



INTO LIFE'S PANE

I ate last at 3:30 p.m. Friday, it is now 3:30 p.m. Saturday--and no meal has yet been served since 24 hours ago! I've heard of the starving artist, but never had I heard of the starving novelist (or writer), until I became one.

My locker is barren of any sustenance, other than intellectual. I have no money on my Jpay account (0.11¢) and have been unable to purchase any food lately. Families (or friends) of prisoners were allowed to purchase care packages last month, through www.southcarolinapackages.com and will be able to again in a few weeks; but my family could not afford one this time, nor will they on this next allotted time. I'm going to try to get about \$50.00 worth (of the \$200.00 limit), myself. Just to stock up on Ramen soups and coffee. That way when days like today¹ occur, I'll have a little backup stock of food. Normally, we would've been fed again at around noon (our weekend "brunch" meal that somehow replaced breakfast and lunch--the tray no bigger than the old breakfast tray, it just has a scoop of meat grease on the side), and be up for our supper meal by now: but something has occurred.

I've had to accept long ago, that my life as an Imprisoned, was--and is still--subject to the comings and goings of crack-heads and child molesters. They fill the ranks of prisons, and their antics cost us all: it seems like in every day that passes, more drama involving them unfolds.

I try to ignore it.

We're on a lock-down NOW; because of some drama! What exactly it is? I have no idea yet. But, we'll know soon.² Corrupt guards sell about 80 percent of the phones, and they fill every corner of every building. The homosexuals call and sext each other like wayward schoolgirls--conniving little SOBs too, that thrive on the melodrama and always try to make more--and the gangbangers (or ghetto-drones I prefer to call them): will spread the intel across their network. The ghetto-drones will pause their trade of drugs and funds, and the waywards will let go of themselves, just long enough to discuss the "exclusive" scoop. It will be known not only here, but within each prison in this state, with a few others.

The sex offenders have been busy ALL day (:?) with the youthful, and naive, female officer in charge of our building: taking



discreet belfie-style photos and videos of her assets in motion to post and trade online--she's went viral, they say. I try to ignore it, though I must remain aware of my surroundings, it IS Saturday morning and all the kids' shows are on TV with the sex offenders gathered ... in hand. Except today it's not just the children they excite themselves to, but Ms. Belfie as well. Staring at her for hours, as she stares right back with a confused look planted firmly on her face while Dirty Moe mops the floor around her desk for the sixteenth time in two hours.

I try to ignore it.

But at the same time, I wish to stay far out of the way: which paradoxically means I have to be on the lookout for it in order to avoid it. Now that we're on lock-down; all that has come to an end.

Ironically, I'm working on a story entitled: "Stranger Danger." It's an innuendo directed at sex offenders, and the plight of women in their struggle against them.

Many of my current works have such premises.

Maybe one day, I'll have food to eat after selling some stories (or a book) to some poor editor that just feels sorry for my miserable lot. "Stranger Danger," is intended for a literary journal that pays well for such a work--it would be a life changer for me. I could get a new pair of shoes that aren't held together with glue and prayer. Prayers directed to the New Balance god:

"Please, New Balance," I say, prostrated near the toilet of Running Water. "Just one more day, keep the bottoms on, don't let the rainwater in--"

Thunder claps as lightning traverses the sky.

"--I hate wet socks!" I finish with a flush of penance.

There's a tap at my cell door.

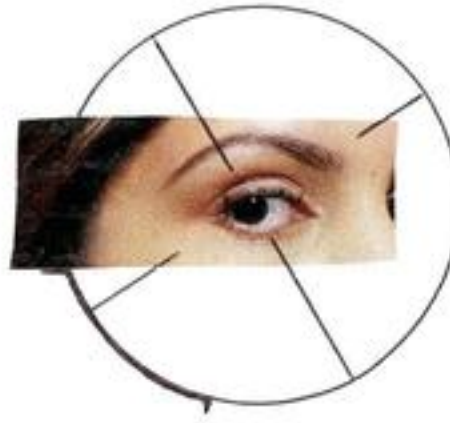
I look, only to find Dirty Moe, grimy face pushed to the tempered glass (I'll have to clean that later). "Hey man," he says, "we gonna be a, uh, havin' school Monday. It be a holiday."

"NO."

"You got a cup of coffee?"

"NO."

And with his ulterior motive revealed and aptly denied, he disappears--leaving me to wonder just how, and why, he's even out. But I don't care. Nobody cares. Dirty Moe will always be Dirty Moe.



* * *

I've been working on "Stranger Danger" intermittently since March, in prep for a September submission--I leave the publisher unnamed at this time so no naysayer haters attempt to intervene on their consideration of my work--I'm trying to make the story mean something profound. I know I should start simple, but I can't help myself, I want my writing to stand for something. Something bigger than myself that will outlast the bottoms of the new shoes "Stranger Danger" will help me purchase; something that will outlast even me. Short stories have ways of doing such things.

Kurt Vonnegut once wrote of, Maharishi Yogi, "guru to the Beatles and assorted movie stars ('Yes, We Have No Nirvanas,' published in Esquire and collected in his book Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon). He satirized the stylish popularity of Eastern meditation, saying we had the same thing in the West--reading short stories, which also lowered your heart rate and freed your mind from other concerns. He said short stories were 'Buddhist catnaps,'"³ And I must say I concur completely! Reading a short story is like a brief interlude into another world; it's not quite like the novel.

In a novel, a reader visits the narrative window piecemeally (very seldom, these days, can someone devote the time, and energy, to read a novel in one sitting, though it does happen, just not that often, not with my novels not yet published that is), stepping in and out of the intangible pane. The novel, is a slumbering hibernation of cognitive regeneration; while the short story is the, "catnap." In comparison to meditation: not all are gurus in practice, devoting only certain limits within certain days to peering into Life's pane. The bigger windows may show more of the story visceral--but that doesn't mean their smaller counterparts necessarily show less--sometimes less is more, depending on what it is.

A good short story writer can turn a mere dozen (or less) pages into a heartstrings, or an unexpected sucker-punch! It is for that--in both endeavors--that I strive.

They finally delivered our "brunch," (it's 4:20 p.m.) exactly 24 hours and 50 minutes since my last TV-dinner size tray, and I consumed this one like a homeless guy finding a cheeseburger.



As I now write, I can feel the heavily processed food inside me, refilling the gaps with its carcinogenic fuel. The fact that I feel such things further proves to me the nutritional starvations of my own body.

Nobody is to blame.

It's simply a societal reflection.

The way things are, and from what's portrayed within the narrative affidavits of Dostoyevsky--it's been the same refraction for a very very long time now.

I've eaten, but I am still hungry; I have lived, but I am not quite alive; I have known love in my life, and for it I am jaded; I have written, yet not quite been read. But the latter is changing--and with it, so too can the former. I need as many catnaps as I can get, to deal with this Inferno: I need so many I have to write some of my own. Very much like Vonnegut, "the fact remains that I am stuck with the risk of being me. I am compelled, therefore, to spread the risk around a little, if I can."⁴ Put a little more breath on the Pane, before I'm gone.

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NOTES AND
REFERENCES

1. I say "today," but this was written originally on Saturday the 5th--I am typing it on the 6th. Then, of course, it must traverse the country via the U.S. Postal service before reaching MIT for digital transcription for your screen.
2. Word spread within 2 hours of a hostage situation at the Kirkland prison, and the local news reported the lock-down as well (just not in truth with detail).
3. Kurt Vonnegut: Letters, Edited by Dan Wakefield. Delacorte Press, 2012. pages 75-76.
4. *ibid.* pg. 65