would not play.

Sad eyes' name was Bobbi; she was a real butch. Because she was under age, she was picked up for being gay and hanging out with other gay people. They thought she could be cured by locking her up in an all-girl institution, where the majority of the girls acted gay. It was the thing to do, though most girls went back to boys when released. The staff told Bobbi she had to wear lipstick and dresses to get out. She held out for a long time; she was there almost as long as I was. I watched Bobbi. I didn't ever become her friend, but I was interested in her story.

Bobbi set up her family on the west side of the dayroom. There were three or four families play-acted on every unit, with parents, kids, cousins, aunts, and uncles, even grandparents. I usually stayed out of the families. I liked to be on my own, I was a solitary. Bobbi's family was pretty small, just parents and kids. Bobbi was the daddy. Her wife was named Liz. I knew Liz from outside; she was a straight girl; she'd been in a foster home run by some of my real relatives. Of course she was doomed — my real family was crazy. Liz had very white skin and blond hair. She was kind of innocent, and she liked to be in with the in crowd. That was all it started out to be when she joined the family. Their kids were three very tough, black girls, all real butches with lovers on other units. Sometimes they carried on temporary love affairs with girls on the unit who then usually got attacked at school and beaten up by the lovers. It was all a game I'd seen many times before so I thought it was pretty boring.

But Liz and Bobbi were different; it started out a game and turned into something real. Bobbi was a real butch, and nobody can make love like a real butch. A butch plays a role. She is a tender woman with the skill that comes from being a woman and knowing all the secrets of a woman's body. Yet in her butch role, she was as masterful and controlling as a man. The combination was really sexy. Liz fell in love with Bobbi. I don't know what Bobbi felt, she was tough, but Liz let it show all over her. She radiated love at Bobbi. Her face glowed — her smile was special. She touched Bobbi's arm with her arm when they passed. She moved her body close to Bobbi when they sat. She hung on Bobbi's every word and brought her gifts, gave

her the dessert off her tray, saved her the best seat at the movie or the first use of the washer. "This is for Bobbi," she'd say. And Bobbi would smile and say, "Thanks, Baby." Liz was in a state of bliss.

I watched them. I saw how Liz looked. I wondered what Bobbi did to make Liz look like that. Once I sat next to them in the movie, and when the lights went down, I heard Bobbi say, "Come closer, Baby." I heard rustlings and a low groan from Liz. The heat from them burned into my thighs. Another time I walked into the laundry room, and they were there, on the floor next to the dryer. Liz didn't see me. Her face was flushed, she had her eyes closed, she was moaning. Bobbi looked right into my eyes and smiled as a lion or a stallion might smile. "That's good, Baby," she said. I stumbled out of the room.

I decided to stay away from them for a while. I tried not to watch them, and I kept myself on the other side of the dayroom. Sometimes I'd look up, and Bobbi would look at me and smile. I'd look away.

I started talking to a group of girls; I made some friends. I joined a big family and got entangled in relationships with sisters and cousins. We got reprimanded because our family got so big it became a threat to the staff. "You don't need a family," the old redhead said. "You're all my babies."

Sitting in the dayroom with my back to the door, I felt it whenever Bobbi came in the room. The hairs on the back of my neck would stand up, and then I'd smell her behind me. I'd take in a deep breath — I'd feel dizzy. One day she gave me her bathrobe, early in the morning. She brought it to my room, opened the door, and threw it on my bed.

"Don't wear it out of your room," she said, smiling at me. I felt a hot flush on my face as she laughed and walked away. The feeling of her filled up the whole room with heat; I felt as if I couldn't breathe. My neighbor, Pat, talked to me through a crack in the wall, at the end away from the door.

"What happened?" she said. "Why did Bobbi come to your room?"

"Nothing," I said. "I left my book in the dayroom and she brought it to me. Do you have a match?" She passed me a match, and we had a cigarette together, blowing the smoke out the window between the bars. Each of us lived in a single room, with a steel cot that had a thin mattress on it with a wool blanket, a lumpy little pillow and cotton sheets, a steel desk and chair, a closet with built-in drawers, a toilet and a sink. Every part of the room was visible to anyone looking in the window set in the door, even the toilet; there was no privacy. The window opposite the door was barred and looked out on the grounds; grass, leading to a wall with barbed wire, low

buildings with barred windows like ours dotted the grass and at one end, a tower with big windows and a lady inside who watched everyone who walked outside the buildings. Nobody ever escaped.

I imagined, many times, that I was a mouse. I ran under the door and down the hall past all the other girl's rooms and out to and under the main door, and outside, in the sun ... then I ran, in my fantasy, across the grass towards the wall. I never made it out. Sometimes a big cat came and killed me; sometimes I got squashed under someone's shoe or under a cart carrying our food or linens. Once I got to the wall only to find no way out under the brick, no crack anywhere I could crawl under. So I always had to come back to my room and become me again.

I sang songs every night to Pat. She couldn't sleep. So I sang, "Lemon Tree, very pretty, and the lemon flower is sweet, but the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat..." and she slept.

The robe smelled like Bobbi so I never washed it. I slept with it every night — my secret lover, breathing the smell of Bobbi deep into my soul. Once I felt her and looked up, and there she was, framed in the window of my door, smiling at me. She knows, I thought, but she won't tell; I am still safe.

I had a needle in my room I'd been using to sew buttons on a blouse. I heated it with a match and opened my blouse. I picked up a bottle of liquid eyeliner from my desk and opened it. I settled back on my bed and put the eyeliner on the ledge of my steel headboard. I dipped the needle in the eyeliner and then pierced my left breast, above my heart. I tattooed a dot, then another dot, and another. It hurt but it was a sweet pain — all my love was in that pain. I spelled out "Bobbi" with the dots on my breast, my secret and the keeper of my secret. That evening, after showers, as I walked to my room, I passed it by and entered Pat's room. The staff woman at the end of the hall watched me, but from that distance I knew she couldn't tell if I was entering my own room or not. Pat was surprised, but she did not object when I kissed her and pulled her to the bed. I made love to her every evening after showers until she was paroled. It helped me a little bit, and Pat liked it a lot, though we never did really love each other. I felt very smug. My reputation had finally paid off. I was never suspected and so was not watched by the staff. I felt like a bank teller who gets away with a million dollars after years of faithful service. I felt as if I was even with Bobbi for trying to blow my cover. I could look at Bobbi and not blush.

Bobbi started wearing dresses and lipstick; she put hairspray on her hair. She still walked tough and dresses looked silly on her. Liz looked scared. She had a long way to go before parole. A joyride had given Liz a felony on her record: grand theft auto. But Bobbi wanted out. She was granted her parole two months after .

she started wearing dresses. Liz showed her grief, tears on her face every day, several times a day. My heart turned to ice from trying to keep it hard. I was alone in the laundry room ironing a shirt the night before Bobbi was supposed to leave. Bobbi came in the room and stood behind me. She kissed the back of my neck. My stomach heaved, wringing my liver and squashing my spleen, stopping my heart and closing up my throat. I kept my face a mask. "Why did you fuck Pat, bitch?" she whispered in my ear. I wanted to kiss her. My body ached, and my heart felt as if it was trying to slam its way right through the wall of my chest, but I played my game to the end. I smiled at her, and I said, "Because I wanted to." She laughed and walked away. "You're so damn good," she said.

I went into the dayroom, and there was a goodbye party for Bobbi. We had ice cream and a talent show, girls sang songs and danced. Liz cried. Then Bobbi stood up to say goodbye to us all. She looked at Liz and said, "Baby, this is for you." Bobbi sang her goodbye song, a real oldie from the forties or fifties ... to a slow lazy beat. She sang, "Daddy's Home." Liz sobbed all through the song. Two of her family kids sat one on each side of her, holding her and watching Bobbi sing. The third kid was putting the make on a new girl in the corner across from me.

The girl next to me said, "Did you know Bobbi has somebody waiting for her on the outside? She turned Liz loose — told her not to look her up when she gets out". The girl on my other side laughed and said, "Hey, that's life. This was just a little jailhouse romance, know what I mean?" We watched Liz cry. Bobbi sang, "Daddy's home, to stay..."

Looking at Liz I thought, that could have been me, if ... if? I wouldn't let myself think if what.

Bobbi left before we got up the next morning. I was released a month later as "A failure of the program," but I fooled them. I made it. I learned to play the right game.

Susie Day

In Handcuffs, Smiling

Here is the story of a highly strange girl — for “girl” is how she secretly thought of herself, even into her 40s; it was other people who thought of her as strange. Anyway, this highly strange girl, she fell in love with a prisoner. Anyone will tell you this is a bad idea. It gets worse. She fell in love with a lesbian prisoner. A lesbian political prisoner. A leftist lesbian political prisoner, who, along with two men and three other women, was facing over 70 years behind bars for a series of property bombings, among them the 1983 bombing of the Capitol building in protest of the U.S. invasion of Grenada. This highly strange girl... Oh what the hell, it was me.

I first heard about the case in 1988. The targets the group was accused of bombing were, from the point of view of a 70s lesbian such as myself, fairly well chosen. They included the Police Benevolent Association after the police shooting of African American grandmother Eleanor Bumpurs, and the apartheid-era South African Consulate, along with our friend, the Capitol building. No one was killed or even slightly injured in the blasts. The Capitol's Republican Cloak Room was damaged, and Teddy Roosevelt's bust busted. Small injuries, compared to the overthrow of a sovereign country.

The indicted prisoners, I noticed, were educated, middle class, white people. What the hell were they thinking, I wondered. Didn't they know they were throwing away their lives? Wasn't taking up arms a tactical disaster, almost sure to hurt the innocent while giving the government another incentive to upgrade its firepower? Yes. But. Given the delusion of Democracy in this country, anything that broke the anesthetic grip of MacNeil/Lehrer was a relief.

I agreed with them; I disagreed with them. I needed to know who they were. A newspaper wanted a story on the four women in the case. I read attorneys' briefs and political pamphlets. I studied the defendants' photos. They all seemed modulated, intelligent people, yet because of their anti-government stance, they had drawn inordinate sentences from previous charges. Susan Rosenberg, for instance, was already carrying a sentence of 58 years for explosives possession. Linda Evans incurred 45 years for giving a false ID to purchase legal guns. Then there was Laura Whitehorn, unconvicted, who at that point had spent more jail time — almost four years — without bail than any prisoner in U.S. history. I looked at Laura's photo. She was wearing a kafiya and smiling, her fist in the air. “She looks so bossy,” I thought. I went to Washington, DC to interview the four women. The DC Jail was noise and grime and a brutal hopelessness,

permeated by fluorescent lighting and the omnipresence of guards. The prisoners — 95% Black — wore jumpsuits. One by one, Susan Rosenberg, then Marilyn Buck, then Linda Evans were brought into the glass-walled cubicle, where I interviewed them.

Then a small, grey-haired woman with deep brown eyes was led in in handcuffs, carrying a stack of legal papers. She grinned and offered me a roll of “Silence = Death” stickers. As we talked, I was startled to find that I was quietly, perversely, becoming happy. It was another day before I figured out that I had a large crush on Laura Whitehorn. I was euphoric and deeply shocked when the feeling became mutual. Soon, we realized we loved each other. Laura’s bail never happened, but a plea bargain did. Laura was finally sentenced — the maximum of 23 years — and transferred to the Lexington, Kentucky women’s prison.

So began for me years of the low-grade terror that comes with loving someone who is in constant danger. In prison, Laura, like her codefendants, had virtually relinquished the “white skin privilege” that allows most Caucasians to be treated as human beings. Like her Black and Latina friends in the general prison population, she could be beaten up, or put in “the hole,” for various infractions. Like other political prisoners, Laura could at any time be confined to a sensory deprivation unit. She could die of bad medical care. Once, on a summer afternoon in the first year of our love, I fell asleep, and dreamed that I was moving, flying through a blackness to reach someone I loved the most. Such lift, such hope — only to find myself face to face with a skull.

Then there were our political fights. How could I be in this relationship without signing on as a Revolutionary? Why did I criticize armed struggle? “I would die for my principles,” Laura said during one of our arguments. “And I would die for my right to remain ambivalent,” I retorted.

We talked on the phone, but only when Laura called me; it’s impossible to call a prisoner. We visited, but only when I had the money to go to Kentucky; later, California. I must have seemed to her cloying and demanding, always wanting to talk about “feelings.” Our conversations were suffused with misunderstanding, longing, anger. Always, they were monitored by guards or agents.

I hated myself for being “codependent” enough to love a prisoner. I wondered if I was crazy. Friends and therapists told me in one way or another: This hurts too much. She’s using you. Let her go. She would want you to be happy. Laura herself told me to see other people. But how could I, when I loved her so much? I must have acted weird and jerky. I must have treated friends badly. Certainly, I lost friends. Finally — you knew it was coming, didn’t you? — Laura and I did the sensible thing. We broke up. We went on with our lives.

But you know what? Stupidly, masochistically, wonderfully, we got back together. And last August, after 14 years and 3 months of incarceration, Laura Jane Whitehorn, having served her time, walked out of prison.

Not that the advice wasn't sound; not that my friends didn't care; not that I don't still think she can be bossy and we don't still fight about politics. But Laura and I are still together and, last time I checked (about one second ago), we plan to be for the rest of our lives. You see, there are things beyond prison. I would have known Laura anywhere. She just happened to come to me in handcuffs, smiling. She is the only person in the world who has meant the sun to me. I will spend the rest of my life being grateful and happy that she is out.

Because so many similar stories don't end this way, I want to dedicate this one to anyone who's loved impossibly. To anyone who continues to love through death and disease and difference and distance and all the extravagant barricades — including prison — that life can put up. And to the women and men behind bars whom I know or have yet to know — to Susan and Marilyn and Linda who remain in prison — please hang on. Love is as tangible as the body, you know, regardless of where our bodies are.



Laura Whitehorn

Laura Whitehorn

To My Love

(Written shortly after my release from prison, to Susie Day)

Quiet green of early morning woods,
Skins of leaves, chartreuse and gold, translucent
Swaying branches shed bouquets of water
Droplets pianissimo. Swallows trill,
Overhead a distant airplane hums.
You lie sleeping, lovely, warm and damp
Far off sounds of traffic coat the stillness.
We have nowhere we have to go today
But deep inside the forests of each other.
From years of shackles I've come back to you.

Laura Whitehorn

In Memory

Like a lot of other people I know, I've taken to reading the obituaries every day. I scan the page looking for ages; anything under 60, I stop and read. Sometimes the cause of death is cloaked in code — "cancer," "respiratory disease," "pneumonia," — and then I have to search for other clues in career or survivors. When it's plain — "He had AIDS" — I stop and read every word. It's only very seldom that I actually know or have heard of the person. I'm just paying my respects. I hope that when my friends Eliot Espana and Mike Riegle died, someone paid them the respect of poring over their obituaries, committing to heart the scant facts of another life lost to the epidemic.

But most of my friends who died with AIDS never made it into the pages of any newspaper. No obituary; rarely even a death notice. Some of them died with AIDS before it was even acknowledged that women get HIV. Joyce Cooper for example.

I met her in the D.C. Jail in 1988 when she defied the guards in order to bring me a hot cup of coffee in the morning while I was on lock-down status. In jail, you tend to get close to people pretty fast, because things are so intense, you spend so much time together, and your survival depends on one another in a lot of ways. It was like that with me and Joyce.

Joyce had a clear, uncynical smile, and the strength to fight to be a human being in a situation geared to prevent that. Late in the winter of '88, she caught a bad cold, and the next thing she knew she was waking up in D.C. General Hospital's prison ward, chained to the bed, breathing through a mask. When a doctor finally visited her he told her, "What's the matter with you, don't you know you have AIDS and you're dying?" By the time I saw her again, back on the cold, damp unit at the Jail, her smile had collapsed into a haunted, terrified look. One Monday morning, following a long, icy weekend during which we'd been locked in our cells for most of every day, Joyce sent someone to get me. I ran downstairs to her cell and found her soaking in sweat, moaning with the pain of a high fever. The guards locked themselves in the bubble (their command post) and locked down the whole unit. Joyce and I managed to refuse to go into our cells, and sat in the metal-benched dayroom, with her cradled in my arms, demanding to see a P.A. I asked the guard to come out and look at Joyce; to feel her skin to see how hot she was, so that there could be no doubt that this was an emergency and immediate medical assistance was needed. The guard wouldn't even answer me — too scared to open her mouth or look me in the eye. Finally a P.A. came to the unit for the regular sick call, and I was able to convince her to look at Joyce, whom I'd carried back to her cell, too weak to walk

or sit or lie on the metal bench. The last time I saw Joyce she was being wheeled out of the unit on a gurney. Knowing the loneliness awaiting her, I had no means of managing the heartbreak. And I've never learned to do it any better in the five years since.

Joyce died a few months later. She'd been released not long after the incident, because her sentence was up. I can only imagine the bleakness that met her outside, as even her family, who tried to protect her, was utterly unable to find resources for a woman — especially an African American Woman — with AIDS.

That virus blind-sided Joyce. She didn't have a chance to choose resistance, she didn't have enough time and back-up to exhibit her nobility in the face of AIDS, because she never saw it coming and hardly knew what it: was when it hit. This was before the important option of "living with AIDS" was available to women, to poor people, to Black people, and certainly to a Black woman in prison.

Like people on the outside, the only way I could begin to deal with my grief over Joyce — and Theresa, and Eliot, both of whom died around the same time as Joyce — was to throw myself with a vengeance into AIDS education, support, and — to whatever extent it's possible in prison — activism. In so doing, I've met some strong, courageous, sometimes heroic women, some frightened and inconsolable women, some new forms of inspiration, and some new forms of heartbreak.

I knew Dawn Copeland at D.C. Jail, but it wasn't until I saw her again at F.C.I. Lexington in 1991 that I got to know her well. By then she had full-blown AIDS, and had been moved to the hospital unit. She was in her mid-20's, but was wide-eyed and childlike enough to seem much younger. She didn't care who knew she was HIV-positive, as long as people would respond by caring for her. She craved attention and support, loved to be babied, and that was fine with some of us — pouring our anguish into attentiveness.

Dawn's impishness did an end-run around the bigotry and prejudice. Once when I was accompanying her to a Saturday night movie, she got a gleam in her eye as I turned and asked another prisoner for a piece of candy out of the woman's bag of red-hots. The woman thrust out her hand and said, "Here, take the whole bag," and melted into the crowd in the basement. Dawn told me, "The stupider they are, harder they fall — she thinks she'll catch AIDS from me if I eat a piece of candy and then she eats another from the same bag!"

"Work it, sister," I said. And she did, feeding her sweet tooth and her affectionate nature. She didn't want to deal with her medical problems — not that she could have done much in the of controlling her own health care in those conditions — preferring to trust the doctors and be taken care of by others. Dawn went home to

D.C. and lived only a short time after her release. By letting a group of us take care of her, shower her with attention, she left a wake of sentiment on which we could build our AIDS work at Lex. That was quite a contribution, because Lex held about 1,800 women then, and most of the HIV+ women in the federal prison system were there. When I lived at Lex, AIDS education at orientation consisted of a white male guard saying "I can't tell you much about AIDS, but I'll tell you two things: you and I might not like it, but it's the law that people with AIDS can work in food service; and don't share an apple with someone with AIDS, because the skin can cut your gums, and if they bleed on the apple and then you bite it, you'll get AIDS." So AIDS work was drastically needed at Lex, and by accepting support, Dawn helped us begin work together to build something. I don't think she realized that, but I wish she had, because it might have been a comfort to her.

Gerri Norwood spent time in D.C. Jail, too, and was transferred to Lex at the same time I was, in January of '91. But unlike Dawn, she never got to go home, dying instead in the hospital at Lex. Gerri chose to fight aggressively and with a lot less hugging and cuddling than Dawn. Gerri would tell you what she wanted, then say "fuck you" if you didn't give it. She knew that ultimately she was in a very lonely situation. I mean, picture yourself as an African American woman prisoner with AIDS, suffering from "mysterious" gynecological problems that were ignored by the prison doctors both as being excruciatingly painful and as being part of AIDS. There was no AIDS support group at Lex yet, and Gerri's main support came from a terrific life-long friend who was also a prisoner there at the time, and from a prison Chaplain. But her friend, Nicie, had to sneak to see her (at that time, the hospital unit was out-of-bounds to the rest of us; that changed as we began the AIDS work). And the medical staff treated Gerri as a hostile un-cooperative prisoner/patient, because she didn't meekly accept their diagnoses, judgments, and especially their pressure to let them operate. Gerri refused a hysterectomy shortly before she died. I have no way of judging her decisions on medical grounds, but I know she died as she lived, fighting for herself. The fact that she'd had to wage so much of that fight all alone was part of what compelled a few people to join in the formation of the "A Team," an AIDS education and support group at Lex.

Much of the spirit and strength to make the A Team work came from two prisoners with AIDS at Lex, Rosalind Simpson-Bey, who is happily still living and active, recently freed in D.C. on 'compassionate release,' and her dear friend Doloris Hatcher-El, who died in D.C. last year. For a long time, Roz and Doloris were the only two women at Lex who talked openly about having AIDS, insisting on being respected, making it clear that they were in the process of living, not dying, and that the problem wasn't with them for being HIV-positive, but with those too ignorant to deal with that. This was at a time (still pre-CDC recognition of gynecological diseases as opportunistic infections) when "she's got AIDS" was a behind-the-back

curse at Lex, as at most prisons. After Doloris had returned from Lex to D.C., Roz provided the political and spiritual heart for our AIDS work by standing in the Chapel addressing an audience of 400 women, saying "I am living with AIDS, and so can you; we have to conquer deathly ignorance with the spirit of life." But even before that, Doloris and Roz together had provided a daily example of faith in life and the strength of women overcoming fear and prejudice.

Doloris went out of prison and spread that strength, doing HIV/AIDS education and support through a D.C. organization, The Positive Woman, Inc. That organization as played an important role in bringing resources, inform and support to the African American community in the fight against AIDS.

I have known and loved all these women, along with others who have died whom I can't write about because they kept their HIV hidden to the end, and many others who are still fighting. It's funny how enormously thankful you can be every day for your friends' lives when those lives are threatened. It's been on these women's lives and deaths that prisoner peer advocacy AIDS programs have grown in Lexington and other federal women's prisons. That work has enabled other positive women prisoners to take a little more control over their health, and to live better and be more at peace. But we are so limited by prison conditions — and by the oxymoron of "prison healthcare" — that the demand for release of all prisoners with HIV and AIDS is the only humane and/reasonable resolution to AIDS in prison.

Shortly before I was transferred from Lex to the prison I'm in now, I was asked to write out a dying woman prisoner's Last Will and Testament to her small son. I hadn't known Yvonne well, and only spent a few hours with her in her hospital cell. When I went to show her the completed document, she was asleep. I sat down and waited until she woke up — ashen, sunken, emaciated. I sat with her and held her as long as I could, until she fell back asleep. In the overheated stuffy stillness of that cell, I thought about the times when, as a child, I would waken in a fever of measles or some other childhood disease, hurting and miserable, and see my mother sitting reading across the room. Just sitting with me, having taken the day off to be with me. And I thought, that's such a simple thing, but what a difference to awaken in a prison cell all alone, with only death watching over you.

To all who read this, in memory of Joyce, and Dawn, and Geri, and Doloris, and Yvonne, and too many others: fight for the release of all prisoners with HIV and AIDS.

Marilyn Buck

Clandestine Kisses

for Linda -

Kisses

blooming on lips
which have already spoken
and now await
stolen
clandestine kisses

A prisoner kisses
she is defiant
she breaks the rules
she traffics in contraband

women's kisses

A crime wave of kisses
Bitter sweet sensuality
flouting women-hating satraps
in their prison fiefdoms
 furious
 that love
 can not be arrested.

Kathleen Allen

Where Has the Time Gone

I'm at work where I'm supposed to be
The phone rings and
Instinctively
I reach for the phone
but then I remember
I haven't paid my phone bill in six years.
I'm at work, where I'm supposed to be
A long legged woman with rolling hips and ruby lips walks by and
instinctively
I want to take this woman to dinner
But then I remember
I haven't paid my Visa bill in six years.
I'm in bed, where I'm supposed to be.
The alarm jolts me out of my dreams and
instinctively
I'm putting on my slippers
to go hunt for the morning paper
but then I remember
I haven't paid the paperboy in six years.
I'm sitting in a room of my own, where I'm supposed to be.
I'm reading Virginia Woolf with her battle cry of
Women have the right to choose their own destinations and
instinctively
I jump up and shout, "Yes Virginia, we do have the right
to choose our own destinations!"
But then I remember I haven't been able to choose my
own destination for six years.
I am a woman in prison.

Kathleen Allen

Peeking at Hiding

Like a child
playing Peek-a-Boo
I'm peek
when I am sane,
but I'm often boo.
Booness runs in my family.
My mother is often boosed.
My dad peeks one day
and boos the next.
My cousin Wilma boos, and
there are rumors
about my grandmother.
I feel like a child
playing Hide-'n-Go-Seek
except no one looks for me.
I don't blame them.
I'm often boo.
I want to peek.
Why does peek always
hide from me?
Alee Alee Oxen Free!

Contributors' Notes

Bella Donna Night Raven is 43, Celtic Wiccan, M to F Pre-op trans, Lesbian/Bi, political prisoner, activist. I enjoy music, writing, art and staying active in the GLBT community. I want to make a positive difference in the way things are.

Beverly Henry, a woman living with HIV and hepatitis C, is currently serving her time inside the Central California Women's Facility. She was an extraordinary peer educator, HIV case manager and recovery counselor while in the community. She is continuing this work with a vengeance inside prison. Beverly continues to be the target of retaliation and punishment for being outspoken and working closely with outside prisoners' rights advocates. Her writings have been published in various women's and HIV magazines, including *Women Alive*, *WORLD* and *Positively Aware*.

Brandy Maynard: I am a 31 year old lesbian who has been writing poetry for 17 years and loving women just as long. Women have always been my inspiration.

Carmen Nunez: My lover's name is Michelle and we met here at Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton, New Jersey. We've been together for nine months now. When we are together, it doesn't seem like we're in prison because the joy and love that we share surpasses the otherwise intensifying pain that can regularly be experienced while incarcerated. Michelle is the light of my life. Our goal is to continue our relationship outside of these gates. We are best friends first and foremost above all else, and that is our recipe to making it work! Peace and Love to all couples who are incarcerated – Lesbians, Gays or Bisexuals. Yours in Sisterhood.

Charisse Shumate was the woman who made the California Department of Corrections shake in its boots when she stepped forward to be the lead plaintiff and prison spokesperson for the class action lawsuit challenging medical neglect and abuse of women prisoners (aptly named *Shumate v. Wilson*). Charisse was serving a life sentence for killing her abuser. She was incarcerated for 16 years in the California prison system and spent much of her time fighting for care for other prisoners (and for the serious complications she suffered from: sickle cell anemia, hepatitis C, and cancer). Charisse was a victim of Governor Davis' no parole, no compassionate release policy and died in prison on August 4, 2001.

Christy Marie Camp is a California prisoner sentenced to 16 years to life for the death of her abusive husband. She has served 13 years and has an application for clemency pending with the Governor. In 1992 she testified before lawmakers addressing domestic violence issues. She has completed the book *Take the Keys and Lock Her Up: Bridging the Gap Between Society and Female Prisoners*. She is contacting Volunteers of America to find projects that women prisoners can participate in and is working with

Victims of Crime. She has earned an AA degree with emphasis on psychology and two paralegal degrees. All correspondence is welcome.

Danielle Garner, age 36, born a lesbian, incarcerated for 6 to 12 years. I am in the process of recovery, not only from drugs, but from shame, guilt, no self-esteem and sexual abuse. I began to write to rid myself of these feelings. I have come in contact with a great many adversities which I have begun to conquer here in prison. Today I am aware of the me nobody knows. I am a healthy spiritual lesbian and proud of it.

Darlene Dixon: Born in South Florida, raised in South Georgia, I'm a 35 year old female serving time on a life sentence. My time is spent helping others and enjoying the company of my partner. We've been together a little over 2 years. It's not always easy but staying focused on the positive makes anything possible. I enjoy writing and aspire to someday be a published author.

Geri Calhoun, age 37, lives in central Texas with her lifelong partner where she spends her time painting and writing and co-writing poetry with her partner.

Gretchen Schumacher: What happens in Japan happens here and in Canada as well as other countries. Sex always equals dollars. I should have been the first female president of the United States — but I got corrupted early on. I'm 37 years old, having spent 17 years in prison for driving a dude to Eugene from Portland — I'm an accessory to the crime — and a sensitive artist who always gets into trouble by being in the wrong place. I wanted to be a comedian at one time — and I do make people laugh!

Holli Hampton: Imprisoned but not impotent. Spends free time on a quest for knowledge. Recently surrendered 10 year union with "Lisa."

Jennifer Sutton was a transgender woman living in the harsh world that is the Protective Housing Unit at California State Prison — Corcoran. Even though she faced a lot of discrimination and abuse from both the staff and the prisoners, she managed to keep her sense of humor and the desire to make the world a better place. Jennifer was also battling HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV), but instead of channeling her energies into being negative, she focused them on her writing and art. In the end, Jennifer's death was preventable with a little bit of attention and care, but because (as many of us believe) of the fact that she was an HIV/HCV infected, African-American, transgender woman her cries for help were ignored, no matter how loud we shouted from the outside. Jennifer Sutton was murdered by the prison, but her memory lives on through the struggle to fight for the rights of HIV/HCV positive and transgender prisoners.

Jessy Luanni Wolf drew inspiration for her fiction story from her time spent at California Youth Authority, Ventura School for Girls as Lynda Lasnover in 1964-1966. She lives in Oakland and is an English teacher, grandmother, lesbian and witch who has published fiction and poetry in several anthologies. Her lesbian literary zine is online at <http://www.coffytimeblues.com>

Joann Walker began it all in the early 1990s when she came out as an HIV+ woman inside the Central California Women's Facility. She was the founder of the in-prison peer education program and quickly became an inspiration to women organizers inside and outside the prison walls. She refused to be silenced and helped organize the first demonstration outside the walls of CCWF in January 1994 (while still inside). Joann died on July 13, 1994, just three months after winning a compassionate release from prison.

Kathleen Allen is an inmate at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in Westchester County, NY, and a student in the Mercy College master's program in English Literature. She will receive her MA degree in May 2003. Kathleen is a writing tutor for the inmate students in the undergraduate college program at Bedford Hills, sponsored by Marymount Manhattan College. Her poetry has been published in the Hiram Poetry Review, her favorite book is Beowulf, and her favorite poet is Billy Collins. Her goal is to teach college writing in the prison after she earns her master's degree.

Kathy O'Donnell: The luckiest woman in the world. Even though I'm locked up I've found the love of my life. My woman Irene!

Laura Whitehorn was released from federal prison on August 6, 1999, maxing out on a 23 1/2 year sentence after 14 years. She now lives happily ever after in New York City with her lover, Susie Day. She writes for POZ, a magazine for the communities affected by HIV, focusing on HIV and HCV in prison, and works towards the release of political prisoners.

Linda Evans is a former political prisoner, an anti-imperialist and a lesbian who served 16 years of a 40-year federal prison sentence for actions against the U.S. government. While in prison she was a founding member of Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education, an inmate-to-inmate AIDS peer counseling organization, and of the Council Against Racism, an inmate organization that worked against institutional racism and to lessen racial tensions inside the prison. She was released from prison on January 20, 2001, when President Clinton commuted her sentence. She is working with the Center for Third World Organizing in Oakland, focusing on leadership skills development for ex-offender activists and working to improve re-entry services for people coming out of prison.

Lisa Kuffel is a 45 year-old Native American serving a 53.3 year prison term, another victim of the selective sentencing of the mandatory minimum guidelines.

Lorrie Flakes: I was born May 31, 1960 in Kansas, moved to Jacksonville, Florida at age of eight and have lived there since. I have two beautiful children, Joe 22 years old and Trish 17, they are my world. I go home in 2003 and will reside in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. There I will start my life anew.

Marashette Burks: This St. Louis native and former member of the Armed Forces is now a member of an elite team of computer programmers at WERDCC, a women's prison in Missouri. As a member of YAG she also counsels juveniles who are headed down the wrong path and doubles as a tour guide in the prison. Shug, as she is known by her friends, crochets toys for needy children in her spare time.

Maria Talag is 40 years old. I have been incarcerated since 1985. I am a writer as well as an artist. Some of my works have been published in other prison newsletters and I also work with translations to different languages by working with other foreign poets.

Marilyn Buck is a north American anti-imperialist political prisoner serving an 80 year sentence at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, CA. She is a long time activist in support of anti racist organizing, the women's movement and national liberation struggles at home and abroad and was targeted by the government's COINTELPRO program. She was tried and convicted of participating in the escape of Assata Shakur, a leader of the Black liberation movement. Later, she, along with Linda Evans, was convicted as part of the Resistance Conspiracy Case of conspiracy to commit militant actions to protest U.S. government policies. She has lifted her voice through poetry for the whole time she has been incarcerated and has participated in Poetry for the People workshops inside. She also writes a column, "Notes from the Unrepententiary," for Prison Legal News. She received a national poetry Pen Award for "Clandestine Kisses."

Melanie Vicheck: I am a twenty-six year old, presently serving a 30-60 year sentence at SCI Muncy in Pennsylvania. To sum me up, I am a dreamer who still believes wishes will come true.

Michelle: I am 35 years old, and have served 15 of my 25 year sentence. In spite of being incarcerated, or because of it — I'm not sure which, I've continued to grow and learn who I am as a person. I don't consider myself a poet or artist, but I've learned that sharing ideas, thoughts, experiences, and love is the core of life.

Rebekah Taylor: A leader and vibrant feminist, I put my mistakes behind me and ask God to bring out the good.

Rose Halley: I have learned that life is not about mistakes, only lessons. Love yourself, trust your choices, and everything is possible!

Roxane Roberts: I am a 49 year old enemy of the state, ex-genius, ex-teacher, case-worker, ex-mechanic, ex-law student, but I'll never be an ex-black lesbian writer – I thank all who appreciate or spend time with these few of my words – please write.

Ruth Bravo: I am a mother, best friend, lover and daughter, Indian from "Crow Nation" (MT) 30 years old and can't wait to enjoy life with people I love. I am a novice writer but I'm sure my imagination and experiences will fuel my next adventures, so enjoy.

Sandy Hamilton: I am 34 years old and have been in prison since I was 20. The one thing I have learned is if you believe in yourself, anything is possible.

Sara Jessimy Kruzan: I am a 23 year old multiracial female. I've been incarcerated since I was 16, and still enjoy life to the fullest. Poetry is a way to allow my soul to be heard and I hope that my words can be felt, as I felt when I wrote them.

Senia Cruse Foster: I am a Native American female age 23, doing 6 years for Armed Robbery. Currently I am at OWCC in Salem. I was moved from my former location because of having a loving relationship with my wife.

Sheena King: I am a 28 year old God-fearing and womyn-loving poet. I have two beautiful children and I write material that I feel passionate about.

Stephanie Narro is age 31; born and raised in Dallas, Texas. The loves of my life are my son Joshua and my mother Loretta.

Theresa Martinez: I am age 35 Hispanic, better known as BooBoo. My residence is Los Angeles, born and raised, and I have been sentenced to six years at CCWF prison. I've been into my woman to woman relationships for 16 years, and I'm HIV positive co-infected and am very comfortable with my status, even with all the prejudice surrounding me. It's been a battle to be accepted with a different lifestyle, but hopefully the world will accept me as normal and stop looking down on me and my "choices."

Tiffany Jackson: I'm twenty-two years old and have written poetry since I can remember. I'm a lesbian who is currently incarcerated and thought I'd share some of my adventures, joys and hurts from loving another woman in prison.

Valessa Lyn Robinson was brought up in a middle-class home. I didn't know what hardship was until I came to prison. I'm 18 years old now and have met the love of my life — MINE. She helped me maintain and forget about the trials and tribulations in my life. She's brought the most love and joy to my life; I will never forget her.

Yavonne M.T. Anderson: I am an openly gay/lesbian 20 years of age doing a seven to life term in C.D.C. I have no children, yet am considering having one or two. My interests are writing poetry, rapping and welding. My goals and aspirations are to leave prison one day in hopes of having a prosperous and fulfilling life.

Sinister Wisdom

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

- #59/60 Love, sex & romance
- #58 Open issue
- #57 Healing
- #56 On Language
- #55 Exploring issues of racial & sexual identification
- #54 Lesbians & religion
- #53 Old dykes/lesbians-guest edited by lesbians over 60

- #52 Allies issue
- #51 New lesbian writing
- #50 Not the ethics issue-find out why!

- #49 The lesbian body
- #48 Lesbian resistance including work by dykes in prison
- #47 Lesbians of color: Tellin' It Like It 'Tis
- #46 Dyke lives
- #45 Lesbians & class - the first issue of a lesbian journal edited entirely by poverty and working class dykes

- #43/44 15th Anniversary double-size (368 pgs)
retrospective issue
- #42 Lesbian voices
- #41 Italian American Women's issue
- #40 Friendship
- #39 Disability
- #38 Emphasis on lesbian relationships
- #37 Emphasis on lesbian theory
- #36 Surviving Psychiatric Assault/Creating emotional well being
in our communities
- #35 Passing
- #34 Sci-Fi, Fantasy & lesbian visions
- #33 Wisdom
- #32 Open Issue
- #31 Includes Sapphire, Elana Dykewomon & others

• circle the issues you want on the next page •



Sinister Wisdom — A Multicultural Lesbian Literary & Art Journal
The oldest surviving lesbian literary journal- now celebrating 27 years
Create, read, write, draw, explore, cry fantasize, argue, celebrate, learn, teach, laugh,
relate with writers and artists like: Chrystos, Terri Jewell, Beth Brant, Julia
Youngblood, Elana Dykewomon, JEB, Sapphire, Victoria Lena Manyarrows,
Caryatis Cardea, Jamie Lee Evans, Gloria Anzaldúa, Irena Klepfisz, Barbara Smith,
Cherrie Moraga, Adrienne Rich, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Sharon Lim-Hing, Aly Kim,
Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, and many many more

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1 YEAR= 3 issues

Individual: • 1 year \$20 • 2 years \$34

Out of U.S.: \$25 (US\$)

Hardship \$10-15

Institutions & Libraries: 1 year \$33

Sustaining \$50-200

free on request to women in prison or mental institutions

SINISTER WISDOM, INC. • POBOX 3252 • BERKELEY CA 94703 • USA

Please send : Sinister Wisdom Subscription (see rates above)

\$..... Back issues @\$5. each (circle): 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42,
45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58

\$..... Back issues @\$6. each (circle): 43/44, 59/60

\$..... Postage & Handling \$1.50 first, 50cents each after that

\$..... Tax deductible donation to support free and hardship subscriptions

\$..... TOTAL ENCLOSED

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

MANUSCRIPTS, SUBSCRIPTIONS,
BACK ISSUE ORDERS & CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Submissions and correspondence for SW #63 *Lesbians Writing and Reading* should be sent to fran@sonic.net or mailed to SW c/o Fran Day, POB 1180, Sebastopol, CA 95473-118. See page 7 for details.

Everything else should be sent to Sinister Wisdom, POB 3252, Berkeley, CA 94703 or sw@aalexander.org. Check our website at www.sinisterwisdom.org.

Submission Guidelines:

All written work should be mailed flat (not folded), with your name and address on each page. Submission may be in any style or form, or combination of forms. Maximum submission: five poems or two stories per issue. We may return longer submissions. We prefer you type (or send your work on floppies with a printout). Legible handwritten work accepted; tapes accepted from print-impaired women. All submissions must be on white paper. **SASE MUST BE ENCLOSED.** *Selection may take up to nine months.* If you want acknowledgement of receipt, enclose a separate, stamped postcard. GRAPHIC ARTISTS should send B&W photos, stats or other duplicates of their work. Let us know if we can keep artwork on file for future use.

We publish only lesbians' work. We are particularly interested in work that reflects the diversity of our experience: as lesbians of color, ethnic lesbians, Jewish, Arab, old, young, working class, poor, disabled, fat. We welcome experimental work. We will not print anything that is oppressive or demeaning to lesbians or women, or that perpetuates negative stereotypes. We do intend to keep an open and critical dialogue on all the issues that affect our work, joy and survival. Do you have a new theme you want to see explored? See the call for guest/new editors on p.6.

Sinister Wisdom, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. We provide free subs to women in prison and mental institutions (20% of our mailing list), as well as reduced price subs for lesbians with limited/fixed incomes. • Enclose an extra \$10 on your renewal to help cover publishing costs (larger donations accepted). • Give Sinister Wisdom for birthdays, holidays, special occasions. • Consider doing a benefit or subscription drive for SW in your city.

I think it is really important for all of us here to think for one moment about what we can do to extend our love and our support from out here inside those walls to break down the bars — tear them apart to whatever extent we can and try to help the women in prison.

— *Linda Evans, former political prisoner*
Speech to San Francisco Dyke March, June 2001

I love the lady three cells down
But she doesn't know it

— *Holly Hampton*

I realize the public can't imprison the whole penal system. But because of the power the public bestows on officers, most think they are above the law. So please give them hell in memory of me.

— *Joann Walker (deceased)*

To Make Love is to become like this infant again.
We move with our mouths towards the hidden
treasure which is the body of another woman... Our
bodies move past the rules of this place...

— *Carmen Nuñez*

\$6 US