

Our cell doors didn't open this morning as they usually do; we were on lock-down for a few hours. Why? Nobody knows. There are of course rumors, but they're just that--rumors. I don't really mind the lock-downs that much because it gives me a good chance to catch up on some reading.

I know what you're thinking: It's prison, how can any time be even more convenient to read than any other? You'd think a prisoner has all the free time in the world, but we don't. Not really. Prison is a very loud and dangerous place, there's always people about doing things they're not suppose to be doing. Chasing that next cigarette, pill, wine, or whatever. I stay away from all of that pretty easily since I don't smoke, do drugs, or drink--it still hinders me by me being injected so deep into such an environment. But it's not just the slew of junkies and pushers that slow my studies and work, it's also prison itself.

I miss my kids, and I've now been single more years than I care to admit. I'm not the kind of guy that enjoys being alone, but I've been forced to get used to it. For as long as I'm in prison I'm in no position to ever be anything to anyone, and that fact is punctuated daily at mail call. Mail call is a big deal in prison: it's like in the old military movies when the Sergeant comes out and all the guys line up to listen hopefully for their name to be called--it's a very emotional moment. Even those that haven't gotten a letter in years, and the hardest of convicts--listen.

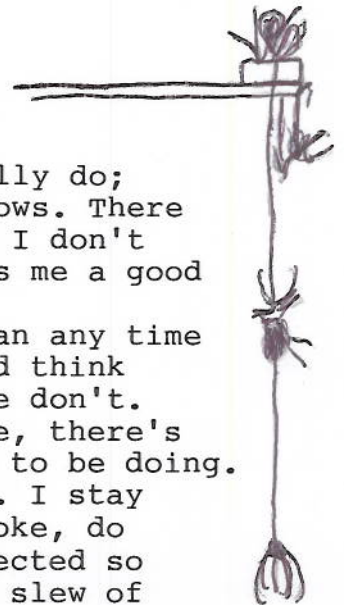
I work on my novels and short story collections every day, and I read like crazy. But fighting off depression is a constant struggle. I go out to run three days a week, and as a form of meditation I do yoga daily; I just started this recently, and it helps. But I still sit down in front of my typewriter and wonder why I'm bothering. I'm so determined to make this writing thing work no matter what, something in me refuses to give up hope. Publishers don't like prisoners, it seems, at least with most of them. The prison stamps our outgoing mail and I'm sure that when an Editor or Assistant Editor goes to the slush pile to do some reading, and sees the prison stamp, that manuscript gets set to the side or even discarded.

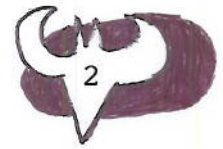
I can understand that, but still. . . .

a lot of work goes into a manuscript, and postage for me is a difficult thing. My hope is that this year is the year my writing gets noticed, and I've now taken my submissions very seriously. This blog may help me do that, because publishers and agents want an author to have a "platform" and part of this platform is a blog. A place readers can go to see samples of work and what's going on new with the writer.

My fingers are crossed.

And for those Editors that aren't quite so inclined to publish work from a prison writer, think of Stephen Crane that confessed, "I have spent ten nights writing a story of the war on my own responsibility but I am not sure that my facts are real and the books won't tell me what I want to know so I must





do it all over again, I guess." He wrote "The Red Badge of Courage" so well that Civil War veterans held the conviction that Crane himself must have been actually in the war, which he wasn't. He was just that good of a writer.

I'm in a very limited situation, but like Crane I'm just gonna have to work with what I've got. Because, not writing, just isn't an option for me. Now I may not write the next American Classic--but I'll write something. Of that I'm sure. I would like to think of my situation as a uniqueness--not a handicap. It gives me a different perspective, and drive behind my prose.

The cell doors may not have opened as usual this morning; but my mind was just as open as ever.

