

Fish Cop

by

Kathy Berlin

CHAPTER 1

THE STATE PRISON OF SOUTHERN MICHIGAN

March 24, 1987

I was standing on third gallery struggling to learn the intricacies of locking and unlocking old cell doors when the siren wailed. Other guards in the block snapped up their heads. The officer training me glanced down at the Lieutenant's desk on the first gallery bulkhead and briskly said, "Lock 'em in." McIntosh, who housed in the cell I was working on, reluctantly stepped back inside. The officer slid his door shut until it clicked. He tugged on it to be sure it was locked, and I followed him as we moved down the gallery, up one side and down the other, tugging on doors and pinching them to make sure they were locked, and tallied our count sheets. Then we waited.

The other dozen or so guards seemed mildly surprised by this interruption. I watched them closely as they mumbled asides to each other in brief, hushed tones and I strained to hear what they were saying. Something was up. I was in my third week of on-the-job training to be a corrections officer in Jackson Prison and assumed the siren was some type of drill. Rumors trickled in from other officers stopping by the Reception and Guidance Center. They said they heard that some prisoners had hung three female teachers in one of the classrooms in the cavernous auditorium in Central Complex, inside the walls, where classes were held. Then another guard said that the teachers had been strangled first, and then hung up with belts. One of the guards whispered that a female schoolteacher was killed by inmates. I struggled to keep my facial expression blank like

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my coworkers and nodded in understanding. Conflicting reports continued to filter into the block. Lurid details shifted and blurred as the clock drew closer to noon. The remainder of the morning lingered, quietly, interrupted only by the crackling, hand-held radios carried by some of the guards. They solemnly cocked their heads to listen to the transmissions exchanged inside the walls. The Lieutenant eventually told me to help a couple of officers go to the main kitchen to pick up chow for the inmates.

We made our way through a maze of cell blocks to the kitchen located in the heart of Central Complex. The hallways were empty and strangely quiet, missing both the usual array of guards walking through and inmate porters sweeping the floors. As we were slowly pulling the loaded cart back along one of those deserted hallways connected to the rotunda, we stopped to look out of one of the large windows at the activity outside.

A small group of guards stood together. We watched in silence as a few of them walked over towards a spot that was blocked from our view, but which we knew to lead to the auditorium. They returned with somber faces. A couple of Central Complex officers walked up slowly and stood beside us in the hall. They shook their heads, saying that a female officer had been killed by an inmate. Her body was found at the bottom of a stairwell. She was naked and her face was beaten with a brick.

I watched them closely as they, too, gazed out the windows. Their tough, hard faces wore their usual blank and weary masks. But their eyes and grim mouths carried an almost imperceptible softening I hadn't previously seen, a mere whisper of vulnerability I recognized as shock and even sadness. These masters of concealing their feelings had been jolted out of their accustomed callousness by the stunning realization that one of their own had been horribly, brutally murdered.

“You can’t even recognize her, her face is smashed in. They strangled her with a belt,” said one of the guards. “Some Goddamn animals did it...”

“They’re *all* animals,” added another.

We stood with them, quietly, looking out the window. We could have walked through a nearby door and joined the officers outside heading toward the crime scene. I felt sorry for this woman found dead, naked, and bloody, with who knows how many men walking over to gawk at her battered body. It seemed so disrespectful. But I also knew that given the opportunity I, too, would go and look.

A few minutes passed. A guard walked toward us from down the hall, his shining black shoes briskly tapping the floor, eyes wide in surprise, holding a picture ID of the victim in his hand. He stopped and showed it to us. I looked at it but did not recognize the name or face of the young, white female. Her eyes were closed in the photo, brown hair pulled back from her pale face. White uniform shirt and black tie crossing under her top shirt button. Then the guard continued on, carefully carrying her ID to the control center in the rotunda.

We returned to RGC, slowly pulling the cart along with us, and passed out sack lunches to the inmates in their cells. The prison remained on lockdown status all day. The block was quiet and still, as the minutes slowly ticked away. We were relieved by the afternoon shift at 2 p.m., with curious expressions on their faces as they entered the block and quietly spoke with the guards on duty.

During the 30-minute drive back to my Lansing apartment, finally free to loosen up and let my guard down, I gripped the steering wheel and tried to focus on the freeway traffic while sorting through the thoughts bombarding my head. The commute gave me

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plenty of time to think about this unlikely job I had taken in Michigan's most notorious prison, and I anxiously wondered if I, too, would meet a similar fate. I had two months left in my training before I found out where I would be placed for my permanent assignment. It could be anywhere — the Northside section of Jackson, Southside, RGC...or the dreaded Central Complex located inside the walls. I could not go inside. I *would* not go inside. Once again, I wondered, as I had countless times, what in the Hell was I doing working in Jackson Prison?

Detroit Free Press**March 25, 1987*****CORRECTIONS OFFICER BEATEN, KILLED***

By Brian Flanigan and David Ashenfelter

A female corrections officer was beaten to death and found nude in an auditorium stairwell at the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson, which houses many of the state's most dangerous criminals...Union officials charge that the death of McCallum—the first female corrections officer to die in the line of duty in Michigan—may have occurred because she was a probationary employee working alone in violation of the union contract...

McCallum joined the department in October 1986 and had been working at Jackson full time since Feb. 6. Her body was found at 8:20 a.m. when "a prisoner came to the control center...and said an officer was down in the auditorium," said Thomas Phillips, administrative assistant to the warden.

The prison employees who demanded anonymity said a belt was wrapped around

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McCallum's neck and she had been badly beaten. They said there were indications that she might have been sexually assaulted.

An autopsy showed that McCallum died of "a beating around the head," Phillips said, but he declined to say whether she had been sexually assaulted.

The auditorium is part of a 61-year-old brick building that also houses classrooms for many of the 600 inmates who attend Jackson Community College classes at the prison. The auditorium is in Jackson Central, one of several facilities that comprise the State Prison of Southern Michigan. The 57 ½ -acre Central Complex is believed to be the largest walled prison in the world...

"She was the only one in that whole building," said Parks. "That place is as big as a field house and the nearest officer was outside. He couldn't have heard nothing."

McCallum who has a seven-year-old son, was married to a Detroit News circulation employee who works in Lansing. When reached at the family's two-story wood frame home on the East side of Lansing, her husband, William, said, "I just don't want to make any statements right now."

The attack on McCallum is part of a growing wave of violence inside Michigan's prisons, according to department reports. Between 1981—when inmates rioted at three prisons—and 1985, the department saw a 122 percent increase in assaults on staff members. Inmate-against-inmate assaults increased 19 percent during the same period.

During the past several months, at least one female corrections officer has been taken hostage and several others have been raped or sexually molested by inmates incarcerated throughout the state, according to the department officials. Two weeks ago at Jackson, a female corrections officer was stabbed three times but was not seriously injured, officials said.

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Some corrections officers said Tuesday's killing of McCallum was the tragic but inevitable consequence of prison overcrowding, lenient disciplinary policies and allowing corrections officers to frequently work without a partner because of staffing problems. Some officers also complained that women should not be working in men's prisons.

"It was inevitable," said Robert Hughes, the former president of the Michigan Corrections Organization chapter at Jackson. "The kind of clientele we're getting in prisons just don't give a damn. I've been here six years and I've never seen anything like this. They're going to kill guards."

Parks said probationary employees such as McCallum are supposed to be closely monitored by a supervisor or a veteran corrections officer. The union, Parks said, believes that the wording of the contract requires probationary employees to be accompanied by an experienced staff member.

Corrections department officials interpret the contract language to mean that the veteran staff member merely be in close proximity to the probationary employee.

"She should've had some supervision within close proximity," said corrections spokeswoman Light. "They should've been checking on her, if they were not with her." Light said she was told by Jackson prison warden Foltz that McCallum's supervisor was a sergeant.

"It's not clear how frequently he got around to check on her because he had other duties," she said.

Light said the warden told her that the radio McCallum was carrying was "the best device you can have."

But Hughes, who has worked at the Jackson facility for the past six years, said, "That radio doesn't mean much. They can grab you so quick, you don't even have a chance to (use)

it.”

Robert Brown Jr., director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, said: “I am deeply grieved. She was a relatively new employee who had been cited by her instructors as exceptional. She was professional and enthusiastic about her career. She was the kind of employee we want and need in our business. Her death underscores the difficulty of the jobs held by the men and women who work in our state prisons.”

Since Oct. 1, 1976, a total of 118 state prison corrections officers have been killed in the line of duty in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Justice’s Public Safety officers Benefits Program. Three corrections officers have been killed since October 1986.

Lansing State Journal

March 25, 1987

YEARS OF OVERCROWDING, YEARS OF TROUBLE

By Frank Hand

The Southern Michigan Prison at Jackson has had a troubled history since it was built to house 5,100 prisoners in 1936.

Jackson is the largest walled prison in the world and, according to penal experts, is four times larger than it should be...

Inside its walls, understaffing and overcrowding have contributed to a history of unrest that began 35 years before guard Josephine McCallum’s death Tuesday. McCallum was found at the bottom of a stairwell in an auditorium in the prison’s Central Complex.

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There have been 200 assaults on guards in Jackson in the past year, according to the Department of Corrections. Most recently, Kay Garland was stabbed three times March 11.

Jackson prison is actually a series of four complexes. A prison spokesman said the 5,558 inmates housed in the prison Tuesday included:

- North Complex, medium security, 1,070 prisoners.
- South Complex, minimum security, 1,540
- Reception Center, prisoner processing and testing area, 578
- Central Complex, close security (a higher category than medium), 2,370.

The crowded conditions have caused concern for prison officials for 35 years...The riots of 1952 and 1981 attracted statewide attention.

But Jackson and 22 other Michigan prison sites housing more than 17,000 inmates have been troubled for decades by outbreaks of isolated and organized violence.

- Two state prison guards have been killed by inmates in the past 25 years. In 1962, Jackson guard Barney Thatcher was stabbed to death. In September 1973, guard Earl DeMarse was killed by an inmate at the State House of Correction at Marquette.
- In 1970, Jackson prisoners rebelled peacefully by walking off their work stations and demanded more money. But three years later, guards used tear gas to end a confrontation.
- Crowded conditions brought on a protest in 1977. Jackson prisoners burned several mattresses while protesting crowded conditions. The damage was estimated at \$20,000.

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- Scarcely six months after the 1952 riot, several hundred Jackson prisoners nearly started a riot in the prison cafeteria.
- In the same week as the May 1981 riots in Jackson, prisoners rioted at the Marquette and Ionia Reformatories. Eight guards and four inmates were injured at Marquette and damage was estimated at \$3 million. At Ionia, four guards and 18 prisoners were injured. Damage was placed at \$750,000.

A state investigative committee put most of the blame on understaffing and overcrowding.

Lansing State Journal

March 25, 1987

Policies under fire by Welborn, union

By Phil Jurik

...A litany of stabbings and close calls for guards in the past year indicated that the state's lucky streak of about 14 years without a slain officer was in jeopardy, many suggested Tuesday.

The most appalling aspect of the 28-year-old Lansing guard's death, union leaders and some lawmakers said, was that McCallum was working alone in the close-security compound.

McCallum, 5-foot-5, 128 pounds, had been working in the prison for five months and was still in her probationary period.

The guards' union and Sen. Jack Welborn, chairman of the state Senate Corrections

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Committee, insisted the labor contract prohibits probationary officers from working without a supervisor or a veteran officer.

“I’m thoroughly convinced that if two officers were working the area this probably wouldn’t have happened, because one could have signaled for help or the two could have fought off the attackers,” said Fred Parks, executive director of the Michigan Corrections Organization Local 526.

Brown acknowledged McCallum would have faced better odds with another officer at her side. He said he didn’t know if the contract required that.

“My speculation is that it wouldn’t have happened if she was with someone else, but I don’t know that,” the prisons director said. “Do we hire a supervisor for every employee? Everyone realizes that’s an impossibility in these times.”

Still, Brown said he felt comfortable with his department’s level of staffing. He said inexperience among guards and supervisors is common throughout the state prison system.

In fact, he guessed as many as half the officers at Jackson might be rookies, with less than a year of experience. The state had to put the brakes on transfers, he said. Veteran Jackson guards were attracted to newer, smaller prisons.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERVIEW

Lansing, Michigan

October 1986

As a rookie officer, I knew next to nothing about Jackson Prison or the Michigan Department of Corrections, usually referred to by state workers as MDOC, before starting my job. Scores of my fellow trainees at the academy came from families whose fathers, grandfathers, or uncles had worked in the prisons. For many of them, the profession was akin to generations of workers toiling in the state's automobile factories. A prison job meant state employment. And with that came a good paycheck and generous benefits. It was job security without a college degree.

My Dad was a lifer with the State Highway Department, working long days on the roads paving asphalt, and he had encouraged me to look into civil service employment. He never imagined I would end up in the corrections field. Neither did I. As a 1984 college graduate, I was saddled with student loans and had spent the previous two years working as a lab tech at a plasma center in East Lansing, a college town just outside the state capital of Lansing. During the day I gently plopped warm bags of blood into a centrifuge, then expressed the clear plasma and stored it in a deep freezer prior to shipping it out along with the immune assay samples. (Note: This may sound impressive. It is not.) A core group of us spent Wednesday evenings drinking pitchers of cheap beer during the Silver Dollar Saloon's happy hour special. Afterward we usually ended up at a dive bar called Mac's, where we stood on a grimy bench swaying and singing along to

Mony, Mony with improvised lyrics.

But I was earning little more than minimum wage and could barely pay my monthly bills. Plus, the work had nothing to do with my degree. Bulk resume mailings to various companies advertising job openings in the newspapers resulted in an obstinate silence. I knew all along that my double major in psychology and English was a poor choice without a master's, but I didn't count on a gaping lack of money and motivation, along with mediocre grades, to quash my desire to continue my studies at the graduate level. I registered to take a couple of civil service exams in hopes of landing a decent job with the State of Michigan. The first test, for corrections officer, briefly described duties consisting of working with felony offenders in some type of institution. Having no intention of pursuing that route, I took the exam as a practice run, of sorts, for the more important College Graduate Careers Exam. That's where the good money and opportunity were. The results of my practice test arrived in the mail first, scoring 98%, and I was offered an interview. (Full disclosure – the exam consisted entirely of reading comprehension, and I was an English major, so ... yeah). I also received a notice in the mail along with a job description: "... Duties include searching for contraband and involves extensive face-to-face interaction with prisoners." Picturing myself nose-to-nose with a prisoner, I realized in shock that this was no counseling position. I had, in fact, applied to be a prison guard.

Slowly, grudgingly I came to realize that if nothing else, the interview would be a good experience. I mean, there was no way I was going to be offered a job and had nothing to lose. Anyone could see that I would never make it as a guard, and I couldn't imagine anything less appealing. But I was going nowhere, stuck in the lab, and I

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seriously doubted if I would ever go to grad school. I rallied between my limited options, wedged into the tight corner I had made for myself, and finally decided this was an opportunity that may not come along again. I nudged, cajoled, and finally forced myself to move forward, all along hoping to receive the results of the other exam for college graduates. And there I was. Interviewing to be a corrections officer.

I walked into a large auditorium in my dress-for-success navy suit and matching pumps, waistband of the skirt cutting into my belly. My discount store outfit was a splurge on my meager budget, and I hoped no one would notice that it was one size too small. Scanning the area, I noted hundreds of applicants milling about in t-shirts, sweatpants, and jeans. Mostly men in their thirties and forties. But I saw some younger guys, too, and more women than I expected. Some of the men were sporting shirts and ties, but I spotted only a handful of the women wearing business suits such as mine. I felt like I was applying for a spot on the assembly line in that bleak environment. I had overdressed for the interview and felt conspicuously out of place, and self-conscious.

Aware that I looked younger than 25 years old, I knew my youthful appearance was a detriment, particularly in applying for a job as a prison guard, of all things. I wasn't accustomed to wearing a skirt and pumps, either, as I had lived in jeans and tennis shoes for years, and I desperately hoped I wouldn't skid and fall on the shiny floor with my new stiff shoes, which were burning blisters in my heels. The crotch of my drugstore pantyhose had been stubbornly creeping toward my knees since I put them on that morning. I was hiking the nylons up for the final time before stepping out of my car when my index finger poked a hole through the springy material just below my right thigh. To add to my anxiety in going for this job I needed but did not want, I also worried about a

run in my nylons snaking its way down my leg and past the hem of my skirt.

My name was called, and I was led to a large, open area with numerous long tables filled with other people who were also interviewing. I shook hands with a couple of MDOC representatives on the other side of the table and took a seat on a cold, metal folding chair. They both had serious expressions and fired questions at me. Yes, I replied, I am aware of the physical requirements of the job ... no, I am not afraid of heights ... yes, I could shoot a man in the back if he tried to escape over a prison wall. The male – white, middle-aged, with a pot belly and receding hairline – leaned across the table and glared at me. I stared back. I knew this game because in middle school I would have stare downs with Melinda, my best friend, to see who would blink first. I couldn't be beat. The female representative's face remained blank and impossible to read, as it had throughout the interview. We all stood and shook hands and I left. On my way out I tried to visualize shooting at inmates as they scrambled over a tall fence. I had never held a gun, much less considered shooting an escaping convict. I wondered why that man was staring at me, and what a fear of heights would have to do with anything.

Next, following instructions, I drove to a small building located several miles from where the interview was held. I waited there in a crowded seating area with dozens of other CO wannabes for over two hours. Then I was led to a small changing area where I stripped and put on a thin hospital gown to prepare for a urine test screening for drugs. I passed men in the hallway on the way to the toilet and tried to act nonchalant while tightly clutching my cover-up in front of my breasts and in the back where the material parted. The guys looked kind of goofy in their gowns and seemed self-conscious and that comforted me a bit. Everyone wore the revealing gown to prove they were not trying to

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cheat on the drug test. I entered a bathroom stall, peed into a small cup, then dressed and headed to yet a third location, for physical testing, at the Earl F. DeMarse Corrections Academy.

I changed into sweats and huffed my way through sit-ups, push-ups, and a stepping exercise, along with dozens of other people. As a smoker and non-exerciser, it wasn't easy, but I passed the fitness test. I was in pathetic shape, but at least I was in the average weight range. I noted several applicants were plump and/or older and I wondered how they were going to make it through. As I left the grounds, I looked around at the big, old brick buildings looming on the small campus and noted the academy shared the grounds with the Michigan School for the Blind.

Drained from an anxiety-filled day I headed back to my apartment feeling even more firm in my conviction that I did not want to work for DOC. I was, of course, almost immediately offered a position. Placement in a prison would be determined during the 16 weeks of training. The only prison I had ever heard of, besides the federal facility in Milan, was Jackson Prison.

Driving to northern Michigan on family camping trips when I was a kid we would pass by the city of Jackson. My Dad would point his finger out the driver's side window of our station wagon and tell us that's where bad men were sent. I usually sat in the back seat, wedged between my two brothers and sister, and I always strained to see a prison fortress with inmates in striped uniforms working on chain gangs. But I saw nothing from the highway beyond houses and trees and industrial plants. Throughout my childhood and adolescence rumors occasionally circulated about illicit happenings in the prison, things like inmates raping other inmates, stabbings, fights, and so on. It loomed as a dark pit of

Hell in my mind, and I was both fascinated and repelled by the mere thought of what life must be like on the inside.

Nonetheless, after the job offer, I began wondering if perhaps I had misjudged this concept of prisons with my antiquated notions gleaned from old Jimmy Cagney movies. The pay was almost double my current salary, the benefits were excellent, and I would have my foot in the door of state employment. I made a bargain with myself to give it one year, and I would give it my best shot. If it was really and truly as bad as it lurked in my imagination and if I absolutely detested it, I could walk away saying to myself, well, at least I tried. What did I have to lose?

CHAPTER 2

THE EARL F. DEMARSE TRAINING ACADEMY

February 9, 1987

Lansing, Michigan

Training at the academy began with four weeks of classroom instruction on the use of restraints, policy and procedure, hostage situations, physical training (PT), and situations warranting deadly force. And then there was the marching. MDOC was a paramilitary organization. We marched outside first thing in the morning and later in the afternoon in riot squad formation, racking up our pretend shotguns in unison as a show of force. I think we all felt a bit silly, tromping around the grounds with our imaginary weapons and it was one of the few light moments I experienced during training. I was

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frequently assigned gas man position as we practiced entering a rioting prison. Upon the Sergeant's order I fired gas canisters into a crazed throng of inmates, replete with sound effects.

We were told that the show of strength of a riot squad marching into a prison could be enough to subdue a disturbance, and the ratcheting sound of several dozen shotguns racking up in unison is a strong attention-getter. Use of deadly force was limited to preventing death or injury, preventing an escape or damage to state property, or stopping prisoners from unlocking other prisoners. We had to be within five yards of an inmate to shoot and we were to aim for the knees and below. In addition to shotguns, prison arsenals contained grenades, riot gas, and fogger guns, and mace: a potpourri of deadly, debilitating devices. I wondered whether I would remember the proper steps of deadly force when and if the time came, and I tried to visualize shooting inmates running amok. How would I know they were within five yards? What if they were close to five yards, but not quite?

One afternoon, as I looked up while marching, I noticed another division heading toward us. In the front row was a tall, husky guy with dark hair and a pale complexion. He was looking at the ground in concentration and he was slightly out of sync in stepping with the others. He glanced up and we looked at each other. He immediately broke into a grin. Rick Aranda. Rick had been one of my buddies in grade school. He always had a deep, goofy laugh. He smiled and waved as they marched away. In this new reality of mine it was heartening to make a connection with someone I knew.

My division consisted of 60 students and one day we were required to walk to the front of the class, one by one, and give a short speech. My stomach dropped. I last gave a

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speech while I was in college and began hyperventilating during my 10-minute presentation. My voice was shaky, my hands were trembling, and I couldn't catch my breath. I must have plowed through my entire presentation in about two minutes, skipping entire sections I had memorized, just to end the horror show. I vowed to never go through that again. As I watched my academy classmates walk to the front of the room and speak, I squirmed uncomfortably, and my heart pounded in my chest. I glanced at the door several times and thought about walking out, but to do that I would have to cross the classroom and that would also draw attention to myself. I just wanted to be done with this phase and be working in a prison, no matter how bad it was, where at least I could blend in and not be noticed. I tightly gripped the chair seat and tried to slow my heart rate. In the end, I failed to summon the courage to leave, so I stiffly walked to the front of the class, mumbled a mangled sentence or two, and returned quickly to my chair.

During this initial phase of training, we learned what to do if we were taken hostage. The instructor passed out booklets sporting a crudely drawn picture of a muscular white man gripping a woman and pointing a gun to her head.

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS HANDOUT



EMPLOYEE PREPAREDNESS

****STUDENT HANDOUT****

Hostage takers were classified into three types: the criminal, the mentally ill/disturbed, and the politically motivated terrorist. A hostage situation is classified into

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four stages. The first, Alarm, is an unprepared citizen being forced into a life-or-death situation. The trauma from passing from a routine, comfortable existence into a dangerous and dramatic encounter is overwhelming, and the victim feels confused and defenseless as authorities seem to be doing nothing.

In the second stage, Crisis, the hostage takes note of the serious and life-threatening situation. During the next stage, Accommodation, the hours seem to pass slowly, like days, and boredom is broken by moments of terror. This roller coaster of emotions is exhausting to the hostage and some, feeling vulnerable to their captors, develop a close bond with them. Finally, the victims go through a Resolution stage, which involves either successful negotiations with authorities or an assault on the barricade by a SWAT/tactical team to rescue the hostages. We were informed that if we were aware that the barricade was going to be breached we were to lay on the ground and cover our head with our fingers interlaced so the rescue teams wouldn't mistakenly shoot us before our captors could cut our throats. We were also told to focus on staying alive and take mental notes so we could testify in court.

During Custody & Security training we learned the proper use of restraints such as handcuffs, belly chains, and leg irons. We also learned how to conduct a proper body search, or "shakedown." The expected jokes involving sex and bondage circulated in class as we took turns handcuffing and restraining our partners. Unlike the movies, where the good guy roughly slaps a set of cuffs on the villain's wrists, we learned to apply them gently on prisoners who were cooperative. For good reason – sore wrists quickly developed from rough partners. Inflicting pain on a prisoner for no reason may upset an otherwise calm inmate.

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We had an old-school type of instructor for this portion of the training. He was a white, middle-aged male who paraded back and forth in front of the class, belly protruding, and touting his supposedly tough history working in a prison. During shakedowns, we were searching for contraband, which included weapons, drugs, and greenbacks – or cash – beyond 50 pennies. We practiced body searches on our partners until it was time for our demonstration in front of the class.

The first couple of partners smiled and made small jokes as they took turns shaking down each other for their class critique. The first step is asking for the inmate's ID card, then having the inmate empty his pockets. This was followed by checking through the hair and thoroughly working your way down to the inmate's feet, where shoes and socks were removed. The instructor suddenly jumped up from his chair and loudly proclaimed we were all doing the shakedowns improperly and checking for contraband was serious business, damnit. The startled trainees who were demonstrating, both women, became silent as the laughter died in the classroom. The instructor brusquely walked over to them and began his own demonstration on the so-called prisoner, a plump woman in her forties. She raised her outspread arms to the wall and leaned against it, slightly spreading her legs.

The trainer thoroughly checked her hair, nostrils and ears. He lifted the collar of her white blouse and felt around it. The search continued and he reached her chest area. He told her to unhook her bra so he could feel for contraband around her underclothes and between her breasts. She then turned and faced the class. Her bra was still unhooked and her breasts and nipples were visible through her shirt, which was disheveled and a couple of the buttons were undone. He continued searching her down to her feet. She had

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a slight smile on her face and I thought she likely didn't realize that we could see her breasts. The class was silent.

I began to panic. I was wearing a lightweight blouse which was also quite thin. My palms quickly became damp as a feeling of dread washed over me. The class watched as the next female pair demonstrated shakedowns in this same manner, under the threat of having the male instructor do it for them. I glanced over at my partner, Elizabeth, who was cute with long blond hair and freckles. We exchanged concerned looks and subtly shook our heads. By the time it was our turn the other demonstrators had toned down the technique and the trainer seemed okay with a more discreet touch.

Journal Entry

February 13, 1987, 7:48 pm

The fifth day of training is over and Thank God! I'm so tired at night I'm ready for bed at 8:30.

Schedule:

7:55 - 8:35 marching + drill practice (outside!)

8:24 - 11:30 class

11:30 - 12:30 lunch

12:30 - 4 class

4:20 - physical training

Prior to moving to on-the-job training (OJT) we learned about being manipulated or blackmailed by prisoners to bring drugs or money to the prison, or submit to sexual

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favours, or worse. Our class was titled *Anatomy of a Set Up*. This subject fascinated me and I paid close attention. While I had no desire to be a prison guard I was going to be a good one nonetheless and I was not going to be exploited by a cunning inmate, or anyone else, for that matter.

The instructor noted that the first step in a setup involves careful observation on the inmates' behalf. The prisoners carefully, silently study the way you walk, talk and behave. Do you make direct eye contact, or shyly shift your eyes? Do you seem friendly, open, naive? Do you move hesitantly, unsure of yourself? I took notes and recognized several of these traits in myself. The victim is selected and tested through a process of pushing, bending, and breaking minor rules to see how far the manipulator can go. We were taught it is a subtle process in making the victim feel obligated to perform small favours.

The next step involves a support system of praising the victim/officer as a nice cop, a good cop, and so on. Ego strokes. The inmate loosens you up and you share just a small bit of yourself. Eventually, you are on a first name basis and you both engage in pleasantries and conversation to pass the time. The inmate gains sympathy from you, then asks for help with a little something. Just a cigarette, maybe, or some other small favor. This continues into a comfortable pattern of familiar exchanges between the officer and inmate. The inmate discusses your likes and dislikes, agreeing and supporting you. You now have common ground and a bond of sorts. Once this friendly basis is established the inmate asks for more help. His "sister" needs a ride from the airport, or his "cousin" needs some advice. His mother didn't put money into his account, so could you, just this once, until he can pay you back? The inmate makes sly references to dirty jokes, alludes

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to sex, and finds reasons to pick lint off your jacket. This is the touch system, a crucial point in which the relationship veers dangerously into physical familiarity. He loses balance, so reaches out to grab you and steady himself. He brushes against you when passing in the hall. His hand accidentally touches your breast. Rumors spread regarding your over-familiarity with convicts, which only strengthens the bond between the two of you.

The officer/victim at this point is experiencing major stress at work as a result of the isolation from coworkers and the increasing demands by the inmate. Just do this one last thing, the prisoner promises, and he'll leave you alone. But it is too much and too late. You would be fired, lose your family, and everything you have if you give into his final and most pressing demand for drugs, sex, contraband, whatever. You can either produce or you can pay the consequences, which may include just threats, or physical harm, or worse. The officer is manipulated and blackmailed and his/her career is over, reputation permanently smeared. I aced this section of the classroom training.

Journal Entry

February 25, 1987 8:14 pm

Third week of training and the bullshit is starting to creep in. So many people are bitching and complaining about this and that. We have long days with homework at nights, on top of the marching and the dread P.T. every day. I'm getting angsty to go OJT. I have a feeling that Jackson will be nothing at all like I have pictured in my mind. Hopefully it won't be as bad. Sometimes I feel very anxious and wonder - What am I doing? On the other hand, it's a wide-open field for females (no wonder).

Every day during training at the academy I hoped to be contacted by the state regarding job possibilities stemming from the other civil service exam I had taken. Every time I walked into a classroom, I wondered what I was doing there, and how I would be able to stick it out. I muddled through shifting feelings of boredom and anxiety in anticipation of the upcoming on-the-job training. This would be my first look at a prison. Eight weeks of OJT, then a return to the academy for a final four weeks of classroom instruction and testing. Then permanent assignment in a prison. I was finally told my OJT would be at the Reception and Guidance Center, or RGC, in Jackson. While dismayed at my placement in Jackson, and what that could mean for my permanent placement, I uncharacteristically felt a small surge of optimism. Reception and Guidance Center ... I pictured a large, sun-filled room with a greeting desk. Quiet, orderly, pleasant, and calm.

This fleeting optimism was quickly dampened by news from other trainees that RGC was located inside the walls, in Central Complex – certainly the largest, and possibly the most dangerous - prison in Michigan. My classmates were going all over the state to prisons I had never heard of: Ionia, Marquette, Huron Valley. I sought out one of my instructors and asked him about RGC. He was silent for a moment or two, then told me it was a pretty good OJT assignment and a decent place to work. I tried to find comfort in that information, but during the weekend prior to starting my training in Jackson I was anxious and filled with dread waiting for Monday's arrival.

Journal Entry

March 4, 1987 5:24 pm

Oh, this is one of those dread "cry" days. On Monday I'll be in Jackson,

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

Reception & Guidance Center. Sometimes I think I'm so strong - mentally - & that I can handle anything, and at other times (like now!) I feel like I'm insane for even taking the damn job.

CHAPTER 3

THE STATE PRISON OF SOUTHERN MICHIGAN

RECEPTION AND GUIDANCE CENTER

Jackson, Michigan

March 9, 1987

I drove through the early morning darkness on a stretch of highway and maintained a steady foot on the gas pedal despite a growing wave of anxiety seeping up through my belly and squeezing my chest. Occasionally I passed another car or truck and wondered who was in those cars and where they were heading at 4:45 a.m. A glowing rectangular sign appeared ahead in the distance near the shoulder of the road. The hair on my forearms prickled as I knew what the sign said before I could be close enough to read it: PRISON AREA. DO NOT PICK UP HITCHHIKERS. My stomach turned over and I had no choice but to pull into a public rest area a short distance away. I parked my car in the empty lot, quickly looked around, and hustled inside to use the toilet. Afterward, I stared at myself in the mirror under the harsh glare of fluorescent lights while drying my hands with rough paper towels. I looked into the brown eyes looking back at me and tried

to objectively picture my expression as seen by male felony offenders. Tense, strained, and pale. Hair pulled back into a low ponytail. White uniform shirt with a black cross-style tie. My black polyester pants with lots of pockets did nothing for my short-waisted figure and long legs. Then again, why would I want to look attractive in a men's prison? What was I thinking? Why was I so vain? What was *wrong* with me? My brain was spinning in a dozen different directions. I tried taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly, to release some tension, but I knew this was a futile gesture even as I did it.

I had been dreading this moment for months, hoping I would find another job before I had to step foot in a facility, or that I would become seriously ill, or get into a bad car accident enroute because I was certainly not prison guard material, and I could not have come up with a more unlikely destination for myself. I was afraid that I wasn't physically strong enough, that I would be a coward and not help break up a fight, and I didn't understand why the Department of Corrections even offered me this godforsaken job, where I was clearly out of my element. Soon after leaving the rest area, I met up with two guys I knew from training, just outside of Jackson, and climbed into their pickup truck. They knew I had never seen a prison and they found this humorous and offered to drive in with me, but as we drew closer to the prison, I sensed that they, too, were nervous.

At 5:30 am we pulled into a drive leading closer to the prison and parked in a large lot in front of the main entrance. Other cars were pulling in, too, headlights following after one another as they slowly turned in. We all three just sat for a moment, gazing through the windshield at the massive, sprawling complex. Both guys stepped out of the truck. I hesitated briefly, then stepped out after them with an unsettling sense of doom. I was here. I was really doing this. I was going to throw up.

We fell in behind other uniforms walking slowly on a long sidewalk leading up to the main entrance. I looked up, past the towering front doors, to the pointed top of the rotunda rising into the dark sky. Some of the guards were smoking cigarettes on the way in, tossing smoldering butts onto the ground. We reached the entrance and went through the heavy wooden front doors into a large, open area. It smelled of sweat and damp concrete. Breakfast food odors wafted in from somewhere deep within the walls.

Uniforms were everywhere, standing together in small clumps, nearly all of them men. I felt eyes on me, singling me out, some slowly looking me up from my feet to my head and back down again. *Gah!* I expected attention from the inmates and had been trying to brace myself for it, but I hadn't expected this utter lack of subtlety on behalf of the other guards. I felt uncomfortable and completely out of place and hated how I was being checked out. I didn't understand why they were looking at me. I knew I was average-looking, sometimes better and sometimes worse depending on my hair, complexion, and weight, so I tried to figure out if they were just trying to intimidate me and make me feel out of place (like I didn't feel that way already) or if that was their way of letting me know they found me attractive because they were deprived and desperate and lacked some basic social graces.

I scanned over the faces quickly, trying not to make eye contact, looking for other women. At the academy, maybe one-third of my class was female, and I naturally assumed the prison staff would have a similar ratio. But there had to be well over a hundred guards there for first shift and, maybe I wasn't seeing things clearly, but I didn't spot more than two or three women among them. I wasn't prepared for that, and I felt increasingly uneasy and anxious.

Berlin/Fish Cop

We joined a couple of familiar faces from the academy, nodding in silence, and we all stood together self-consciously. Our white, freshly pressed shirts and inky black slacks stood out in stark contrast to the other officers' dulled, stained dress and even duller expressions. I tried to look casual, even bored, but knew I couldn't come close to mimicking the hardened, disinterested look on the faces outside of our little group.

A Sergeant approached.

"RGC trainees here? Follow me," he grunted and turned away.

My carpooling friends watched as I followed the Sergeant, falling in with three other trainees, all guys, and lined up to pass through the gates, silently clustering together after flashing our ID cards at the officers sitting stone-faced up behind the glass, operating the levers. The gate behind us clanked closed before a gate in front of us raised from the ground, slow, and heavy.

We walked down a set of steps and entered the rotunda. This was the control center for Central Complex, where the upper brass stationed themselves, and where officers punched in and stood, waiting for the Lieutenant or Captain to give a briefing before each shift. The Control Center counter was along the far left wall. A few officers stood behind it, shuffling papers, looking in drawers, or leaning on the counter and staring at us with blank expressions. Guards stood quietly in little groups with other guards. A wide set of steps led up to the mezzanine on the second floor of the rotunda, which was encircled by a rail overlooking the ground floor. We followed the Sergeant through a large, heavy door on the right side wall of the rotunda, and entered 6-block.

The cellblock was dark and dimly lit and, like everything else in Jackson, very large. But it was quiet and at 6 a.m. it appeared that many of the inmates were sleeping.

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Rows and rows of tiers holding cells lined up and stretched end to end in the 350-foot-long block, the length of a football field.

We followed the Sergeant inside and he locked the door behind us with one of the keys on a ring clipped to his belt. The keys were large and heavy, about the length of my hand, like something belonging in a Bugs Bunny cartoon. I didn't know prisons used these relics from another era. They looked like they were made for a giant.

“Stay under the bulkheads,” he said.

He veered to the left and walked close—too close, I thought—to the cell bars lining the east side of the block, under the walkway for the first gallery of cells located above. We followed in single file.

A long, low whistle rang out from the darkness behind us. I stared straight ahead at the back shirt of the uniform in front of me, concentrating on trying to look calm, and bored, as though I was accustomed to walking through a men's prison. Not just any prison, but *Jackson Prison*.

An arm holding something small thrust out from a ground-floor cell several feet ahead of us. I caught a glare of light and I realized the inmate was holding a broken chunk of a mirror to better see us. A random comment yelled out behind us. I glanced back and saw another arm pop out holding a mirror. Then another, and more following suit. Whistles and obscenities were gathering steam and becoming more pronounced from dark cells above me, behind me, and from the far side of the cell block.

“Hey, girrrl!”

“Who's that? Hey, hey, you new? You a fish cop?!”

I kept my facial expression blank and tried to focus on looking casual and

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unaffected by the comments, which were becoming louder, more profane, and more difficult to ignore. I stole a quick glance at the trainees behind me, who were staring straight ahead, too.

“Gimme some of that pussy!”

“Shake that ass!”

“Over here, over here!”

“**Hey, Bitch! Fuckin’ hoe!**”

“**White hoe fuckin’ hates niggers!**”

My legs moved stiffly as I walked among the others, hating those eager hands thrusting out and adjusting their looking glasses to better see me. Up ahead I spotted a female guard standing on base talking to an inmate. Shorter than me (although most women were), with a stocky, muscular build, she had long, kinky blonde hair and thick arms. No makeup. Large nose, and acne scars across her face. Instead of the cross-style tie I wore, she was wearing a long black clip-on tie like the men. She turned her head toward us. Relieved to see another woman, I looked hopefully into her eyes. I assumed we had a sisterhood in this place. She glanced at me, quickly averted her gaze, and returned to her business with the inmate. I was a little surprised by the subtle snub, but my attention was directed back to the intensifying verbal flak pelting us as we walked. I felt self-conscious in this men's world, and I hated it. I hated my glaring uniqueness as a female and the attention my race and gender brought.

Finally, we reached the end of the block. We followed the Sergeant through a set of doors and another set of gates into what was called a bubble. We showed our ID cards again and entered the Reception and Guidance Center, which was 7-block. Almost

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everyone called it RGC. Many of the old timers, both officers and inmates, referred to it as Quarantine. I followed the group up a set of stairs to where a Lieutenant was sitting at a desk. It was on the bulkhead at one end of the block on first gallery. There was little movement among the inmates here and it was wonderfully quiet. A random comment yelled out from a cell on an upper gallery. One of the RGC guards in the bulkhead looked up and said loudly, "Watch it!" Silence returned. I noticed the other newbies hanging up their new olive green DOC jackets on a coat rack. I followed suit.

"Shake out your coats before you leave," said a Sergeant.

I wondered why but didn't ask.

"Unless you wanna take cockroaches home," he added.

"Officer Bodkin!" Seems I was always Bodkin or Bokkins in the prison.

Nervously, I braced myself and stepped out toward the Lieutenant from the small handful of other fish cops.

"You Bodkin?"

I nodded.

"You're with Mazur today, in the kitchen. He's good people."

I nodded again.

But privately I was thinking, "*What? The kitchen? The KITCHEN??*" I was working in the *kitchen*. I, surprisingly, took offense at this and felt my face flush, thinking that I had been assigned a soft job working in the kitchen, and given special privileges over my fellow male trainees. They would resent me, and I didn't need to feel any more alienated. It was true, of course, that I was not guard material. But that's what I was hired to do. Not working as a cook or freaking waitress. I didn't want this job but

Berlin/Fish Cop

since I had to do it, I wanted to do it right, and I didn't want any kid-glove treatment. I felt embarrassed and singled out even more now that I was going to work in some stupid kitchen. But as the Lieutenant went over the week's schedule it became clear that everyone would rotate working chow duty.

I walked over and stood next to Charlie Mazur, whose shiny Prince Valiant haircut framed a pleasant, crinkled face. One of the other officers elbowed me. Grinning and shaking his head, he said that Mazur was legendary for eating food loaf.

"Food loaf?" I was puzzled.

"Yeah," he said. "Some of the inmates like to act up and throw food. So in the kitchen they take all the ingredients for the meal and put it in a bread pan. Meat, vegetables, dessert. They mix it up, bake it, and feed it to the convicts. After a couple of days they don't throw food no more."

He shook his head in disgust, then smiled.

"But Charlie eats it all the time. Right, Charlie?"

"Long as it ain't movin'," Charlie replied.

I followed Charlie down a set of steps in the bulkhead onto base, under the first gallery Lieutenant's desk. I listened carefully as he explained the routine. We were going to the main kitchen in the prison, in Central Complex, to pick up breakfast and bring it back to RGC.

I accompanied him through a confusing series of gates, cellblocks, and hallways to the kitchen inside the walls. Many brazen stares and catcalls came from inmates along the way. I squirmed uncomfortably, wanting only to sit off to the side somewhere and not be noticed. But with a sinking feeling, I knew there was to be none of that in this place.

We grabbed a big cart with food and headed back. I carried a large can of coffee and walked alongside Charlie, who was pulling the cart. As we neared the rotunda I saw a tall, thin, dark-skinned inmate sweeping the floor with a broom. He smiled and flagged down Mazur. We stopped while they spoke, exchanging comfortable banter. Then Charlie excused himself for a minute and I was alone with the inmate and my food barge. I looked around and noted a couple of guards at the counter in the Control Center, hoping the inmate would just go away.

“So where you from?” he asked, flashing a wide smile.

“Uh, I don’t like to answer personal questions,” I said, with my prepared statement. Politically neutral, inoffensive, accurate. I had heard a few people at the academy say it was a good line to use to dissuade the inmates from prying into your personal life. I hoped I sounded like an experienced CO and that he would be discouraged from further questioning.

“First day, huh?”

I smiled politely, then quickly erased the friendly expression from my face. I already knew how friendly equated weak and vulnerable. I looked around the rotunda, at a loss as to what to say to this prisoner. Not to mention the tit-for-tat logic I held: if I asked him a question, it was only fair that he ask me one.

“What ya got there?” he asked, nodding toward the coffee can.

“Coffee.”

“Hey, now lemme see.”

“See,” I replied, holding it up so he could read the label.

“Aw, I see, I see what you be like.”

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He grinned.

“Now lemme see, fir real.”

He leaned over closer and read my name tag. K. Botkin.

“C’mon, Off’cer Bokkins?”

I looked at him cautiously and desperately hoped Mazur would return soon.

“No, I don’t think so,” I said.

“You Karen? Kelly?”

I remained mute.

“C’mon! It’s awright if I just look at some coffee!” He held his hands out, palms up, still smiling and friendly. Mazur was nowhere to be seen.

I had to make a decision on the spot, a snap judgment. So I shrugged, nonchalantly I hoped, and handed the coffee over to the inmate.

He immediately laughed out loud.

“You a Fish Cop!” He shouted and held the coffee close to his side.

I hadn’t been at work for even an hour, and I had already screwed up. How serious an error was this? Why would a can of coffee be considered a coup? Not knowing the penalty of being conned out of coffee due to simple stupidity, I tried to think of a way to get it back from him before anyone saw what happened. But it was too late. Mazur had returned and was staring pointedly at the coffee can in the inmate’s hand. Then he swiveled his head to look at me. I kept a blank expression on my face but inwardly cringed.

“She a Fish Cop! Hahaha!” The inmate laughed and laughed while Mazur just shook his head and grabbed the front of the cart to head back to RGC.

“Hand it over,” mumbled Mazur.

The inmate handed the goods over to me and stepped in closer, lowering his voice, and looking serious.

“Don’t ever do that. Don’t trust nobody in here,” he said.

I looked at him blankly, then abruptly turned and followed Charlie and his food cart with no response to the inmate.

As we made our way back to 7-block, the cellblocks came into clearer focus with the rising sun. Inmates woke and started stirring. Keys jangled from CO’s working on upper galleries and cell doors clanked open and closed again. The odors of the prison were more pronounced now—scrambled eggs, spoiled fruit, urine, and human excrement laced with the ever-present musky scent of sweat. Like driving behind a garbage truck on a warm day. Toilets flushed. Voices called out to their buddies down the rock and across the block. Birds chirped and occasionally flew through the high ceilings overhead. Whistles and vulgarities intensified. I became uncomfortably aware that a good portion of the attention was directed at me, the new female fish cop. More hands holding pieces of small mirrors thrust out through cell bars as we walked by.

We finally returned to RGC and unloaded supplies for breakfast. A couple of officers wandered over to speak with me. A particularly brawny guard with a small waist crossed his bulging Popeye arms and leaned casually against a counter. I listened as he quietly explained the meal routine out of the side of his mouth. Guards talked that way so the inmates couldn’t hear what they were saying. It was another curiosity in the prison: everyone seemed to talk very quietly, just above a whisper, and out of the side of their mouth. Unaware at that point in my life that previous rock concerts during my teen years

at the Pontiac Silverdome had pretty much wrecked my hearing, I strained to understand what they were mumbling.

Inmates began moving through the food line.

“**ONE!**” the guard suddenly yelled. I jumped, startled, before I realized the comment was not directed at me.

“ONLY ONE CEREAL! PUT IT BACK! NOW!”

The inmates had their choice of cereal from those small boxes that were usually bought for kids in a variety pack at the store. And apparently, they were allowed only one. Another rule. The offender grudgingly tossed the pilfered cereal box back into the crate and moved along.

“Hey, watch the line,” the guard said to me. “I’ll be back in a minute.”

And no sooner did he leave than an inmate filched an extra box of cereal, glancing slyly at me. Another test. I pretended not to see this crime while I silently debated how to handle the situation. Obviously, an intimidation tactic similar to the husky guard’s was not going to be effective coming from me. Not to mention that I really, really did not want a confrontation.

Another inmate took too many cereals, then another followed suit. They were smiling and very pleased with this turn of events. *Uh oh*. This was getting out of control. I could no longer ignore the thievery. Clearly, I needed to take action. I stepped closer and cleared my throat.

“Uh, excuse me. You need to return that,” I said, voice wavering.

He ignored me. I repeated myself, louder this time. But the inmate continued to saunter away from me with three or four cereal boxes piled on his tray.

“WHEN SHE SAYS ONE CEREAL THAT MEANS ONE CEREAL!” the returning guard boomed behind me.

The inmate gave him a sullen look, and I glimpsed what appeared to be fear in his eyes as he tossed back the pilfered booty. Order was restored. It was that simple.

“You gotta watch these guys,” the guard said pleasantly, smiling at me.

I nodded, weakly, wondering how I would ever be able to order the inmates around and intimidate them as he did. I couldn't do it. It wasn't my nature to be bossy. Or aggressive. Or even assertive. Or self-assured. I loved to read and I loved animals and viewed myself as a softie at heart. I had a hard time even killing insects. I lacked confidence and typically withered when confronted by someone who bullied me in any aspect of my life up to that point. I was sensitive to criticism. I couldn't help but ask myself once again, as I had countless times already, what in the *Hell* was I doing working in Jackson Prison.

CHAPTER 4

SHOWER DUTY

Slowly, gradually, time passed, and I began absorbing and piecing together the endless bits of information at my new workplace. The Reception and Guidance Center was one of the many large cell blocks forming the outer walls of the State Prison of Southern Michigan. Even though RGC was physically located in 7-block, inside the walls of Jackson and nestled among the Central Complex cellblocks, it was a separate prison administratively, with its own Warden, brass, and guards. RGC had a reputation as a tightly run block and therefore considered relatively safe, with a high proportion of guards to inmates. In addition, the guards were primarily old-timers with years of invaluable experience working with felons. The inmates were kept under control and unruly behavior was not tolerated.

Inmates recently sentenced to prison from courts throughout the state were transported here first, to RGC. During their temporary stay in my block, the inmates were assigned their prison number, sorted by risk level, and classified to one of the many prisons in Michigan. Some were on their first trip through the system, while others were on their second, third, or more. Higher security inmates would go on to serve time at places like Marquette Branch Prison in the Upper Peninsula, where John Norman Collins was doing life for the Ann Arbor coed murders. One of my RGC coworkers told me he had a friend who worked in Marquette, and that friend said that Collins' eyes were lacking any signs of a human being inside. The dangerous inmates could also be sent inside the walls of Central Complex. Others would go to minimum security facilities like

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Jackson's Southside, or the Saugatuck Dunes on the shores of Lake Michigan because they were classified as low-risk offenders.

One day the guards pointed out an offender sitting quietly in a corner of his cell on first gallery. He was a white male in his 20's with dark hair and a slight build. He had raped and murdered two young boys on the eastern side of the state and had recently been sentenced to life in prison. His heinous offense made the front pages of the newspapers and his name was well known. It was a high-publicity case and I instantly recognized him. He showered separately from the rest of the block, while watched by one of the CO's, and ate alone in his cell.

Due to the inmate's small stature and the nature of his crime, he was easy prey for the more seasoned convicts, who would humiliate, assault, rape, and perhaps murder him. So he had to be protected from them. That's what we did. We guarded the outside world from the inmates, and we also guarded the inmates from themselves and each other. Even a low-life child rapist/murderer had the right to be protected. In RGC, we saw them all. The murderers and child molesters and rapists came through our block, along with robbers and drug dealers, and petty car thieves. My training location was limited to this one cell block, holding over 450 inmates. In contrast, Central Complex housed over 2500 prisoners in its many cell blocks and countless dark, hidden spots providing opportunities for predators and other enterprising inmates looking to scam commodities like sex, food, and drugs.

In RGC we were somewhat insulated from the hazards facing the other officers working inside. Every morning at 5:45 a.m. I walked through the heavy doors at the main entrance into the prison and joined the other trainees and guards headed for 7-block. We

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clustered together and flashed our ID cards at the guards operating the controls behind glass windows. We moved slowly, waiting to pass through the many barred gates opening and clanking closed. The stoic Central Complex officers lined up for roll call and briefing by the Lieutenant in the large, octagonal rotunda area, while we continued walking past them, through the lengthy expanse of 6-block, then into the adjoining RGC unit.

My eyes were drawn to the guards working inside, and I tried not to stare. I couldn't help but wonder what horrors they had seen in Central Complex to make them so tough. Everyone in the state knew about Jackson Prison's bad reputation. Especially inside the walls, in Central Complex. I was just beginning to grasp the enormity of SPSM, but I had seen and heard enough to know that it was dangerous. Over and over, countless trainees and guards told me that Central Complex was filled with many bad officers among the occasional good ones. Only a half dozen or so total CO's staffed each cellblock and many of those blocks held 450 to 500 inmates. Also, Central Complex frequently imposed a transfer freeze on staff, who tried to get out of there as soon as they were eligible at the end of their first year. Many were involuntarily stuck inside the walls much longer than they intended. This resulted in the bulk of the staff consisting of younger, inexperienced officers. Once their first year was up, guards could be held over from their shift to work yet another eight hours if too many called in sick.

I did meet another female guard whose presence lifted my spirits. She not only looked me in the eyes, but often gave me a barely perceptible smile, too. And she worked inside, in Central Complex, with the hardened guards and inmates. Every morning while making my trek through 6-block I discreetly looked for her. She usually stood at the

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Sergeant's desk near the far end of the block. I didn't know her name but she seemed to be around my age with light brown — almost blond — hair and a fair complexion. Her features thawed and softened slightly during our brief eye contact routine. She looked fresh, and kind, unlike the other Central Complex guards. I felt a bit strengthened by this silent camaraderie with a fellow minority behind the walls and wondered how someone like her could survive in a place like Central Complex. Not RGC, the closely guarded block where I was assigned, but inside the walls. If she could work in Central Complex, I could at least make it in RGC. It was a little ray of hope for me.

On one of those early days in the prison I was making that long walk through 6-block with two other trainees and bracing myself for the expected array of disparaging remarks calling out from around the block. But it was unusually quiet and still. About halfway through the block our gaze collectively turned toward an open cell door on base. A bare light bulb inside threw a spotlight on this cell, the only one harshly lit among the countless rows of darkened cells stretching out and above.

As we passed by we looked in at a sheeted mattress with a dark, dinner plate-size stain near one end. A 6-block guard standing nearby mentioned that the inmate had cut his own throat during the night. He didn't say whether he survived. A jumble of emotions washed through me: while I was relieved to not be the center of attention, I also felt guilty knowing I was spared from the mouthing off this morning because blood had been shed, and I felt curiously fascinated that someone could slash himself in that way.

One moment in the prison slowly melded into another as I did my time, hour after uncomfortable hour droning by. Finally, nerves frayed from a continual state of tension, I pulled my timecard out of its slot and punched out at the end of my shift, which could not

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come soon enough. Each morning on waking I battled with myself to simply not show up for work. Every day while driving from Lansing I passed the ominous prison sign, which had its predictable effect on my gut, forcing me to segue off the highway and into the ever vacant but now familiar public rest stop where I reconsidered my destination, and invariably climbed back into my car and headed to Jackson.

The parking lot was located directly in front of 4-block and 5-block — blocks in Central Complex — just to the left of the main entrance. The prisoners, upon discovering that a new batch of guards had arrived, vocalized their delighted disgust with me in particular by hollering obscenities through the block windows every day when I arrived for work, and again when I left. They quickly learned my name, these inmates I did not know and had not met, and I inwardly winced every time “Bokkins” was shouted out. Eyes were on me from the moment I pulled up in my car, scrutinizing every move I made. And it became only marginally better once I entered through the gates and made it into RGC. I continually fought a strong urge to quit and to be away from all of those relentlessly prying eyes and ears turned my way, watching, listening, always observing me, me of all people, just an average person trying to work my way into a decent job and pay off my student loans.

Journal Entry

March 18, 1987 5:57 pm

2nd week of OJT (On-The-Job training). Am I really working in this place? I'm sick of thinking about it and talking about it all the time. People just really cannot understand what it's like to work in this pit. I'm hooted at, whistled at, and

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stared at all day, all of the time. If I'm nice to the prisoners they won't stop talking to me, and if I ignore them they whistle & yell even louder. "Hey girl!" Or the following: bitch (not very often, though), wench, pussy, miss, Miss "Bokkins", hoe (whore), etc.

They stare at my crotch, or look me up & down- from head to toe- and blow kisses to me. They ask me personal questions (which I try to deftly field, even though they act/are socially ignorant). Even a guy I work with called tonight "just to talk." I said I didn't think my boyfriend would appreciate that. He (Clauzell Dentmond) said he just wanted to be friends, and I said oh, I don't think so. There are officers everywhere, smiling and asking me questions. Bunch of horny, frigging perverts. I'll start warming up to one of them, feeling something like a daughter, and he'll turn and say a filthy joke, or make some sexual comment to or about me. I'm not even pretty! I'm simply attractive- some days better and some worse.

I can't believe I get all of this attention. Although, today I was the only female on duty. Oh, well. Tomorrow I have to try and smuggle in some Tampax, since I'll be on my period, and pray to God they don't shake me down (search me) when I go in, or they'll confiscate it. It IS a man's world, at least in Jackson Prison!

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, my stark surroundings became a little less jarring as those beginning days dragged by. I gradually adjusted to the shock of this odd, self-contained world with a growing awareness that the guards were watching me, just as the inmates were. They were simply more subtle about it. When I quietly spoke with a prisoner or another guard, my co-workers watched me through their peripheral vision or

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stood to the side, turned slightly away from me, pretending to fiddle with their keys while listening to every word of my conversations. They slyly glanced at me out of the side of their eyes when a particularly demeaning adjective was flung my way, measuring my reaction and judging my behavior.

But I was watching them, too. I carefully studied my coworkers performing their duties—taking count, locking and unlocking cells, how they carried themselves, how they spoke to the inmates, how they treated each other, and how they acted. I mentally noted that they seemed to keep a healthy distance from me. Whoever I was assigned to shadow for my shift was usually respectful and polite, but carefully gauged my reaction to each situation. It occurred to me that I was being tested. I tried to exude a numb expression, even when inside I was filled with dread.

Gradually, the RGC guards seemed to relax a little and feel more at ease around me. I seemed to be passing their test. Tightened lips loosened and the guards stood closer, quietly mumbling helpful suggestions and relaying stories about the prison.

“You don’t want to work inside,” my co-workers said, one by one, quietly, shaking their heads.

Everybody — *everybody* — told me to watch my back. Over and over, I was warned by the other officers, even in the confines of this closely guarded block. Most of the staff had worked in Central Complex, transferring to RGC in recent years when conditions inside became too dangerous. My problem was that I was already watching my back and was under no illusion that I was safe, and their comments made me even more anxious. But I kept my face blank and nodded slightly when they were being helpful. I learned how to wear a mask.

The senior RGC workers also shared some of the prison's colorful history/rumors with us trainees. One of the stories that continued to surface throughout my time at the prison involved a cat. A couple of officers one day happened upon a small group of Central Complex inmates in a far corner of Yard acting suspiciously. They observed a fresh mound of rocks and dirt and directed the inmates to dig it up. In a shallow grave lay a dead cat, its head smashed. The inmates had raped it. How? I don't know the specifics, and every time I pass that tale along someone asks me how a cat could be raped.

Another story, one I heard many times, involved an inmate being pushed off of an upper gallery. His head burst open like a watermelon on the concrete base. One of the guards who relayed this tale laughed jovially as he described the resulting mess of brains and blood.

That same officer also pantomimed Jackson Prison's CPR method: blankly looking down at an imaginary inmate on the ground, he brusquely stomped on the chest area with his foot three times and, still standing, blew two quick puffs of air from his mouth toward his feet. He laughed again. I looked blank and nodded.

While I quietly observed the rules in this strange world, I also tried to absorb the advice that some of the more respected and experienced RGC guards were willing to share. One of those veteran officers, Ames, ran the Top-6 unit in RGC. This section had been the mental ward for Jackson prisoners in earlier years. Located on the top floor of 6-block, it connected to the rotunda, and RGC staff ran it. Top-6 housed dangerous offenders needing extra security. Ames was tall and good-looking with dark hair and a strong build. He had recently married. Although quiet spoken, he proudly showed me a

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picture he carried in his wallet of his new wife and her kids. When he occasionally talked of Central Complex, his face turned grim and he shook his head. Ames's father and cousin also worked in the prison system in Jackson. They had a good reputation.

Ames introduced me to one of the inmates in his care, a thin but strong black man in his forties, who had served multiple prison terms. This time he was coming through on a new sentence for serious offenses involving a prison escape, a stolen vehicle, and robbery/kidnapping/assault charges. Ames was gentle and respectful with the inmate and, as he secured handcuffs, belly chains, and leg irons on him, explained that he enjoyed his company. They quietly joked and engaged in conversation. The inmate laughed loudly while Ames spoke, a barely noticeable smile on his face.

Ames finished securing the inmate. Then he stood. He looked into my eyes and softly pointed out that he liked this inmate and had worked with him for years, each time he passed through the system.

Ames paused, gathering his thoughts. The pleasant look on his face faded and he spoke slowly and carefully, saying that this prisoner was very, very intelligent. And very dangerous. While Ames enjoyed his company, he would not ever make the mistake of trusting him. He looked at me with an intense, sincere expression. I nodded in understanding. The prisoner also nodded in agreement, smiling pleasantly, wordlessly agreeing with Ames. It was one of the best lessons I learned in the prison .

I followed the other guards around, taking notes on the little memo pad I carried in my shirt pocket. An introvert by nature, I found it difficult to concentrate on learning a new job while my every move was scrutinized by hundreds of male inmates. Comments and quips regarding my body and face and my inadequacies as a worker flew out from all

directions in nearly relentless waves, trailing me as I self-consciously moved through my day. Often, when I couldn't open a cell door with one of the large, heavy keys, or when I started heading in the wrong direction before quickly correcting myself, inmates howled in disgust at my perceived ineptness. *Stupid girl!* So even if not all of the prisoners could see that I was making some mistake, they knew I somehow screwed up from the commotion and uproar in the block, and they joined in.

Each CO was assigned to one of the four galleries, plus base. Every day I was partnered with someone different. I worked first gallery, third gallery, base, and so on. But I was always with a male guard and I was almost always the only woman in the block. Most of the guys working in RGC were older, in their thirties, forties, and beyond, but there were a couple of younger ones, too, not long out of the academy.

During the course of my duties I occasionally had to pass through the shower area, which was located at the end of the block in one of the upper bulkheads over the Lieutenant's desk. I warily glanced at the officers guarding that section as I walked through, trying to act nonchalant, as though I was accustomed to being around dozens of naked men washing up. My presence brought forth hoots and jeers, of course, and I was concerned that I might be posted there, too, at some point, as equal rights and equal duties among the staff seemed to be in full force in Jackson.

My hunch was right and I kept a placid expression on my face when the Lieutenant one morning assigned me to showers. I took my place and watched as inmates stood under the steaming water. As usual, I was the only female on duty in RGC. I maintained a neutral expression on my face. Some of the prisoners seemed oblivious to my presence among the male officers. A few kept their backs to me while showering,

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obviously offended by a female guard. Others gleefully ran the bar of soap across their chest, under their arms, and lingered while soaping up their genitals and buttocks, singing loudly, smiling, and swaying their bodies in a mock dance, their dangling penises jiggling to and fro.

The other inmates who were drying off and dressing watched me carefully. They were measuring my reaction to the display and taking mental notes on my behavior. Where I stood, where my eyes looked, how I held myself. You know. The usual. I strived to keep my face like a stone, unmoving, and my arms and hands hanging loosely at my sides, instead of shoved into my pockets where I wanted to put them or crossed tightly in front of my chest. You weren't supposed to do that because if an inmate assaulted you then you wouldn't be ready to defend yourself or whatever it was you were supposed to do. I understood the logic but I felt it wouldn't make much difference in my case either way if I was attacked.

Standing alone, I was trying my best to look deadily bored when a tall, dark-skinned, muscular inmate approached and stood directly in front of me. He was wearing nothing but white socks and a smile.

"Off'cer Bokkins!"

I looked him in the eye.

"Hi!"

I nodded slightly.

"What's up with you?" Which came out as *What's up wit choo?*

I remained silent. *He's naked*, I said to myself. *But this is the shower area. Of course he's naked. Rules?? What are the rules here?* I frantically searched my memory

for some mention of how to handle such a situation but came up empty.

Keeping my eyes locked into his dark brown ones, I checked my peripheral vision for other officers. I didn't see any.

"How you like yo' job?" He was now grinning.

I noted several inmates behind him looking at us curiously. I didn't know what to say, so I defaulted to my thus far best response: silence.

"Uh hem," he cleared his throat.

I gazed at him, waiting.

"What ... uh ..." he lowered his head and his shoulders started shaking.

"Ahem," he again cleared his throat and crossed his arms, looking down at the ground. Then he straightened up and with a serious look on his face said, "What time's... uhhhhh... chow?"

He couldn't even finish his sentence before snorting and breaking out into laughter, eyes closed as he clutched his stomach and let loose a spasm of giggles. Anxiety welled up inside of me while I stood there, still and quiet, perplexed.

Really?? What the Hell ... and here I am, looking like an idiot. Do I write him up? Does this warrant a misconduct ticket? And how do I write one?? Where are the other guards? Do I just ignore him? He is in the shower area, after all. He is in the shower! That must give him the right to walk around naked. Right? Doesn't it?

I wanted to take action and do the right thing, but I didn't know what that was. The inmate's teeth gleamed in his face as he continued making small talk and laughing, clearly taking pleasure in our one-way exchange. I noted some of the inmates in the background behind him were smiling, also. Some were glaring at me. Others ignored us

and focused on their shower, backs to me.

I held a steady gaze into his eyes with my neutral expression while he spoke, pretending to be concentrating on what he was saying while searching for options in my mind to somehow save face.

Officer Meeks finally walked up. He was a slim, light-skinned African American around my age who carried himself very well, as a professional. He was also a college graduate. He was someone I looked up to and respected and I could only hope to someday be so confident and effective. Meeks briskly told the happy offender to wrap up with a towel. As the inmate walked away, still smiling, Meeks turned to me and explained that, yes, we could tell them to cover up with a towel out of respect while speaking with us. If they refused, we could write a misconduct ticket for disobeying a direct order.

Feeling like an idiot, I nodded in response to Meeks' tutorial and silently, achingly, longed for the end of my shift.

CHAPTER 5

JOSEPHINE MCCALLUM

March 24, 1987

It was 5:30 am Tuesday and my third week of On the Job Training (OJT) in Jackson Prison. I parked my car as usual and made the dreadful walk up to the prison doors through the dark. An occasional vulgarity or whistle called out from the windows. My stomach tightened in conditioned response and I stared at the sidewalk as I fell in with the other guards making their way to the front doors. While making my trek on base through 6-block, I looked for the female guard who usually stood at the Sergeant's desk near the end of the block. She wasn't there. Disappointed, I continued amid the catcalls and jeers.

Once in the Reception and Guidance Center I hung up my coat and stood with the others on the first gallery bulkhead while the Lieutenant gave us our assignments for the day. I was working on third gallery and I took notes on my small memo pad that I carried in my shirt pocket. This was my first time working third, and halfway down the gallery we paused while the other guard spoke with an inmate in his cell. I listened to their conversation and glanced out over the railing. It was a long drop to base. *If a person fell or was pushed...* an image of a bursting watermelon slipped into my head and I felt a little dizzy as a wave of nausea crept over me. I subtly touched the cold railing with my fingertips and steadied myself.

We unlocked the inmates for morning chow, then locked them back in. I found that I could keep my vertigo in check as long as I kept moving steadily along the gallery.

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But any time I paused or stopped to address an inmate with the gallery guard, I was susceptible to imbalance. The other guard had me take the lead and he watched quietly as I spoke with inmates and checked my notes on who to let out, who was locked in, who needed to see the nurse, go for GED or psych testing, and so on. We all carried ink pens and small notepads in pocket protectors in our shirt pockets. This was invaluable to me as I made notes and, later, recorded inmates' statements to write tickets. I wanted to be accurate.

One of the inmates, McIntosh, pried me with questions, smiling, as I fumbled with my small memo pad and pen, checking off cell number 28-3. He waited in his house for me to unlock his cell door.

“You a Fish Cop, huh?”

I nodded my head briskly in response, hoping that would quell further probing questions.

Of course, it didn't. It never did. The prisoners seemed curious and amused by my presence in the block. As the only female on duty for the first shift I seemed to attract a lot of attention. Not that I didn't expect some notice in my new job as a corrections officer. But I certainly hadn't expected this nearly unrelenting level of interest in me among the other trainees and guards, mostly older and overwhelmingly male. I thought the novelty would have worn off at this point and was starting to feel a little irritated at the non-stop attention.

I tried to concentrate on the daunting task of keeping track of which inmates I was letting out and which ones were supposed to stay locked in their cells. I was in a continual state of anxiety since accepting this prison job and starting my training at the

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academy. Behind me, housed on the other side of the cell block, hundreds of inmates were watching every move I made and shouting out derogatory remarks regularly. I felt self-conscious and wanted to disappear. I was so sick of hearing comments about myself, particularly my body.

I jammed the pad and pen into my shirt pocket and clumsily reached down for the heavy set of keys hanging from the shiny new key clip at my waist. I needed to keep moving at a steady rate but it was critical that I not make mistakes. Who was I, anyhow, to think that I could hold my own among the tough, brawny male guards? What was I doing in this awful place? I had never read *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and the phrase repeatedly ran through my mind. *Stranger in a Strange Land, Stranger in a Strange Land...* but I needed to stop thinking about all that and just concentrate on learning the job. I also had to keep a watchful eye down the long gallery stretching on either side of me, imagining the quiet dangers lurking among these inmates, felony offenders from places like the inner cities of Detroit, Benton Harbor and Flint.

“Whatsa matter? Don’t you talk?” McIntosh said.

The guard stared at him. “Maybe it ain’t none a your damn business,” he said.

“Just askin’,” said McIntosh.

I hurriedly inserted one of the large, long keys into the lock and turned. Nothing. I jiggled the key brusquely, turning it one way and then another, but it didn’t catch. I glanced quickly at the other officer.

“Just play with it, and take your time, like this,” he said patiently, taking the keys from my hand and demonstrating. His left hand grasped a bar on the cell door, and he expertly rattled it slightly while inserting the key with his right hand. The lock clicked

and the old, barred door slid open. But he clanged it shut.

“Here. Try again.”

I took the keys and inserted one into the lock, while grabbing onto a cell bar with my left hand. The cold, smooth steel felt good against my damp palm. *Relax. Slow down,* I said to myself. *Just focus on learning the damn job and don't think about all those inmates on the other side of the block staring at you ...* I toyed with moving the key slightly while jiggling the door. *Click. Finally!* Relieved, I snapped the key ring back onto my belt and opened the door.

McIntosh stepped out onto third gallery as a loud siren pierced the air.

“Aw, man!” said McIntosh.

The guard next to me told him to step back inside his cell and he complied. All inmates in the prison were put on lockdown. The block was unusually quiet. We eventually were told by another officer that a female guard had been found naked and dead. During my drive back to Lansing the local news on the radio also announced her death.

I finally reached my apartment in Lansing. I ran up the steps and into the second-floor apartment I shared with my brother, spilling my bottled-up emotions about the day's events as soon as I walked in. He stood in the living room, staring at me with an odd expression on his face as I closed the door.

“God, you won't believe what happened at work ...” I started saying to him.

Todd interrupted me. “Call Mom and Dad,” he said. “They thought it was you.”

I paused, startled.

“*What?*”

He told me that our parents heard a guard was killed at Jackson. A young female who lived in Lansing and who hadn't been working there very long. The media hadn't released the victim's name, and they were starting to get worried. My stepmother Betty called the prison but they wouldn't tell her anything. At some point she reached the Warden's office and gave them my name and they finally confirmed it wasn't me.

I called my parents and retreated to my bedroom and changed out of my uniform. Then I sat down and talked with Todd about my day. At 6 p.m. we turned on the local news and listened as the anchor relayed the story.

“...a probationary employee of Jackson Prison, found dead this morning, has been identified as 26-year-old Josephine McCallum... indications she was sexually assaulted...”

A picture of the young woman flashed on the screen, to the right of the news anchor. A jolt of recognition shot through me as I stared at her photo. It was the nice female guard I usually saw in 6-block in the morning. Dead? She was *dead*?? Stunned, I continued watching the news, which moved on to another topic. But I couldn't move on. I couldn't stop thinking about Josephine McCallum. The murdered officer was the woman I exchanged quick smiles with. The only woman who made eye contact with me in that place. She worked in Central Complex and I usually saw her standing on base in 6-block, by the Sergeant's desk, while I self-consciously walked through enroute to RGC. Our silent camaraderie had strengthened me a bit. *If she can do it, I can do it*, I had thought.

I hadn't even known her name. We had an unspoken bond as fellow minorities in that harsh men's world. She was one of the few other females working in Jackson Prison. But she wasn't standing near the Sergeant's desk in 6-block that morning. She wouldn't

be there tomorrow morning, either, quietly looking up to smile at me. While I had been working in RGC, scrawling notes on my little memo pad and locking and unlocking prisoners in and out of their cells, closely accompanied by another guard, Josephine McCallum was being brutalized—beaten, strangled and raped. She died, bleeding and broken, in a cold, dark stairwell.

I wanted to quit. I just wanted a normal freaking job where I didn't need to worry if I was going to be stabbed, strangled, raped, and/or murdered, and I dreaded the thought of walking into the prison the next day for work. But then where would I go? Move back in with Mom – who lived out in the country in the middle of nowhere – in Southeast Michigan with Larry the Perv, her second husband? Stare at the corn stalks and John Deere farm equipment and listen to Larry's stupid dirty jokes and pretend to laugh? Find a job at a convenience store and wonder what I was doing with my life? No. I was going to tough it out and get my year in and nothing was going to stop me.

THE FIRING RANGE

Part of our OJT involved weapons training at the gun range located on the prison grounds, across the street from the front entrance into Central Complex. While I was relieved to be out of the spotlight of working in the cell block, I also felt anxious in learning yet another facet of becoming a prison guard. Most of my fellow trainees were, again, men and had at some point handled a firearm. Many were avid deer hunters.

The weapons instructor was Sgt. Al Ames, an old, hardened officer. He was a member of the generations of Ames' men working throughout the sprawling Jackson Prison and father of the Ames I trained with in the top 6 in RGC. Sgt. Ames was direct and no nonsense. I perked up when he stated that it was entirely possible for someone who had never touched a rifle to be a better shot than guys who were accustomed to shooting, because bad habits had not yet been ingrained. I clung to that possibility, and took thorough notes in class on everything he said. I made every effort to spare myself further embarrassment and humiliation.

He taught us everything we needed to know about shotguns and rifles in a small classroom-type building adjacent to the gun range. We spent several hours listening and studying his chalkboard instructions before setting foot on the range. And he made it clear from the beginning that we had better listen carefully because he was not going to repeat himself, and he did not tolerate goofing off. We were, all of us, afraid of him.

Another female in the class — a woman in her thirties with bleach blonde hair named Linda — and I sat together and exchanged nervous looks. Linda was doing her On-The-Job training at Jackson's Northside, a medium security complex. Following the

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unwritten protocol, we did not dare speak a word to each other while Sgt. Ames demonstrated in front of the class. I memorized every step and visualized myself properly holding and firing a rifle.

We finally stepped out onto the gun range and were handed our rifles. The firearm was longer and heavier than I had imagined, and I unexpectedly found the cold, smooth weight calming. We again ran through proper loading and handling techniques. I put my safety glasses on, along with the thick, padded ear protectors.

I inserted a cartridge and closed the chamber. Then I positioned myself and looked through the scope at a target 100 yards away. We were told to take our time and focus on accuracy.

“Focus on your sites! Ready on the firing line? Ready on the left! Ready on the right!”

The whistle blew, but before it ended a weapon fired prematurely.

“NO, NO, NO! Now who the Hell did that?”

Sgt. Ames was hopping mad. He stomped over and stared at me and Linda, stationed next to each other on the firing line.

“Which one of you *blondies* fired your weapon?”

Ames spat out the word “blondies” with a disgusted look on his face. We peered at him through our plastic goggles and shook our heads. He stared at us as if in disbelief. We stared back in silence. One of the assisting Sergeants hollered at Ames from farther down the firing line. The perpetrator was male. Sgt. Ames glared at us for a few lingering seconds, then moved on down the line to chew out the offender. Ames returned to his position of safety behind us.

“Once more. Now pay attention! Focus on your sites! Ready on the left? Ready on the right?” The whistle blew.

My heart pounded with a muffled thup-thup, thup-thup, in the earphones. Several seconds passed before the first shots rang out. Then, gradually, one or two more. I waited.

My steady hold on the rifle masked my frayed nerves. I slowly exhaled and peered through the scope, watching the delicate, floating red dot. My lungs half emptied, I paused my breathing, and I patiently let the dot settle in the crosshairs. I gently squeezed the trigger. CRACK. The loudness startled me, but I held my position and finished exhaling. Then I lowered my weapon. I could not see where on the target my shot landed, because it was so far away from where I stood.

Everyone finished. We were told to lay down our rifles, and we watched as Sgt. Ames and his assistants walked to the far end of the gun range and examined the results. As he neared my target he began bellowing and waving his arms.

I tensed, and waited for my scolding. The target was missed entirely, the ammo hitting way below on the metal post. But Ames was not standing at my target. It was the young man’s next to me. His face turned crimson as Ames yelled from the far end of the range.

Ames and one of the assistants moved on to my target, then turned and looked at me. Ames hesitated, then moved on to Linda’s target. I let out my breath. A few minutes later they finished their inspection and returned to the firing line.

“You almost got a bull’s eye,” whispered a Sergeant who came to stand beside me.

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Having never held a firearm, I did surprisingly well. I found myself enjoying the sportsmanship, the art, of firing a rifle. A couple of the Sergeants spoke with me about joining the gun club. Even grumpy Al Ames said, "Nice job."

The small measure of confidence I gained on the firing range followed me with my return to training in RGC. And I found the other officers quietly making more suggestions to me, on the side, out of earshot of the prisoners. A common bit of advice was to find my style. Every officer had a different way of dealing with the inmates, and I had to find what worked for me. I was also told that my power was in my pen, as in writing misconduct tickets. All these tidbits helped. The logic made sense. Certainly, it wasn't feasible for me to bark at the inmates as I ordered them to return pilfered cereal to the breakfast line. But I could picture myself quietly instructing the offender to return one of the cereals. And if he didn't follow through I could take out my pen and notepad and write him up.

Every day when I entered the prison I watched the solemn Central Complex officers disappearing into the other clumps of uniformed bodies clustered together in the rotunda. I was fascinated by their calloused expressions. *They seem so worn and lifeless. What are they thinking about that makes them look so weary? What does a person have to go through to toughen up like that?* I saw an occasional female dotted here or there, but very few in comparison to the men. And they all wore the same expression: blank, dull, numb. They seemed rough around the edges, and strong. Strong physically and strong mentally. Uncaring. An I-don't-give-a-shit-what-you-think attitude.

During the second half of OJT, we trainees all switched shifts. I was now working seconds, afternoons from 1:45 p.m. to 9:45 p.m. When I entered the prison, the inmates

were awake and roaring in their zealous attempts at both flattery and insults as I walked up to the front doors in the bright light of day. At least on first shift I had a couple of hours when many were still sleeping and not yet going full gear. This abrupt change from anonymous voices hollering out in the predawn darkness to torrential waves of twisted giddiness yelling at me was yet another subtle shock to my battered system.

Once I reached my destination in RGC I couldn't help but feel relieved. This block that had seemed so large and threatening when I first started was now tame in comparison with the rest of the prison. And since RGC was located in the thick of Jackson's sprawling compound, the only thing separating our Yard from the Yard in Central Complex was a series of chain-link fencing topped with Constantine wire, the coiled, razor-edged deterrent to escape. Yard duty was one more opportunity for me to catch yet another glimpse of the mercurial mood inside the walls, where the atmosphere was filled with frustration and fury.

Directly on the other side of our Yard was the corralled Yard for 6-block, which I now knew was the block for felons who were child molesters, baby rapers, and an unusually high proportion of white inmates. Surrounding this protective enclosure was the enormous territory comprising the Yard for the remainder of Central Complex. The ratio of officers to inmates in RGC's Yard was relatively high, compared to the other side of the fence, and beyond, where literally countless inmates—*hundreds* of inmates—slowly sauntered and strolled or just hung out, smoking cigarettes, maybe lifting weights, with an occasional guard spotted among the bodies.

While our Yard was quiet and orderly, the inmates on the other side were bold and crude. Even the 6-blockers. They stared at me and brazenly discussed my physical

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attributes loudly, as if I were a pony on the auction block. They seemed fearless.

Ironically, these inmates were actually the wimps of Jackson Prison.

During my first day in RGC's Yard, I stood self-consciously and watched prisoners. A distinct hissing sound came from the other side of the fence. I froze. I glanced over to the Central Complex Yard and saw several inmate faces staring at me. Ugh. I quickly looked back to my area.

"Pssst..."

I squinted in mock concentration at a couple of inmates in front of me rolling cigarettes with Bugler tobacco.

"Pssst! Hoe! Hey, Hoe!"

I stood still, hoping against hope that the idiot trying to get my attention would lay off. But he continued.

As casually as I could muster I walked over to a nearby RGC officer.

"I think an inmate over there is saying something to me," I said, as quietly and matter-of-fact as possible.

We were turned away from the direction of the Central Complex Yard, as though we were discussing the weather.

"Do you know which one it is?" the officer asked. I shook my head.

"HEY, FUCKIN' HOE!"

No longer able to ignore the insult, we both turned towards the direction of the comment. Silence. Eyes, seemingly everywhere, glaring at me.

"You can write a misconduct ticket, you know," the officer suggested out of the side of his mouth.

My stomach protested.

“That’s okay,” I replied.

I didn’t know which one was making the comments anyhow. The hostile looking faces on the other side of the fence melded into each other when I looked into their eyes. I had no idea who the offender was. I also was not eager to start writing tickets. In RGC, tickets were rarely given out, because the inmates were kept under control by a staff of experienced officers. I certainly didn’t want to write a ticket on someone inside the walls. No way. Definitely not. I hadn’t written a ticket yet, I didn’t know how or when it would be appropriate, and I wasn’t even familiar with the rules of the prison. And I sure didn’t want to piss off a Central Complex inmate. I also didn’t want to bring any more attention to myself. My chest tightened. Thankfully, Yard ended soon after, and we watched the inmates saunter back toward their blocks inside the walls.

But just a couple of days later I did end up writing my first ticket, ever, on a Central Complex inmate. I was again working RGC's Yard when a prisoner on the other side of the fence looked at me and yelled, "Hey bitch! I have \$100 in green money if I could get some of that pussy!"

One of the experienced officers working with me pulled out his radio and called the 6-block Sergeant. The radio crackled in response. I was mystified as to how anyone could understand what was being transmitted through the static.

Sgt. Clark walked over to us and spoke through the fence. He identified the inmate. My stomach was turning and my heart pounded as I wrote out a major misconduct ticket with the officer's help. Just another hurdle to overcome on my way to being a prison guard.

Meanwhile, at our apartment in Lansing, Todd accepted a job transfer and was preparing to move to the Detroit area. I, too, was moving in a couple of weeks—to Jackson, to be closer to my job at the prison. Eight years earlier, I was packed and ready to leave for college at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant. The night before I left, as Todd and I smoked Marlboros and watched Saturday Night Live, I cried uncontrollably at the thought of leaving him. After graduating from college, I moved back in with him in East Lansing. Three years later, after taking a couple of computer classes through a community college, he was working in a good-paying job alongside our older brother, Jeff.

Todd was loading a moving truck when I walked out of my bedroom dressed in my uniform and headed to work in RGC. He looked at me, tilted his head, and smiled a little. Then he walked up and hugged me. I stiffly hugged him back. The lump in my throat ached as I held my breath, trying to avoid a drawn-out goodbye. But I choked and triggered the inevitable tears.

“Come see me,” he said.

I nodded briskly and turned away from him to conceal my embarrassing display of emotion and quickly walked outside to my car. As soon as I left the parking lot I started crying again and continued bawling until passing the prison sign on 127-South. I made my usual pit stop and dabbed at my red, swollen eyes with toilet paper. Then I climbed back into my car. A couple of miles from the prison I stopped crying and blew my nose. I worked my shift, which seemed even longer than usual, dry-eyed and straight faced. But as soon as I punched out I felt the tide of grief again rising up and as I drove away from the prison I resumed my crying jag.

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On returning home I found a note Todd left me in our quiet and nearly empty apartment. Which only made me cry harder. We hadn't talked a lot about my new job, or what I was going through in the prison, but his presence had been a source of support for me. His absence left me feeling more vulnerable and alone.

Kathy,

I know I probably left some things. I'll be back to pick them up later. I didn't get time to take my old clothes somewhere. Thanks for being the best roommate ever!! Love ya lots!! Call me!!!

Todd

PS. I'll help dismantle the bar sometime.

PSS. Take care of kitties.

DON'T BE A HERO AT WORK.

Couldn't fit my car on tow dolly. Be back to retrieve it soon! The cord comes out of back of phone. Check it.

Journal Entry

May ??, 1987

Todd moved out today and I felt so horrible. I'm glad he has Linda to be happy with, so at least I don't have to worry about him so much. I cried all of the way to work, managed to maintain my feelings at work, then cried all the way home. I miss him already. If he ever died I'd never be the same. I still feel like crying!! This is horrible. I just love him so much!

WORK

My 8th week of OJT. Rumor has it we'll be placed inside the walls (Central Complex). Ugh...during these past 2 weeks I've felt more comfortable around the convicts. I was so terrified when I first went in that I HAD to relax a bit in order to function. I try to walk that line between being too tense and too relaxed. However, I've already been threatened more times than I can recall. I feel that if I go inside, I'll be taking a big risk. The following are among those who have made threats: Driggs (RGC), Johnson (6-Block), and a white guy in 6-Block with lt. Brown hair. These are only the convicts I can pick-out. The others I do not know. I'm certainly not bored!

Our apartment complex had been experiencing a rash of burglaries and rapes, and after Todd moved out, I spent my nights sleepless and tense, deadbolt secured. I was terrified of someone breaking in and attacking me. I often sat in my darkened living room, smoking a cigarette, petting my cats, and watching the glare of spotlights flashing in through the sliding doors on my deck as a police helicopter swooped overhead.

CHAPTER 7

THE EARL F. DEMARSE CORRECTIONS ACADEMY

May 4, 1987 to May 29, 1987

I returned to the DeMarse academy for the last four weeks of classroom instruction on Monday, May 5th, 1987 and discovered that at least a couple of female trainees had quit as a result of Josephine McCallum's murder. They decided the risk wasn't worth it. This presented another opportunity to examine my own decision, so far, to stick it out. I also anxiously considered the possibility of being placed inside the walls and hoped that wouldn't be the case. Yes, it was a dangerous place inside. That much was clear. But what were the odds of my getting killed, anyhow? How about getting seriously injured? Minor injuries? Ensnared and caught up in some clever blackmail scheme by felons? Each day that passed was another step closer to getting my permanent assignment. No one in my class seemed as nervous and as uptight about it as I was. I had been told that RGC didn't need more officers. Besides, it was hard to break into RGC, as the guards who worked there had many years of experience and didn't plan to leave that stable environment. Central Complex was chronically short on staff and officers were frequently forced to work two shifts in a row to cover absences. As soon as their mandatory year was up, many put in for transfers to other prisons. Anywhere but inside.

But how could they put me inside if I trained in RGC? Maybe I would go to Northside or, even better, Southside, also known as the trusty prison. I tried to remain hopeful but was torn between my wishes and my instincts. My gut feeling continually told me — from the time that I discovered I had signed up for a prison guard exam, not a

counselor position, and from the time I first learned of Central Complex during the first weeks in the academy — that I was going in.

These thoughts lobbed back and forth through my mind as I listened to more instructors and watched more videotapes in the classrooms. Interpersonal communications, race relations, probation and parole, report writing, security classification, females in corrections, and so on. We also had training on crisis control with Aikido. The principles of Aikido focused on centering oneself and using only the amount of force necessary to control the situation, so neither the officer nor inmate gets hurt. We practiced tricky techniques such as various handholds to control unruly inmates.

Most of us felt frustrated with the useless strategies. As for myself, I could practically guarantee that my Aikido tactics for controlling an inmate would be worthless. I had to make my partner, Ali, stand still for a moment or so while I contorted my fingers around his hand and tried to apply pressure points. Ali was a big guy—tall and husky. Nice, helpful. If I worked at the maneuverings for a while, and managed to push on the right spots, it did seem to have some effect. But it was clear to me that this portion of the training was a good lawsuit shield for the department: DOC was giving officers *something* to protect themselves with, but unlikely to inflict physical damage on their charges. Many of the academy instructors talked about getting sued by inmates and the importance, therefore, of following policy and procedure.

After three full days in our sweatpants and t-shirts practicing Aikido, I was thoroughly bored with the classes and wanted the seemingly endless training to stop. But I also didn't want to leave the safety of the academy.

On Wednesday, May 27th, two days before graduation from the academy, letters

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were handed out to every student listing their permanent assignment. The worst assignment I could receive would be Central Complex, second shift. Afternoons. Not days, when the inmates still slept the first couple of hours, and certainly not midnights, that preferred shift with much less trouble.

I removed the letter from its envelope and unfolded it. I quickly scanned the contents and stopped at **Central Complex, 2nd shift**. I read the words again. *Shit*. My heart was heavy. I smiled politely at passing classmates and began walking slowly toward the parking lot. As I was unlocking my car door I spotted Tony Dysert, one of my division friends, a couple of car rows over. Tony was only 19. He was tall and slender, with a fair complexion and boyish face, nice brown eyes, and short, straight brown hair. Cute, quiet, and nice. He did his training in Central Complex and had been placed there, also. I had mentioned my fears of being placed inside earlier to him, after we returned to the academy. I had asked him how bad it was. He had said it was pretty bad. At one point during OJT I happened to see both Tony and Rick Aranda in the prison, standing in long, DOC issued raincoats. They had just come in from Yard and had somber faces. I asked how it was going. Silence. Then Rick slowly shook his head, staring at the floor, his characteristic goofy grin nowhere in sight.

As it turned out, I was the only female, besides Dee, who was going to work there. A total of fourteen or so other guards were being placed inside, all male. Dee had been the only woman out of our academy class to train in Central Complex. She was quite heavy, with short black hair and a couple of years older than me, and rough around the edges. She was a single mom and had kids at home to support. Beyond the color of our skin, we didn't seem to have much in common. I tried to comfort myself with the

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knowledge that she did okay inside, but she also looked visibly stronger and tougher than I did. And, at that point, I knew how much appearances mattered. Especially inside of a prison. Particularly in Jackson.

The last two days at the academy rolled by. Our division won the marching competition, a surprise, as we had been considered a “problem” class in the beginning weeks. In fact, our primary instructor had mysteriously disappeared, apparently frustrated in his inability to control us. We had a few vocal and unruly individuals in class who complained loudly, jeered, and were generally disrespectful to whoever was standing in front of the chalkboard.

That teacher was immediately replaced by Billy Ray. Billy Ray—and it was always Billy Ray, not Billy—had been a paratrooper. He was in top physical condition and his body was toned and muscular. Dark-skinned, with closely cropped black hair and a bit on the short side, he nonetheless stood tall and carried himself with a sense of dignity.

Billy Ray was proud of us for winning the marching competition and beamed his broad smile, face breaking into a friendly expression. I adored him. I was, in many ways, sad to finally be leaving the now familiar grounds of the Earl F. DeMarse Corrections Academy. I shook hands with Billy Ray, smiling, and he wished me well. Then I headed towards my car and slowly drove away, preoccupied with thoughts of Jackson Prison.

I spent the weekend quietly in my new Jackson apartment. Mom had helped me move a couple of weeks earlier. It was just me and Mom moving my furniture, dresser, bed, clothes, everything. It was exhausting. At the end of the day we both sat on my sofa and Mom surprised me with some gifts wrapped, of course, with big fancy bows,

including the pricey little tins of flavored coffees that she knew I loved, and a couple of pretty, snow-white bathroom rugs.

As I progressed through the academy and training in RGC, I had less and less contact with my boyfriend Jim. Jim, like my brother, took a job transfer to Detroit a few months earlier. We still saw each other. But like everyone else in my life outside of the prison, except my Mom, Jim didn't want to talk about my job in Jackson. He would just smile, gently punch my shoulder, and change the subject. He seemed bored when I brought up the topic, so I stopped talking about it.

It was frustrating to keep my feelings bottled up inside. I had to suppress my emotions all day at work and now I had to censor myself around my friends and family, too. Everyone seemed uncomfortable with it. I had no one to talk to except Mom. And even she didn't know much about it. I didn't want to tell her too much because I knew she was worried about me.

How could a place like that even exist these days? I wondered. Why isn't anyone doing anything about it? Walking through those gates was like entering a time warp, stepping into an antiquated world that existed decades earlier, rife with racism and sexism. There were 1,000 employees. The place was huge.

But no one seemed to understand. No one *could* understand. So I stopped talking about it. I spent more time alone, not quite finding comfort in my solitude but a relief in not feeling like an outsider, too, among my friends and family, like the freak I was in the prison.

The area inside the walls was enormous, over 56 acres. Almost 2700 inmates in Central Complex alone, milling about, hanging out in Yard, lifting weights, smoking

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cigarettes, slowly sauntering to Chow Hall, shirtless, proudly displaying their hard bodies and defined, cut muscles and six-pack abs, slyly running their street games and schemes on weaker inmates and guards, to make a little money to get drugs or sex or spud juice or just to pass the time. There were black gangs and Hispanic gangs and white gangs and fights and stabbings and officers numb with the hopelessness of it all, worn down from the weight of too many abusive prisoners and too few officers thrown together in a concrete slum surrounded by Concertina wire and guards with rifles perched high up in their little gun turrets far away, on top of the cell blocks. I did not know my way around in Central Complex and did not train there. But I was no longer a trainee, following other officers around, while they took the lead. Now I was going to be holding the keys. In charge. I never felt so alone.

Journal Entry

May 27, 1987

Phase III

4th week

2 more days until graduation. Part of me is glad, but overall I feel that I don't want this week to end. I like being at the academy- it's safe, well-lit, and it doesn't stink like the prison does.

Bad news-- I just found out today that I'm going inside the walls (Central Complex) for my permanent assignment. I knew I would. I feel like I'm walking blindly to my death. McCallum's death scares me because I'm a lot like her (during work, anyhow)- quiet, well-mannered, young, white & FEMALE. Ugh. i.e., if it can happen to her, it can happen to

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me. I don't know if this fateful feeling I have is instinct or simple common sense. Does it matter? No. I'm going in regardless. At least it won't be boring!

What bothers me more is the way Jim acts about it. He doesn't seem too concerned, or that it's any big deal. Well, my feelings are a big deal and I want some support. When I'm inside the prison, I feel so alone that I need a lot of support in my personal life. My cats, actually, are a big help. I can freely show them tenderness and love in contrast to that harsh world in prison. It's life on the streets, that's all.

The slang these guys use is taken directly from the streets, too.

In a strange way, though, I'm looking forward to it. I almost miss the anxiety of waiting for an incident to occur. And inside there are a LOT of incidents!

I'm not afraid of death...but I'm not ready to go, either. I've always felt I would die young. All of my life I've heard horror stories about SPSM & here I am walking right into the heart of my own nightmare. Is that courage or stupidity? It's a paycheck! And a real nice one, at that.

I love my cats so much. Right now Seymour is laying beside me on the bed, with his paws on my knee. His tail is slapping up and down and he's looking at me w/pure love. He's so sweet. I get such pleasure out of caring for them-- simply protecting them from all of those cruel and inhumane people is enough to give me a good feeling. I'm spoiling them, and I LOVE it!

CHAPTER 8

SPSM

CENTRAL COMPLEX

WHERE'S ELEVEN-BLOCK?

June, 1987

My beginning days in RGC had been tinged with bewilderment as I tried to take in my surroundings and orient myself to a completely foreign job in a strange environment. Now, however, I was familiar with the rumors that had filtered out of Central Complex. There were more cell blocks and that meant more inmates directing attention at me, the female Fish Cop. I also heard rumors that I was going to be transferred to Northside and fervently hoped this was true.

My legs carried me forward into the main entrance, through the gates and into the rotunda. I fell into a long line with the Central Complex guards and waited my turn to punch the time clock.

Someone hollered, "Fall in!"

We assembled in line formations in the rotunda. Lt. Wemple gave a recap of the previous shift's incidents. I tried to concentrate on his words but found it difficult to do so with my heart thumping hard in my chest. A Sergeant slowly walked through our lines, looking at each of us from head to toe for inspection. Then the cellblock assignments were called out.

"Botkin. Eleven-block."

I casually attempted to blend in with the other uniforms as I approached the

Control Center counter. I unsnapped a key ring, which held four quarter-size metal key tabs inscribed with my initials, KB, on one side and my clock number, 540c, on the other.

I handed over one of the tabs and snapped the key ring back onto my belt clip. Lt. Wemple glanced up at me and handed over a set of large, heavy keys.

“Eleven-block,” he repeated.

I hesitated. Lt. Wemple stared at me.

“Um,” I said, “where is 11-block?”

He stared at me for a long moment and then motioned to another guard.

“Show her where 11-block is.”

I nodded my head in response to the guard’s grunt, and followed him out into Yard, through one cellblock, around another, in a confusing route to my first assignment. It would take weeks for me to learn my way around the huge, sprawling area inside the walls.

Inmates were everywhere as we made our way to 11-block. Slowly sauntering through Yard, or standing around alone and in small groups, they all looked up at me as I passed by. Hostile, derogatory comments came my way--some soft and subtle, others loud and brash. Whistles, cat calls, smiles, frowns and jeers rippled through the endless sea of prisoners.

I tried to concentrate on the guard in front of me, and the route we were taking to 11-block, but was completely disoriented and I vaguely wondered how on earth I was going to find my way back to the rotunda to punch out at the end of my shift. I hoped I could simply walk along with the other officers, pretending as though I knew my way around. There would be no blending in here, ever.

In RGC the prisoners all wore the traditional prisoner blues garb. But once they were shipped out of Quarantine to their prison placement, they were free to wear street clothes. So in Central Complex, while many of the inmates wore the blues, many also wore jeans and t-shirts, along with a head wrap referred to as a doo-rag. Some of the skilled trades workers from outside occasionally entered the prison for electrical or plumbing work. They, too, wore street clothes. I found it very difficult, at times, to tell the prisoners apart from the employees.

I remember very little of my duties in 11-block that first evening. I do recall learning that I was working in the Honor block, and inmates had more freedom and privileges here. The cellblock easily housed over 400 prisoners. With the lone Sergeant, and one officer assigned to each of the four galleries, plus base, there were only five or six of us guarding the entire block.

Everybody knew that I was a rookie. Nonetheless, I was assigned second gallery and jotted quick notes on the small notepad I kept in my shirt pocket as I tried to make sense of the block's daily routine of locking and unlocking cell doors. Eyes watched my every movement. We broke out all of the galleries for Yard, and I was instructed to stand in the bulkhead and watch over the inmates running down the steps on either side of me.

Mass movement was a prime opportunity for inmates to be stuck with a shank for owing money, cheating someone on a drug deal, or being a snitch. It was my job to police them, to protect them, to be a witness and report who did what. I watched the endless bodies jostling past me on their way to base.

The other officers—all men, of course—warned me to keep my back to the railing and to watch myself on the bulkhead. It seemed as though all of the inmates passing by

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looked up at me with surprise and mixed reactions of delight, anger, and disgust as they at once noted my sex and race. I couldn't help but hear their comments along with the endless smiles and grimaces and heads craning to see my nametag. "Hey, Off'cer! What's your name? Off'cer Bokkins?" "Hi Off'cer Bokkins!" "Hoe", "Fucking bitch" and so on.

Later on, my Sergeant sent me to help out with dinnertime. I walked over to Chow Hall, following a couple of guards making their way to the dining hall from the other blocks. I stepped inside and looked around. It was enormous and referred to by the old timers as Big Top. One of the officers pointed out a couple of divots in the back concrete wall and said it was from bullets fired out of the gun turret in times past.

The gun turret was located high up on the far wall, at the opposite end of the cavernous building, near the ceiling. It was directly over the food serving line. It seemed very far away from the back of Chow Hall, and I wondered how an officer could fire a rifle accurately from that distance.

Approaching the Sergeant in charge, I inquired as to my job duties. Sgt. Tope was a large, red-faced man with slightly higher than normal eyebrows that gave him a perpetually startled expression. He was known as No Hope Tope. Which did absolutely nothing to reassure me.

Tope pointed to rows and rows of tables with attached seats spanning the greater part of Chow Hall. The tables started just past the food serving line and were divided by a tall, chain-link fence separating the two halves of the dining room. "Go stand over there and make sure they fill in all the seats. Swift will help you out."

I followed his gaze and walked over to CO Swift, a petite female with smooth,

dark skin and neatly pulled back black hair.

Swift asked if this was my first time working Chow Hall.

I nodded, surprised that she was talking to me. Most of the women, and there weren't many, kept their distance from me and, in fact, actually acted like I didn't exist. Later I, too, would instinctively move away from new female guards. Women obviously attracted a lot of attention, and they were continually tested by the inmates in an attempt to identify weak spots open to exploitation. Also, while I hate to share this, some of them acted inappropriately with the inmates, by flirting or relishing the attention ... or worse, becoming sexually involved. This made the work that much more difficult for those of us who simply wanted to do our job.

"Okay," Swift said, quietly, leaning in close. "We start out seating these last couple of rows in the back. After the guys leave the serving line, they'll carry their tray down the aisle and you make sure they fill in these seats first. You stand with your back to the serving line. After all the seats and tables are filled in, you step backward to the next row of tables. They know that's where they have to start sitting."

I glanced at the inmates starting to walk down the aisle with their trays. Loud voices jostled back and forth across the chain-link fence. Surprised looks and hostile glares came my way as they spotted me.

"All of the seats have to be filled?" I asked.

"Well, try to make sure three out of the four seats at each table are full."

Swift moved closer to me and lowered her voice. "This is the worst job in here. A lot of these guys have enemies and don't want to sit next to them. And they won't sit with their back to the fence.

“And while you’re trying to seat and walk backward between the tables, make sure you watch the guys coming down the aisle from the serving line. They try to sneak in behind you and sit down and before you know it you’re surrounded. That happened to one girl and they started ripping her clothes off. She was half undressed before anyone could get to her.”

“And another thing,” Swift continued. “If you hear the buzzer go off, that means there’s a fight. Just get the Hell out of here as fast as you can and lock the door behind you. Sometimes it’s used as a distraction and while you’re watching the fight, something else will go down and no one will see who did what.”

One of my friends from the academy, Tony Dysert, was sent over from the other side of Chow Hall to help me with seating. On a prison tour during our OJT days, I discerned that some of the hoots and catcalls were directed at him for his youthful good looks. We had been paraded throughout the sprawling prison complex, walking in single file behind a Sergeant down the length of base in one cellblock, to the Yard outside and into another cell block, and up the stairs on the bulkhead and down galleries. I don’t know the point of this particular exercise. Maybe they were giving us a tour of the prison. Maybe they just wanted to watch our reactions to being treated like a piece of meat. The inmates delighted in this entertaining show and verbally abused the entire group, but mostly singled out the females. And Tony.

I stood between the tables in chow hall. I slowly stepped backward and tried to casually watch what was going on behind me. Inmates pointed at me, stared at my chest and crotch, whistled, glared and spit to the side as if disgusted by the sight of me. Obscenities and hostile remarks shot out from the hordes of bodies whenever I glanced in

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another direction.

After observing this scene briefly Dysert looked at me, shook his head, and said, “Man, Botkin, I wouldn’t want to be in your shoes for anything.”

I looked into his eyes, trying to maintain a neutral expression amid my discomfort, and thought, *Me either, Tony. Me either.*

Tony was again moved to another area in the dining hall, far away on the other side of the enormous facility. I couldn’t see his new position through the hundreds of bodies from where I stood.

My heart sank without Tony’s comforting presence as I continued with seating amid the circus. It seemed a long, long time until the end of my shift that first day, and my relief in finally heading home at 10 pm was tempered by the knowledge that the next day would bring much of the same.

Journal Entry

June 2, 1987

Last night I worked 11 block & chow hall. They gave me a set of keys & said, “Go to it!” Actually, 11 blk wasn’t bad, but chow hall was a circus. I can’t tell you how many times I was yelled at – those fuckers from 4-blk are a bunch of animals. A few of the staff is friendly and helpful, most of them are just there (not doing much) and a few of them are downright rude to me (“I wouldn’t let my girlfriend work here!”) or just ignore me.

Cool news, though- we’re supposedly being transferred to Northside June 15.

As a fish cop in Jackson, one was routinely placed on the merry-go-round, meaning your cellblock assignment varied daily, and you were assigned where needed. One day it was 12-block, the next day 8-block, and so on. The upside to this is it would be more difficult to become entrenched in some blackmail scheme perpetrated by a cunning inmate who knew you and your habits too well, working the same cellblock day after day.

The drawback was the constant and never-ending abuse by inmates who tested new officers to find out what they could get away with, and how far we could be pushed. Once an officer had established himself with clear limits, a portion of the torment would subside. Until then, the testing phase was, at times, brutal. Being placed in different blocks also meant a lack of knowledge with that particular block's quirks, rules and particularly troublesome inmates.

On June 8th I went through my usual routine while bracing myself to prepare for work that afternoon—I did laundry and ran errands with an eye on the passing time. My tension level rose as morning slipped away towards noon. Around 1:15 pm I changed into my uniform and left for work, being careful to replace my favored long and dangly earrings with small pearl studs and to wipe away any lip gloss, so as not to draw any more attention to myself or my female characteristics. More than once I had been warned by well-meaning officers to remove my earrings, as an inmate could rip them out. My philosophy held that if a prisoner was pissed enough to tear a tiny earring out of my ear, a torn earlobe would be the least of my worries.

Upon arriving at the prison I was placed in 12-block, a general population unit. I stood on the bulkhead at the end of my gallery, watching the inmates as they came down

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the stairs on either side, headed towards base. Hundreds of them filed out during a mass movement to Yard, or some other activity. I knew what to expect when the inmates saw me, the new female fish cop, and inwardly braced for the wave of attention and verbal abuse. Another officer — male, of course — came and stood beside me and told me of how an inmate had been stabbed in his chest on the gallery just outside of his cell after the brakes were thrown and the inmates opened their doors. He left a long trail of blood crawling to the bulkhead, where he died.

I nodded carefully and watched the inmates as they caught sight of me. I heard murmurs of “Bokkins” along with the curious and sometimes hostile glances and intense stares. I was a walking freak show no matter where I was stationed.

After the inmates returned from Yard I was instructed by my Sergeant to go and help out in Chow Hall. Reluctantly, I nodded and fell in behind some other officers walking over to the Big Top.

I was assigned seating, again, and inwardly sighed as I took my place among the tables, much to the amusement and disgust of the hundreds and hundreds of inmates who, again, shouted out profanities and remarks regarding my body.

After a few minutes, a young black inmate seated at a table caught my attention.

“Off’cer, off’cer!”

I lifted my head and looked over in his direction.

“Off’cer, come ‘ere!” He had a pleasant expression as he waved at me.

“Off’cer! Off’cer!”

Cautiously taking a few steps towards him, I asked, “What do you want?”

He hesitated, and grinned.

“A blow job!”

The inmates sitting at his table chuckled and shook their heads. Others at nearby tables glared at me, watching closely. For the first time since I started working in the prison, I felt a flare of anger. I was getting damn tired of being tested, toyed with, and jeered at. Plus, he left me with no choice but to take some action. If I didn't call him on this, my reputation would be smeared and the inmates would get away with any number of outrageous acts. I would have no control at all.

I turned and scouted out the nearest guard, who was quite a distance away, and made my way over to him. His name tag read J. Yirku. Yirku, nicknamed Boo-boo, came out of the academy only a couple of months before me. He was around my age, a chunky white guy with a baby face and small eyes.

“I want to write a ticket on that inmate,” I said.

“Okay,” Yirku replied. “Go ask him for his ID card.”

“*What? I ask him?*” I said incredulously. I had somehow assumed that a Sergeant or someone else got the ID since the offender was obviously not going to be very happy with me.

Yirku explained that policy required officers to obtain positive identification, preferably from a prison-issued ID card, in order to copy down the inmate's prison number, name, and cell block. I nodded, dreading my next move as I realized that I would have to go back and confront him.

By this time Chow Hall was full and it was a long walk back to the instigator. I carefully made my way through the tables of inmates towards the offender. Yirku and a couple of other officers followed behind me for back up. The noise level lowered as

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curious inmates looked my way.

My knees were jittery and my voice was quivering, but I nonetheless looked the prisoner directly in the eye and asked for his ID card. The inmate raised his eyebrows and his smile faded. Instead of the flak I expected he quietly reached into his back pocket, brought forth his ID, and handed it to me. The other officers and I made our way out of the sea of inmates, and Yirku gave me pointers for writing a ticket for sexual misconduct. That ticket seemed to quell the more direct insults, at least for a while.

Journal Entry

June 8, 1987 11:21 pm

I wrote another major ticket today for sexual misconduct in the mess hall. I was seating (naturally- I always do) when a certain Eric Jones kept saying, "come here." I said I couldn't because I had a job to do and what did he want. He said he wanted a blow job.

I was so furious. Usually their remarks don't make me that mad. So I wrote him up. I called an officer over (as soon as I could find one- it took 5 or 10 minutes before I spotted him) and asked him if he could get an ID on Jones. He said 'procedure is to get it yourself'. I said, 'are you serious?' He was very nice, by the way. He offered to go over & stand behind me and I said okay. My knees were shaking along w/my hands, and my heart was pounding right out of my chest. But Wright said I didn't look nervous at all. In fact, I think Jones looked more scared than I did!

I hear these remarks all of the time, but when they're stupid enough to say something like that to my face, they deserve a ticket. A lot of officers told me when I first started working mess hall to ignore a lot of shit that goes on in order to avoid a fight

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(which can easily start a riot). This is where my own judgment comes in, but it's difficult because I am in their world and my normal sense of decency is stretched far beyond normal limits.

Everyone hated working Chow Hall. I quickly learned that one indicator of a bad day in the Big Top was the menu. Many inmates opted out of the liver—lumpy hunks of green-tinged meat, most of which was thrown on the floor. Few showed up for dinner time, choosing instead to stay in their block and eat whatever food they had stashed in their cells or could purchase from an enterprising inmate with ties to the kitchen or prison store. Working in the dining hall during liver night was generally uneventful, a piece of cake.

My first time monitoring the food line was on fried chicken day. Fried chicken was bad news. Soon after showing up for my shift I knew if I was guaranteed to have a bad time that night based on dejected groans from other guards referencing “fried chicken” in Chow Hall. We dreaded it. Nearly all of the inmates wanted fried chicken. Chicken was stolen from food trays, cuts were made in the serving line, and inmates tried sneaking back into the food line for seconds and thirds. The noise level increased and tempers flared.

In contrast to the less popular selections, inmate participation in fried chicken day consistently remained high. The inmates were pumped up, adrenaline flowing, excitedly scheming to get more food. Food, especially good food, was a hot commodity. Instead of sex, drugs, and rock and roll it should be sex, drugs, and food.

So when the Sergeant told me to watch the food line when chicken was being

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served I knew I was in for a hard time. He instructed me to watch closely and make sure no one took cuts or hopped back in line for seconds.

I followed the Chow Hall sergeant's gaze to an area directly in front of the food serving line. It was already crowded with agitated inmates, jostling for position to get to the coveted delicacy. The tumult was even louder than usual.

Oh, god. I thought. This is gonna be bad.

I took a slow, deep breath and braced myself. I looked back at the sergeant steadily, then turned and headed toward the melee.

Reluctantly, I squeezed my body in among the crowd of prisoners. Within a minute or so of taking my station one of the inmates walked directly in front of me and cut in line. Well, it was the line as far as I could determine in that mess. I peered into the mass of bodies, trying to ignore hostile eyes looking back at me. I finally spotted the offender in his prison blues.

Oh, there he is. I just need to get his ID card and write him up.

I looked around for another guard to back me up but couldn't see over the tall bodies around me. I was on my own for this one. I started to take a step toward the line-cutter and stopped.

Wait. Was it this guy?

I zeroed in on another inmate. *Or that one?*

He disappeared. Just like that. I glanced away for three seconds and he was gone. He blended in quickly and smoothly with the other inmates and was just one of the dozens of hot, sweating, agitated felons hollering at their buddies and trying to strong-arm their way closer to the food trays.

I stared intently at the pack of bodies before me. Confused, I looked at the faces but simply couldn't recognize which one was him.

Upon seeing this successful maneuver a couple of other inmates immediately took cuts, too. More prisoners began crowding into the already congested spot. I knew that I had to do something but was at a loss. It was like the pilfered cereal episode in RGC, only magnified by about 100. I desperately tried to come up with a solution, all the while trying to watch my back and sides amidst the swarm of angry inmates around me. They were everywhere, no matter which way I looked or turned. Amid the rising tension and excitement, inmates started pushing and shoving each other and angry voices rose above the din.

The space surrounding my body was growing smaller and tighter as more heated and agitated bodies moved in. I stole quick glances up at the gun turret above me, tucked away inside the wall over the serving line. I thought I caught a glimpse of movement between the slats but couldn't be sure. I hoped that whoever was up there was watching over me, and ready to fire.

What seemed like an eternity later, but was probably just a matter of a few minutes, several officers appeared, moving in to help out. They eventually managed to bring some order to the mess. A near riot was averted. This time.

On another occasion I had been busy seating and trying to watch my back during a typical dinner. I returned to my block and was asked about the inmate who was stuck in Chow Hall. Someone was stuck? Turns out that the mini-ambulance, which resembled a golf cart or small jeep, was called to the back area of the Big Top, where an inmate had been stabbed with a shank. Paramedics placed him on the cart and transported him to the

prison hospital. I never saw a thing. That's how big the place was.

Standing amidst the swirl and clamor of inmates in the Big Top also brought relentless comments about my physical attributes, and lack thereof, from the inmates. They knew, almost before I did, when I gained a couple of pounds or sprouted a pimple on my face. They seemed to know when I was tired, or feeling particularly vulnerable, even though I tried to wear my face frozen, like a mask. Some even guessed when I was on my period. Really. It was uncanny and I had no idea how they knew. Could they detect my slightly swollen lower tummy area? Did I emit some sort of scent or pheromone? I can tell you exactly what my body looks like to an outsider from top to toe, and from every angle as a result of their comments. I was on a stage from the time I stepped out of my car in the large parking lot facing 4-block to the time I left the prison at 10 pm.

During my training at the academy I had put on some weight. The long days sitting in classrooms led by uninspired instructors paved the way for my growing addiction to gum and candy to help pass the time. I discovered I could discreetly chew Bazooka bubble gum and even blow bubbles when the teacher was at the blackboard or otherwise sidetracked. So I was almost always popping something sugary in my mouth. This, of course, led to a five or six pound weight gain that I carried with me into the prison. It doesn't sound like much, but it was enough to be quite noticeable on my small frame. Uncomfortably self-conscious of my seemingly lumpy physique I made a grievous mistake of buying plain black slacks from a department store in an attempt to camouflage my hips and burgeoning butt. Unlike the state-issued uniform slacks, these pants had no bulky side or back pockets. I thought they were slenderizing and would bring less

attention to my butt from the inmates. More flattering.

I, of course, was completely wrong and promptly ripped apart for this vain move. One of the inmates in chow hall referred to my smooth buttocks and loudly concluded that I must be wearing 'Underalls,' a popular brand of pantyhose at the time that women wore to disguise panty lines. The so-called news spread quickly. The inmates found this hysterically funny, some laughing uncontrollably, mouths hanging wide open with half-eaten food spilling out. I could only continue to stand among the hundreds of inmates and try and mentally deflect their derisive guffaws and chortles. Needless to say, for my next day's shift I wore the standard polyester uniform pants.

I should have known better. When I was training in RGC I bought a pair of black penny loafers to wear instead of the ugly State-issued black shoes with a thick rubber sole. Many of the CO's wore black tennis shoes instead of the State shoes, and I found both revoltingly ugly back then. Not that I was a fashion plate or anything. I wore my shiny new shoes for two days before succumbing to the ugly tennis shoes. My lower back ached from standing and walking on the concrete all day with little or no cushioning in my shoes. Plus, the Quarantine inmates had chided me relentlessly, accusing me of believing I was Michael Jackson with my so-called fancy footwear.

ADMINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION

“THE HOLE”

June 9, 1987

To the right of the main counter in the control center stood a locked door with a small, dirty, and smudged window near the top. This was the entrance into 5-block. On occasions when the door was unlocked and opened by prison staff during assembly, Lt. Wemple would stop speaking and stare straight ahead at us, stone-faced, as we stood in formation, waiting for the commotion to subside.

The scene reminded me of *The Exorcist*. When Father Karras was speaking to the devil, who had taken up residence in Regan’s body, howls of anguish and vulgarities in different tongues and hoarse voices spewed forth from her cracked, swollen lips. The 5-block door represented for me that passage into Hell, where many of the most beastly and ferocious inmates in the prison were kept locked down. Their whoops and hollers and frustrated screams rushed into the rotunda in a torrent of fury until the door once again was slammed shut and locked, screening out the bulk of the carnage and allowing a much less intense muffled jumble of sounds to leak out. Only then would the lieutenant continue with his briefing.

Five-block, also known as The Hole, was the administrative segregation unit in the prison. It served as a time-out for the prison’s most violent and unruly offenders. There was one way to end up in 5-block and that was to receive a major misconduct ticket written by corrections staff. Inmates from prisons all over the state were sent here. A good portion of the offenders in 5-block were, therefore, the finest of the

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troublemakers, the crème de la crème: inmates who had assaulted another inmate or corrections officer; those who were particularly insolent or verbally threatening; the younger offenders filled with hostile, angry energy; and the Bugs — guys with mental illnesses or severe personality disorders — who were simply incapable of getting along in the general population.

Five-block inmates ate all meals in their cell, showered one at a time in a tiny locked area, and received limited Yard privileges separate from the rest of the prison's inmates. They did not move anywhere outside of their cell without their hands cuffed behind their backs. The more dangerous offenders wore belly chains and leg irons as well.

For reasons unknown to me, I was regularly assigned to The Hole, becoming more familiar with that block than any other in Central Complex.

There were two sides to 5-block—5-East and 5-West—and each was run separately with its own Sergeant and officers. Since the inmates' movements were restricted, 5-block was supposedly a more secure unit. At the very least, I found a small measure of comfort in the familiarity of working one block regularly.

But the verbal abuse was unrelenting until the inmates settled down at bedtime. Threats, obscenities, and vulgarities were a standard part of the ongoing din. And the inmates commonly “dressed out” the officers by throwing items at them. Fruit, milk cartons, cups, feces and urine, among other substances. It was, in fact, common practice in 5-block. Urine, or feces mixed with urine and/or semen, was reserved for the more detested officers. This was referred to by the officers as a “special mixture.”

On my first day in 5-block I was partnered with Vanessa, a tall, large-boned lady

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around my age. She had a great laugh and a wide smile that flashed across her mocha skin. I instantly liked her. I stood next to her on base and looked around, trying to concentrate on what she was saying. Inmates yelled obscenities, sang, called out to a buddy on another gallery and shouted to inmates through the large windows leading into Yard. Toilets flushed and cell doors clanked closed by officers moving inmates.

Noise amplified and echoed through the five-story cellblock. It was nearly deafening. An occasional bird swooped through the air. Trash littered the base floor, consisting of various items thrown through cell bars and over gallery railings by the inmates. Rotting food. Streams of toilet paper. I looked up at a smoking bed sheet hung over the railing on fourth gallery, apparently set on fire by one of the inmates. A guard hustled to a fire extinguisher hanging on a nearby wall and doused the flames.

Vanessa gave me a rundown of block procedures. A couple of guards signed door cards for the entire block. Two officers were assigned to each gallery, along with the cells on base, escorting the inmates from their cells to Yard or showers or administrative hearings. A cell was never opened without at least two officers present, and an officer never entered a cell unless the inmate was in handcuffs and secured a safe distance away, while another guard supervised.

The 5-block officers warned me to watch my back, never get too close to the cell bars, and to beware of being dressed out. Ideally, segregation units would have solid doors with narrow slots for food trays and access to handcuffs. Five-block cells had standard bars, leaving officers vulnerable to the whims of an unusually large proportion of mentally unbalanced offenders. In fact, the Ionia Maximum Correctional Facility (I-Max, or Super Max) opened that year, in 1987, for that purpose. Many of the 5-block

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offenders would be transferred to I-Max. But at this point, the mentally ill offenders who caused the most trouble were housed in 5-block.

I helped Vanessa gather several sets of handcuffs from the Sergeant's desk on base and we looped them through our belts. I followed her up the steps to third gallery and we approached the first cell. The inmate turned around and backed up to the cell bars, hands together behind his back. Vanessa carefully applied the handcuffs and clicked them into place. I removed the heavy set of cell keys from a clip attached to my belt and unlocked the cell door.

Jackson was an old prison and both locking and unlocking cell doors was a skill honed through repetition. It was also an art. During my time in Jackson, I experienced many tense moments firmly jiggling a cell door with my left hand, while wiggling the large, heavy key in the lock with my right, my back and sides vulnerable to inmates who happened to be standing by. In 5-block we were especially careful in securing the prisoners' restraints before opening a door.

Vanessa led the way down the gallery, followed by the cuffed inmate, and I followed behind him. We walked down the steps, past cell after cell of inmates, onto base and through the cell block door outside. Five-block's Yard was a half dozen or so small fenced-in areas adjacent to the cellblock's outer wall. Concertina wire encircled the top of the tall chain-link fences. Several inmates were placed in each fenced-in Yard area, one at a time. After locking the Yard gate the inmate backed up to the fence and the handcuffs were removed.

We continued this routine until all of the inmates on third gallery were taken to Yard, and used the same process to return them to their cells when their time was up one

hour later. The process was repeated for showers. Five-block was a hard working block physically. We ran up and down the steps retrieving inmates, locking and unlocking cell doors, gently applying and removing handcuffs so as not to set off an otherwise cooperative inmate.

About halfway through our gallery we approached the cell of a known Bug. Body odor and the stench of filth emanated several feet down the gallery in both directions from his cell. The smell even outdid the usual 5-block aroma. Tall and thin, dark skinned and cloudy-eyed, this guy was a shit slinger. Some unfortunate guards had been pelted with his feces recently, and I was forewarned by Vanessa. He smeared it on the walls and floor of his cell along with his body.

The inmate backed up to the cell bars and Vanessa carefully clicked the cuffs closed around one wrist. Then, while she was starting to position a cuff around his second wrist, the inmate flung himself away from us. Leaping and dancing around, he jumped onto his mattress and began a strange combination of singing and howling. His arms waved over his head as the open cuff dangled from his wrist during a crude pirouette. Never had handcuffs looked so menacing as they did that day. *Holy crap.*

Vanessa and I both jumped back quickly as the inmate twirled towards the cell bars with his newly found weapon slicing the air.

We looked at each other in alarm. Before retreating to base for back-up in handling this faux pas we made a half-hearted attempt to get the inmate settled down. *Never in a million years is this Bug going to listen to us*, I thought. Surprisingly, he did calm down and backed up to the bars. We managed to lock the cuff around his other wrist without incident. This prevented what could have been an unpleasant confrontation with

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the Goon Squad--the biggest and burliest prison guards who muscled their way into cells, gas masks and body shields at the ready, and restrained out-of-control offenders. It also prevented us from having to face the embarrassment of messing up what should've been just a routine task.

We continued moving inmates to showers and, a short time later, moving them back to their cells. I was walking behind an inmate on third gallery, Vanessa leading the way, when *Whoosh!* A cold, wet substance smacked my face.

I whirled away from the cell bars and leaned over the railing, eyelids reflexively squeezed shut.

Cautiously, I peered down at my white shirt and recoiled in disgust.

A dark brown stain stretched across my chest and upper arms, dripping over my belt.

Vanessa turned around and her eyes widened.

"Uhhh..." I choked out.

Vanessa's mouth formed a small "o" as she looked at my shirt. She was leaning away from me, then came in a little closer and carefully sniffed.

"Hmm..." she said, frowning.

I didn't want to breathe but had to at some point. So I exhaled, and tentatively breathed in through my nose, mentally bracing for the pungent stench of feces and urine that was sure to follow.

Yet, the smell really wasn't too bad. An unexpected scent, yes, but certainly not a bad one, and ... somehow familiar. I was confused.

Suddenly Vanessa's face lit up. "It's chocolate!" she said, smiling.

Oh, sweet relief! I felt the tension leave my body.

We walked together down to the Sergeant's desk on base and I wrote my first assault ticket. Vanessa spoke with the offender and discovered he had been aiming for the inmate we were escorting. He actually told her he was sorry for dressing me out with the chocolate pudding and water he had mixed together.

As I stood in line at the end of my shift to punch the time clock I noticed several guards eyeing my stained uniform and stringy hair. "Must be you worked 5-block tonight" was a common refrain.

One day not long after I was regularly working in The Hole, a new EMT worker from the prison hospital tagged along for a couple of hours while I signed door cards. We were on base and I was explaining my job duties. Through the corner of my eye, I detected a small projectile hurtling directly for me. I bent my left leg, lifting my foot a few inches off the ground. An orange whizzed by just behind my knee. I continued talking until the EMT interrupted.

"Wow. Does that happen a lot?"

"Yeah, but it's usually in liquid form."

Pause.

He asked how I saw it coming.

"I really don't know," I shrugged.

I couldn't explain it but like the other 5-block guards I had quickly found the ability to perform my duties amidst the clamor while at the same time staying alert for threats above, below, and around me. To not do so could be devastating. I couldn't catch everything going on, but I was doing okay so far.

Journal Entry

June 9, 1987 10:40 pm

Just tried calling Jim, but no answer so I'll pour out my thoughts on paper.

I was assaulted tonight-- with the dread chocolate pudding they served for dinner!

Was working 5-block (administrative segregation) & walking by 55-3 when something suddenly whooshed! All over my face & chest. I was stunned for about 10-15 seconds, then enraged then relieved when I discovered it was chocolate pudding & not the shit & piss mixture I'd thought it was. Turns out the guy was trying to hit an inmate we were escorting back from showers, but got me instead. I wrote an assault ticket anyhow, of course.

More good news-- they're keeping me inside. 14 were transferred to Northside, and 4 of us lucky people were chosen to stay inside. Oh, well. At least it's not boring, and it will be invaluable experience for me.

In Central Complex we were required to shakedown at least five inmates and five cells each day in a feeble attempt to stem the flow of contraband. We turned in our inmate shakedown reports at the end of the shift listing the inmates' prison numbers.

I quickly learned, on my first day inside, that shakedowns in there were radically different from those we practiced at the academy and much different, also, from the thorough method I used in RGC. While I was headed for my first inmate shakedown, a couple of the other officers specifically told me NOT to do it the way we were shown at

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the academy, or risk the inmate's wrath. I nodded in understanding and nervously performed a quick search, hoping to find nothing.

I never discovered contraband on a prisoner in Central Complex and I wasn't looking for it, either. The last thing I needed was another pissed-off inmate. A lot of these guys carried weapons in self-defense. And many also wore their armor--cardboard taken from notepads, which they slipped under their shirts, and tucked into their pants in both the front and back of their bodies. This helped give some protection against stabbings.

I quickly lost my initial hesitancy in touching the prisoners. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon for the inmates to start forming lines behind the prisoner I was shaking down, smiles on their faces, and hands in the air as if surrendering. I was embarrassed every time this happened, feeling self-conscious as usual and knowing full well that any inmate who volunteered for a shakedown was not going to be found with contraband. I felt like an idiot and a continued liability to my fellow workers.

Shaking down cells was another matter. We did thoroughly search those. Some of the inmates, of course, detested this routine procedure. The 5-block inmates, in particular, tended to become especially upset and riled when we searched their cells. The inmate was restrained in cuffs on the gallery with at least two other officers watching him while one or two others shook down his cell. This was often done amid a stream of yelling profanity, threats, and put-downs coming from the prisoner.

My name tag read K. Botkin, and the guards all referred to each other by last name only. Soon after starting at the prison, my first name became private and coveted by me. It was a link to my personal life away from that Hellhole. The inmates guessed Karen and Kelly, among other names, and I stood mute, as usual. But Botkin was fair game. The

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inmates seemed to have difficulty with the correct pronunciation, and I was commonly called 'Off'cer Bokkins' or 'Boatkin'. One pleasant inmate from the inner city of Detroit, who was always pleasant and smiling, called me Bopkins, as many did.

"It's Botkin," I said.

"Yeah! Bopkins!" he replied.

I sighed.

"No. Bot. Kin. Botkin."

"Bopkins!" he grinned.

"No. Say BOT."

"BOT."

"KIN."

"KIN."

"Botkin."

"Bopkins!" He grinned.

I couldn't help but smile as I walked away.

Journal Entry

June 13, 1987 11:42 pm

Saturday

This job is so...different from any other that I've had. Tonight I started thinking that maybe I'm becoming too trusting and careless, although of course I'm not. A lot of the inmates tell me to loosen up, I'm too shy, timid & afraid. But there are many who tell me I'm very nice, don't change, they like me because I don't "mess" with them, etc. I'm

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discovering that my job runs much smoother when they like me. It seems that I'm always trying to walk that line-- not to be too hard or soft, too open or shy. But it's hard.

Journal Entry

June 14, 1987 11:33 am

Was too sleepy last night to write much. Even though I'm working 2nd shift, I'm still a morning person. The first thing I do when I come home from work (besides turning on the AC) is to wash my face. It feels sooooo good.

I'm trying to get a feel on how the prisoners view me. From a lot of their remarks, they think I'm young (18-21), sweet, shy, innocent, and to paraphrase, "fresh and tender". I hear "fresh" quite a bit. Compared to most of the other officers, I imagine I do look attractive to inmates. But I'm certainly not eliciting such responses on the streets.

I'm also finding that other officers can be a pain in the ass, too. Never thought I'd get sick of being hit upon, but I'm quite fed-up with it all. A lot have come right out & asked me out-- Don Carrigan, Walker, Rork, Knasiak (academy), while others are leading up to it & I try to subtly let them know I'm not interested. I feel like I'm doing a balancing act over a pit of chaos, all the while watching my back. If it was someone I was attracted to I'd be writing a different story. But isn't that just the way life is?

CHAPTER 10

4-BLOCK

In March, a couple of weeks prior to McCallum's death, a white female guard had been stuck (stabbed) by an inmate three or four times while working 4-block. The injuries occurred to her arm and upper back. One of the officers who had been working with her that day told me she didn't even know she'd been cut. She returned to base believing an inmate had struck her and she appeared surprised to see blood staining her shirt.

Four-block was maximum security and housed the higher risk inmates. Next to 5-block, the prison's most troublesome prisoners lived here. Many were young, insolent offenders serving life sentences and had little or no concern regarding their behavior and the resulting consequences. Unlike the other general population blocks, which assigned one officer per gallery, 4-block used two officers on each gallery. But these guys were not locked down like the 5-blockers, either. And while they were watched more closely than the other general pop blocks, the inmates still milled out and about.

On my first day assigned to 4-block (called "Foe-block" by most of the inmates), I stood on base with the other nine or so guards and listened to the Sergeant's gallery assignments.

"Botkin. You're on first with Hall."

Having no idea who Hall was, I glanced around at the other officers heading to their galleries in pairs. Then I spotted a lone female figure in a uniform lumbering toward the steps. Short and squat, she grasped onto the railing and pulled herself up and along. About halfway up the short flight she paused, still holding the railing, and seemed to be concentrating on a memo pad in her hand.

I noted her slumped posture and scrunched facial features above a dingy shirt

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sporting what appeared to be coffee or cola stains trickling down the chest. A tiny pink barrette stuck at an odd angle on the side of her head with no apparent rhyme or reason, dark hair kinking up around it and sticking out in awkward tufts around her head. Surprised that I was partnered with the only other female in the block, I exhaled cautiously and headed over.

I briefly introduced myself. Hall jerked her head away from me and mumbled quietly.

“Uh, what was that?” I said, craning my neck forward, straining to hear her soft voice over the block’s din.

But Hall jerked her head away from me as if she had been struck and stared at the steps. I glanced down and saw nothing unusual in the aging concrete.

I paused briefly before trying again.

“I’m new,” I said, stating the obvious.

Hall tilted the top of her head in my direction and I caught a glimpse of a confused expression crossing her face before she quickly jerked away and resumed climbing the stairs.

Alarm fired in my gut. I quickly looked back down at the Sergeant’s desk. He was busy writing in the log book as another guard stood next to him talking. Dread filled my body as I braced myself and moved up the stairs ahead of her, cuffs looped through my belt clacking against each other in rhythmic sway with my movements.

Over and over, while I was dealing with the inmates in their cells, making notes, locking and unlocking cell doors, I glanced down the gallery to check on Hall and to make sure she was, in turn, watching my back. She was usually turned away from me,

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head bent downward. Perplexed, I had little time to ponder why she wasn't paying attention to me. *Watch her*, I said to myself. I made a quick mental note as a reminder that Hall was not to be trusted and added it to my growing list of concerns.

Not long after the shift started I glanced in her direction and realized with a start that I was alone. This was taboo in 4-block and considered dangerous in light of the aggressive offenders housed there. Hall had wandered down to base and was standing with a mildly pleasant look on her face. I watched her as she slowly turned around and shuffled back up the steps to first gallery. My jaw clenched tightly and I gritted my teeth in frustration, finally resigned to working with a worthless partner. I slogged through my duties and time passed steadily and slowly.

Later in my shift several inmates, perhaps six or eight, returned from Yard after playing basketball in the sweltering afternoon sun. Sweaty and heaving, they towered over me in a small room on base where asthma medication was kept under lock. The Sergeant had tossed me a large ring of keys and told me to pass out meds.

Just another task I was unfamiliar with. I began trying the keys, but none opened the rickety old locker. The inmates, hands on hips, breathing heavily, began complaining and swearing, shaking their heads. Their anger was tangible, and mounting.

My heart thudded as I quickly tried key after key. No good. *Oh, shit*. I was in one of the most dangerous blocks in Central Complex, isolated without my partner with a mess of unhappy, maximum-security inmates, and I once again had no idea what I was doing.

I gave up on trying the keys and looked at the frustrated inmates, some bent over at the waist gasping for air.

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I heard myself quietly and calmly mention that I had not previously passed out meds and did not know which key it was.

Silence.

Eyes glared back at me.

They could grab me and attack me and I could be dead before anyone knew something was amiss, I thought.

One of the inmates suddenly said, loudly, "Awright, awright. She don't know what's goin' on."

This seemed to have a calming effect and several heads nodded in understanding. One of the prisoners stepped closer and eyed my key ring. I held it up and he pointed to a key. It worked, and I, relieved, passed out their meds without further incident.

Early that summer, while still fresh from the academy, I was walking to the Infirmary at the beginning of my shift. I had heard it was a good housing unit and I was looking forward to a decent assignment for a change. Along the way I came across one of the other female guards. Judy was in her late forties or early fifties, short and petite with teased blonde hair on top of her head. She walked proudly and carried herself well. I thought she looked tough. She was married to one of the other guards in Central Complex. Judy asked what I thought about working inside. I said that it wasn't as bad as I had expected.

"That's what they all say," she replied, nodding. "Give it some time."

At the infirmary I met Big Charlie, an inmate who was almost legendary among the prison population. Many of the officers also spoke of him with a faint touch of admiration. I didn't know what offense he was serving time for, but he treated me with

respect. I had never seen a man that large and that strong in person. His biceps looked to be the size of my waist and his massive, muscular shoulders and chest tapered to a distinct “V” where his trousers were cinched snugly with a belt.

I didn't have much contact with Big Charlie during my time in Jackson but when I observed him in the Infirmary or Chow Hall or Yard he was quiet and seemed to go about his own business. The other inmates, of course, didn't mess with him. In fact, they paid homage of sorts on Store Day. Once a week or so the inmates were allowed to purchase items such as tobacco and snacks at a small shop in the prison. I happened to be working Big Charlie's floor on Store Day and curiously observed several inmates respectfully walk up to his cell and drop in bags and bags of snacks, usually without saying a word. Sometimes Big Charlie nodded slightly, but mostly he sat or stood quietly. During mealtime in Chow Hall the inmate servers piled up mountains of mashed potatoes and meat on his plate. He sat grazing at a table, usually alone, in front of enough food for a half dozen men. There, too, inmates casually walked by and deposited rolls or apples or other goodies.

I couldn't help but feel less threatened by the inmates when Big Charlie was around although he took little notice of me. I had no indication he would ever help me out if I needed it, but there did seem to be a more subdued atmosphere, especially among the more hot-headed inmates when he was present.

The Infirmary was a good assignment. Unfortunately, I was placed there only once or twice. One of the other interesting and less threatening assignments I received that summer was working in MR, the medical rehab unit. I had noticed that a disproportionate number of inmates in general pop blocks who flaunted their bodies

carried surgical scars running vertically, up and down their chest and midsection. I was finally told that most of the surgeries were due to gunshot wounds--either by other street hoodlums, or police. And, of course, there were inmates with physical problems who were wheelchair bound, for whatever reason, along with others in poor health. A select group of the most incapacitated, perhaps 25 or so inmates, housed in MR. This was a very small building, or unit, in Central Complex with only two officers running it. The inmates there were quiet, relaxed, and not filled with the hostile tension running amok among the prisoners inside the walls.

Once or twice I worked MR with a guard named Probst. Probst was a regular MR worker and helped me out recording activities in the logbook, and other daily routines. This housing unit was so low-key we actually sat and watched a television program with the inmates at one point. Later, Probst waved me into a small office, and pulled open a drawer in a filing cabinet. He took out a couple of files.

“Hey, wanna see something?” he asked.

I nodded and walked over to the desk where he opened one of the files. It was at least one inch thick and filled with papers metal-clipped on both sides of the folder. Then Probst pointed to the name on the file. It was one of the inmates confined to a wheelchair. He had been shot by police and was paralyzed. He was in his late twenties, black, heavy. Probst showed me something called a presentence report in the file, then flipped to a written description of the offense that put him in prison.

I read, captivated. It was the first time I had seen one of the inmates' files. These materials were supposedly off-limits to officers and restricted to the prison counselors. The inmate was part of a small group of offenders who broke into a Detroit home and

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terrorized and robbed the occupants. And this particular inmate was in the kitchen with one of the older female victims when he grabbed her by the hair and made her perform oral sex on him. I can't recall the number of years he was serving, but it was a long prison term. I never would have guessed the type of offense he was in Jackson for. He was quiet and polite with me.

During another assignment, I was walking outside when I heard muffled screams and loud voices coming from the auditorium. It was the large, old brick building where Josephine McCallum had been raped and murdered.

Alarmed, I calmly approached a nearby officer and asked what was going on.

"Movie night," he replied.

The auditorium was infamous for illicit happenings during the showing of films. The seats filled with inmates and the lights lowered during the movie. Any number of opportunities presented themselves involving sex acts, spud juice and drugs.

"Oh, really? What are they watching?" I asked.

"Texas Chainsaw Massacre II," he said.

"Are you kidding me?"

"No, I am not."

It was true. Why and how TCM II had been chosen was beyond me.

The prisoners were treated to movie night on a regular basis. The only time I was assigned auditorium duty was during a showing of a little-known movie called *American Anthem*. The film starred Janet Jones and featured a lot of gymnastics scenes. Janet competed in several floor exercises. The inmates hooted and yelled obscenities at the screen as she twirled and flipped and performed the splits.

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Janet inevitably ended every floor routine with arms stretched over her head. The camera lingered on her toned body from the backside, showing her taut, leotard-clad buttocks. This shot, shown repeatedly, brought waves of roaring and clapping from the inmates.

I was stationed near an exit door and was told by other guards to stay there during the movie. The inmates barely paid attention to me. The smell of marijuana drifted in the air. In this dark and enclosed cavern, I felt content and relieved to simply fade into my surroundings. It was nearly blissful.

Journal Entry

June 15, 1987 12:25 pm

Yesterday was my first experience working in the dread 4-block. It wouldn't have been so awful if I knew what I was doing. Instead of briefly telling me my duties, they gave me a toplock key and had me working first gallery with one off. Hall, who was a stupid, fat, lazy little Bitch. She left me working alone numerous times, didn't tell me what was going on, & when she did talk to me it was a mumble or she was facing the opposite direction. After I fucked up a few times, an officer (Williams) finally pulled me aside and gave me some pointers. I still don't know what's going on, but c'est la vie.

Journal Entry

June 16, 1987 12:45 pm

So much to write, but so little time (or I'm just too tired by the time I get home from work.)

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I worked 3rd Infirmary last night. Went to shakedown a cell & caught a guy masturbating. I wasn't embarrassed, but felt bad for him. He acted angry & said, "You sure picked a bad time." He's a man, what else can I say?

Also on the floor was Big Charlie. He's about 6'3 or 6'4, must weigh 300 or 350, & all of it is pure muscle. Gentle as a pussycat, though. I made it a point to smile & say good night to him. On store day the other inmates will stop at his cell (aka house) & give him treats. Sort of a show of respect, I imagine, & maybe a little insurance of support from B.C.

I could write forever, but time for work again!

Prison graffiti: 'Why not let the bad guy win every once in a while (my favorite)'. 'Woman was God's gift to Man'. And 'You've got to go through Hell before you get to Heaven.' More later.

CHAPTER 11

SWEET HONEY BEAR

Time dragged on and some aspects of my job seemed to be going just a bit smoother. I was still on the merry-go-round, but most days I was sent to work in 5-block. I had mixed feelings for this steady assignment. I liked and respected the 5-block staff. They were, for the most part, cocky and energetic officers—nearly all guys, of course—who took pride in working one of the toughest blocks in the system. And I encountered no friction from my fellow officers in that block, no harassment, no problems. In fact, my coworkers—one of whom was Yirku, who helped me write my ticket in Chow Hall—

began jokingly referring to me as "Botkin-bey."

But the Beys and the Els wanted nothing to do with me. The prisoners who adopted the Muslim and Moor religions attached the suffixes to their last name. They became Williams-bey or Robinson-el. While it is true that some inmates find God, or earnestly and sincerely latch onto a religion behind bars, more often the religion is a tool of manipulation. In fact, the Muslims and Moors were simply a front for the prison drug trade, and everyone knew it.

These religions were popular in prisons nationwide. They emphasized the racial superiority of blacks over whites. White women, in particular, were evil. Looking into the face of a white woman was looking into the eyes of the devil. So said inmates took it upon themselves to prove they would not succumb to my darkness, and spewed obscenities upon me when I passed their cells. It was just another downfall to being female in that shit hole.

Yirku and Harry Trapp often serenaded the 5-blockers over the block's speaker system when they were tucked in for the night, just prior to the end of our shift. They sang a soothing song in harmony, or at least tried, regardless of the obscenities and profanity shouting out in response from the cells. I did notice, though, that the block was quieter than usual when they sang, and I believe some inmates actually found their amateur voices soothing.

One of the benefits of a 5-block assignment was being excused from working the Chow Hall circus that evening. We fed the inmates in their cells due to their segregation status. At dinner time, we passed out food trays with the help of porters. These porters were inmate workers who were housed in the general population blocks in Central

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Complex. I believe they were paid the paltry prison wages for their porter jobs, though many of them lasted only a short time before quitting in disgust.

One black porter of slight build once poked holes in a large, black garbage bag and wore his improvised raincoat to fend off the substances thrown at him. He carefully looked around, sheepishly walking down the block on base, arms held at his sides with elbows slightly crooked to defend himself from flying objects. I watched this spectacle from third gallery with a mixture of amusement and envy, and to this day hear the jeers and hooting that the sight provoked among the inmates, their clamor in the block heightened even more than usual. *I know just how you feel, buddy*, I thought to myself. The porter only drew more attention, of course, and was pelted with numerous objects. He never returned to work in the block.

Prior to being allowed to enter 5-block, the porters were required to submit to a strip search. I took part in many of these searches and was frequently the only female present. Contraband in 5-block was a problem and the porters were passing a lot of it. According to the academy, the proper technique involved the naked inmate standing with his legs apart. He was to lift his penis, then his testicles, and then roll back the skin on an uncircumcised penis. Then he would bend over and spread his buttocks apart. If contraband was suspected in the anus he would then squat and cough several times. This supposedly dislodged whatever object he was carrying. Officers were told to keep their hands off the inmate during a strip search, no doubt resulting from a lawsuit somewhere down the line. Body orifices and cavities were to be checked and entered by medical personnel only.

On one occasion an inmate would take a double-take at me and protested at

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having to undress in my presence. I actually felt sympathy for him, but maintained my neutral demeanor. I wanted to say, *Listen, you are only one out of the hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies I have looked at. Believe me, you have nothing that I haven't already seen.* He did, finally, strip--though shot me many sullen glances while doing so. The actual porter strip searches were much less revealing than the academy method, though many times the inmate was instructed to bend over and spread his buttocks.

In 5-block, one of my regular, more respectful porters was a muscular white kid with short, dirty blond hair. He performed his duties without any issues. He was always polite, respectful and quiet-spoken with me. If he was passing contraband along to the inmates I wasn't aware of it. Then again, it wasn't difficult amid the chaos in that block to break any number of rules without being caught. I simply overlooked the minor infractions in light of the assaults and other pressing matters that took priority.

The worst job in 5-block was signing door cards. One officer would be assigned door card duty for a couple of galleries for the entire shift. Going cell to cell, from one end of the block to the other, you looked into each inmate's cell and made sure he was alive and breathing. Your initials and the time were then recorded on the infamous door card, located on the wall just a few inches to the right of the inmate's cell, and next to his neighbor. This placed your arm perilously within grabbing and stabbing distance. One kept moving at a steady clip for many reasons, including an attempt to avoid being dressed out or worse.

This close and repeated proximity to inmates in The Hole meant endless requests, questions, and demands. They wanted pencils, they wanted to send a kite to complain about something, they needed paper RIGHT NOW to do it. They wanted to know when

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they were going to Yard, when they were getting a shower, when they were going to the law library. They demanded to speak with the Sergeant, and why did you write that TICKET on them in 8-block, anyhow, and send them to the fucking HOLE? When was chow coming, how long have you been working here, where are you from, do you have a boyfriend and there is BIRD SHIT on my GODDAMN FOOD TRAY.

My standard response, "I don't know. I'm just signing door cards" was not well-received among this unbalanced population. There were no right answers. Only yet another reason for the inmates to become even more frustrated and angry with me. If I knew the answer to one question or followed through with one demand, it was never enough and invariably led to more demands from that inmate as well as his neighbor, too. And knowing which inmates were pissed off at me only increased my anxiety for the next round of signing door cards.

All of the 5-block guards dealt with this abuse though I seemed to be an added novelty, as usual. I was also given countless so-called love letters, many of them written by inmates with obvious mental issues.

Hello! princess, Greeting

How are you,?

what, Need, Be, said, Shall Be Said, At, This, moment,

The UN-said Thing you Need, To Know, I.do; princess. I. do. Love you Much. "Other, Speek of other shit, But I speek of how i feel, Being. in The nearness, of your, Tender Touching present, I.do, my, Adoreable, Love, understand, your greatest, want's and Need's And How To Apply Those Thing To The Utmost,"

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Honest, what you Need Is, A True, warm, Tender, Loving, I, do, understand your sensetive, Delicate, circumstancies, my, Love, princess, my rare, delicate, 'Love priness whom, i, Adore, Most heighly.

Those, Tender elated moments, spent In The Nearness Of your present, was sheer, Tinglaing soothing, Blissful, Magical warm Tende Joy.

Any moment, in The Nearness of your present its Quiet Sensational, Those precious moment 's are Absolutely Breathe Taking. whenever I see, your Mysterious Feeling showing in a strange Noticeiable, way, Actually. your. mood, Even Tell Me Much More, Honest, I.do, Enjoy Kindleing your Mood warmly. I Always Touch you with A Needful, Tenderly magical Glowing Love Ray's. To spread over you, All, over you From head to Toe. I do find, My! princess, My Lady, That your Vibrant mysterious Beauty, to be Quiet Fascinating, comely, rare in Every way, you'er Breathe Taking Beautifully, "im, stunned, with The delicate Richiness of your warmly Lit Fragrance, its Quiet captivatieing and Breathtaking, my Love

Some of the inmates would pretend to be in the throes of swooning in an attempt to flatter and therefore manipulate me. One 5-block inmate intently looked me in the eyes as I was signing door cards. He filled his lungs with a deep breath and, as I tried to brace myself against whatever obscenities he was going to spew forth, he broke into a song from West Side Story. "I am pretty, oh so pretty..." hands clasped together at his chest. It was one of the rare times I spontaneously smiled. I couldn't help myself.

Some of the prisoners put on an impressive show of widening their eyes and smiling brightly, some whistling, and always, *always*, was the ongoing masturbation

among others. But as quickly as they proclaimed their love and lust for me they changed instantly into snarling, hissing demons, loathing every fiber of my being. Invariably, after looking me up and down and thoroughly checking me out, the grinning leer disappeared. Then their tone took on a serious edge as they requested or insisted that I engage in some type of sexual act or in some creative way submit to their wants and needs.

After ignoring them, or writing up my major misconduct ticket, I uneasily predicted their next reaction. "Yeah, you ain't got nothin' on my baby!...Shee-it, you ain't nothin'...I know what you is, you a FREAK! A fuckin' FREAK!" And so on. "I smell that pussy all the way down the rock!...You a nasty thang!...Get that cunt outta here!" A "freak" meant that I was lesbian. I was also racist, a hooker, and a whore. I was Cinderella, the most beautiful girl at the ball, and I was an evil, ugly cow, the devil disguised as a white woman.

As the 5-block inmates became more familiar with me, their insults sharpened in an attempt to get a reaction. They knew nothing about me, beyond what they saw: a quiet white girl intruding in their world. I said nothing in response. This, of course, infuriated them, too. I stubbornly remained silent, fighting the battle with one of the few weapons I had: my mind. I tried reasoning with myself to escape the wearing-down of constant verbal abuse and threats of physical harm. They pummeled me with insults, threw things at me, or simply yelled and screamed in my face to try and intimidate me. I began feeling less afraid of being hurt physically and more concerned with sorting the frivolous threats from the genuine ones.

But they would never know who I was and they would never see me cry or express any emotion. *Never*. They could not have that and I would be damned if I lay

dying at the bottom of a stairwell but I would never give in. That knowledge was my strength and my way to beat them and it was the only thing I had to hold on to.

Curiously, I discovered that of all the lowly, obscene things they said to me, calling me 'girl' struck a chord and riled me every time. As though I was some lowly servant. From the inmates' comments--and I couldn't help but hear them--they viewed me as inexperienced, naive, coddled. They also seemed to think I hailed from an upper middle-class family with some money.

This made absolutely no sense to me. Why would I be working in Jackson Prison if I had a family with privileges, with contacts? I was just determined to have a good life and escape from the stifling town where I grew up. I knew there was another world outside of Adrian through the other kids in school, the ones who belonged to the country club and who wore nice clothes and had straight white teeth and smooth complexions from expensive visits to the orthodontist and the dermatologist. Their parents paid for private music and dance lessons and financed their trips to Europe with the French Club. I lived with my brothers and my divorced Mom in Friendly Village Mobile Home Park and woke on the weekends to the grinding arrival of kids peddling down the sidewalks on their obnoxious plastic Big Wheels.

I wasn't going to make my home in some run-down trailer park or shitty little house, waiting for my welfare check and food stamps, with a mess of snotty-nosed little brats running around. That was my nightmare. I had no interest in having children and wanted no responsibilities beyond taking care of myself. I had come this far, and I was damned if some fucking convicts — who thought I *owed* them — were going to derail me from my dream of someday having a good job. I was going to make it through my year in

the prison.

And so it went, my silent battle with the 5-blockers. The segregation unit was filled with psychotics, sociopaths, assaultive and hostile offenders, sexual predators, and otherwise socially deviant misfits. My mind held a map of the "hot spots" on my galleries, of cells containing inmates who were prone to verbally or physically assaulting me. Whenever I stood in the rotunda prior to the start of my shift and heard "Botkin, 5-West" called out, I felt equally relieved that I would be working with decent officers I knew, in a familiar block, along with pure dread knowing that there was a good chance I would be dealing with a cluster of inmates who were especially troublesome. In 5-West, at the end of third gallery, up by the ceiling and near the gun turret, three offenders housed in a row: Nickerson, Harris, and Robinson. They were young and black, and seething with sneering contempt for me and just about everyone else.

I don't know if they were acquainted with each other prior to going to The Hole but once in there they worked well together. They were particularly venomous and vocal regarding my physical characteristics--there was little else they could attack personally.

They didn't know a damn thing about me beyond the hated things I represented: I was white and therefore racist. And I was also a woman, an inferior creature with lowly status, good only for sex and serving men and little else. My supposed authority status as a corrections officer--one who held the keys and who walked in and out through the gates every day--only added to their disdain.

But it didn't matter. My life was none of their business, and it would not have made a difference. Any personal information was simply more ammo for them to strike me with. I didn't want them to know anything about me. Not my first name, not my

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hometown, not my age. Nothing. The prisoners would find a way to use the information against me, to set me up, to ensnare me in a blackmail scheme. To manipulate me into smuggling in their drugs, or worse. And it was none of their goddamn business. They got enough of me and I would never give them any more.

As that summer wore on, I felt distanced from my friends and family, none of whom had worked in corrections. I tried to talk about my job, but the look on their face, or tone in their voice, seemed to lack something I was looking for. They seemed disinterested or uncomfortable listening to me. I wanted confirmation that I had a horrible position, some acknowledgement or sense of understanding what it was like to walk into the shithole of a job I had. The environment inside was indescribable and I could not find the words. I was frustrated. They, of course, could not know. How could anyone know if they hadn't worked there?

I felt manhandled, on edge, tense, strangely removed from the clean grocery stores and places where I watched other people going through their routines. Jackson had one small shopping mall a couple of minutes' drive from my apartment and I liked to visit there on my days off — not to shop, as I had little money left over after paying rent, groceries, and student loans — but to wander slowly among the bright, cheerful aisles in one of the nice department stores, stealing curious glances at the snotty ladies staffing the pricey cosmetics counters and wistfully touching the smooth material on the Kasper business suits in the women's department, dreaming about a real job. I often found a spot and positioned myself in the middle of the mall, watching people pass by. Couples holding hands, mothers pushing strollers, crying babies and screaming kids, gangly groups of teens laughing and talking loudly. It was a stark contrast from the gray and

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lifeless environment I worked in, this fantasy world of shiny, sparkling stores and glittering display cases. I casually sipped my pop and quickly averted my eyes when someone looked in my direction. I carefully kept track of people passing behind me through my peripheral vision.

But most of them walked on by with barely a glance at the obscure, quiet figure standing alone. I blended in as one of them, relishing my anonymity, the luxury of simply existing in peace and being ignored. It felt as though I was some sort of spy or undercover agent. A ghost, maybe, moving quietly and unnoticed in this world that had been mine a very short time ago.

These people seemed so *alive*. They had freedom from disparaging remarks and insults. They enjoyed the bright light of day, the wonderful, boring monotony of their regular, normal lives. My life felt anything but normal. Resentment bubbled within me towards these people who were clueless. I would be heading back to work soon, the next day or in a couple of days, when my weekend was over. Back to the stares and comments and obscene gestures amid odors of rotting garbage mingling with sweat and urine. Back to sticking out as a glaring minority with my pale skin and feminine features in a sea of crude, rough men.

The never-ending verbal abuse and threat of violence in 5-block unexpectedly affected my life on another level outside of the prison, too. I couldn't connect with my boyfriend, Jim. Our lives were so different: Jim spent his work days wearing a suit and tie and working with computers and white collar co-workers and making sure his hair was cut above his shirt collar in accordance with EDS policy; I was hooted at and whistled at and felt eyes and obscene gestures and comments making a bull's eye for my breasts or

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crotch or ass, degrading me and reducing me to my female parts, all day and every day that I was at work.

Our previously comfortable camaraderie disintegrated under the fallout of the prison. When Jim tried to hold my hand that summer, the hairs on my forearms stood on end and I prickled with visible goosebumps. This new phenomenon amazed me and I observed my body react as though it belonged to someone else. I felt molested in the prison, sexually abused, and I could no longer stand to be touched. Our relationship came to an end.

On a sunny Father's Day that June, Dad and Betty stopped in Jackson and treated me to a late breakfast at Bob Evans. I picked at a fruit plate while they dug into their eggs, bacon, and hash browns. Diners around us chatted, laughed, and relaxed. I glanced at my watch and mentally noted that I would be getting ready to go into work soon.

I needed to get going. I couldn't help but think about what was waiting for me at work. I didn't want to leave them. It was very, very difficult for me to say goodbye and head back to my apartment where I changed into my uniform and prepared for my shift. They had no idea, of course, of how I was feeling. How could they? I was, at that point, good at putting on a mask, pretending to be something or someone I wasn't.

Sometimes I broke down and cried over the phone to Mom, describing to her the awful conditions in the prison and how I hated it.

"Oh, Kath," she said. "Why don't you quit and move in with us? You can stay here and look for another job."

"I can't, Mom."

I have to admit that it was very, very tempting at times, but it was also out of the

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question. Moving back to small-town Adrian was almost as unappealing as working in the prison. Only then there would be no hope of my getting a decent job with the State. I would be unemployed and a failure and no better off. Back where I started. I had to make this work.

Meanwhile, it was business as usual in 5-block. One day on second gallery I glanced in a cell before scribbling my initials on the door card. There was a big, muscular white kid, laying on his mattress, unblinking eyes gazing at me, a deadened expression on his face. His penis was erect, pointing straight up. He held it around its base, then stroked it. Up and down, up and down. Steadily, unhurriedly. And why not? He had all the time in the world. My eyes moved from his penis to his face and I noted that his hair was blond. I did a double take, thinking how closely he resembled the good porter who had previously helped me pass out food trays. I looked at his name on the door card. It was him. He continued staring at me, hand moving faster. I quickly moved on.

During my next round he was still masturbating. And the next. He lay there for hours with a blank expression, staring at me open-eyed when I looked in to check on him. I wondered how he could masturbate for so long, for all of those hours and hours, and how his penis must have been sore from the endless rubbing and pulling. The transformation from helpful and dependable porter into typical, sullen, I-don't-give-a-shit-I-want-you-to-look-at-me-jacking-off 5-block inmate was jarring. I would not have believed it was him, had I not seen him with my own eyes.

Inmates in The Hole were locked up almost 24 hours a day. Since they were already in the detention unit, and many of them were serving life sentences, they had nothing to lose. Tactics to get the better of me were limited only by the cell bars and the

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inmates' imagination. They smiled and flirted with me, then segued into a ranting discourse on my physical features. "Face is awright, but what happened to yo body?" They threatened to be "layin'" for me. One minute they were puffed up with pride in offering to put me in pretty dresses and be their baby, and the next they screamed vulgarities in torrents of anger and frustration.

Then there was the 4-blocker with celebrity good looks: tall, black, and slender but muscular. Confident and cocky, he usually had a posse of inmates following him on base or out in Yard. He strutted around the prison shirtless, proudly displaying his strong biceps and cut abs. He was a newer convict serving a life term on a drug sentence. This inmate was particularly venomous toward me. He harassed me, glared at me and indirectly threatened me, though not enough to write him up on a ticket. His band of brothers followed suit and took their cue to insult me. But they weren't as smart, and some did end up in The Hole for their vociferous support of their leader.

One day I was signing door cards in 5-block when I saw him lying on a mattress, staring at the ceiling. I was surprised to see him in The Hole but never did find out why he landed in there. Fully expecting the worst, I braced myself every time I made rounds past his cell.

But he never bothered me. In fact, he did not eat and barely moved for days. It took a while for me to recognize that he was depressed. Maybe the reality of spending the rest of his life in prison was finally settling in. When he did start moving about, he was more subdued and gave me little trouble, even after he made it out of 5-block.

Through it all I continued down the rock, either working with my gallery partner or signing door cards, whatever the day's assignment brought. I tried to keep a cautious

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distance from the cell bars where the inmates could reach me, while also keeping an eye out for flying objects appearing from above the gallery or down the rock. Sometimes I stood on the stairwell and *click-click-clicked* the handcuffs looped through my belt. I found the distinct clacking sound of the single bar moving through the double bar calming. ‘Round and ‘round, over and over, I *click-click-clicked* a cuff with my hand, right side of my black leather belt sagging from the heavy pull of the cool steel.

Once in a while, I was able to sit on the stairs at the end of the block for a couple of minutes, taking a precious but brief break from the battle in 5-block. One day I sat and watched a cockroach as it scurried over the concrete. I reflexively moved my foot to crush it, as I had countless times in the prison. But this time I held my foot aloft. I dimly heard the prisoners yelling and hollering and the slamming and clanking of cell bars being opened and closed by officers, and I thought, *Oh, how nice to be that bug and simply crawl away. No fear, no mind games. Just scooting along.* I watched it crawl away from me, oblivious to its near miss of doom, and lowered my foot.

There were so many types of bugs in the prison. I once spotted a very pale cockroach on those same concrete steps in 5-block. It was some mutant, colorless albino-type. I studied it closely, curiously. Yep. It was nearly white, all right. And several officers had told me tales of giant, flying cockroaches living in the tunnels under the cellblocks. I thought they were joking at first. *They could fly? And who knew they could look so different? The wonderful world of cockroaches, right here in Jackson Prison.*

Much too soon, I stood and walked back out onto the rock, my assigned gallery. I sighed deeply, weary of the abuse.

I can recall only one other occasion, besides my first time in that block, when I

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worked a gallery in 5-block with another female. It was Vanessa, the good-natured officer who was with me during the chocolate pudding dressing out. We were passing out food trays with our plastic gloves on second gallery.

I turned and bent over slightly to grab the next tray and felt a poking object firmly and quickly making its way upward between my buttocks. I jumped forward and turned to see a smiling and friendly-looking older black inmate, with graying hair, looking back at me. His hand was still outside of the bars, index finger pointed slightly.

I glared at him and sputtered. I was equally upset that he had touched me, and angry with myself that I had gotten too close to the cell bars. I knew better. I was lucky he had only used his finger. Vanessa laughed and said, "Cootchie cool!"

I went down to base and wrote my sexual assault ticket.

During my time in 5-block the plastic honey bear--that innocent, smiling symbol of childhood sweetness--became my foe. Emptied of its original contents, it was filled with liquid, usually water. Then the happy bear sprung out between cell bars and was squeezed into my face.

Again and again, often when I was least expecting it, the improvised squirt gun struck with alarming accuracy. Right into my face. Argh. I wiped myself off with a clean handkerchief from my pocket. Then I headed down to the Sergeant's desk on base to write my assault ticket. The ticket was reviewed. The contraband honey bear was seized. And the inmate was given more time in 5-block. The Hole. My place of employment. The added measure now being the offender's rage at my having written him up.

Time and again, as I stood in line to punch the time clock at the end of my shift, the guards coming on for midnights, almost all men, quietly stared at me, blank-faced,

from their line-up facing us. Oftentimes my shirt was stained with whatever substance I had been dressed out with that evening. Or a gob of my hair stuck to one side of my head from a well-aimed cup of who-knows-what.

I seemed a curiosity to these guys, also, and was damn sick of being looked at. By inmates, by officers, by whoever wanted to gawk at the freak. I averted my eyes and pretended not to notice the onlookers. Numb, I stared at the floor, followed the uniforms in front of me, picked my time card out of the slot, and punched out. Then I shuffled across the rotunda, up the steps, and made my way through the gates. Another shift over. Another one coming up far too soon.

All the while, I continued to mull over the other civil service test I had taken, the College Graduate Careers Exam. Boo-boo and his buddy, Harry Trapp, had recently taken the test, too, and were hoping to score in the first band, which was receiving a minimum score of 90%. That, they said, was the ticket to getting out of the prison and into a good job. Either as a probation or parole officer. They also said it was difficult to get a high score. It looked as though I would be working in the prison for a long time. I waited and waited for those test results as the summer dredged along. My hopes of scoring in the first band dwindled with the passing days, along with my hopes of getting out of Central Complex.

The prison haunted me outside of its walls, too. Driving home after my shift should have been a relief, but I usually felt drained and tried to shake lingering images of hostility and profane voices booming in my head. I slowly parked my car, turned off the lights, and headed up the stairs to my second floor apartment.

My key chain delicately *clink-clinked* as I unlocked my door, and I vaguely noted

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how light and dainty my small batch of keys seemed, compared to the thick, heavy set that swayed and clanked from my belt at work. Wary, watchful, I swiftly went inside, closed the door, and turned the dead-bolt. I headed straight to my bathroom and ran the sink faucet while I blew my clogged nose. I opened the tissue, always amazed at the grayish-black substance expelled from my nostrils after working in the prison. I washed my hands, then my face, and brushed my teeth.

Then I headed to my bedroom and removed my uniform with my fingertips, unbuttoning and unzipping and touching as little of the tainted material as possible before depositing the whole stinking pile into my laundry basket. I set my belt, key clips, nametag, laminated ID card, and ink-stained pocket protector on my dresser, and lined up my dirty black tennis shoes on the floor.

I put on one of Todd's big, clean, old t-shirts and slipped into bed, between the cool sheets. My cats crawled next to me, purring. Junior pawed at my shoulder. We both knew this routine. I turned on my back and he softly crept onto my chest, settling his sleek body onto mine, as I gently stroked his shiny black coat. Then he stretched his whiskery head forward and sniffed my lips before nestling in and kneading me with his front paws.

If it was cool enough in the evenings, I would lay like that and listen to the far-off movement of vehicles on the highway outside, lace curtains falling softly around the window. On the hot and humid nights, I switched on the little air conditioning unit in my living room after walking in and locking my front door. By the time I went to bed, the cool air began seeping into my bedroom. I lay still, lightly trailing my fingers through Junior's silky fur, losing myself in his distinct purr rumbling through me along with the

steady drone of the air conditioner.

CHAPTER 12

CAT AND MOUSE

Five-block was an active housing unit. Something was always going on. The inmates had five hours of Yard per week, an occasional shower, and food trays slopped in. Otherwise, 23 hours a day in a small, dirty cell with concrete floors, a toilet, sink, and a small, beat-up mattress bearing burn marks. Personal property such as books, papers, photographs sent from home. Water frequently gushed onto base from a jammed and overflowing toilet.

One day while I was working an upper gallery, a Bug on base busted his toilet. He purposefully cut himself up with the porcelain pieces and flung the jagged chunks through his cell bars at approaching officers. He was subdued by the Goon Squad in his bloody, feces-infested mess of a cell and taken away. A couple of the experienced officers in 5-block shook their heads at this spectacle, just one of the many and countless sideshows in segregation. They told me how some of the mentally disturbed inmates were given prescribed drugs. They also said that in times past the dose was frequently doubled, to either knock the inmates out or make them inert and zombie-like, resulting in what was

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called a Thorazine Shuffle. Passive inmates equaled good inmates. Ah, the glory days in the prison.

I also heard tales of how the general population inmates, decades earlier, walked single file to chow and anyone caught talking was written up. I repeatedly heard that the older prisoners preferred those days, too, as the conditions were safer for them. And, occasionally, I listened to a gray-haired convict mention the earlier years, before these mouthy drug dealers swarmed into Jackson and things grew out of control. But that was another era, far removed from when I was working.

Cockroaches scurried in the cracks, mice got into hidden food, birds swooped through the high-ceilinged block. Fights broke out in Yard, backup officers were gathered to confiscate drugs or weapons in a cell, mattresses and sheets set on fire. The Goon Squad, led by Lt. Wemple, with their plexiglass shields and masks, gas canisters and restraints, broke into cells and tackled inmates.

One of the lucky female officers permanently stationed in the Control Center came along and videotaped the Goon Squad parade. She was always safely positioned toward the back of the cluster of men. I envied her and sorely wanted her job. To leave the rotunda and enter the housing units with a half dozen or so brawny and cocky officers seemed like a heavenly prospect to me. But at least the chaos and noise in the block seemed to lessen a notch or two when Lt. Wemple and his men filed into the block. The guards and the inmates all knew what was coming and the drama provided a brief, much-needed break in the tension, if only for a few minutes.

I usually watched the scene with the other guards standing on base, relishing those moments of safety while the inmates focused on some other clown in the center ring. I

never could see what happened in the cell, what with the crowd of guards gathered in front of the bars. But I knew the Goon Squad was rushing the convict, spraying their pepper spray, grabbing arms and legs and holding him down and cuffing him, doing whatever needed to be done to subdue and restrain him. Inevitably, it was all over much too soon for my liking. The inmate, now cuffed and usually more quiet, was led out of 5-block in the midst of the officers. I don't know where the culprit was taken, ever. He was just one of the hundreds of troublesome inmates locking in segregation and as soon as the cavalry was gone, the noise level once again shot up and the craziness resumed. And as the parade passed by, no matter how far away from me, the remnants of the gas canisters lingered in the air and drifted past. The sharp odor pierced my nostrils with a mere whiff and set my eyes watering.

Oddly, I was attracted to the pungent scent. It was safety and control and reminiscent of earlier days in my training. I was just a rookie on the gun range and far removed from the reality of Central Complex, which was but a disturbing possibility at that point. After the nerve-wracking qualification with the rifles was over, we moved on to training with the shotguns, which, in comparison, was a piece of cake.

The art of accuracy wasn't an issue as it was with the rifle. I found an unfamiliar, reckless thrill in the satisfying ratchet sound of cocking the weapon (*a show of intimidation while entering an out-of-control prison in riot formation!*), in the kick of the shotgun against my right shoulder, and the loud blast of ammo. We trainees were all more at ease at that point, as the toughest part of weapons training was over.

After dinking around with the shotguns, grumpy Al Ames moved on to crowd control with tear gas. He almost grinned at that point as he described the forthcoming

bodily reaction we would experience. It was necessary, he explained, so that we were prepared when an inmate was gassed, or if we had to march into a rioting prison. He also said we should consider ourselves lucky, as we would not be in the middle of the tear gas, like previous classes, but we would be close enough to experience some mild effects. So we stood in an open field while one of the instructors set off some type of gas cloud a short distance away, and we had no choice but to inhale some of the potent fumes and cough and gag with eyes watering and stringy snot running from our noses.

I felt my mascara smear in circles under my eyes, and I self-consciously tried wiping it off as my throat closed and I coughed and sputtered, but I needn't have been so concerned, as the rest of my group—nearly all men, of course—was also a teary-eyed, gagging, coughing, snotty mess. Ames smirked as he told of previously setting off tear gas during a training session and the bomb of sorts was inadvertently propelled in the wrong direction, sailing off and out of the prison grounds and landing near the main road. Apparently, there were some complaints regarding the wayward cloud of tear gas, but nothing major happened.

So it went that I mentally traveled out and away from the hellhole that was 5-block when the Goon Squad strode in and did their thing. It was a respite, a relief, an *ahhhhh* moment all too brief and gone way too soon. And it was easy for me to forget, or overlook, the potential for danger as I dispassionately observed the antics from base while relishing my own rare safe and secure moments during the fray.

For the inmate being tackled and subdued, of course, it was anything but serene. In fact, a 5-block inmate was inadvertently killed in this manner, shortly before I went to work inside. From what I recall, the Goon Squad was sent in to subdue him, and during

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the struggle his windpipe was blocked and he died on his mattress, with guards piled on top of him. I'm quite sure his family filed a lawsuit against the department and I can recall reading newspaper articles about the incident, but it quickly faded from the media and my thoughts. I had my own sorry self to worry about in that madhouse, after all.

And how strange and bizarre your thoughts can turn while working under dangerous and abusive conditions, day after day. You cannot help but prepare yourself mentally for what *might* or *could* happen. Getting stuck in the arm wasn't looking so bad after all. Chances are it wouldn't be fatal. But if they managed to get close enough to my head or upper body, I was going to be in trouble. I began imagining all of the weapons that could be used to hurt me. Why hadn't they smashed the light bulb in the ceiling of their cell, and thrown the crushed pieces in my eyes? Could it be that they simply hadn't thought of it yet? When *were* they going to think of it?

And if I was taken hostage and raped, I was as good as dead, because certainly they hated me and I would be killed afterward. If I was going to die, please let it be quick. Then they could do what they wanted with my body. But I knew that if I was going to be killed it would be a messy, painful affair. Choking, strangling, beating or stabbing. Like Josephine McCallum.

Early one afternoon, I was making my rounds on fourth gallery. Lewis, a consistently hostile Bug with blazing black eyes, locked in 26-4. This tall, dark-skinned inmate did not associate with other prisoners. He kept to himself, and occasionally greeted me with a silent glare.

"When am I getting my shower?" he asked.

I gave him my standard reply. "I don't know."

"Well, can't you tell me if I'm getting a shower today? I haven't had a shower for five days!"

Lewis was at least 6'2, slight but strong, black, late 50's. He wore an incredulous expression during this exchange.

"I really don't know. They're starting on base today, so you probably won't get one until tomorrow."

The corners of Lewis' mouth turned down and he began sputtering. *Uh, oh. Here it comes*, I thought, as I moved on to the next door card.

"I've got that two by four soaking in oil, girl, and I'm gonna whack you upside the head with it!"

I continued working my way down the rock.

"I'm gonna smack your head with that goddamned two by four, girl! I said I want my goddamned shower!"

When I reached base I wrote the threatening behavior ticket. Just another one of countless major misconduct tickets I wrote that summer. I became very good at it.

Meanwhile, the 5-blockers continued their endless masturbation, fondling and stroking their penises while laying on their filthy, stained mattresses, staring at me as I walked by; they worked themselves up, standing at their cell bars with glazed eyes, trying to ejaculate on me when they knew I would be coming around to sign door cards; they masturbated behind flimsy, dirty sheets strung up across their bars, chest high, trying to stall me with a ridiculous attempt at small talk in between ragged breaths, one shoulder and arm moving up and down, fervently trying to time their ejaculation during a moment when I was standing before them.

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I ordered the sheets removed, told them to cover up, and tried to avoid the line of fire. I continued signing my door cards and wondered what they were thinking about when they masturbated, bristling at the possibility of being an unwanted part of a dirty, stinking inmate's sexual daydreams. *Don't put me in your fantasy, you sick motherfucker!*

Of course, they continued fondling their penises, undeterred. And if I wrote a misconduct ticket? They were given their hearing, and they lost because I never wrote a bad ticket. They were given more time in 5-block. They typically became further enraged after getting more time in The Hole, and I dreaded having to ultimately sign their door card again on my rounds, wondering what would be waiting for me. They knew I would be back again, and I knew that they knew. They had all day and night to come up with plots and plans to get me. There were hundreds of them with their twisted minds. I was cautious, trying to stay alert. Cat and mouse.

I once wrote a conspiracy ticket and that, too, stuck. Even though my fellow officers warned me that it wouldn't, as conspiracy charges were tough to write, and tough to prove. But I was determined to write that goddamned ticket, anyhow, and I silently dared the higher-ups to dismiss it.

It all started when I had been going about my usual business on fourth gallery in 5-West, and I was dressed out with a cup of water thrown in my face.

It was a feeble attempt, weakly and half-heartedly tossed out between the bars, and I was surprised that particular inmate acted in this manner. He was a smaller, white inmate with long, greasy hair and a down-trodden look. He mumbled when spoken to and rarely made eye contact. Certainly no threat to me, or anyone else, for that matter. *This lowly piece of shit is dressing me out, too?? Well, fuck!* I thought. *Fuck! GodDAMMIT!*

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

What IS this, a fucking free-for-all?? Hey, here comes that stupid bitch, Botkin!!

Whoopee!! Let's throw some shit on her!!

Pissed, I headed down the rock towards base and paused on the steps at the end of third gallery to take out my notepad and record the inmate's cell number. But as I stood there writing I overheard the assholes toward the end of third gallery, Nickerson, Harris and Robinson, loudly discussing how one of them—I can't recall which one—was making arrangements to pass along some cigarettes to the pathetic inmate on fourth who had dressed me out per their earlier agreement.

I cocked my head and listened and recorded the entire conversation. They couldn't see me, of course, and I took careful notes. Obviously, they had bullied the inmate into assaulting me with water and he had no choice but to do as they ordered. And I went on down to base and wrote my ticket as a couple of my co-workers shook their heads, saying it wasn't worth processing, it would never fly.

But it did, which only further infuriated my third gallery tormentors, resulting in increased threats and hostility towards me. I wish I could say that I no longer cared, that I was tough and brave and hardened and ready to battle them face to face. But that would not be true. I hated them and I feared them, too, but I was not going to let them get away with it. I was sick of the bullshit. They would hate me anyhow, if I did nothing, or perhaps they would see that as a sign of weakness and pull even more shit on me.

Of course, many of the other guards struggled with their own demons in the prison. One of my fellow trainees, Rusty Pelham, was a tall, thin, lanky kid with red hair and freckles. He was pleasant and mild mannered. Rusty smiled less and less frequently as time passed. He, too, received a fair portion of abuse.

One 5-block inmate, in particular, enjoyed harassing Rusty. The prisoner was an older, large white guy with a lot of tattoos and a shaved head. He had a wild look in his eyes, but he was one of the few in that block that didn't bother with me. I witnessed him, though, on a few occasions when he bullied Rusty. I finally decided to try and do something, even if it backfired, after the inmate slammed into Rusty with his muscular body. Rusty remained quiet as his face turned ghostly pale. He looked sick.

Later in my shift, as I was passing by the inmate's cell, I asked why he was picking on Rusty. I risked bearing the brunt of the inmate's anger and frustration, and braced myself for attracting the attention of a new enemy. Or, worse, antagonizing the guy to brutalize Rusty even more. But he simply looked at me and shrugged, with a smile, as if indicating he had nothing better to do. I said Pelham was a good guy.

The inmate shrugged again and said he would leave him alone then. I don't know for sure if he backed off or not, but I did not witness any more bullying from that inmate. I never told Rusty about my conversation, either. Hopefully I didn't make the situation worse for him. It seemed to me that many of these inmates were nothing more than kids, mentally. Physically mature, dangerous children.

The noise level in the block typically lowered when the prisoners went to bed for the night, near the end of my shift at 10 pm. One evening I was making final rounds on second gallery, collecting mail. The other officers were gathered on base around the Sergeant's desk, waiting for the end of the shift. The block was dark and uncharacteristically quiet as I picked up envelopes placed between the cell bars. The sweet, distinctive aroma of burning marijuana wafted through one end of the gallery, adding a dreamy note of calm to the day's end. As a teenager during the 70's, I was

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familiar with the smell of pot. While working in The Hole, I quickly discovered that marijuana use brought little or no reaction from the other guards and I followed suit.

I was moving fast and approaching a Bug's cell in the middle of the gallery. His light was on, and he was standing a couple of feet back from his cell bars, naked and quiet. He wasn't masturbating and he wasn't talking to an invisible friend. He simply stood still, gazing vacantly ahead. Though mentally ill and very stinky, he had not previously bothered me with thrown objects or playing with his penis. The tall, dark-skinned inmate had never spoken a word to me and had seemed oblivious to my presence in the block. I curiously noted this change in behavior and continued collecting mail, reaching to pluck the Bug's envelope from his bars.

He moved so fast that I didn't see it coming. Or maybe I was tired, or had let my guard down for just a second or two because I didn't perceive him as a threat.

After picking up his mail I started to take a step, but couldn't. *Huh?* Flashed through my mind. Then I was swiftly, forcibly pulled up against the cell bars, the Bug's hand tightly gripping my right uniform sleeve. Stunned, I froze for what was probably just a few seconds, but seemed like several long minutes.

In my confusion I looked up into his eyes. He stared down at me and did not let go. His expression was blank, eyes dead. He was somewhere far, far away. I was numb and unable to think clearly, not quite comprehending what was happening. I instinctively leaned away from him. He held his grip. I tried pulling back again. He held on tightly. Mind still blank, I yanked away from him hard, and finally broke free, my body whirling towards the railing on the gallery. As I sped off down the rock, still holding mail, I caught a glimpse of his erect penis. I did not pick up the remaining envelopes, and the inmates

began yelling and complaining as they saw me scurry by.

By the time I returned to base, I was shaking. He could have cut my throat, or strangled me, quietly and effortlessly. Or stuck me. I don't know where the guard in the gun turret located between 4- and 5-block had been looking, but I had no indication that I was covered during the incident. I wrote my assault ticket. The guards around the Sergeant's desk didn't say much when I casually mentioned that I had been grabbed by the Bug up on second gallery. They had no idea how distraught I was feeling. As usual, my face likely gave no indication of my inner distress. Plus it was the end of the shift and we were all tired, worn down from another day of abuse.

When I returned to my apartment I found that the stitching on my uniform sleeve had been torn apart and needed mending. I lightly traced the torn seam with my fingers. I had never made a sound. I would have died like that—silently, in the darkness of the cellblock on second gallery, thinking—*Wha-??* Third shift would have found my body, crumpled in front of the Bug's cell, surprised look on my face, envelopes scattered about. Or maybe still tightly clutched in my hand. Out of all of the threats and anger and hatred festooned upon me by the rapists and drug dealers and Muslims and just plain hostile sociopaths in The Hole, I could have met my fate by someone barely there mentally, who took little notice of the white female officer except when she just happened by at a fortuitous moment.

CHAPTER 13

8-BLOCK

I remember well my first time working 8-block. Sounded neutral enough when the Lieutenant announced my shift assignment and I exchanged my key tabs for 8-block keys. It was a general population unit, without the stigma or reputation of 4-block or the familiar abuse in 5-block. In fact, I had heard very little about 8-block and assumed the lack of notoriety was a good omen. I headed out and took my place in the block. First or second gallery, as I recall.

The prison routine for general pop blocks involved letting the inmates in and out of their cells in mass movement sweeps, for things such as Yard and Chow Hall. This was called 'throwing the brakes', or 'breaking out' the inmates via controls on the end of each gallery. Otherwise, officers individually keyed open cells for inmates heading to work detail, classes in the auditorium, showers, and so on.

While throwing the brakes, the inmates had a few seconds to open their cell doors, which temporarily unlocked. After stepping outside of their cell, the inmates were supposed to close their doors. After the gallery cleared, we--the guards--swept the galleries by walking down past each cell and pinching the doors to make sure they were

shut and locked. Prisoners caught outside of their cells without a pass were considered 'out of place' or 'skating', and eligible to be written up with a misconduct ticket. Open cell doors invited opportunities for passing contraband such as weapons and drugs, or engaging in other illicit activities.

Shortly after my shift in 8-block began, I stood in the bulkhead, observing both sides of my gallery. The inmates were locked in their cells. The walkways were empty, while a few inmates moved on base and the other galleries. As it should be. Satisfied with my progress in this new assignment, I took out a small notebook that I carried to check my notes on the block's routine.

Then I glanced up. On the right side of my gallery a couple of inmates casually walked past each other. I looked to the left. A couple of inmates walked on that gallery as well. Wait a minute. What are they doing out? Where did they come from? I looked again to the right. Now there was only one inmate. Where did the other guy go? I whipped my head to the left and there, too, was a change in the number of inmates. Now there were three or four milling about. *What in the Hell...??* I started off down the left gallery to check ID's and try to figure out what was going on.

This was the first time I worked 8-block and I was not familiar with any of the numerous inmates on my gallery. The names and faces were all new. In addition, I did not know the 8-block routine and my head was still swimming with the varying assignments I received daily on the merry-go-round. In other words, I was easily misled. As I headed down the gallery the roaming inmates disappeared into cells. *Where did they go? How did they get out? And how did they get back IN?*

I couldn't identify the inmates, of course, there were so many of them. Nor could I

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determine which cell number they had slipped back into. I walked to the end of the empty gallery, pinching doors along the way to make sure they were locked shut. Then I headed back to the bulkhead.

Along the way, I looked across the block and observed several inmates dotting the opposite gallery. They were talking, smiling, and carrying on with their business. *But these guys were supposed to be locked--LOCKED--in their cells!* I made a beeline through the bulkhead and out onto the other gallery. The inmates swiftly and gracefully disappeared. Frustrated and feeling like the village idiot, I returned to the bulkhead, trying to mask my bewilderment.

I did manage to confront one or two inmates, and was met with fierce hostility. And, no, I could not positively identify the rambling men, so could not write tickets, and was therefore powerless. I quickly surrendered to my impotent role. Later on in my shift one of the regular 8-block officers told me most of the cell doors in the block could be popped open. By the inmates. At will. In fact, it was nearly impossible to keep them locked in. This supposedly was common knowledge. I worked 8-block only twice or so during my stint in Jackson Prison. I dreaded it each time. The inmates controlled the block.

Journal Entry

June 24, 1987 1: ? am

6 blk

Infirmery

4 blk

5East

8 blk

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

Well, I've finally cracked. I just can't stop crying. I hate those fuckers so bad-- no wonder the stress is so intense. I'm constantly being yelled at by those motherfuckers. Tonight I worked 8 blk & chow hall. 8 block is a fucking circus. I locked an inmate's door when he went to shower, & forgot about him. Well, he was pissed & started yelling at me. I was so goddamned close to crying. I wanted to kill that asshole. I told him that it was the first time I'd worked 8 block and he said HE had been there 2 YEARS and if I didn't know my job & had to follow someone else around (A. Allen was helping me) then I didn't belong there.

I guess what made me so mad was that he didn't give a fuck if I'd never worked there (some of them will apologize at that point) and he spoke the TRUTH. Because I didn't train in there & I have no business being in control when I don't know what the fuck I'm doing. I'm really mad that I trained in RGC & they stuck me inside. I hate that place. Fuck 'em all & kiss my ass, you fucking bastards.

Journal Entry

June 25, 1987 3:25 pm

Last night's journal entry was certainly uplifting, wasn't it? I started crying again today when I talked to Mom on the phone. It's so good to talk to her when things get rough. Unfortunately, she can't hold my hand at work.

Being an attractive female, and a quiet person, I come across as being stuck-up (to the inmates). I wouldn't be surprised if I was stuck. I've done nothing to deserve it, but the inmates seem to get angry with me because I don't give them the attention they want.

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

Right now I don't even feel like talking to any of the fuckers. So many of them want a piece of me and then so many others hate me for what I am-- a middle-class white Bitch-snob. This is how they view me. They watch my every move. If I scratch my back, I get offers to scratch it for me and nasty comments, too. If I wrinkle my nose from an itch, they say 'What's the matter? Can't stand the smell of niggers?' No matter what I do, they comment on it and there is no right or wrong. Re-reading last night's entry sheds a little light on the situation.

It is true that I'm frustrated with being trained in RGC, then placed in CC. That will never change, but I'm going to have to deal with it, because I have no choice. I don't know if this will work, but I'll try approaching this thing day by day and see if I can handle it better. Usually I'll have one bad day out of every 2, 3, or 4. Last week I had 3 bad days in a row.

CHAPTER 14

5-BLOCK FUN

Not all of the 5-block inmates were hostile. Some were intentionally housed in the

segregation unit for protection, and to avoid a sullied reputation as a wimp for being in 6-block. Six-block was known to house a large proportion of child molesters and white offenders. The block traveled together to Chow Hall, and was always kept apart from the general population. Asking to be locked up for protection in the sissy block would brand an inmate forever. Some half-heartedly assaulted an officer on purpose to be put in The Hole, instead.

I stood in the 5-block Yard, watching inmates behind the locked fences in their small, contained dog runs. The 5-blockers plied me with occasional insults and barbs, but not with their trademark ferociousness. The summer of 1987 was hot and humid, typical July weather in Michigan. My polyester-blend uniform trapped the dampness between my sticky skin and the fabric.

Sweat beaded up on my chest and trickled down, soaking into my bra. The back of my neck, down between my shoulder blades, and the small of my back were all wet and dripping. The waistline of my shirt, where it was tucked into my pants, was soaked. My nylon undies stuck to my butt, and I had no choice but to endure the unpleasant sensation of feeling bunched up. There was no opportunity for a discreet hand to my backside to adjust my underwear, or to my chest to tug on my bra. God forbid I do anything anywhere near my female parts because I would never hear the end of it.

So I stood there, quiet as usual, uncomfortable but grateful simply to be outside in the sunlight. Here, the inmates could find more appealing targets, distractions, opportunities. Also, my chances of being injured decreased outside, or so I felt, away from the noisy, smelly, dank segregation cells.

I looked up and around the enormous Yard area in Central Complex. *I cannot*

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believe I am here. Still, even now, when my senses are sharpened and alert to the dangers and absurdities, I cannot believe I am working in this insane asylum.

My eyes wandered to the clear blue sky. Freedom, there, beyond the fence and the Concertina wire encircling the top, the razor-sharp, gray metal contrasting against the tranquil and serene azure world above. *Beautiful, this summer sky in Michigan. There are people all over the state, all over the country and the earth, looking up at the sky right now, the same sky I am looking at from Jackson Prison. I could float up there and just drift away. Far, far away from this place.*

One of the 5-block inmates in Yard began speaking to me, and I reluctantly left my brief but peaceful respite. This guy locked on third gallery, down at the opposite end from my three tormentors. He was one of the few inmates who received newspapers sent to him in the prison, and he actually read them. Quiet, he always thanked me for delivering his food tray or picking up his mail. I had barely noticed him, really. He made small talk and I politely listened, wondering, as always, what this prisoner wanted from me.

Shortly into his chat he paused and looked at me curiously. He mentioned that I seemed to receive a lot of harassment from the inmates.

I nodded slightly, keeping an eye on the yammering prisoners farther down in the Yard pens.

He continued, saying that he had asked to lock up in 5-block for protection, as 6-block was filled. He told me he was a recent arrival in Jackson, and he was initially housed in a general pop block. But he had been robbed of his watch by a couple of the tough black inmates. Then they wanted his wedding ring and were waiting under the

bulkhead for him when he was returning from Chow Hall or Yard or some other mass movement. He had turned and walked the other way and decided it was time to be locked up for protection.

I remained silent, pondering the realities of living in Central Complex.

"You don't know who I am, do you?" he asked.

"No," I replied.

He smiled briefly. "Prong," he said. "Keith Prong."

I shrugged. The name sounded faintly familiar, but I couldn't place it.

"The two little old ladies? The construction company? In Ionia?"

Recognition jolted through me. The newspapers in previous months had detailed the murders of two elderly women. The culprit ran a company, in construction or some related business, and owed a substantial amount of money to these ladies. When they requested repayment of his debt, I believe he beat and strangled them and buried the bodies. Keith Prong. Of course. I took a closer look at him. He was attractive, and the kind of guy I would go out with under any other circumstances.

Prong went on to tell me how he had lost twenty pounds since entering Jackson Prison. We chatted briefly and I asked him about the murders. He claimed he blacked out and could not remember the incident. He was appealing his case, as they all were. This polite, respectful, clean-shaven man was one of the most vicious killers in the system. He could've passed for my brother-in-law, so harmless and "normal" he seemed. And although I strived to treat all of the prisoners with respect, until they treated me otherwise, I found myself being more polite to Keith Prong when I delivered his meal trays after our chat. I could only imagine the pressures of living behind bars, with career

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criminals, for life. And while I appreciated his civility towards me, I never trusted him. Not for a moment. I was very careful in not ever smiling or spending too much time by his bars. I was not going to give Prong or any other inmate an impression of favoritism. Because the reality was it didn't matter who or what this inmate was. I would never allow myself to become emotionally involved in an inmate's life. It would be considered a glaring weakness and leave me vulnerable. My life could be destroyed in an instant.

For the most part, I did not know what offense the inmates were serving time for. Except the child molesters: they were usually white, either slightly built or chubby, had inadequate and wimpy personalities, and they housed in 6-block to avoid victimization by the more enterprising prisoners. Otherwise, I learned tidbits through other inmates or CO's. The solid inmate locking on second gallery in 5-block was a sexual predator who raped vulnerable prisoners. He was called Hollywood by his 5-block buddies and frequently offered to make me his baby and put me in pretty dresses. He had a wide grin and a smooth voice.

I was also given advice by the inmates, whether I wanted it or not. And more letters of endearment.

Botkins

*Stop frowning So much...I could be the President or someone important for all you know
a joke dont take me serious. No one else does...Just dont look so down and out every round
hard. You only work here So gets used to it dont all that Bad. working here.*

Your facial expression is never kind. You must hate everyone.

"Kathy Botkin's

"Hello Sunshine..,"

It is of an overflowing waterfall (Refreshing) to be able to communicate with you at this time.

I find myself living and breathing for you to walk pass my cell, so that I may gaze upon your lovliness.

Dig this here gorgeous, you know that I am infatuated by your beauty. I know you doh't know me as of now and your new to this situation.

You know that I'am not the kind of guy to force myself on you still a lil shy when it comes to dating women.

Which is why it took me so long to approach you. But I must admit, you are the only one I would take time out to share my most inner thoughts with.

To make a long story short, although there is lots of things I would like to do with you.

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

For I feel we have a lot in common. I would like to be discreate about this..as well develop and create something special.

And by all means this was written for your eye's only. All I need to know right now is, "how do you feel about this?" Is it possible you could start viewing me in a different light as a friend first instead of just another resident (inmate).

And sometime stop and share small conversation with me to get to know you as human being instead of one of these gestople "smile just joking.

Later

A Friend

I hope this note of concern finds you in the very best of health, and the highst of spirits? I just wanted to express to you my personal feelings towards you, and I truly hope you dont mind? "I think youre a very attractive woman, one whos both inner and outter beauty stands out far above the rest."

I respect you very much, and hope my being a convict doesnt cast a shadow on

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

your respect for me? I sit here in this cell, and listen as well as watch how these so called men try to disrespect you, and I must say "you handle the situation very, very well." Most men tend to feel because they can't have you, or any beautiful woman for themselves there ego and manhood has been violated.

The fact of the matter is "they can't stand rejection in the eyes of their peers." Everyone wants so badly to be that guy, and I'm sure you understand what I'm saying, don't you? I'd be lying if I said "I never thought of pursuing a meaningful relationship with you, because I have. However, I respect you very much and would like to be your friend."

People just don't seem to understand real friendship anymore. It's as if no one realizes the true meaning of the word "friend". Men and Women friendships are practically nonexistent now days. They become too possessive about people they don't even know, as well as those who are already involved in a relationship. I just wanted to share my thoughts with you, and hope you'll accept my hand in friendship?

Your Pal.

LK

While warily making my rounds in the 5-block din, one of the inmates excitedly and pleasantly flagged me down as he indicated he wanted to show me something. I reluctantly paused in front of his cell and waited to see an expected work of art, a picture of a dog or cat, perhaps, or a scenic landscape. Some of the prisoners were quite skilled as artists and I was continually amazed with their talent. Not that I had the time or the desire to submit to the endless demands for my attention. It seemed as though they all

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

wanted a piece of me, much as small children vying to be the apple of the teacher's eye.

Many used anger and hostility to catch my eye.

This particular inmate, obviously, had been working on a project that he was very proud of. I sighed inwardly as I stood before him, ready to give my standard comment of “nice job” or “very good” with a neutral nod of my head before continuing on my merry way. He shyly beamed a sincere smile as he held up a picture for me to view.

The details were painstakingly drawn and he did, indeed, have a talent for capturing a portrait of a woman—obviously me—involved in a graphic sexual act. My eyes widened and a brief flash of shock broke through my frozen expression as I muttered an involuntary grunt of disgust and hurriedly resumed making my way down the gallery. Sometime later he managed to slip me the following note:

Dearest B.

I'm sorry about that card I showed you, It wasn't meant to be disrespectful but I suppose it could have appeared as such.

I've got beside myself 14 years in prison, and alone with no one to love or loved by and no sex with a woman has warped my senses a bit.

I have a crush on you, maybe more sexual, then emotional, but a crush just the same, you're very attractive and desirable to me.

I guess your sick and tired of prisoners in here looking at you as only an object of sex. But this is prison, what do you expect?, I know your more than purly an object of sex, that your also a human being.

*I've tried to relate to you as a human being but you tend to ignore me or
away. If I were an angel, I wouldn't be where I am. I don't want to "BUM" you or
either, but have a little heart, if the tables were turned and you were in this cell
would ~~be~~ here for you everyday.*

*I just told the parole board to kiss my rear end, I'm not ready to get, prison
created to much bitterness in my heart for me to get out yet, I care about you,
disciplinary actions brought against don't mean nothing to me, I'm still gonna wa
I'm waiting to transfer back to Huron Valley Men's Facility, and the sooner that
happens the better mainly to be out of your sight, I have an obsession of passi
with you, and seeing you as such and not being able to have you or your love
pain physically and emotionally.*

*I didn't mean to anger you, wasn't my intentions, As for the picture on the
card, only a screwed up mind with constant negative thoughts would have cam
me as cold as you did. I dig the hell out of you, and I want you in my life, and a
childish ~~as~~riay sound, "life has no values to me if your not apart of it. and would
allow you to slit my throat if you hate me so much. I know flirting with inmates is
violation of your work codes, and is against prison rules for me, but I'm still hun
with need just like you, Rules were meant to be violated, but I would never attac
assault or physically rape. I wasn't brought up that way. But as long as my life*

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

*I'm never gonna stop trying to one day seek love and marriage simply sex with
there's a magnetic force in you that is drawing me to you and I'm not gonna fig
Herb.*

And often I intercepted notes flung out of an inmate's cell bars and intended for another. I did nothing with the information I read on the note below, even though the inmate clearly was selling drugs.

36-4-5

Like dig why in the fuck are you still sending police"s down here? I am trying to roll this shit up! And anyway I ain't got nothing for anyone down there unless they have some tokens,, no tokens,, no business! Yea, I got some show tickets and tray sacks...

Have a nice day

LiL Moe

164-5

No freaky today!!!

On yet another occasion, I was signing door cards in 5-East. I was on base, first and second. I had been working in the prison for a while at this point, and was familiar with the threats and projectiles tossed in my direction. On base one of the inmates asked for a pencil. *God, they just don't get it. They never quit*, I thought. *Just leave me the fuck alone.*

"You need to ask your gallery officers for that," I replied, and moved on to the next door card.

On my next round he asked again, politely, for a pencil so that he could write a kite. I repeated my answer dully and kept moving. For whatever reason, I had to stop down at the Sergeant's desk before my next round and, for the Hell of it, grabbed one of the few sharpened pencil stubs and shoved it in my pocket. I again came up to the inmate's cell on base and he looked at me and didn't say anything. I signed his door card and started to move on. Then I backtracked a couple of steps.

"Oh, here, I almost forgot," I said, distractedly, and tossed him the pencil.

The inmate looked up, surprised, and his face broke into a wide smile as he caught the pencil. I noted, for the first time, his straight white teeth. He nodded quickly.

"Thanks, Officer! Thank you!"

I nodded and moved on. It was one of the few times I was thanked during my short prison career, and it came from, of all things, a 5-blocker. Once again, I found myself treating that particular inmate more politely because he was civil and pleasant to me. But I was ever conscious of not trusting any of them. It was one of the harder rules to learn and live by. I could like a person, yet not trust him. Not ever. It could be my

undoing.

CHAPTER 15

A VISIT FROM TODD

June 26, 1987

I recall my amazement upon seeing Todd for the first time in over a month. I was taken aback. He suddenly seemed so tall and slender and clean, so extraordinarily good looking. Neatly dressed. I hugged him tightly and inhaled his scent. He was warm, bright, and youthful.

I had always known he was an attractive guy, but now it seemed as though he had stepped out of the glossy pages of GQ. My young and tender brother would be a hot commodity in the prison, whether as an inmate or an officer. While Todd sat at my small kitchen table and pleasantly ate and chatted in my safe apartment, I thought of the ways he could be victimized and beaten down and in little time transformed into a worn and dejected shadow of a person in the Hellhole where I worked.

A few months earlier, when we had lived together in Lansing, I had anxiously moved through the academy and my training in RGC. Nervously glancing at the officers who worked in Central Complex, I had believed that their dull expressions and their I-don't-give-a-shit attitude reflected strength and toughness. But the dreary, jaded prison

guards I worked with no longer seemed powerful and strong to me. They were just hard and worn down and weary. What was “tough,” after all? Was it a callous, done-it-all, seen-it-all, know-it-all attitude? Brute physical strength? Preying on more vulnerable and trusting personalities? Was a polite and respectful person a weaker person?

I couldn't deny that the big, muscular officers caught less flak from the inmates than the weaker looking guys. Of course, that held true for the inmates, also. But just being female put me on a different playing field altogether. I would never be muscular or physically intimidating. No matter if I had any motivation to lift weights or try to adopt some facade of toughness. It wasn't me and was never going to be me.

I finally understood. The other officers and inmates were looking at me as I was looking at Todd: fresh and vulnerable. An easy target. No wonder many of them seemed slightly surprised when I wrote my tickets and thwarted their sexual advances and other attempts to manipulate me. My appearance was one of weakness. They expected me to somehow quit. To bend and bow and give in to their loathsome, dirty methods of survival inside the walls. But they didn't know how determined I was to finish out my self-imposed year. I hated every moment in that miserable prison, but I was going to make it.

Not everyone in the prison was slimy. I met good and decent officers, too. And there were some inmates quietly going about their business, wanting only to do their time and not bother anyone or be bothered or hassled. They did not have an easy time of it, but neither did the calloused ones. There were no easy times in Jackson. Just making it through was considered something of a success, to me. I would never compromise myself by giving into what I considered was crossing the line—personal relations with inmates, ignoring blatant rule violations. Never. I was hanging in there. Barely, but still. I was

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

doing it.

But on the same date that Todd stopped in for a visit, a report on Josephine McCallum's murder was released to the press. And while officials and the media cried outrage over the deplorable and hazardous conditions in Central Complex, I was working in the midst of it all.

Journal Entry

June 26, 1987 11:58 pm

Tonight Todd stopped by to see me on his way up to Lansing (from Adrian). I fed him a salad & a couple of beers & it was so nice talking with him. I love him so much, & miss him too, sometimes. I'm glad he's not living alone. Anyhow, he looked so young and so sweet, and it finally just occurred to me that he seems so fresh compared to the people I work with. There is such a tired, slow, old feeling in the prison. Must be the inmate's attitudes rub-off on the CO's. Anyhow, it was wonderful to see Todd and I hope things work out for him and Linda.

By the way, I spent my weekend shopping and going to the movies & eating ice cream, and I feel so much more relaxed now. Last night I had terrible nightmares-- in the first dream, Mom died. I was so lonely & wished I could talk to her, & wanted to hug her, etc. I woke-up with a tight feeling in my throat, I'd been crying so hard in my sleep.

Department of Corrections

June 26, 1987

Berlin/Fish Cop

TO : The Corrections Committee
FROM: Robert Brown Jr., Director
SUBJECT: Investigation of Conditions Relating to the Murder of officer
McCallum

The murder last March of officer Josephine McCallum in the central complex of the State Prison of Southern Michigan was in and of itself appropriately the subject of a criminal investigation, and prosecution which is still underway.

At the same time, however, there was an obvious need for internal investigation into the conditions surrounding the homicide which may have directly or indirectly affected the risk of such an event.

Following my order that such an investigation take place immediately, Deputy Bolden suggested it be carried out by Warden Joseph Abramajtys, of the Muskegon Temporary Facility, and Deputy Warden Everett Elkins of the Huron Valley Men's Facility...

Their report is attached. It is very clear and speaks for itself and there is no need for me to summarize it here. It is not a comfortable report for any of us to read. It describes conditions, some of which have resisted long standing attempts at remedy, which nevertheless must and will be remedied...

Michigan Department of Corrections**Memorandum**

June 24, 1987

TO: Dan Bolden, Deputy Director
Bureau of Correctional Facilities

FROM: Joseph Abramajtys, MTF Warden
Everett Elkins, HVMF Deputy Warden

SUBJECT: Investigation of officer McCallum's Murder and SPSM Policies

INTRODUCTION

On March 31, 1987 we were asked by Director Brown and Deputy Director Bolden to pursue an investigation of SPSM-Central (SMI) to determine the following: Whether officer Josephine McCallum's assignment to the JCC gate on March 24, 1987 was appropriate and within existing policy; whether appropriate attention is given to SMI probationary employees; what requirements SMI has for supervisory checks, both in person and by radio or other electronic means; and any violation of other existing policies...

On March 24, 1987 Corrections officer Josephine McCallum was scheduled to work 5-Block. Just prior to the start of her 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. shift that day, the Shift Commander...assigned officer McCallum to work the JCC gate because several other officers had called in sick and the gate assignment was still open. Officer

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McCallum was to first work in the dining hall and then go to the JCC gate assignment at about 7:45 a.m. when the gate assignment was to open.

We spoke with an SMI Corrections officer who was an Academy classmate of officer McCallum. He told us that on the morning she was murdered, he had tried to help her find any other officer who had worked the JCC assignment so that she could get information on how to run the assignment. This officer told us he could not find another person to help officer McCallum. We asked this officer why officer McCallum or he did not go to the Shift Commander, the South Yard Sergeant or other supervisors for such information. The officer stated that most supervisors didn't care enough to want to help you. He stated that the "staff in 4 and 12 blocks make you read the rules and they keep you close to them until you learn. Single assignments like JCC or Bakery gates--you're on your own--nobody tells you anything."

...Departmental policies and institutional procedures represent the greatest source of job related information for the Correctional officer...

Most of these procedures are in need of major revision...The policy and procedure manuals at SMI are outdated, incomplete and indexed poorly.

The many officers who we spoke with said they knew the policy and procedure manuals were outdated and, therefore, they didn't bother to read them. Some officers did not know where any manuals were kept outside of the SMI Control Center, and had not read a policy or procedure since they finished Academy training. And many officers felt that regardless of whether or not the manuals were outdated, their co-

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workers and supervisors did not follow the procedures, so why bother...

We went to the SMI Deputy Warden and requested copies of all critical incident reports between January 1, 1987 and April 6, 1987 that involved prisoner assaults on staff. When we received 25 reports, we thought some mistake was made and we went to the SMI Deputy Warden to get what we thought should be a greater number of such reports. We were told that when there is an alleged assault on staff, the staff reports of the incident are sent to the Shift Commander who completes a critical incident report and sends it, along with any misconduct reports to the Deputy Warden. The Deputy Warden processes the misconducts and decides which incident will be processed as a critical incident, and which will be simply designed FYI and sent to I and I for filing. Both critical incidents and FYI incidents are noted in a log book in the Deputy Warden's office.

We were told that the practice of designating reports as either FYI or as critical incidents started with the former SMI Deputy Warden. We asked the former SMI Deputy Warden the criteria he used to determine if an incident of violence or injury was serious enough to process as a critical incident. He told us he processed "any physical contact on a staff person" as a critical incident.

When we asked the current SMI Deputy Warden about the criteria he used to determine what constituted an assault on staff important enough to merit a critical incident report, he stated, "I'm not going to process a critical incident every time a female officer gets her tits or ass grabbed."

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We reviewed the 288 critical incident reports submitted by Shift Commanders to the Deputy Warden between January 1, 1987 and April 6, 1987. Of the 288 submitted, 186 were given numbers and processed as critical incidents to BCF. All others were designated as FYI and sent to I and I for filing.

Of the 102 reports designated as FYI, we noted that 69 involved some form of staff assault. We randomly pulled 15 of these FYI reports involving staff assault for review and found the following:

--11 of these reports involved assaults on female Corrections officers or Nurses.

--5 of the 11 assaults on female were some type of sexual assault.

--1 of the 5 sexual assaults on females was dated February 14, 1987 and involved Josephine McCallum when a prisoner, "grabbed her by the crotch."

We also reviewed the major misconduct hearing reports associated with the 15 randomly selected FYI reports and found the following disposition:

2 - 7 days detention

1 - 5 days detention

5 - 30 days LOP

2 - 20 days LOP

1 - 15 days LOP

2 - Not guilty

1 - No record found

All three not guilty findings were for assaults on female officers: one for

grabbing a female Corrections officer by the arm, and two for grabbing female Corrections officers by their buttocks.

Of the 186 critical incident reports given numbers and sent to B.C. F. from January 1, 1987 through April 6, 1987, only 25 were for staff assault. Of this 25, 5 included "staff use of force", which leaves only 20 for staff assault alone. One of these 20 was for the murder of officer McCallum. Of the 19 remaining, only one was for sexual assault, one for hitting a nurse, and one for "spitting on a hearing officer and busting the hearing officer's typewriter."

CONCLUSIONS:

PD-DWA-12.0ee1 requires that "any serious incident of violence or injury to any employee or citizen by a client" be immediately telephoned to the appropriate Deputy Director, followed by a written critical incident report within three days.

If an assault on a staff person is not seen as serious under the SMI procedure, it does not get processed as a critical incident and the Warden and Deputy Director, BCF, are not made aware of the incident. Since the policy directive does not specify what to do with assaults on staff that are seen as less than serious, or that do not constitute an unusual incident, the SMI procedure for processing critical incidents is not in violation of policy. If the assaulting of staff, particularly female staff who are grabbed in a sexual manner, does not result in a serious injury, it is not viewed as a serious assault, is not seen as unusual, then administrators such as the Warden and Deputy Director, BCF, will not receive the types of information on these situations that is provided by critical

incident reports...

As with key control, the accountability of prisoner movement is almost nonexistent, and staff performance in this area indicates a lack of involvement with institutional operations, a lack of control and a lack of interest with staff and prisoner safety.

SMI Sexual Harassment

"I was just out of the Academy two weeks and I was assigned to work 5-Block. I was on the fourth gallery when the prisoner assaulted me, about 30 feet from the gun turret. I was hit repeatedly and suffered broken bones. The officer in the gun turret said he didn't know I was assaulted and he didn't hear or see anything. I was in plain sight of the turret," she said.

The critical incident report that was processed on this incident...indicates that the female officer was working alone at the North end of the fourth gallery in 5-Block. She was leaving the fourth gallery to walk down the stairs to the base level when a prisoner assaulted her. She indicates she started screaming and blowing her whistle immediately. The prisoner hit her in the chest, head and face, which caused her to fall and hit her head on the wall. Another officer who was working on a level below the victim heard her scream and whistle and ran up the stairs to see what happened. A third officer who was working elsewhere on the fourth gallery who heard the screams

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and whistle and ran the length of the gallery until he found a trail of blood to follow. The officer coming up the stairs from below the victim reached her first, by then she had made her way down to the third gallery, and escorted her to the base level. The officer who followed the trail of blood caught up with the victim as she was being escorted off the third gallery. The gun turret officers reported in the critical that they did hear her screams and whistle, but that they did not see her until she was being escorted off of the third gallery. The victim received immediate medical treatment. She suffered bruises and bumps on her chest, face, neck, head and back. In addition, her mouth was cut and swollen, teeth were loose, her nose was broken and her right arm was sore and tingling.

The female officer completed her Academy training on March 8, 1986. The following were her assignments at SMI:

- March 10, 1986--5-Block
- March 11, 1986--5-Block
- March 12, 1986--4-Block
- March 13, 14, 1986--RDO
- March 15, 1986--4-Block
- March 16, 1986-Infirmery (worked alone)
- March 17, 1986--5-Block (assaulted on third gallery when a prisoner hit her on her arm. No serious injuries. Incident was processed as an FYI).
- March 18, 1986--5-Block (Serious assault. officer went on medical leave).

After she was off work for several months because of her injuries, she came back to work at SMI.

“When I came back,” she said, “they told me to go back to work in 5-Block. I told them the prisoner who assaulted me had threatened me in court when he got

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prosecuted for the assault, and he still locks in 5-Block. I told the Captain I didn't want to go back to 5-Block. He said I had to."

"What did you do then?" we asked.

"I went to the Deputy Warden," she said. "He told me not to believe everything prisoners threatened and I had to go back to work in 5-Block with the same prisoner there. They didn't put me on another assignment or transfer the prisoner until I went to the Warden."

The usual practice would be to not place staff back on the same assignment after they have been seriously injured, at least not immediately and efforts are usually made to make sure that the prisoner and the staff person involved in an assault are separated.

Unfortunately, such stories of staff and supervisory callousness are all too common at SMI, particularly as directed at female staff.

"I was working 5-Block," another female officer told us "and I was doing my last round when an officer from the next shift came up to me on the third gallery and asked 'What are you doing here?' I found out later, the officers on my shift put their coats on 15 minutes early and just left me."

She said she was tired of staff harassment and was going to sue the Department.

"I have been told to falsify logs and say I made rounds and searched cells when I didn't," she said angrily, "but I refused. When another (male) officer threatened to hit

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me, I went to I and I. The I and I investigator told me I shouldn't even be here and that his wife wouldn't work here."

Frequently the harassment of female staff is sexual in nature. An SMI Captain told us that when he first started to work at SMI, he was amazed to find prisoners walking up to female officers with such comments as, "Baby you're going to have to set out some of that pussy." He also observed prisoners freely fondling female staff on their buttocks or other areas. The Captain stated that when he asked the staff why they were taking this type of behavior from prisoners with little or no attempt to take corrective action, that he was told over and over by female officers that they had been advised by supervisors that they had to be thick-skinned and tolerate this type of behavior from prisoners...

FINAL COMMENT

Officer Josephine McCallum started to work for the Department on October 20, 1986 and was murdered on March 24, 1987. During these five months, she completed OJT at North Complex on January 9, 1987 and her Academy training...on February 7, 1987. She had worked at SMI just over one month...Her co-workers allege that she did not know the job requirements of the assignment or even where it was located. We know she probably did not read the post orders since she had not signed the JCC post order signature sheet. And she was probably unfamiliar with SMI since she had done

all of her OJT at North Complex and had only worked at SMI for a little more than a month.

Given what we found at SMI, it is fair to conclude that officer McCallum was not ready to work the JCC gate assignment. We found at SMI a lack of supervisory accountability and staff concern for how they do their job, a disregard for Department policy, and a lack of concern for how new officers are trained and assigned.

Staff at SMI are not performing fundamental prison operations such as knowing where the prisoners are, training new staff, developing and following rules, and checking to see if staff are in trouble. These are all basic things, fundamental to the safe operation of a prison. Making a prison safe for staff and prisoners does not involve the implementation of exotic, complicated programs and systems. Rather, it involves everybody knowing their job and helping each other do their jobs.

CHAPTER 16

THE FOURTH OF JULY

The prison was simmering with unrest from the ongoing overcrowding and the fallout of the publicity stemming from Josephine McCallum's death in March. The

Lansing, Jackson and Detroit Newspapers continued to carry occasional coverage of the investigation into the murder, the conditions at Jackson Prison, and its troubled history. Reports surfaced on the many things that were wrong about the prison, especially inside the walls in Central Complex.

How had I been so oblivious to these issues before I was hired into the Department of Corrections? Where was I when all of this shit had been going on? Where was everyone else? The people with the power? The wardens and the higher ups and the politicians? Didn't they know? Didn't they *care*? Inmate assaults on inmates, inmate assaults on staff, dangerous conditions for everyone had been going on for years. Many, many years. The critical incidents had been increasing, only getting worse.

And those were only the incidents that were reported. Everyone knew that many inmate robberies and stabbings and blackmail schemes and rapes went unreported for fear of reprisal. Snitches were killed. What was I doing in there? I had initially felt, prior to being placed inside, that the odds were in my favor. I would be nervous, of course, but would eventually settle down into my new job after seeing for myself that things were not that bad, that I simply had an overactive imagination. Well. So much for that. The more experience I gained in Central Complex, the more I saw for myself how bad it was. I did not understand how a place like Jackson Prison, which had a larger population than many towns, could continue to exist, to be ignored. Sure, the Consent Decree people were supposedly watching, but why did it seem as though nothing happened to change conditions for the better?

Criminal justice authorities, along with the general public, debated the wisdom of placing female guards in a men's prison. After Josephine McCallum's death, Senator Jack

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Wellborn had tried, in vain, to pull women officers from the more dangerous, maximum security prisons.

I, too, mulled the consequences of women working in the housing units. I had always wondered how effective I would be in a situation involving a fight or other disturbance, which would call on my physical strength. I was a smoker and non-exerciser. Even if I had been in good physical condition, I was no match for any man. This was one of my biggest concerns. I knew that I would fight to the end if I was attacked. But would I help a fellow CO? What if a fight started in Chow Hall and my co-workers were trying to pull apart the prisoners? What if an inmate and officer were in fisticuffs?

Over and over, I visualized throwing myself into the fracas, regardless of my stick-like arms, hoping that I would follow through when the time came, and not simply stand aside like a coward. I discussed this with a male guard during a lull in one of the cell blocks. He looked at me and said that the best thing I could do was to summon help. I got the message: obviously, the last thing anyone needed was some pathetic weakling having to be rescued. The officer also pointed out some of the benefits of having a woman in the housing units. He said some of the inmates were now taking better care of themselves, tucking in their shirts, and showering more frequently. I, of course, hadn't noticed, focusing only on the liability that settled around me wherever I went, like Pigpen's dust cloud. In another discussion with one of my male coworkers, the officer noted that women tended to be better at diffusing potential disturbances. They were not as apt to be caught up in the swaggering machismo of one-upping another. This was true, at least for me, and I began to focus on developing my skills in tempering a potentially volatile situation. It wasn't much, but it gave me something to work with.

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The sultry weather underscored the already tense atmosphere. The cell blocks were hot and stifling pressure cookers. Strong, sharp body odors diffused whatever outside air seeped into the cell blocks, blending with the aromas secreted by spoiled fruit and sour milk. The dank concrete released decades of urine and excrement embedded in the walls and floors.

Rumors of a planned July fourth riot gained momentum with the rising heat: a disturbance was going to take place in Chow Hall. Female guards were going to be taken hostage. And I knew what that meant. We all knew what lay in store if that happened. Rape, sodomy, painful and excruciating death. Things I hadn't thought of, either, reaching beyond the limits of even my sordid imagination.

My family was getting together for a pool party at my Mom's house. I thought of them while I was standing in the heat of Chow Hall, sweating under my uniform, trying to watch my back, ready to run if a riot broke out, to get as far away as fast as possible before I could be grabbed and dragged by a crowd of angry inmates and brutalized in unspeakable ways.

Journal Entry

July 6, 1987 11:32 pm

Work is terrible. I don't know how much longer I'll last. It's getting to the point where I'm going to get disgusted and simply walk out. I worked 6 blk today & chow hall. Chow hall was absolutely terrible. So many inmates were in my face, trying to front me off, I lost count. I also stood up to them more than I have been in the past, so that probably antagonizes them a bit.

Berlin/*Fish Cop*

I don't know. I'm afraid I'm going to get hurt. Should I quit? Am I just being paranoid?

Journal Entry

July 7, 1987 6:10 pm

I called in sick this afternoon due to a nasty cold I picked up last weekend. Felt like I had a hairball in my throat all week, then last night I prayed for a cough to develop so I could miss work and lo! and behold! Maybe there is a God.

To return to the mess in Chow Hall last night...three or four inmates cornered me at one point between tables and loudly insisted I was working at the prison to find a man. I said, no, I'm working for a paycheck. Needless to say, all of the inmates who "fronted me off" were just looking for a fight. Between the heat & all of the publicity surrounding the prison lately, tempers are hot & quick. I know I'm going to get hurt.

I had to reach my goal of working in the prison for one year, no matter what. And I was going to continue writing tickets, when those tickets deserved to be written. If I let myself succumb to what many of the others expected of me—based on my soft appearance—it would be easier in the short-term. But in the long-run I would pay a stiff price. I would belong to them, to the lowly ranks of the worst officers and the scummiest inmates. I could not, would not ever resort to that.

And the written rules I had learned at the Academy--the policies and procedures and handouts and silly exercises and demonstrations—took a back seat inside the walls. Shakedown, key control, drugs, weapons...I learned one set of rules at the Academy, and

another in RGC. Central Complex was run by something else entirely.

And what *were* the rules, by the way? Where were the good female examples or buddies inside to compare notes with, to discuss that piece of shit job with? While I was blindly trying to find my way through to a good career, I needed to step carefully and cautiously so as not to get injured. I was learning by doing, by trial and error, and listening to my gut feelings. By sorting out the good guards from the bad, the decent inmates from the troublemakers. I also made many, many mistakes. And I was being closely watched by countless conniving eyes the entire time.

I spent most of my free time and weekends that summer quietly, reading books, watching the world outside the windows of my small Jackson apartment. The television and stereo were usually turned off so I could listen to the soft whoosh and low rumble of cars and trucks passing on the freeway nearby. I savored the soothing rhythm of cleaning my quiet apartment. I used an old toothbrush to work around the faucet fixtures in my kitchen, rinsing and wiping and shining the counters and the linoleum floor. I loved the grainy texture of Comet *scratching* as I scrubbed, and deeply inhaled the scent of Spic‘n Span and Mr. Clean. Todd would have been proud. We had constantly bickered over whose turn it was to wash the dirty dishes piled on our kitchen counter in Lansing and our carpet was vacuumed about once a month. Maybe. We would stack our dirty dishes until someone got disgusted and finally washed them. Todd preferred to stack them on the counter, and I preferred to stack them in the sink and throw a kitchen towel over them because the mess was less noticeable. During one of our arguments, I grabbed the dishcloth and started washing the dishes a little too vigorously and a shard of glass pulled up a chunk of my flesh when I shoved my hand into a glass that broke. The blood was

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fairly impressive and Todd drove me to the hospital, where the doctor scrubbed the wound and stuck a countless number of needles into it. Which hurt much worse than the original gash.

I used a damp, wrung-out washcloth and wiped down my couch, picking off the black cat hair as it balled up on the fabric. I usually had only a small load of laundry, but walked it downstairs to the laundry room anyhow, and sat as the washer agitated and spun. While folding the clean clothes I pulled out Todd's big, old T-shirt he had given me to sleep in. I held it against my face and sniffed. The soft, faded material smelled of detergent. Clean. I sorted and folded my clothes into neat little stacks, carefully lining up the edges.

Sometimes I just lay across my bed, running my fingers through the fur of my cats, feeling the hum of their purr vibrating through their lounging, languid bodies. I watched the breeze softly blow through my bedroom window and sway the long, cream-colored lace curtains my Mom had given me, back when I lived in Lansing with Todd. I thanked her and tossed them into a box, never intending to hang the old-fashioned looking things. But while unpacking and settling into my Jackson apartment, I pulled them out and saw them with new eyes. Wow. They were so pretty. They looked so pure and delicate and clean, especially when the morning sun glinted through them. I thought they were beautiful and I realized then that I didn't care if they were out of style or what anyone else would think. I felt I could be content forever if I could just stay home and never leave. I wouldn't need to ask for anything beyond the safe haven of my little apartment.

But five days a week I did have to leave, to change into my uniform and head to

work. I knew the inmates were excited to see me, and I couldn't help but wonder what was in store for that day's shift. It was wearing on me, that prison job.

Q

Journal Entry

July 27, 1987 3:52 am

I feel like I'm going to throw-up. I just had one of the worst dreams...I dreamed I was at work and Junior was there for some strange reason. Anyhow, it was night, and time to go home. I was going to stay at Charlie's house (worker from RGC) & he said he'd be there around 2 am. I said, "Oh no, ha, ha, I get paranoid when I stay in a strange house by myself." I was trying to make light of the situation.

Anyhow I had these bad feelings about staying there but went anyhow. I got undressed & went upstairs & went to bed. While I was laying there I remembered I didn't check the locks, so I got up & went downstairs. There were two doors. I saw that the one door was locked and was trying to figure out if the other door was locked, too, when I felt a hand on my waist. I looked up and saw a white guy w/blond hair (ugly) holding my arm while a black just stood there watching. I tried to scream but couldn't. He started ripping my clothes off. I kicked him and tried as hard as I could to scream or get away, but couldn't. I finally decided that if I went along with him, maybe I could get a chance to hurt him & get away. I was having sex on top of him and thought I was going to throw up. Then I went down and bit off his penis.

In the 2nd part of the dream I was meeting Mom at a hotel and we were going shopping the next day. I made sure the door was locked. I fell asleep. I woke up late at night & Mom wasn't there yet. I looked at the door & saw a chain lock I hadn't noticed

before. To make a long story short (my stomach is still turning), I prevented myself from being raped this time around.

I recorded this dream in my work journal because I feel I had it due to work.

Unlike the other blocks in Central Complex, 6-block had electronic gates. The control panel was on base by the desk and was easy to operate. Six-block was referred to as "PE," Protective Environment, and was filled with mostly white offenders locked up for protection. An unusually large proportion of these inmates were child molesters, or "baby rapers." They were considered the scourge of the prison population. These soft, easy targets were exploited and victimized by the tougher, street-wise inmates in general population. This unit housed some of the more streetwise offenders as well who asked to be placed in PE due to gambling debts or drug debts and were fearful of retaliation in general population.

One of the offenders, Kungloo, had a sprinkling of blue tattoos inked on his face in the shape of tears. He was at least 6'0, a heavy-set white guy. The tattooed tears were distinct from several feet away. He refused to speak and communicated with officers by notes passed through his bars. Initially, I felt inclined to be somewhat polite with him. He was, after all, a pathetic kind of guy who didn't give me any grief. But I quickly became irritated when he tried passing me notes. *Oh, for God's sake. Just open your damn mouth and talk*, I thought. He claimed he didn't understand why he was sent to prison for attempting a robbery with a toy gun.

One evening after I finished my shift in 6-block Kungloo jammed his cell door with clothing items, lay down, and cut himself with a sharp object. He made several

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slashes along his upper legs and arms and neck. Third shift had the unpleasant task of not only finding his bloodied body, but also cleaning up his cell. Kungloo survived. I heard he intentionally cut himself in areas which would produce a lot of blood, while causing no permanent damage, as an attention-getter. He had timed the incident so the CO's coming onto third shift would find him during their initial rounds, before too much time had passed. The general feeling was one of annoyance. This included me. We had enough critical incidents to deal with, and were simply irritated by Kungloo's pathetic attempt at self-mutilation.

Some time later Kungloo sent me a kite:

Teddy Bear Kathy Botkin:

As I've said, I have missed you. And I have worried over what others may have told you about what happen.

I was not temporarily out-of-my-mind, or what have you. I simply made the decision to take my life - such as it is. I did everything I could to make it happen. I was bleeding badly, my door was broken, it was shift-change, and I bleed enough to die. But it just didn't happen. It took E.R. 7 1/2 hours to sew me up. I had 430 stitches on the outside, and 30 or 40 on the inside. Though they were not severed, I had damaged the jugular vein, plus the main veins in both my left and right arms.

Hence, I am left to conclude, there is some unforeseen purpose for my existence, and I have yet to serve that purpose.

I'm serving my 3rd flope now, and though I see the parole board again

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March of 1988 - Roughly 5-months away, I have no real hope for a parole. Unless you've killed or molested children, they don't seem to want to let you go. The whole thing is quite sickening.

Well enough of that. I'm alright now. And I figure I'll make it out somehow.

I do have something, that I would like you to give serious consideration to. Then, when next I see you, you can give answer.

I would like to create an open-line of communication with you. This is how it would work.

Let's say I assign you the pen-name "Samaya". And you give me the address of some friend of yours "who does not work for the State. Your friends address is (example)

*Ms.Smith
801 Dresden Ave
Williamston, Michigan 49204*

So I would write to you like this:

*"Samaya
c/o The Smith Family
801 Dresden Avenue
Willamston, Michigan 49204*

This way, if someone were to search my cell, I would not have your name or address. Nor would I have any letters from you. Because you never write to me.

"You can answer anything I might ask (verbally) whenever you see me.

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“But the real purpose of the open-line is to allow me to communicate whatever I’m thinking whenever I wish.” I need the freedom to do this.

*I see you so seldom, and even if I saw you every day, you still wouldn’t have time to pay any real attention to what I say (because here you have a job to do.) But out there, you could sit down with my letter, and really listen to me. All such matters are a two-way street. I have stated a need, or genuine desire. But if what I want does not sit well with you,’ “Then you should say no.” Love to you,
Kungloo*

If answer is yes, write down address - nothing more - and send it to this address:

*NoMan Empat Kungloo 143229
P.O. Box E
Jackson, Michigan 49204*

Print address, don’t write

Disgusted, I did not respond and never heard from him again.

Journal Entry

August 19, 1987 9 am

I’ve been meaning to write in this for some time, but just didn’t want to. Not a good week- Kungloo tried to kill himself by slashing his throat. More later--

And even though 6-block housed the wimpy child molesters and the handsome

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inmates who didn't want to be raped by predators, there were also general population inmates who locked up because of some mess they had gotten into with others in their wheeling and dealing antics.

One afternoon I was working 6-block Yard--a rare assignment for me--when a slim inmate approached and politely asked to go back into the cell block. I told him no, as he knew inmates were not allowed to go back in once they went out into Yard, not until Yard was officially over. He looked panicked and kept insisting on going in. I told him no, again. He looked like he was going to cry. I noticed a thin film of sweat across his forehead, and his eyes looked glassy. I relented, and sent him in. I was later informed by the Sergeant that he had been taken to the hospital, as he had passed out after going inside. He had been stuck with a shank in the groin area while out in Yard. Apparently, he had an unpaid gambling debt.

Interesting how one's perspective changes. Earlier that spring, when I was training in RGC's adjacent Yard, I was the recipient of the inmates' stark glares and comments. Being called a Hoe was *so* bad...how threatening that had been! The crowd of inmates was one dark, menacing inkblot eyeing me head to toe. And now that I worked inside, 6-block was a church camp in comparison with the other cell blocks in Central Complex. It was easy, a piece of cake, and one of my few preferred assignments.

One of the regular 6-block officers was a white female in her 20's. Pretty face, shoulder-length dark blonde hair, just a tad overweight and a little bottom-heavy. I can't recall her name, but she was quiet and polite, and she always, *always* worked 6-block. She knew her job and did it well. One day while I was in Chow Hall, sent over from one of the other blocks, there she was on the other side of the Big Top, seating. I had not seen

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her in Chow Hall before. Her face had a pinched expression. For whatever reason, the powers-that-be had started moving her around, just like she was on the merry-go-round. Different day, different block. Not long after I initially spotted her in Chow Hall, she disappeared and I never saw her again. I was told she went out on stress leave.

Sometime in early to mid-August I finally received my score on the College Graduate Careers Exam: 92%. I had made it into the first band. Barely, but I made it. So much had happened, and my life had changed so much since I had taken the civil service tests the previous fall. I began receiving notices for job vacancies in various State agencies. One piqued my interest. I applied and was called for an immediate interview. The position was with the Department of Social Services as a Child Protective Services worker. The supervisor for the position in the small, northern town of Harrison explained that the area covered a lower economic level of clientele. They desperately needed another worker to investigate home situations for possible removal of children due to abuse or neglect. I interviewed well and she offered me the position while I was there. I eagerly accepted.

Driving back to my apartment in Jackson, however, I started feeling uncomfortable. I had little interest in children and therefore would probably make poor decisions regarding their welfare. Harrison was a small town, not unlike Adrian, and offered little in the way of culture or activities outside of work. Very unappealing. If I was receiving responses to my test results this quickly, then something better would come along. By the time I arrived home I had decided to turn down the offer. I called the supervisor the next morning and expressed my regrets.

As much as I wanted to get out of the prison I could not see the logic in going

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from one Hell-hole to another. I finally felt as though I was actually becoming a corrections officer even though I was still quite green. The Protective Services work sounded downright depressing. It would have been a poor fit all the way around. My fellow officers couldn't understand why I would not jump at the chance to escape from Jackson Prison. They thought I was nuts.

CHAPTER 17
GUN TURRET SURPRISE

The best shift to work in Central Complex was thirds, from 10 pm to 6 am. Most of the inmates slept, and the cell blocks, from what I was told, were relatively quiet. Day shift was the next best, because punching in at 6 a.m. meant many of the prisoners would sleep a couple of more hours. And then they took a little time to wake up and warm up to their abusive behavior. In contrast, when we walked into our afternoon shift, the inmates were wide awake and roaring loud. And they stayed that way. Beyond working night shift, the favored positions were generally up in a gun turret, away from the inmates.

I was placed in a gun turret only once, at the end of August. It was located up near the ceiling between 4-block and 5-block. I worked with a male who was a gun turret regular. Having not held a firearm since training on the firing range in March, I was dismayed to discover I could not remember much about rifles or shotguns. I couldn't even remember how to load my firearm! I wasn't going to say anything to the other guy. Because I would look so female/stupid. But what if something happened and I had to actually use it?

I asked the male officer to review some basics with me and admitted I had forgotten my training. I braced myself for a derogatory look or comment, but received none. He quietly and patiently refreshed my memory and he did not do so in a condescending manner. Maybe he thought I was an idiot but he kept that to himself. Not

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that I could blame him. He explained some basics and my training returned to me in trickles. I remembered that the shotgun held Big Red, an ear-blasting, empty shell meant to startle the inmates with its powerful blast. We were to fire that warning shot first, if possible. Then, if necessary, we fired the rifle—a mini-14.223—to disable. Meaning shooting the inmate on the lower part of their body without killing him.

I took my station overlooking 5-West, while my partner covered the other areas. I peered through the long, vertical, narrow slot, rifle leaning against the wall next to me. More rifles and shotguns within reach. Third gallery was close by. Very close. Spitting distance, as a matter of fact. But those assholes on the end, Nickerson, Robinson and Harris, couldn't reach me here, could not even see me, or know I was in the turret. That was pretty cool. I picked up the binoculars and looked. What a world of difference from this viewpoint. I was in the midst of the clamor and stress, yet it was not directed at me, for once. I was invisible.

The cellblock spanned the length of a football field, and from the angle of the gun turret I could not see directly into the cells. But I could see well enough when the inmates on the end of third gallery moved closer to the front of their cells. I focused the binoculars farther down the block and dispassionately watched an inmate masturbating his erect penis at the front of his bars. I observed him for a few minutes, then slowly scanned over the rest of the block.

The officers on the galleries signed door cards, applied restraints, and walked inmates to the shower area, or to Yard. Base was littered with its usual array of garbage and strewn food. Loud, boisterous voices yelling, booming, and echoing in the large expanse of space. The male officer working with me watched 4-block and the Yard area

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on the other side of the turret. Dinnertime came and he asked if I wanted something to eat from the kitchen. I declined. Too many stories about inmates pissing or spitting in the large vats of food made me a little paranoid.

At one point during the shift the other guard left me alone in the gun turret for a while. I looked out at Yard, and into 4-block. Then I took my seat by 5-West. I felt strange being so close to the foul inmates at the end of third gallery. I relished watching them when they didn't know it. They would hate that. I listened to them talk and brag, yelling obscenities at the officers. *What would they do if they knew I was listening?* I couldn't help but smile at this. I could imagine the outcry. Then the retaliation and paybacks for "dissin'" them, not respecting them, acting like I was something besides the lowly white whore they wanted me to feel like.

Fucking assholes. They beat me down and battered me without laying a finger on me. But they wanted to, and I knew it. They wanted to hurt me and toss me aside like the garbage they thought I was. And what did they have to lose? They were all either serving life sentences or so many years that their outdate was too far to see. I was a perfect target for their anger. I was also a plaything for them, something to be toyed with to pass the time. They made my life miserable and I hated them. I hated them more than anyone or anything I had ever hated. I sat and seethed, unlocking an inner gateway and allowing the prickly anger to flow in all of its seductive intensity.

I glanced down at my rifle, then cautiously picked it up and checked the safety. *I should be ready in case anything happens. I'm not leaving my buddies on their own with no protection.* I held the Ruger up to my face inside the gun turret and moved my barrel toward the narrow slot and lined up my sights. Ahh. I had a loaded rifle aimed directly at

the end of third gallery. I was able to see each of them, in turn, as they leaned close to the cell bars, talking and yelling and acting stupid. *They don't know what a good shot I was on the firing range. I beat out most of the guys who had been hunting for years.*

I pointed my rifle toward the end of third gallery. My sights were lined up just as I had been trained. The small, vertical window in the wall—my view into 5-block—granted me some rare privacy away from the prisoners. They knew someone was in there, up in the box by the ceiling, but they didn't know who. There, in the safety of the gun turret, my mind could wander slowly, savoring the possibilities.

I relished this rare opportunity of lingering in my thoughts. Unlike my usual work shift at the prison, when I hustled down the galleries like the other guards were doing now, deflecting projectiles, threats, and erect penises poking through the bars.

I moved my barrel slightly to the left. *Well, hello Nickerson!* That asshole housed in one of the cells close to the turret. At this angle, almost a side view down the length of the gallery, I had a good shot. He moved away from the front of his cell, where I couldn't see him, then back up to the bars, grasping them with his hands and pulling himself forward. Slender but strong, his arms and abs displayed defined muscles. An objective onlooker would probably consider him very good looking—until he started talking. He opened his mouth and began spewing his street talk to some other inmate locking farther down the rock. Nickerson's voice rose above the others in the cellblock.

I watched his upper lip snarl above his slightly protruding front teeth, as he grinned, shouting obscenities and foul language at one of his buddies. He was light skinned, with a faint trace of a mustache. His taut belly was so flat it looked nearly concave above the dark blue prison-issued trousers hanging loosely around his hips.

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Nickerson absent-mindedly shoved his hand down inside the front of his pants to fondle and scratch himself while he jeered and hooted.

Fucking Nickerson.

On visiting day he acted almost normal with the elderly lady sitting in front of him, gazing into her eyes, nodding his head earnestly, like some altar boy. She gave me a cool, disapproving look. No doubt he almost had her bowled over, and told her some degrading lie about what a cruel and inhumane guard I was. She was trim and neat as a pin, too, gray hair curled tightly under her little hat and wearing her best little Sunday dress. I'll bet she was a sweetheart. I assumed she was his Grandmother, but who knew? Maybe she was a neighbor from the home town who believed his nonsense and put a little money into his account. Or a well-intentioned lady from a relative's church congregation trying to save the poor boy before he fell into the clutches of those slick prison inmates.

No matter. She was just another game, someone else to dupe and con with his slippery talk. It was crystal clear to me. I knew these guys because I dealt with them. All. Day. Long. Nearly five days a week. I watched them strut around like they owned the place. I heard their talk, I read their kites they wrote to other inmates that weren't intended for the eyes of a CO. I saw them when they ate, when they showered and when they took a shit. When they were napping, or masturbating, or bored, or angry, or just bursting at the seams because they were men with no productive place to funnel all of that youthful energy, anger and lust.

Hatred flashed in Nickerson's face when he spotted me making my rounds on the upper level of the rotunda. He barked out an occasional order to me to show everyone he was The Man and in charge. I ignored him. I couldn't be bothered with Nickerson's

bullshit. I was too busy trying to keep an eye on a couple of inmates dangerously close to having sexual intercourse with some visiting ladies elsewhere in the rotunda.

And speaking of flashes of hatred...after weeks or months or years of sexual deprivation, these guys saw no humor in having their little tête-à-tête thwarted, especially by a female guard. Central Complex was overcrowded, as usual, but the prisoners were due their visitation rights. So the overflow from the visiting room by the front gates took their seats in loose chairs around the upper level of the rotunda, overlooking the Control Center.

Like the gun turret post, it would be the only time I worked that assignment. The other officers didn't know that, of course, or didn't care, so it was up to me to figure out what the Hell I was supposed to be doing. I had hoped that I would be one of the guards shaking down visitors for contraband on their way in. I knew how to do that job, having searched hundreds of inmates over the past few months. But of course I was given one of the shit jobs and told to monitor the visitors and inmates in the rotunda.

I nodded and asked what I was supposed to do. One of the Corrections officers told me to be sure none of the inmates had sex with their visitors. *Oh, okay*, I thought. *Like someone could actually have sex in front of all these other visitors and inmates in the rotunda.* I ever so slightly raised an eyebrow, and he shut me up quickly with a serious look. He added that one of the upper ranking brass—a Captain or Lieutenant or Warden—had a fit recently upon witnessing one of these transactions.

Within minutes of seating the couples I knew exactly what he was talking about. The women were perfumed and lipsticked for their men, goose-stepping in their stiletto heels and short dresses. They smiled at the inmates who looked eager and attentive, and

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the women believed their bullshit lines. They didn't see that they were just one in the long parade of dolled-up visitors traipsing through the main entrance into Central Complex week after week. They didn't see the inmates in their cells, writing their love letters to numerous women because they had nothing but time on their hands, hoping that maybe one of the ladies would pass along drugs or sex or money or something else that could be bartered for something better inside the walls.

The hand holding that was allowed during visiting quickly and smoothly progressed into roaming hands and shifting legs. The women hiked up their skirts and straddled the seated inmates. As much as I hated my job, I didn't want to be suspended because of some slimy inmates and their hooker girlfriends. I had no black marks on my record and I was going to keep it that way.

In the gun turret, my attention turned back to 5-block and Nickerson.

Fucking bastard.

If I aimed for his ribs, and hit him in one of his lungs, he would instantly collapse. At least, that's what one of the inmates had told me—a guy's legs would buckle and he would go down fast if he was stuck in the ribs with a shank. Shank, rifle. Same effect.

I was confident I could get a good shot at that fucker when he leaned forward like he was doing now, pressing his face and his body up against the bars of his “house” where he spent 23 hours a day, every day, because he was an asshole.

I wondered if the force of a live round ripping into his smooth flesh would knock him down right away, like a sucker punch to the nose. Or if he would continue standing for a few seconds, shocked and uncomprehending at the devastation taking place in his body, before his legs stopped working and he collapsed to the floor. It probably

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depended on where the ammo hit. A shot to the mouth, of course, could be very satisfying.

Or maybe the distinct cracking sound echoing cleanly through the vast cellblock would startle him nearly as much as the sharp and sudden jolt of pain that quickly followed. A shotgun...now, that would knock him over immediately, and get some attention with its loud **BOOM!** But anyone could hit a target with a shotgun, whereas rifles required a certain skill level.

My breathing remained measured and even as I squinted through the site on the rifle, until I paused halfway through a soft exhale, to steady my aim. I playfully, delicately laid my right index finger lightly on the side of the trigger. It would be so wrong ... but the idea of the damage I could cause was seductive. I flirted with that trigger. I was teasing myself with the delightfully dark possibilities. It felt like the height of power to realize that I only had to move my finger forward just a tiny bit and I would be good to go.

When I first walked up the stairs and stepped into the turret at the start of my shift, I had carefully picked up the rifle and checked the safety, looking it over. I only intended to become familiar with my firearm, once again, in case I actually had to use it to quell some disturbance. I was struck by the graceful power I held in my hands. The magazine was loaded with live rounds and ready to go. The cool weight of the polished, smooth wood on my palms was soothing, and brought back long-forgotten confidence from my earlier days in training.

One of the Sergeants on the firing range had said I was a natural with the weapons. He probably had ulterior motives, too, like a lot of the other men I worked with.

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The few female guards working in Jackson were all prime targets for those guys. But there was no denying that I had done well, and was considering joining the gun club in competition with the other prisons. The guards at Jackson Prison trained at 100 yards and were reportedly some of the best marksmen in the state. And I had held my own among the hunters and deer slayers in my group. It was one area I had excelled in during training. But the inmates didn't know that. Just as they didn't know it was me—their lowly, hated, white-hoe female officer—sitting in that gun turret with a rifle, fantasizing about shooting those motherfuckers who made my life miserable nearly every minute of every day that I worked.

I lowered my rifle slightly, still focusing on my sights, to Nickerson's lower body. *I could shoot him in one of his knees if he stands in just the right position. All I need is a few seconds for a good aim. If I played my cards right, I could start shooting, and maybe get all three of them before they knew what was going on, and before anyone could stop me. But they would probably not be stupid enough to stand up by the bars when they heard the gunfire. All they had to do was move back a few inches, and I wouldn't be able to get them.*

I shifted my rifle slightly to the right, further down the block, and spotted another erect penis poking through the bars.

I can shoot that fucker right off.

The thoughts pleasantly bobbed in my head as I pictured the blood and gore, and the inmates screaming in agony. The confusion and the chaos.

I was so close. I could do it. I could get them back for some of the anguish they put me through. You have no idea how close I was... I relished the delightful feeling of

power I had, and the control.

I continued to watch as the guards—my coworkers—carried their frozen, expressionless faces up and down the galleries, applying restraints to inmates backing up to their cell bars, unlocking the heavy, sliding doors, and chaperoning their charges to showers, to the law library, out to Yard.

Within mere seconds I could unlatch the safety on my rifle and start squeezing the trigger. I wanted to kill them. People like Nickerson. And Harris. And Robinson. Five-block was, in many ways, even worse than the fear I imagined during my teen years lying in bed at night, terrified of the unknown creeping up on me while I slept. I knew these demons. They had names and faces. I saw them day after day, having no choice but to listen to their threats and conniving and slick street ways.

Oh, the paperwork my shocking, murderous behavior would generate! I could keep the brass busy for weeks! The flurry of police, investigators, reporters! The critical incident reports from my fellow officers, accounts from the inmates, copies of my tests and performance at the Academy and in RGC. The Central Office drones in Lansing would be nearly blissful as they sorted and filed and compartmentalized my thick personnel file.

And what would be the Department's take? Was it my personality? What lurked under the quiet, polite exterior that led a normal, average woman on a murderous rampage? I would be taken into custody, of course. Arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to life in prison, to one of the few women's facilities in the state. The inmates' families would sue the pants off of the Department, and they would be quoted by the media. My family and friends would be shocked. Former neighbors would be

interviewed.

Experts nationwide would weigh in on my erratic behavior in the gun turret, and theorize how an average female morphed into a cold-blooded killer. Corrections authorities and officials and criminal justice experts would tour Central Complex in their shirts and ties and scurry back to the safety of their brightly lit offices where they would stroke their chins and analyze and dissect what went wrong. The president of the Michigan Corrections Organization would be quoted describing the stressful conditions in Jackson, how the officers were under tremendous strain from the dangerous conditions, although noting that did not excuse my murderous rampage. Investigations would be undertaken, reports written.

How did I reach such a state? *Me*. An average, college-educated, middle-class female. A psych and English major!

But I was not so average in Jackson Prison. In fact, I was a fish out of water, an anomaly, among the tough inmates, the male officers, and the grizzled screws and turnkeys from the old days in the prison. A lack of camaraderie among the few female guards working inside only contributed to my sense of isolation.

Every time I drove up to the parking lot in front of 4-block, every single day, I marveled at how such a place could still exist. It both fascinated and terrified me. Stepping through the gates and down the stairs into the massive rotunda was a passage back in time, into another era, when equal rights for minorities was heralded and trumpeted by the Lansing suits but simply did not exist in that hardscrabble world. Policies and procedures I learned at the academy weakened and wilted under the madness and chaos that simmered and regularly erupted inside the walls.

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Every day when I left for work I said goodbye to my cats and locked the doorknob and deadbolt on my apartment door and wondered if I would be walking back in at the end of my shift. Or if I would be in the Emergency Room at Foote Hospital being treated for stab wounds or a concussion. Or maybe I would be crumpled in one of the countless dark crevices inside the walls, fading in and out of consciousness, left to die by one or any number of the unbalanced and fuming inmates roaming freely among the expansive prison grounds.

At some point, I carefully lowered the butt of my rifle to the floor and gently leaned it up against the wall. Then I picked up my binoculars and scanned the galleries, listening to the din and watching the day's business in 5-block. My partner returned and mumbled a greeting before taking his seat overlooking Yard. I hoped my stint in the gun turret was the beginning of a steady assignment, but my next shift found me back in the cell blocks, and I was never placed there again.

Final Journal Entry

August 23, 1987 12:10 pm

I hate this fucking job so much I can't stand it. They put me in fucking 12 blk & now I have a new blk to learn all over again. This really sucks.

It's so nice to sit home & listen to the wind blow & pet my cats. I enjoy peacefulness so much now, in contrast to this sucky job. It's such a temptation to move home w/Mom where it's safe and comforting.

I'm going to start smoking again tonight. The stress is too much and I've gained 6 lbs I can't lose because I'm always munching popcorn or something. So FUCK IT!

CHAPTER 18

THE EMERGENCY ROOM

September 9, 1987

In August and September, while things seemed to be picking up in my quest for a different state job, my life in the prison continued to be prickly. My initial nervousness at working in Central Complex had melded into a varying level of apprehension and uneasiness. I had been so scared when I first went to work inside that I had to settle down a notch or two in order to function and perform my job.

But as the freshman jitters faded, the reality of the conditions in Jackson shifted to the forefront. An inmate who wanted to hurt me **COULD** hurt me, and there was nothing I could do about it. They were locked up with nothing but time to think about crazy plots with their twisted logic. While many inmates simply went about their business, barely noticing me, others paid close attention. And the inmates had a lot of freedom to roam, or “skate”, in the prison. They were everywhere, out and about, walking slowly in their cocky, tough, street-style saunter, eyeing each other warily, on their way to who knew where.

I no longer bothered to try and comfort myself with the adage that the odds were in my favor. As a white female, I garnered a lot of attention. I was going to get hurt, and I knew it. What I could not know was how serious it would be. Alternate endings played out in my mind. I would get stuck. But I would be stitched up and otherwise okay.

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Worse, I would be taken hostage and locked in a cell and repeatedly raped and beaten senseless by an inmate. Or I would lay dying at the bottom of a damp concrete stairwell, thinking *I knew it. I knew this was coming. Why? Why didn't I leave? Was it worth it?*

I spoke with my family less and less frequently. There was such a contrast between their lives and mine. *They have no idea*, I thought, resentful and envious of them and their busy, normal lives. My life felt anything but normal. Every day, every single day, I wondered if I was going to be stabbed or strangled or raped or killed the next time I went into work. I no longer wrote in my journal because it extended my work hours. I was simply rehashing and reliving my time inside. I didn't want to talk about work or in any way think about work when I wasn't there. I had kept journals for most of my life, since grade school, writing my way through angst and turmoil and crises like greasy hair and zits and my parent's divorce in eighth grade, and now I couldn't bring myself to write, because it meant spending more time thinking about that stinking place. In my gut, I knew I was going to get hurt. I wondered where and how and when, and hoped it wouldn't be serious.

At times in the prison, when inmates exploded and leaned in close to my face, lambasting me with their anger and hatred, I willed myself to not walk out of that concrete ghetto and away from the onslaught of ridicule and derision. I stood, unmoving, hands loose at my sides as I had been trained, ready to defend myself from physical blows, knowing all the while that any effort at self-defense was futile.

But I had not yet been punched or slapped or shoved during a verbal confrontation. The odds of physical harm were much greater in an unexpected moment, while I was turned away and unable to identify my attacker. A slip of a shank in my side

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as a crowd of inmates headed to Yard, or to the Auditorium for a movie, or to Chow Hall. A momentary distraction, such as a staged fight between inmates, or some type of disturbance to my left, and from the right, an ice pick wedging in my back or neck. Chances are, I would not see it coming.

Still, while trying to deflect an inmate's verbal abuse, I looked directly into his eyes and wondered if he was going to hit me or hurt me in some way. I could feel other eyes on us, watching the scene, hating every second of being on stage and being degraded and abused by this asshole inmate.

He doesn't know a goddamn thing about me. I'll write my ticket and move on. I can make it through this. It will eventually be over. My shift will end and I will walk out of here. The clock's second hand glided so slowly and smoothly around, easing into the next second, and the next, while the inmate of the moment yelled at me in his fury. *This will end, this will end, this will end...* the tirade would eventually cease, I would move forward with my duties, and I would, eventually, punch out and walk through the gates into the night.

Over and over I was told, "You gonna write a ticket on me, g 'head. I'm doin' life! I ain't never gettin' outta here!" And "I be layin' fo' you, bitch! Fuckin' bitch!" So I wrote my major tickets, rarely bothering with the minor infractions, and showed up every day. I quickly learned to expect to have a bad day at work, so it stopped sneaking up on me. If I was lucky, I had an okay day. There were not going to be any good days, and I had to stop punching in every day hoping that THIS day was going to go smoothly with no confrontations or assaults. Then when I stood in line with the other guards at the end of my shift, I could punch out and maybe say to myself, *Hey, tonight wasn't so bad.* Like a

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pleasant surprise. *Wow. I didn't have a completely shit time at work tonight.* I felt less vulnerable that way.

For the most part, this shift in attitude worked. At least, I kept going. Crying, or other signs of emotional defeat at work, would have immediately ended my short career in corrections. I knew this much. The inmates would tear me to pieces. Many, many times I was so close to tears. I felt vulnerable, naked, much like the day I had to speak in front of the class at the academy. Back then I glanced nervously at the door, but simply could not summon the courage to stand up from my desk and leave. I so wanted to be working in a prison at that moment, naively believing I could somehow blend in and not be the center of attention.

In the prison, on countless occasions, I pictured myself strolling out through the series of clanking gates and into the bright light of day. No one was forcing me to work inside. There was no gun to my head. I had chosen this, and I could immediately bring it to an end. I would stop in at the Control Center in the rotunda, first, and bid adieu to Lt. Wemple. *Bye! See ya! Thanks for the memories!* The almost unrelenting verbal and emotional degradation coupled with the threat of physical harm or even death produced a level of stress unlike any I had ever known. But if I left, I would be walking away from my one opportunity for a better life away from Adrian.

I would be completely justified in leaving that god-awful job. But what employer would hire me then? They would nod in understanding as I explained the dangers and threats to my life, and we would smile at each other as we shook hands at the end of the interview. And I would never be called with a job offer, because they had no idea how bad it was inside. No one knew. Even the occasional prison tour group, filled with wide-

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eyed trainees, most of whom would be placed in Northside or Southside or some other less menacing area, could not know.

“If they put you someplace working by yourself, you just refuse,” my Mom insisted, time and again, as I cried to her in frustration.

“I can’t do that, Mom.”

I sure as Hell could not pick and choose my assignments. I was being paid the same amount as everyone else in that pit. I was just a Fish Cop, and a female. A male officer could just as easily be taken hostage and raped, too, or attacked and stuck from behind. Who was going to protect and guard me? *I* was the guard. It was a sorry situation for not only myself, but the other officers and vulnerable inmates as well. The best I could do was watch my back and hope luck was on my side. What if I was placed in the Auditorium, or some other isolated area, to work alone, like Josephine McCallum had been? Would I have the balls to walk to Control Center and insist that they put another CO in to work with me? Would I simply walk out? I honestly didn’t know what I would do and ultimately decided I would deal with that when the time came.

On September 9, 1987, I was working 5-block, signing door cards on an upper gallery. One inmate, an older man with springy, graying hair, continually badgered me as I passed by his cell. I had dealt with him before and he usually needled me, but not enough to bother writing him up. This time, apparently frustrated in his failure to draw a response, he spit out, "Your new name is Josephine McCallum. They're gonna find you in a building somewhere!"

Oh, how it pissed me off that he made reference to that poor woman! That he even mentioned her name in such a lowly way! I had barely known her. Josephine’s face

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was familiar to me only by passing through 6-block on my way to RGC, months earlier. I was just a rookie then, a trainee, and Central Complex was but a dark and remote possibility in my future. We exchanged quick, knowing smiles with each other. Her pale skin seemed to glow in the early morning darkness of the cell block, and looking at her gave me slight hope that I, too, could handle working inside the walls. I felt a curious bond with this fellow minority, who obviously had to deal with the same shit I did as a quiet female in that vast no-man's land.

Then Josephine was beaten, raped and murdered. It had to be a horrible, agonizing death. Since being placed in Central Complex, I occasionally met a guard who had witnessed the aftermath of the killing. I was told how her clothes had been ripped into tiny little pieces all over the stage in the Auditorium. Buttons from her shirt had gone flying, too. Officers had mistakenly walked in puddles of her blood and tracked it all over the crime scene.

That scum rapist/murderer, Hill, had been placed in a cell in 5-block during the investigation, grinning broadly at the guards through his bars. He had been seen leaving the area, sweating heavily and out of breath. Josephine's death removed any possible hope I had that working inside the walls was not that dreadful. It was. It was just as bad as the tales I had heard from the old timers and experienced officers in RGC. Only it had gotten worse since their days working inside, and even they would refuse to go back in.

The inmate's remark to me seemed to dishonor Josephine and make light of the horrible way she had died. I was in a no-win situation. If I wrote the ticket he'd be pissed. If I didn't write the ticket his threats would continue to escalate. I wrote the ticket. He knew I was going to. I saw it in his eyes when he threatened me. And I had been working

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there long enough for him to be able to predict the type of officer that I was. He knew I was not going to let him say bullshit like that to me. No matter if my stupid little tickets seemed nearly useless, he would win more time in The Hole.

He was, predictably, furious and glowered in silence every time I passed his cell. It was just one of many threats I fielded that day and almost every day I worked in the prison. Along with the verbal threats came countless hostile glares and gestures.

My tension level steadily rose as I continued to sign door cards. I thought of that inmate and other hot spots lurking on my galleries. I was particularly careful when nearing his cell. Every time I passed I expected a surprise. But you never knew. There didn't appear to be much logic when dealing with the 5-blockers, especially. Their behavior was unpredictable. This one was crafty, though. He was more patient than the typically impulsive prisoners in segregation. He waited a while. Whether he was cooking up an appropriate punishment, or trying to take me by surprise, I don't know. But as I headed away from signing his door card a forceful *whoosh!* splattered my face.

There was a lot of liquid, much more than would fill a cup. I quickly whipped myself away from him, towards the railing, and kept my eyes shut while I pulled out my hankie. I knew he meant business this time and I knew that one way or another he had been planning to get me. I had felt it in my gut. I fully expected shit and piss, and the most foul combination. I carefully wiped my eyes and opened them. As I cleaned up and hurried off the gallery it became clear that he had used some type of chemical, and had been aiming for my eyes. Only then did I start feeling shaky.

At the Sergeant's desk on base I wrote the assault ticket and tried to clean myself up. One of the other guards discovered the inmate had used bleach. The 5-blockers were

routinely given some type of powdered substance containing bleach to clean their toilets. He had mixed it with water and thrown it on me. I was surprised and, oddly, a sense of calm washed over me. I knew something was coming, and he had meant to hurt me, but I was okay. The tension broke and I relished the rare feeling of relief I was experiencing. It was only a few minutes of feeling good, but still. For this moment—and my shift was almost over—I was all right.

As I stood in line to punch out, the night shift officers looked at me. Some shook their heads. Lt. Wemple approached and asked how I was doing. My eyes felt grainy, and dry, but my vision was fine. I told him I was okay. He told me to go to the hospital and have my eyes checked. I said I hadn't punched out yet. He said, "Go. Now." So I left and drove to Foote Hospital.

The doctor at Foote explained that bleach was a base, not an acid, so it would not have damaged my eyes. But as a precaution he dropped orange dye into each eye, turned off the lights, and checked me with a small flashlight.

"I don't understand why you would want to work in that prison," he said, during the examination.

I paused. "It's a long story."

I didn't even want to try and muster up the energy to explain what I was doing in that hell hole. I dimly realized that I didn't give a shit what he thought of me.

The doctor said no damage had been done. Then he sent me home with a bottle of eye drops. I felt like a mess, but had no idea what I looked like until facing my bathroom mirror. Bright orange splotches surrounded each eye, and ran in streaks down my face. My hair had been drenched, and was plastered back, stiff, on my head. No wonder people

had stared when I walked into the emergency room.

I turned on the shower and stood under the steamy, hot water, letting it run over my head, until I felt tired. I gazed at myself in the mirror as I dried off with a towel. I was still there. I had proof. I could see myself looking back. *How much longer? How much more can I take? How long can I last? How long before I really get hurt??*

I gathered my uniform to throw it in the hamper. My black pants had splats bleached white on the front. And drops of the liquid had reached my black tennis shoes, turning parts of those white, too. Then I pulled on a big t-shirt and clean underwear and slid under my cool bed sheets, listening to the cars traveling on a nearby highway through an open window. My cats crept close to me and I stroked them gently, thinking about what had happened and what might be waiting for me the next time. I lay like that for a long, long while, eyes open, thinking.

CHAPTER 19

11-BLOCK

My very first assignment in Central Complex had been 11-block, the honor unit, with the color TV and other toys on base, for the inmates' use. It was a good block, as far as housing units in Central Complex went. Inmates had a few more freedoms here, and generally behaved so as not to lose those privileges. In September of 1987, I started

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getting more assignments to 11-block, though I remained a 5-block regular. I was, again, nearly always the only female present in that housing unit.

After working 11-block a few times I was feeling more comfortable with the routine and more confident in my duties. I was now a more familiar face among the Central Complex prisoners and wasn't tested quite as much as when I first went inside. I was trying very hard to be a good officer, a fair officer. I certainly was not going to be a hard-ass, but I also was no pushover as the inmates seemed to think when first seeing me. I was not as vulnerable as I looked.

Therein, I believe, was part of the conflict: I had a "soft" face and build. Meaning vulnerable-looking. Supposedly easy to manipulate. Ripe for the plucking. All sorts of assumptions were made regarding my character, based solely on my appearance. Even my monthly period added to my reluctance to go into work, for fear of having my tampon confiscated and displayed for all to see. Look, ever'body! Botkin is having her period today!

Some of the few women who worked inside brought along their DOC green blazers and tucked a couple of tampons in the inside pocket. But in the blazing summer heat, carrying a coat seemed obvious. Plus, the lining was a slippery, polyester material and I feared a wayward tampon would slide out and bounce on the concrete while I was walking with my jacket draped over my arm. So I hid tampons in my sock, on the inside of my leg. Inevitably, I would be concealing these when the staff was being searched on the way in.

Once a month or so, all of the employees entering the prison went through a shakedown prior to passing through the first of four sets of gates into Central Complex.

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The afternoon shift had well over one-hundred officers, and a long line snaked out into the lobby. The overwhelming majority, of course, being men. So there I stood, dreading going inside those abusive walls anyhow, but now with another layer of tension.

Will they feel the bulge in my sock and ask me to remove it for the long line of men standing behind me to see? Then what to do with it? Holding it in my hand while passing through the gates was out of the question. Kneeling down and fumbling to replace it in my sock, while the men stood patiently behind me, sounded equally excruciating. I finally decided I would shove it in my pants pocket if I had to.

Thankfully, this was one humiliation I was spared. Linda, the female CO from Northside who sat next to me during firearms training, had told me that a male who was shaking her down had felt her tampon in her coat pocket, and she looked at him with alarm, expecting the worst, by having to remove and hand over the dreaded feminine sanitary thing for all to see, for it to be opened and examined for drugs or weapons, while the men around her watched, and he looked her in the eye and quietly said it was okay, and motioned her through. She was visibly relieved in retelling the incident to me. Just one more inconvenience for being female in that man's world.

So it went in Jackson Prison, where even my monthly cycle struck fear in my heart. Fear of being singled out, once again, as a female, and garnering even more attention. I just wanted to blend in with the other uniforms, do my job, and punch out. But I knew that was asking too much. I was working in a men's prison. It was to be expected and I had to roll with the punches. The place was so big and overwhelming, and it was difficult enough to simply learn the rules and how and when to apply them. I hadn't been in the prison long enough to understand its inner workings.

I didn't know, for example, why I was placed as a regular in 5-block. Or why some of the women officers worked in the Control Center with the Lieutenant and the Captain and never, ever did I see them in the cell blocks or Big Top, dealing with the crap the inmates doled out to the rest of us. *How did they get that job?* I wondered, every time I saw them. And they were rudely quiet and completely ignored me. I thought they were stuck-up bitches. And I didn't know why the powers-that-be started putting me in 11-block more frequently that fall, either. Yet another block to learn. All over again.

It was tiring, to say the least. I felt worn down. Like all the other housing units in Jackson, 11-block was enormous and held 400 or so inmates. Inmates who, for the most part, had locked in there for a while and knew the routine well. But they were generally more respectful towards the officers so as not to lose the honor block privileges.

Shortly after starting my training in RGC, I had heard that there were transsexuals in the prison, but had no contact with any of them until working 11-block. And there she was, on first gallery. Pale complexion, slight of build, shorter and more petite than myself. She had light brown, shoulder length hair and big blue eyes. She acted like a female and I found myself treating her like one, smiling more frequently and politely when I dealt with her.

One would think that the transsexuals had a difficult time behind the walls. Maybe so, but this one seemed to be doing okay. She associated with a black inmate who was also polite and quiet-spoken, and who seemed to have a crush on her. Of course, she wasn't technically a "she". This particular inmate was well-behaved and always polite and courteous. She generally declined going to Chow Hall at dinner time, choosing instead to stay in the block and shower while most of the inmates were gone. There was

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no conscious effort on my part to treat her as a female. It just happened. I was aware that I treated her differently, and was friendlier and more expressive with her as opposed to the other inmates.

But I wasn't breaking any rules, either, and I gave her the respect she showed me. Maybe she was earning money by turning tricks. Maybe I'm naïve in thinking that maybe she wasn't. It didn't matter to me. I wasn't concerned, as there were far too many other pressing issues staring me in the face.

One of the 11-block inmates, Palmatier, was a tall, obese, older white man. Unshaven and unkempt, he was the epitome of a slob. Palmatier was also no mental giant, and the guards found him annoying, a nuisance. So did the inmates. He had no buddies and, probably due to his poor personal hygiene, also did not appear to be messed with by them. They, too, had their standards. While Palmatier wasn't exactly on the same lower level as the baby-rapers, he certainly hovered somewhere near that dubious distinction.

He was also one of the few inmates who didn't terrorize or intimidate me, and I used that to my advantage. One day I was shaking down his cell simply to meet my quota of five daily cell searches. It was a mess. Old, musty books, wrinkled and stained papers, empty snack bags. Dirty styrofoam cups. Piles and stacks of worthless junk. The Sergeant walked up to the front of the cell bars while I was going through Palmatier's belongings.

He stood quietly, watching me, and finally said, "How can you stand to touch that man's shit?"

I looked back at him and shrugged, not wanting to admit that I didn't expect to find any contraband - I simply knew that this prisoner was not going to put up a fuss

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regarding me going through his inventory. It helped meet my quota and was meaningless in every other way. I just wanted to get out of Jackson with my life and what was left of my soul. If that meant wasting time rifling through some worthless, filthy pig of an inmate's cell, so be it.

I had been working 11-block for just a week or so, along with my regular 5-block stint, and was just settling into the block's routine. One day in particular I was assigned first gallery. Things had been going okay in this block and I found the abuse much less than from my other assignments in Central Complex. The officers I worked with seemed okay, for the most part, though once again I had no female coworkers. I was standing on my gallery, keys in hand, talking with an inmate in his cell about some now-forgotten issue.

Through my peripheral vision I mentally noted an inmate walking down the gallery towards me, from my left. I always tried to be conscious of where the inmates stood in proximity to my body. I had to be. The inmate coming down the gallery was looking directly at me, smiling. I glanced at him and moved in a bit closer to the cell bars so he had plenty of room to pass by. He had never given me problems and had been friendly and respectful every time I worked 11-block. I did not view him as a threat. Suddenly, his body slammed into mine, knocking me off balance. I almost dropped my keys. I quickly, awkwardly recovered.

"Oh, sorry, Off'cer! I am sorry!" he laughed, hands up in front of him in mock defense.

I stared at him, stunned. He was probably in his mid to late twenties, tall, dark skinned, muscular, but friendly looking.

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The inmates knew that to touch my body, or to touch any guard, anywhere, was considered an assault and therefore a major misconduct. It was inappropriate behavior on many levels--over familiarity with prisoners, part of the touching/testing process leading to a dangerous set-up, a potential assault with a hidden shank, and on and on. They were not to touch our shoulder with their finger, they were not to lay a hand on our arm, and they all knew not to bump into us. It was common knowledge.

I remained shocked. I knew he had seen me, I had looked directly into his smiling eyes when I glanced at him coming towards me on the gallery. Not to mention I stood out like a sore thumb among the convicts and other male officers in my uniform and being female as well. Why would he do something so stupid, when he knew what would happen?

I looked at him and didn't say anything. Then I walked down to the Sergeant's desk on base and wrote my ticket. The Sergeant had witnessed the incident, also, and shook his head, puzzled. A few minutes later the Goon Squad arrived and stood in front of the inmate's cell on first gallery. He backed up to the bars, was handcuffed, and taken away to 5-block.

The verbal threats and booing began almost immediately, before he was even out of the block. I returned to my duties on first gallery and tried ignoring the cat calls and vulgarities calling out from anonymous cells throughout 11-block. But the remarks only increased in intensity and I could not pretend that it wasn't happening. So I stood and looked across the block, into the cells on the five stories of galleries on the other side, and tried to determine which inmates were heckling me. This behavior, while typical in The Hole, was not tolerated in the Honor block. Officers on the other galleries slowly walked

down their rocks and listened. This helped subdue some, but not all, of the profanity. The Sergeant pulled me aside.

“You better watch yourself on the bulkheads,” he said.

I looked at him and once again reminded myself that I was not in 5-block, and this was not typical inmate behavior. During the next mass movement, for chow time, I stood at the end of my gallery, on the bulkhead, with my back to the railing directly over the Sergeant’s desk. Some of the passing inmates glared at me and I was asked several times why I wrote that ticket. I stood silently, looking them in the eye when they addressed me, and said nothing in response.

“Don’t go by *her*”... “I ain’t getting anywhere near that bitch”... “Fuckin’ bitch!” On and on it went. I couldn’t catch the direct threats. I felt helpless and was in a no-win situation. I didn’t quite understand, either, why I was receiving such a hostile response. The inmate had clearly run into me, on purpose, and if I hadn’t written the ticket I would have had inmates bouncing off my body at every pass. The inmates all knew he had violated a very basic and important rule, on first gallery, where everyone could see the incident. There was no question he had been in the wrong. I couldn’t NOT write the ticket. Not that I would have let it slide, anyhow.

Later in my shift, when many of the threats had subsided, but still not completely, one of the officers told me the inmate I had locked up was well-known to be in the upper echelons of the prison drug trade.

Oh. There it was. That explained the response. But no one could explain why he ran into me.

Days later I was working 5-West and the 11-block inmate was on third gallery,

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my gallery. I tensed and braced myself for what was waiting for me. It was going to be a bad night, worse than usual. He had been given time in The Hole for the assault and he was going to be pissed. I had learned that rational thinking was a rare and special thing in 5-block and did not expect this inmate to be any different from Harris or Robinson or Nickerson or any of the other insolent, disrespectful and profane sociopaths and assholes and Bugs in that block who refused to take responsibility for their behavior.

I started signing door cards, dreading reaching his cell, but trying to stay mentally alert to the other deviants I dealt with. The first couple of times I signed his door card he seemed busy in his cell, and I thought he was simply cooking up a scheme to get me and pay me back for his time in The Hole. I was again signing his door card and he made a friendly remark to me.

Huh? I thought. I responded to him, cautiously, and stood waiting for the onslaught of vulgarities and threats. But he merely smiled and returned to whatever he was doing.

He is tricking me.

I grimaced, and continued down the rock, signing door cards, deflecting abuse, watching for the evil, water-logged honey bear to make its appearance, eyeing erect penises, ready-to-burst-and-ejaculate penises, white ones, black ones, brown ones, short ones and long ones. Skinny penises, thick penises, and one eye-opening penis in particular, proudly displayed by its owner, a young black inmate standing naked at his cell bars. His fire-hose penis, in a flaccid state, stretched along his inner thigh and hung pendulum-like toward his knees. He tried stalling me by a feeble attempt at conversation, slow and dull in his speech.

I stopped and looked in his eyes, taking part in the game, which granted me the freedom to peripherally observe the gargantuan specimen. It was a freak of nature. A blazing, deformed oddity. Then I moved along, trying to absorb the size of the monstrosity I had just witnessed. I continued cautiously down the rock, my attention quickly turned back to the fires and hoots and screams and profanities lacing my normal, average work day.

Again, as I approached the 11-block inmate's cell on the next go-round, I tensed as I tried to anticipate his next move and how to thwart it. But as I cautiously peered into his cell, he only looked up at me from his mattress, and smiled.

Oh, what the fuck! I can't stand this anymore. The anticipation was killing me.

I looked at him steadily and said, "You know I wrote that ticket on you in 11-block."

He nodded, pleasantly. "Yeah."

I waited.

Silence.

"You know I had to write that ticket."

"Yeah, I know," he responded, casually. He looked at me and shrugged. Then he smiled politely.

What? That was it? I felt strangely empty and confused. Where was the anger and hatred? Why didn't he yell and scream at me, or throw piss or shit at me, because I had him locked up?

But that inmate never gave me a problem. In fact, he was one of the most polite and respectful prisoners I dealt with in Jackson. Had I to do it over again, I would have

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asked him why he bumped into me in the first place. I would also ask that he call off his loyal followers and their threats. He was okay with being in The Hole, but they obviously weren't happy about it. And I was still placed in 11-block regularly. I had never received so many verbal threats and so much hostility in a general population block, not even when I worked 4-block.

My initial bewilderment and frightened outlook on being placed in Central Complex had long since worn off. I had seen how being female attracted unwanted attention from the inmates, and some of the guards, and any attention inside the walls was a bad thing. But the flak I was getting from locking up the drug dealer seemed to be on a different level entirely. I felt that my luck was running out and my time was coming.

It was also around this time, during my fourth full month of working inside, that a small group of new Fish Cops arrived for On-the-Job training in Central Complex. Perhaps six or eight of them. There were proportionately more females in this group as opposed to the one female, Dee, who had trained inside with the dozen or so men in our academy class.

The three or four women clumped together in the rotunda before the Lieutenant's briefing. Two of them were younger, and quite attractive. All of them looked inquisitive, lively, animated, whispering to each other, smiling tentatively at the other officers.

I observed them with mild curiosity and kept myself far, far away from their group, on the other side of the vast rotunda. I felt worlds away from them. They stood out like a sore thumb. And their stupid, naïve facial expressions advertised LOOK AT ME!
I'M A FISH COP!

The older women in the group, who looked to be in their thirties and forties, used

too much hairspray and blush. One of the women, a cute black female, wore thick, gold hoop earrings and several gold necklaces. She clearly enjoyed the looks she was receiving from the male officers. I averted my eyes when any of them started looking in my direction. I didn't need some stupid little bitch thinking that I was her buddy, and I sure as Hell didn't need any more attention by associating with a female Fish Cop.

Idiots, I thought. Can't you see how stupid you look? You have no idea the shit you're going to go through. You just wait.

CHAPTER 20

THE LETTER

In late September, I started receiving letters from probation and parole offices requesting interviews for positions located throughout the state of Michigan. The Department of Corrections fiscal year started October 1st, and apparently there was money in the budget that year for field services. I accepted interviews wherever they were offered. Grand Haven, Grand Rapids, Jackson, even Detroit.

I didn't know a thing about probation or parole, but wanted to get the Hell out of Jackson before I was hurt. I felt the odds were no longer in my favor, had not been for some time, and I was, at the very least, going to be stuck/stabbed a couple of times as a warning, in a show of support for the drug dealer, if a Bug in 5-block didn't get me first. My white femaleness was, in itself, antagonistic to many of the inmates. This was different from my initial Fish Cop type of fear. This was a deep gut instinct. And my gut

instincts had been right so far.

So I brushed up on my interview techniques and this time bought a good quality skirted suit in a black, white and gray pinstripe, along with nice black pumps. After dressing, I sat on the edge of my bed and leaned over, gently running a hand over my legs. The hose I had splurged on felt luxuriously smooth and silky. Then I walked into the bathroom and checked in the mirror. I liked what I saw: a professional young woman with a serious face and a determined air. I wasn't accustomed to wearing a suit, but what the hell. I could fake it.

After dealing daily with the hostile felons in Central Complex, I suspected that interviewing would be a piece of cake. If nothing else, the supervisors would probably be respectful to me. That was all I wanted. And I was going to cherish that time. I was a bit nervous, but it was nothing like the stress and tension that comes with fearing for your life and sanity eight hours a day, five days a week. I even felt confident with my interview in Grand Rapids, where the supervisors appeared the most professional, polished, and friendly. It was there that I also took part in an essay writing test:

What is the biggest problem facing Corrections today?

And I had thought my English major would never be of any use...I scribbled quick, tiny notes for an introduction, body, and conclusion, then wrote my page and a half discourse on overcrowding and understaffing in the prisons, and how those conditions affected staff, inmates, and ultimately society in a negative and dangerous manner.

I received two letters almost immediately from both Jackson and Wayne Counties offering me a position as a probation agent. But my first choice, Grand Haven in Ottawa

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County, hadn't even set up interviews yet. I had never been to Grand Haven, but it sounded nice working in a small town on Lake Michigan. So peaceful. But I also did not want to miss this opportunity to leave the prison job far behind me. I decided that if Grand Rapids offered me a job, I would take it. Never mind that I hadn't ever been to Grand Rapids prior to interviewing, either. The supervisors seemed cool, and the city itself had to be better than Jackson or Detroit. Besides, I had heard some good things about Grand Rapids, so what the hell. Then I waited.

One day passed. Then another. No word from Grand Rapids. The threats in 11-block continued, and 5-block was, as always, predictably bad. The inmates in Chow Hall were in my face, hostile, confrontive, and I was tense.

During my training in RGC, when Josephine was raped and murdered, alarm crept into my gut. But I reasoned with myself that I stood a good chance of side-stepping injury at the hands of an inmate: *Yeah, it can be a dangerous place. Of course. It is a prison, after all. But I am just one of hundreds and hundreds of officers at Jackson and the odds are in my favor.*

Then I was plopped in Central Complex where I was sorted from the bulk of the officers and funneled and squeezed into a narrow slot: white female = minority = soft, weak, easy target. And suddenly the numbers jumbled and shifted and were overwhelmingly against me. I was going to get hurt. I knew it. I felt it. I didn't know how or when, but something was going to happen. I was receiving valid threats and still being told by other guards and Sergeants to watch myself on the bulk heads, to watch my back.

Maybe I would be stuck in the side with a shank as a warning. Or just beaten a bit in one of Jackson's countless blind spots. Or pushed off an upper gallery. Or quickly

grabbed and pulled up to a prisoner's cell bars and choked and strangled within a matter of minutes. Perhaps I would be locked in some sociopath's cell, raped, sodomized, battered and bruised in this mess the Department of Corrections referred to as Jackson Prison, held hostage in a dangerous and complex quagmire by an indifferent bureaucracy.

I had to get out. *Now*.

I was not going to make it to my year deadline in February, because I was going to leave before the inmates could get me. It was no longer worth the risk. And so what if I wasn't hired into probation? So what if they didn't understand why I had to quit before taking another job? If the supervisors had been working in corrections for any length of time, and if they were decent people, they would know about that pit known as Jackson Prison, and they would understand.

But if not...I would go to work at a Seven-Eleven, if need be. It was no longer my number one priority to land a decent job, a professional job. In fact, working at a convenience store sounded pretty damned appealing. Friendly customers. Smiling people. Crappy pay, probably. Sun streaming in through the front windows as I fill mammoth slurpees and dole out lottery tickets. No mind games. No ongoing threats of physical harm. No swollen, erect penises feebly trying to flag my attention in a stinking, filthy cellblock.

What's the worst that could happen? A robbery, perhaps, if I worked the night shift. So? What were the odds of that? And even if I was robbed, what were my chances of getting hurt, or killed?

That was it, then. I wasn't sure who I needed to speak with, as the Department was forever harping about using the proper chain of command in its paramilitary style of

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language. And I found I didn't care, either. What could they do if I gave notice to the wrong person? Fire me? *Ha, ha*. Funny, that notion.

I sat at my kitchen table in my small Jackson apartment and composed a nice letter addressed to Lt. Wemple politely giving him two weeks' notice of my intent to quit my position as a Corrections officer in Central Complex. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you. I left it on the table, and glanced at it several times. The next day, when I was dressing for my shift, I dated it, folded it neatly, and placed it in my pocket. For the first time in a long, long time, I felt calm. Confident. I could relax a bit and breathe again. Only two weeks. I was getting out.

I waited until finishing my shift before approaching Lt. Wemple in the Control Center. He was sitting at a desk and looked up at me.

"I want to give you my notice," I said.

His eyes widened. He took the wrinkled paper I held out and read it. Then he handed it back to me.

"I refuse to accept this," he said, shaking his head.

"This is my written notice," I explained, thinking he misunderstood, and that he thought I wasn't giving proper notice of leave. "I'll finish out the next two weeks."

I held the paper out to him. But he didn't move.

"I won't put you in 8-block anymore. Or 4-block. I won't put you in Chow Hall," he said matter-of-factly.

Surprised, I stared at him. Then I shook my head.

"I just...I can't do this anymore. I've been getting a lot of threats. I know I'm going to get hurt. I can feel it."

“Just think about it over the weekend,” he said. “I promise I won’t put you back in 5-block, either. Just think about it.”

“I’m not going to change my mind.” I shook my head again. He was looking at me intently. *Does he have any idea what I have been going through? Does he know what goes on in those blocks? And was it really this easy to get my assignments changed?? All I had to do was threaten to quit? Are you kidding me?* I held onto the paper and walked out of the rotunda and through the gates. My out date was delayed. *Shit.* That meant two more days of working in the prison before I could get my two weeks in. I was not going to change my mind, and was set to present my notice again when I returned to work on Saturday. But this time, he was going to take it, and I would refuse to buckle.

As it turned out, I gave Lt. Wemple my notice on Saturday as planned. Because Friday, on my day off, I received a letter from Grand Rapids offering me a job. I couldn’t believe it. What timing. I called immediately and accepted. I didn’t know a thing about probation, or Grand Rapids, and I didn’t care because I knew I could learn my way through it, and I was getting out of Jackson. I didn’t have to get my year in.

The next two weeks moved along at the normal, excruciatingly slow pace my time in the prison always had. The inmates didn’t know that I was leaving, and I kept it quiet from many of my fellow officers, too, until close to my last day. I continued to feel threatened, but my heart was lighter.

One day while working 6-block, I was making rounds on base when one of the inmates, a rather chubby and pleasant black guy, spoke with me. He chatted amiably, and talked about a 6-block counselor. “You know that cunt? You know that bitch? I’d fuck her, but I’ve had better.”

I doubt that, I thought, as I recorded his remarks in my notepad and headed towards the Sergeant's desk to write my ticket.

I do recall Lt. Wemple staring at me, as usual, but with a barely perceptible smile on this occasion. He shook his head, saying, "And she's still writing those tickets."

I looked back at him in surprise, and smiled, too, thinking, *Well, Hell yeah, I'm still writing tickets. Why wouldn't I be?*

On my last scheduled day in the prison, a Saturday, I called in sick. I had been given several friendly warnings that I was going to be initiated into that select group of officers who had made it out. Specifically, my fellow officers were going to lock me in an empty cell and hose me down with fire extinguishers. I decided to take a pass.

Two months after leaving the prison, the headlines again carried the news of a Corrections officer's death in Central Complex. This time it took place in 5-block, my old haunt. Jack Budd, who had started working only four months before I did, was murdered on base by a prisoner. He was stabbed and died within minutes. I didn't know Budd, as he had worked first shift and I had been on seconds. But I had heard that he was a good officer and treated the inmates fairly. I also didn't understand how the inmate had been able to stab Budd. They were cuffed until we placed them in the tiny shower area and the door was locked. Then the inmate backed up to the bars and we unlocked his handcuffs, and he showered.

But somehow this inmate had gotten through his shower door. Once again, as I

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had the previous spring, I was riveted to media accounts and newspaper stories regarding the death. Only this time, because I was familiar with 5-block and had worked in that shit hole, I carried a different perspective of the incident. I knew full well the dangers in the segregation unit and wondered how close I had come to being seriously injured.

Once again, the articles made public the realities I had personally experienced, each shedding light on a system that was dangerous from the day it was conceived. I read the Detroit and Grand Rapids newspapers at my desk in my office and thanked my lucky stars I had gotten out.

Detroit Free Press**December 28, 1987**

By David Ashenfelter

Georgia Kovanis

A 23-year-old prisoner with a history of assaults on prison employees is being held in connection with Sunday's fatal stabbing of a corrections officer at the State Prison of Southern Michigan in Jackson.

Killed Sunday was Jack Leonard Budd, 38, of Quincy, who had worked as a corrections officer for 14 months, all of it at Jackson.

Budd is the third corrections officer to be killed in the line of duty in Michigan and the second this year. In March a friend of Budd, Josephine McCallum, 28, was found raped and beaten to death in a Jackson prison auditorium. An inmate is awaiting trial in her slaying.

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Employees identified the inmate suspect in Sunday's assault as James Leonard Miller, who is serving six to 19 years for breaking and entering in Detroit in 1983 and assaulting a corrections employee at Ionia in 1985. Miller had served two earlier sentences for attempted carrying of a concealed weapon and receiving and concealing stolen property.

Employees of the Huron Valley Men's Facility near Ypsilanti, where Miller was kept in 1986, remember him as one of the most dangerous inmates they had ever known.

"We referred to him as 'Ninja Miller,'" said Corrections officer Thomas Gould, "because he had thoroughly convinced himself that he is a great ninja warrior.

"I don't know if he had any kind of martial arts training, but he was a very dangerous man," Gould said, adding that Miller had assaulted several officers at the Ypsilanti prison, including attacking an officer with a knife.

Prison officials said Sunday's attack happened at 7:50 a.m. in Five Block, the prison's 377-cell segregation unit for troublemakers. Officials offered conflicting accounts of how the attack occurred.

In a news release issued early Sunday, officials said Budd and officer Michael Rife had escorted the inmate from his cell to a nearby shower. After his handcuffs were removed, they said, the inmate knocked Rife to the ground, breaking his nose and arm.

Then, they said, the inmate pulled a knife--fashioned from a metal bucket handle--and stabbed Budd repeatedly in the neck and back. They said several officers rushed to Budd and helped subdue the inmate.

Both officers were taken to W.A. Foote Memorial Hospital in Jackson, where Budd died at 8:55 a.m., officials said. Rife was treated and released. He returned to the prison to fill out paperwork.

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Later Sunday, officials said the inmate had been placed in the shower, somehow managed to get out, slugged Rife, then attacked Budd, who was standing about 10 cells away checking inmate identification cards.

Tom Phillips, administrative assistant to the warden, said he didn't know how the inmate got out, but he said the procedure called for putting the inmate in the cell and locking the shower door before removing the handcuffs.

"I don't know if the door was locked," Phillips said. "The normal procedure would call for the door to be locked and closed and the prisoner would put his cuffs through the handcuff slot and have them removed."

Phillips said there was no motive apparent for the attack.

The segregation unit contains five levels on both sides of the cellblock. About 40 officers and two sergeants were in the block when the attack happened, Phillips said. The walled portion of the prison has 2,350 inmates and about 450 officers.

Inmates inside the walled portion of the prison, known as central complex, were being let out of their cells Sunday only to eat. Officials said yard privileges may be restored today.

The suspect in Sunday's attack had been placed in segregation as a result of assaults on the staff, Phillips said, but he said he didn't know how long he had been there or precisely why he was put there.

Inmates in segregation are allowed out of their cells for five hours a week of yard time and five showers each week. They are allowed five visits a month from family members and friends and unlimited visits from their attorneys.

It isn't clear how the inmate got the knife. At the time, he was dressed in a T-shirt and towel, Phillips said. He said shower stalls in the segregation unit are searched regularly.

Fred Parks, executive director of the Michigan Corrections Organization, the officers union, said he was saddened but not surprised by the slaying.

"There's always been tensions in Five Block because it's the detention unit," Parks said. "There's always a problem, like prisoners throwing urine and feces on the officers, or assaulting them. It's a dangerous place to work and prisoners housed there are not only the worst at Jackson, but there also are troublemakers from other prisons."

The Grand Rapids Press

January 10, 1988

By Charlotte Channing

Booth News Service

Mary Elizabeth "Betsy" Budd knows not every man behind bars at the State Prison of Southern Michigan is a violent killer.

In fact, one of the sympathy cards that touched her most deeply was a simple one: a hand-drawn cross entwined with roses and thorns on the cover with handwritten verses inside by inmate David Irving, and one from another inmate, Angelo Shedrick, who wrote: "To the best officer that I had worked for and still the best officer. May God be with you always."

She has no hatred toward the inmate who stabbed her husband, Jack Budd, to death Dec. 27. But on Friday she decried the prison system that crams too many prisoners into too small an area, that allows corrections officers like her husband to be subjected continually to danger and that helped turn her husband into a weary, jaded and often uncommunicative

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man in the year he worked at the world's largest walled prison.

"I sometimes think they killed him before he died," said Betsy, in the small apartment in Richland she and her 11 year-old son share.

Budd, 38, was killed and guard Michael Rife was injured when inmate James L. Miller, released to take a shower, burst through the steel-bar shower door, assaulted Rife with his fists and then stabbed Budd with a weapon fashioned from the steel handle of a mop bucket. Budd died minutes after the attack at W.A. Foote Memorial Hospital in Jackson...

Jack Budd attended a training academy for state corrections officers from October 1986 to January 1987. "That went very well," she said. "He was very proud of it."

And then he was sent to Jackson in January.

Betsy recalled how her husband looked when he came home after his first day at the prison, tired and downtrodden. "His head was even lowered."

In the beginning, Jack Budd would bring home stories about his work, about the stench and the garbage and the violence. But then, concerned about the effect the stories were having on Jason, decided to keep them to himself.

And the stress began to chip away at their marriage. "Our relationship became strained," she said. "We lost some communication."

She finally called prison officials, she said, asking them to get counseling for her husband, but they refused, saying he had to request help himself.

When Betsy told him she had called prison officials, he became very upset and told her he was a good prison guard who did his job well.

In March, one of Budd's classmates from the academy, Josephine McCallum, was

raped and killed by a Jackson inmate.

"They were very close," said Betsy. "They used to study together."

He hadn't wanted to be one of McCallum's pallbearers, she said. In fact, he had wanted to avoid the funeral altogether. But he agreed to help carry her casket out of respect for his fallen classmate.

"I said, 'Jack, get out. It's a matter of life and death,'" Betsy said. "He said, 'Maybe I'm hard-headed, but I want to see my year out,'" she said. He had been assigned to the prison at Jackson for a year, according to her...

Miller was serving six to 19 years on a burglary sentence and for assaulting a corrections employee in 1985. A Detroit Free Press article dated December 28, 1987, said the following:

Detroit Free Press

December 28, 1987

By Margaret Trimer

Jack Budd, a state corrections officer killed at the State Prison of Southern Michigan in Jackson on Sunday, nearly quit his job when training academy classmate Josephine McCallum was found killed in the prison on March 24.

Budd... "almost dropped the job then and there. He was very shaken by" McCallum's slaying, said Budd's brother, Melvin, on Sunday.

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"It's not right that during training the guards are left unsupervised so much--even in the worst part of the prison," Melvin Budd said...

Despite his wish to be sent to Coldwater, Jack Budd was assigned to the State Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson, his family said.

"He did so well in the tests and in training that they kept him at Jackson and put him in the toughest cell block," Melvin Budd said. "He thought Coldwater was plush compared to Jackson."

Jack Budd, a husky six-footer who friends said carried his 200 pounds well, loved to fish, especially with his son, family members said.

"He was real easygoing. He thought he was invincible," his brother said. "He thought he could get somewhere with them, the prisoners. He wouldn't let them push him around."

Jack Budd complained bitterly about the lack of control over Michigan's most violent prisoners at Jackson, mentioning how inmates were issued padlocks that they put in socks and used as weapons against the officers, his brother said.

Within the past month, one prisoner threw a flaming object at Budd, which he deflected, his family said.

Even though he had hoped to be assigned to Coldwater, Jack Budd asked to work in Jackson's Five Block, where troublesome prisoners are segregated. The assignment gave him Thursdays and Fridays off, his family said, and he thought it was safer because Five Block prisoners were locked up more than those in other blocks.

"He was very worried and concerned," Melvin Budd said.

Over the Christmas holidays, Jack Budd asked one of his sisters, Sally Budd, 31, who works for U.S. Rep. William Ford, D-Mich., if she thought there was anything Ford could do to

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get him transferred to Coldwater. State officials had promised that the Coldwater prison jobs would go to people from that area, the family said.

"The sickening part of the whole thing is that the job down here (in Coldwater) was a piece of cake, and he made several attempts to get that job and was just put off," Melvin Budd said.

Family members said they were angry that no prison official had contacted them as of late Sunday afternoon. The family learned the news when another corrections officer drove the 60 miles from Jackson to Quincy to tell them Budd had been injured.

The family said it met a prison chaplain at W.A. Foote Memorial Hospital, where Budd died.

James Lamont Miller, MDOC #168439, was convicted by jury of Murder 2nd for the murder of Jack Budd. He was sentenced on December 15, 1988 to 80-120 years in prison.

Edward Clay Hill, MDOC #155098, was convicted by jury of Felony Murder for the rape and murder of Josephine McCallum. He was sentenced on May 31, 1990 to life in prison with no chance of parole.

AFTERWORD

Shortly before I left the prison, I started dating one of my coworkers. It ended a couple of months later. In my final conversation I told him to never contact me, because if we got back together and he pulled the same shit, I would take a shotgun and blow his head off. Transformation: complete.

I carried small notepads in my uniform shirt pocket, recording notes on a few of the tickets I wrote while working my regular assignment in The Hole, the segregation unit for the prison's worst offenders. Here are some of those notes:

5-block. 6:10 pm. "Give me some of that pussy. As a matter of fact, pull down those pants right now!" Inmate # 172739.

5-block. At 2:10 pm, while I was signing door cards, J. said he was going to have someone dress me out. At 2:36 Jackson gave me a cup of M.S. to give to 13-4. After I told him it was contraband, he said, "That's it. I'm having you dressed out for sure now." # 172515.

5-block. 3:00 pm. (Note: In reference to pornography.) Myself: I'm giving you a direct order to remove that picture under your door card. "That's been up there for a while and no other officer asked me to take it down. I ain't removing it." # unknown. Cell 15-4.

5-block. 6:35 pm. "When are we gonna take care of some business?" My response: What do you mean? "Let me see your titties." #149599.

5-block. 3:08 pm. "You're gonna pay for lying on that ticket." #149599.

5-block. 6:45 pm. "What did you do that for? Kiss my black ass!" # unknown.

5-block. 5:00 pm. "Let me use that broom." Myself: You can use the broom as long as you don't let N. have it. Are you going to let him have it? "No." I then gave the broom to J. who immediately handed it to N. while I was standing there. #179123.

5-block. 7:10 pm. "I'm gonna take the lid off that barrel and smash the head off you!" # unknown.

5-block. 3:33 pm. "I'm gonna slap the shit out of you!" #131953.

5-block. 8:30 pm. "Bitch! Whenever I see you I'm going to throw shit in your face, and you can suck it up your motherfucking ass! Bitch! Don't come back up on this rock!" #149599.

5-block. Time unknown. Masturbating at cell door. Cell 16-3.

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5-block. 9:25 pm. (Note: This inmate had been given a verbal warning.)

Masturbating at cell door. # unknown. Cell 29-3.

5-block. Time unknown. Fire. # unknown. Cell 36-4.

5-block. 6:49 pm. "Get the fuck down the motherfucking rock right now!" # unknown. Cell 43-3.

5-block. Time unknown. "If you write me a ticket for some motherfucking bullshit, I'm gonna make it worth it." # unknown. Cell 44-4.

And my personal favorite: **5-block.** 3:45 pm. "Fuck you and your mammy too, bitch!" #134372.

Office of Legislative Corrections Ombudsman

Memorandum

Date: March 25, 1987

To: The Honorable Jack Welborn, State Senator

From: Clayton Burch, Ombudsman

Re: PRELIMINARY REPORT - HOMICIDE OF C/O JOSEPHINE MCCALLUM,
SMI, 3/24/87

The following is our preliminary report concerning the above critical incident at State Prison of Southern Michigan Central Complex (SMI) on 3/24/87. This report is being provided for your information. Additional monitoring of conditions and tension

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levels is planned by our office.

Summary of Incident

Officer Josephine McCallum was a homicide victim at SMI on 3/24/87. She reportedly was assigned to the Big Top between 6:00 - 7:30 a.m. to monitor the breakfast meal. Staff report last seeing officer McCallum on her way from the Big Top to her assigned post at the JCC checkpoint gate located within the Special Acts building. The entrance to Special Acts is opened in the morning for Jackson Community College (JCC) faculty and students and Prison Legal Services employees. Prisoners entering the building must produce proof of permission to be in this area. The Auditorium itself is not generally in use at this time of the morning and the access door located just beyond the guard checkpoint is usually locked.

The receiving door next to the Special Acts entrance was opened in the morning to receive a delivery truck. This receiving door provides direct access to Special Acts through a storage room from all areas of the kitchen. It should be noted that prisoners are also in the kitchen area to clean up after breakfast and to begin lunch preparation.

At approximately 8:25 a.m. a prisoner advised Control Center staff that an officer was down in the Auditorium. Staff immediately went to the Auditorium to investigate and found an officer's blazer near the stage area. Staff then located officer's blood covered clothes that appeared to have been torn off, near the far end of the stage area. The officer's radio was also found by the clothing and a considerable

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amount of blood was reported in this area. Staff found officer McCallum's body at approximately 8:30 a.m, at the bottom of a short stairway near this area. She was completely nude, had a belt or some other object tied around her neck and had a substantial head wound. Deputy Whelan advised that a concrete block was found in this area, but was not certain if it had been used to injure the officer.

The area was secured and a request made for medical assistance. The emergency siren sounded at about 8:33 a.m. and prisoners began to return to the cell blocks. SMI, SMN and SMT were ordered locked down.

A search was then made of the yard area surrounding the site of the incident and a set of Auditorium keys were found in a trash can outside of the South Yard Subhall door inside a hat.

Medical staff and the mini-ambulance arrived in a short time. An unconfirmed report indicated that a faint pulse was found and officer McCallum's body was still warm, indicating that the homicide had occurred shortly before discovery. She was later, however, pronounced dead at the scene. Her body remained at the crime scene to be examined by the State Police Crime Lab. The MSP Forensic team arrived at SMI at approximately 10:30 a.m. to begin their investigation.

Five suspects were identified and placed in Administrative Segregation (5 Block) pending the outcome of the State Police investigation. One was reported to have a scratch mark on his upper right arm; another suspect reportedly had scratches on his neck; and another had blood on his clothing. Food Service Supervisor K.C.

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Martin stated that he noted unusual behavior displayed by the primary suspect in the morning between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. He further advised that he had considered returning this prisoner to 4 Block, because he suspected from his actions that he was either drunk or on drugs. It was further reported by Mr. Martin that his behavior was noted as unusual because staff reported him to be an excellent worker, although sometimes a hothead. Food Service Supervisor Martin also stated that Food Service Supervisor Follick had trouble supervising this prisoner in the morning and had to leave the kitchen area to look for him on at least one occasion. Staff also reported that this prisoner was chased out of the JCC area several times earlier in the morning. It was reported that he also wears a hat frequently (the Auditorium keys were found in a hat in the Subhall trash can). Staff escorted this prisoner to 5 Block from his 4 Block cell where he had returned when the emergency siren was blown.

LCO Observations

Ombudsman Clayton Burch and Field Investigator Keith Barber met with Deputy Whelan after their arrival at the SMI Complex at approximately 9:45. They were advised that he was going to make a radio announcement to be aired over the prison radio system throughout the day, advising prisoners of the reason for the lockdown and administration's plans for the day.

Deputy Whelan then escorted them to the Special Acts entrance at about 10:20 a.m. to explain what had happened. The area was still secured by Department of Corrections staff, awaiting the MSP Forensic Team. Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber made no

attempt to gain or request admittance to the crime scene.

They then entered the kitchen to determine the progress of lunch preparation. Deputy Whelan had previously advised that sack lunches would be provided to prisoners in their cells. Food Director Steve McClain told Deputy Whelan he hoped to begin feeding between 12 noon and 12:30 pm. At that time (approximately 10:35) several corrections officers reported to the kitchen to assist in preparing the sack lunches. Deputy Whelan was concerned about the delay in feeding and asked Mr. McClain to start as quickly as possible.

Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber then returned to the Control Center to get the identities of the prisoner suspects already in 5 Block. They met Assistant Deputy Warden Elo at Control Center and found that he had just ordered several more staff to report to the kitchen for meal preparation at about 10:45 am. At this time they entered the Control Center area which contains surveillance equipment with Assistant Deputy Warden Elo to listen to the tape of radio transmissions which are staff radio communications monitored by Control Center on a 24-hour basis. Specific time frames reported in the above Summary were obtained from this source. Assistant Deputy Warden Elo ordered Control Center C/O Roxanne Rutledge to transcribe the radio transmissions, identifying the staff speaking and the time.

Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber then returned to the kitchen to monitor meal preparation at 11:30 am. Mr. McCain advised that R&GC meals had already been sent over and feeding would begin in the other blocks soon. The meal consisted of an egg

salad sandwich, peanut butter and crackers, an apple, pudding with a plastic spoon, and milk.

Upon returning to the Deputy's office Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber found that Warden Foltz had arrived at the facility. He had originally taken the day off to attend a seminar. Warden Foltz briefed them on the latest information and advised that he intended to have Deputy Whelan meet with the Warden's Forum representatives to explain the situation and day's plans so that word could be spread amongst the prison population. Warden Foltz also advised that the second shift staff had been called in early and both shifts would remain on duty until at least after the supper meal had been served. He advised that he wanted to feed prisoners in the Big Top for the supper meal. Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber then proceeded to SMN where they monitored problems caused by the housing of overflow prisoners in the gym. They were advised at that time that SMN and SMT had returned to normal operations sometime late in the morning.

Upon their return to SMI Control Center around 3:00 p.m., Deputy Whelan, Assistant Deputy Warden Elo and Assistant Deputy Warden Grinage were meeting with the Warden's Forum. The meeting concluded at 3:10 pm and Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber entered the Parole Board room for an update of events. The three above-mentioned individuals met with Captain Hensley and Sgt. Wemple to develop plans for supper feeding. It was decided that 6 Block (Protection) would eat first as usual; 11 Block would eat next and go half a block at a time; the remaining blocks would go half a

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block at a time. At least 15 officers would be assigned to the yard and gun towers. No phone calls, showers or visits would be allowed for the remainder of the day. Deputy Whelan ordered that officers must travel in pairs on the galleries in the individual blocks. In addition, 15 prisoners would be released to work on the serving line in the Big Top.

Deputy Whelan stressed that he would not tolerate staff retaliation against prisoners for this incident, nor would he tolerate derogatory remarks to staff by prisoners. He ordered staff to clean up the cell blocks, hoping that they would not be so willing to have SMI locked down when they found they would be required to perform work normally done by prisoner porters. Deputy Whelan also advised that the Warden's Forum representatives would be allowed to circulate in the cell blocks until evening lock up, around 9 p.m. He stated SMI would be locked down until Thursday or Friday of this week, and that he hoped to get back to normal operations as soon as possible.

Mr. Burch and Mr. Barber then left SMI at approximately 3:45 p.m. During their departure they noticed an announcement taped to the front door of the facility alerting staff that Fred Parks was having an emergency meeting at a "roadhouse" in the area.

Summary of Report

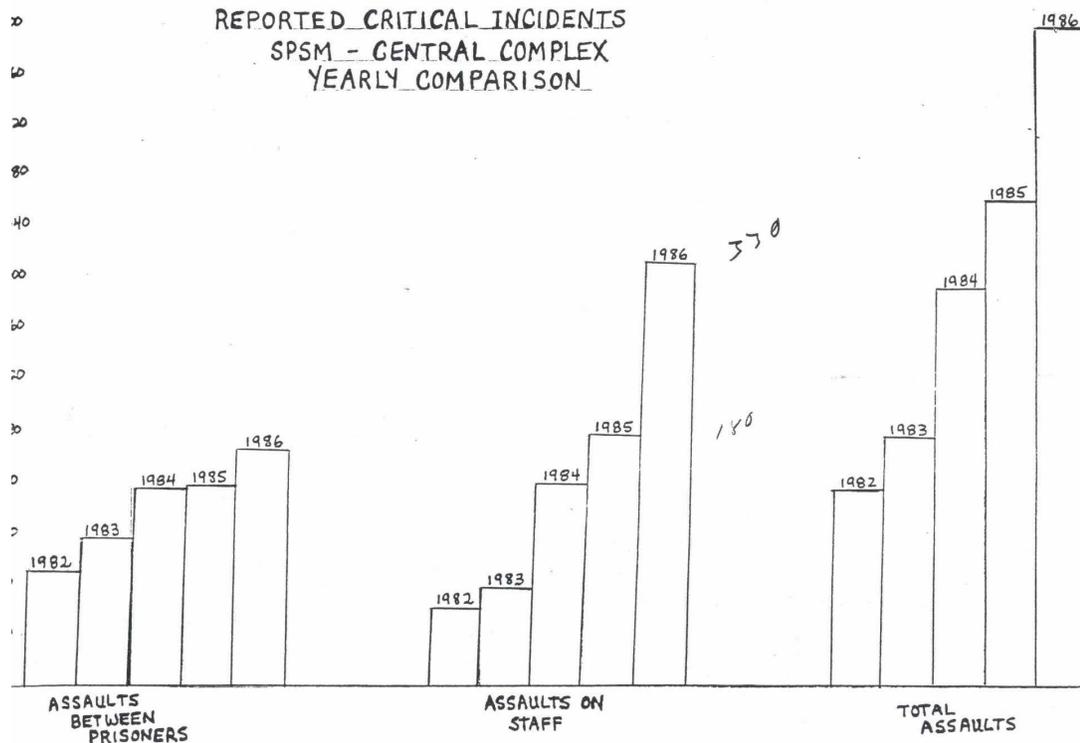
This report is the product of information relayed to our Office by staff at SMI, on 3/24/87 and our observations during the course of the day. Full details are not

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known at this time, but we will request copies of all information from the Department once the Critical Incident Report is prepared.

Attached is a copy of our yearly comparison chart of assaults committed during the years 1982-1986, which was prepared by our office based on previous critical incidents. The chart shows a steady increase of assaults on both staff and prisoners at SMI Central Complex. The chart is an indication of increasing tension levels within this facility.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.



11/18/87

REPORT OF
 THE HOUSE CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE
 COMPREHENSIVE INVESTIGATION OF
 THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
 "Personnel Policies, Procedures, Staffing, Employee Safety
 and Prisoner Disciplinary Policy"

Representative Floyd Clack, Chairman
 Representative David Gubow, Vice-Chair
 Representative Justine Barns
 Representative Ethel Terrell
 Representative William Van Regenmorter, Minority Vice Chair
 Representative Phillip Hoffman
 Representative William Martin

June 2, 1987

Committee Staff

Beverley Nettles-Nickerson House Democratic Research Staff
 Hymie Dahya House Fiscal Staff
 Meredith Cooper Committee Clerk
 James B. Franklin III Committee Staff Aide

On March 24, 1987, the murder of officer Josephine B. McCallum, a corrections officer at the State Prison of Southern Michigan, committed by an inmate or inmates, precipitated an investigation into effect of prison overcrowding and expansion on employee safety.

House Corrections Committee outrage over this tragic incident resulted in an announcement on March 26, 1987 by Chairman Representative Floyd Clack that the House Corrections Committee; consisting of Representative Floyd Clack, Chairman, Representative David Gubow, Vice Chairman, Representative Justine Barns, Representative Phillip Hoffman, Representative William Martin, Representative William Van Regenmorter and Representative Ethel Terrell would conduct a comprehensive investigation of Department of Correction policies, procedures and staffing as a result of the tragic death of a corrections officer at the State Prison of Southern Michigan.

On March 31, 1987 the House Corrections Committee began its investigation with testimony from Robert Brown, Director of the Department of Corrections. Director Brown provided the committee with an overview of the incident that resulted in the death of Corrections Officer McCallum. Director Brown spoke before the committee stating, "that it has been indeed a very tense and trying week for the Department of Corrections" and that the official investigation was still being conducted by the state police, so that there were sensitive areas, that he could not comment on.

The Committee also received testimony from Jackson Prison's Warden Dale Foltz and Fred Parks, Executive Director for Michigan Correction Organization. Warden Foltz informed the Committee that they were studying

staff assignments to ascertain what changes could be made to possibly avoid the chance of these kinds of incidents from reoccurring. Mr. Park called for an overhaul of the corrections system with more attention on prisoner discipline and employee safety.

On Thursday, April 2, 1987, the Corrections Committee reconvened to continue the investigation. It was agreed upon that the committee's investigation would focus on five areas of concern within the Department of Corrections. The following five areas were identified:

- A. New Employee Training
- B. Institutional Management Staffing Patterns
- C. Personnel Policies and Contract Compliance
- D. Employee Safety
- E. Prisoner Disciplinary Policy

With a tentative schedule of meeting dates to address each issue.

See Appendix One

The Committee would like to extend their gratitude and appreciation to Clayton Burch, Legislative Corrections Ombudsmans and staff; Director Bob Brown, Michigan Department of Corrections; Fred Parks, Michigan Corrections Organization; Beverley Nettles-Nickerson, House Democratic Research Staff and James Franklin III, Committee Staff Aide and all others who assisted the corrections committee in its investigation.

In this report, the Committee's findings are divided into the above previously listed five major areas. A summarized list of recommendations is included in appendix two of this report.

INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT STAFFING PATTERNS

The second area of concern for the Committee during its investigation was Institutional Management and Staff Patterns. The Committee's attention was focused on the areas of employee overtime, single officer positions, prisoner waivers; and the breakup of the Southern Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson.

The question facing the Committee is to determine the effects of employee overtime on the correctional system? During testimony, the Committee received information that the average "overtime" correctional budget consisted of at least \$1000 per pay period, per institution. However, according to information provided by the House Fiscal Agency, the average overtime payment for corrections officers per pay period at one institution as an example (Jackson prison), for the current fiscal year amounts to \$117,200 for an average of 5869 overtime hours. It was recently reported by the Michigan Correction Ombudsman that the use of staff overtime was becoming an increasing problem. At some correctional institutions it was not uncommon to have 30-40 officers a day working overtime in order to staff all critical positions. The constant use of overtime creates a greater potential for human error and reduces the coping ability necessary to function in such a stressful environment. This level of overtime requires staff to deal with intensified levels of stress and generally increases tensions in the institutions. This increased tension within the correctional institutions raised additional concerns as to employee safety in single officer position. There are a number of single officer positions that may not be as safe as once thought by the DOC. We are seeing a new breed of prisoners being sentenced to the correctional system; One that is more aggressive, violent and has less respect for authority.

This, coupled with a large influx of new prisoners coming into the correctional system, has caused additional problems for correctional staff, with an increasing number of prisoners being waived into reduced custody levels.

The final area of concern, as it relates to institutional management staffing patterns, was the break up of the Southern Prison of Southern Michigan at Jackson into a more manageable institution. The Committee received testimony as to the continuing plans to reorganize the physical and administrative structure of the Southern Prison of Southern Michigan. The DOC had taken immediate action to speed up the process of reorganizing SPSM into a more manageable institution.

In order to provide maximum security and safety for staff and prisoners the Committee recommends the following action be taken:

1. The DOC review and report back to the House Corrections Committee all single persons assignment and multiple persons assignments where officers are left alone part of the shift or reassigned to other position.
2. Staffing level be increased at facilities which house prisoners with higher security levels than originally intended, including waivers.
3. The DOC take immediate steps to implement plans to breakup SPSM into a more manageable institution.

4. The DOC review all assignments where there is direct contact with prisoners to insure that there is sufficient staff to handle all assignments.
5. That the DOC hire additional staff to provide sufficient relief staff to reduce the use of employee overtime. ✓
6. That the DOC consider developing 3 to 5 member rover team to patrol and respond to problems within correctional institutions.
7. That DOC comply with ACA standards to select, promote, and retain staff in accordance with valid job-related procedures that emphasize professional merit and technical competence.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

The primary concern during the entire investigation was what effect does prison overcrowding and expansion have on employee safety?

The Committee received testimony and had considerable deliberation into ways to improve employee safety. The Committee felt that improvements in previous discussion areas such as new employee training, institutional management and staff patterns, personnel policies and contract compliance were the keys to improving employee safety. Also, there was considerable discussion as to the establishment of Guard/Dog units for officers working alone; more frequent random prisoner shakedowns; the restricted movement of prisoners, and the use of TV camera or monitors as a way to improve employee safety.

The Committee received testimony from MCO that TV monitors would help in certain situations. Also DOC felt that cameras are useful to monitor areas and assisting in assuring the well-being of staff in particular areas. There also was some discussion in terms of eliminating blindspots in new and existing institutions.

It was reported that in 1986, there were 620 incidents involving assaults against staff without provocation. This was an increase of about 36% over 1985. The Committee feels that this rate of increase is intolerable, and that we must do a better job to improve employee safety. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

1. That the DOC evaluate each correctional institution to determine under what conditions and where additional TV cameras should be installed.

2. That the DOC review all policies and procedures dealing with staff safety and prisoner movement.
3. That DOC review and modify all policies that deal with opening an unoccupied building and when opening a cell door in a detention or segregation unit.
4. That the DOC conduct more frequent and random prisoner and employee shakedowns.
5. That DOC conduct a feasibility study into the use of guard dogs or robots in correction facilities.
6. The DOC develop an uniform supervisory policy for all correctional facilities.
7. That DOC should conduct a feasibility study into requiring prison inmate uniforms which denote security classification on sight by color.
8. That the Jackson Community College gate within the special activities building at SPSM be enclosed and operated with an electronically operated gate.
9. The DOC review its policies of allowing ~~female~~^{unit} nurses to dispense medications in close and maximum security male units without the escort of a corrections officer.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Three months after Budd's death, DOC issued the below statement, in what appears to be a press release, commending SPSM staff on improved safety and working conditions after Josephine McCallum's death. There is no mention of Jack Budd. Nor is there mention of the inmate who died in 5-block while being subdued by the Goon Squad during the spring/summer of 1987. And finally, there is no mention of the number of assaults on guards during 1987.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 1988

CONTACT: Leo R. LaLonde

Gail R. Light

(517) 373-2410

State Corrections Director Robert Brown, Jr., today praised Warden John Jabe of the State Prison of Southern Michigan (SPSM) for changes made during the past year at the facility to improve the working conditions and increase the employees' safety since the death of Corrections officer Josephine McCallum one year ago today.

"The warden and his staff should be commended for all their hard work and diligent efforts over the past years," Brown said. "It was especially hard for the Warden because he started his job there after the death of officer McCallum and inherited an array of problems."

Among the changes, Brown cites the increase in custody staff by 96 positions and the designation of Four Block in Central Complex as a maximum security unit. "These two measures allow for tighter security and control of the institution," Brown said.

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Brown also cited the assigning of all new deputy and assistant deputy wardens at the institution and said plans are underway to convert the North Complex into a separate institution with its own warden and administrative staff.

“Converting Northside into a separate institution is a step in the right direction. We need to split SPSM into several smaller institutions for the maximum safety of our employees. We’ve been talking about it since 1969 or since I can remember,” said Brown. “SPSM is too large, housing more than 5,000 prisoners. I don’t know what the thinking was in 1927, when the institution was built, but running a facility that size today creates just too many management problems,” Brown said.

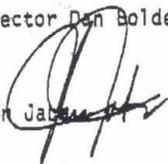
Brown also noted a number of internal changes instituted by Warden Jabe that have been made over the past year, including appointment of sexual harassment counselors at all complexes on all shifts, the revision of all institutional procedures and post order (job descriptions) and additional staff in the Warden’s Office to monitor staff policy compliance.

“Institutional change is a constant variable which must go on all the time,” Brown said. “Constantly looking at how we do things and looking for ways to make improvements is the best way to run an institution.”

MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT
OF
CORRECTIONS

TO: Deputy Director Dan Bolden

DATE: 3-22-88

FROM: Warden John J. 

SUBJECT: SPSM Changes Since March 1987

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You have asked for a complete listing of improvements made at this facility since the change in Administration. Our efforts have centered around improving security in the institution and providing for a safer environment.

The following are changes that have been, or are in the process of being implemented at SPSM in the administration, custody and security, treatment, and the overall operations since March 1987.

GENERAL:

1. Custody staff has been increased by 96.12 positions.
2. The security designation of 4 Block in Central Complex has been changed to maximum custody, allowing for tighter security and control.
3. All single person assignments have been evaluated and changes and/or recommendations made to your office. Hourly checks on employees are now being made.
4. All deputy wardens and assistant deputy wardens in all SPSM complexes have been re-assigned.
5. Plans are underway to convert the North Complex into a separate institution with its own Warden and administrative staff.
6. Sexual harassment coordinators have been appointed at all complexes on all shifts.
7. All institutional procedures have been re-written and distributed.
8. Post orders have been written and placed in manuals on each assignment.
9. Additional staff has been added to the Warden's Office to monitor staff policy compliance.
10. Rules have been re-issued regarding employee dress code.
11. Rules have been re-issued regarding employee work hours.

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Dep. Director Bolden
RE: Changes ...
3-22-88

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RECEPTION AND GUIDANCE CENTER

1. Custody staffing has been increased by twenty (20) officers.
2. The Reception Center bubble and arsenal is now open 24 hours a day, which has resulted in greater security since incoming and outgoing traffic is more closely monitored.
3. RGC prisoners were previously chained and taken by van to the Duane Waters Hospital, which required a great deal of staff time and created obvious security concerns. We now have officers escort these prisoners across the Central Complex yard, thus requiring less staff and not creating the security concerns.
4. Electronic locking system installation has started.
5. Reception Center Deputy Warden now reports directly to the Warden for more uniform supervision and administration.

SOUTH COMPLEX:

1. Perimeter fence lights were installed around the future medium custody portion of the complex, and existing lighting has been enhanced.
2. Approximately forty (40) trees were removed that were close to the perimeter security fence for improved visibility.
3. Thirty-two (32) radios have been added for improved employee safety.
4. Prisoner workers for the Michigan State Industries laundry are now being transported to work, instead of being allowed to walk unescorted.

NORTH COMPLEX:

1. Perimeter security has been improved.
2. Metal detectors have been added.
3. Security monitoring exercises have been re-written to increase security.
4. Manhole covers have been secured.

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Dep. Director Bolden
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9. Currently, a review is taking place regarding the Industries noon lunch schedule. A proposal was made suggesting that custody officers from the South Yard and gym checkpoint gate and the Hobbycraft checkpoint gate officer be sent to Industries to supplement that staff. This revision in the noon schedule would solve a major problem created by having large numbers of prisoners in the yard area.
10. Time lapse cameras are being considered for 5 Block in order to document all staff and prisoner movement within this unit.
11. A camera is on order to be placed in the subhall corridor west end and near food service offices. It will cover that entire corridor, including the Duane Waters Hospital annex area, to the officer station at the cross corridor.
12. The prisoner visiting schedule has been changed to allow much better control of movement and reduce the conflicts with other programs or activities, such as sick call, school, etc.

KEY CONTROL:

Improvements made in key control since March 1987 are as follows:-----

1. There was no up-to-date inventory of security and non-security keys maintained in the Central Complex. Inventories have now been completed. Greater emphasis is now being placed on all key control procedures.
2. Many keys were on broken (unsoldered) key rings. All key rings are now being welded.
3. The number of keys on rings were not indicated on the tags as required by policy. The policy is now being followed.
4. Policy was not followed that required a backup tag to be kept in the key boxes indicating what keys are assigned to that specific hook. This policy is now being followed.
5. Emergency keys and inventory have now been revised and are in compliance with policy.
6. There was no key control at the Information Desk. The key box has now been inventoried, tagged properly, and keys are only issued when proper tags are turned in in order to receive the keys.

