

Tentative, yet loving hugs between
people trying to learn each other again.
Haven't seen each other in weeks, months.
It takes time to reconnect and feel at ease
And then it's time to say good bye
In the prison visiting room.

Children run to Momma's outstretched arms.
She scoops them up and swings them in the air.
They squeal with delight, their joy palpable.
And then tears and screams as they are torn apart
In the prison visiting room.

A brother greets his sister with a smile
and a pat on the back.
They catch up about mom and dad,
share chips, hot dogs, sodas
from the vending machines.
They share memories from childhood
In the prison visiting room.

One bathroom is for visitors, one for inmates,
Must keep them separate.
Like everywhere else here, keys control access.
Both are numbered areas,
charted somewhere for observation
In the prison visiting room.

The women look normal,
Clean-looking, neutral-smelling
Make-up free, jewelry free.
They look almost serene, sweet
Except for hard-living lines,
Nervous eyes, tattooed expressions
And the too-big baggy brown uniforms.
They yearn for a way to make amends,
To make things right, whole
In the prison visiting room.

Gray uniformed sergeants keep watch
with smiles that are genuine yet controlled.
Formidable, forbidding they watch,
ready to scold,
for too much hand-holding,
lingering kisses, unruly children
In the prison visiting room.

Mothers visiting are tired, shrunken, wrinkled.
They worry about their daughters.
They live with broken hearts,
a sadness that never leaves.
Then they leave their daughters
In the prison visiting room.

Cinderblock walls painted a once-cheerful yellow.
Paper butterflies decorate the bulletin boards,
Cruel, ironic reminders of not being free.
Ceiling fans circulate stale air, stale lives
In the prison visiting room.

All aspects of life here
Eyes shining with love, with tears
Minds thinking, minds dulled
Smiles of courage and of cruelty
The ugly, the beautiful
The rich, the poor
The discouraged, the hopeful
The going nowhere, the been everywhere
The lonely, the tired
The satisfied, the searching.
All together, separately – we are one
In the prison visiting room.

Title:

"The Visiting Room"

written by A woman
who went to visit
someone at the
women's prison in
PENNSYLVANIA
S.C.I. Muncy



Announcements

Fight For Lifers West In

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has meetings every third Saturday at Crossroads U.M. Church, located at 325 N. Highland Ave. in the E. Liberty section of Pittsburgh, 15206 (across from Home Depot) at 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. Contact FFLW at 412-361-3022 (leave a message) or at fightforliferswest@yahoo.com for more information.

If you are a prisoner who has

written a book, Prisons Foundation wants to publish it. There is no charge to publish or read your book. Your book will be scanned and published exactly as we receive it. Any language is acceptable. It may contain drawings and photos. For more information, contact:

Prisons Foundation
PO Box 58043
Washington, DC 20037

New College Designed For Inmates'

Needs: New Freedom College (NFC) is designed for the specific needs of inmates' lives. Tuition costs at NFC are between \$33 and \$50 per credit, which includes books, lessons, assignments, encouraging feedback, and grade updates. (NFC was founded in 2013 and currently does not have a web presence, but they are registered as a business in Oregon State)

For a free information guide and enrollment form, write to:

New Freedom College
1957 W. Burnside St. #1660
Portland, OR 97209