

A Memoir  
by Timothy Muise, MA

This year I will have 18 years in on a tragic manslaughter conviction. Next year, 2017, I will go home; the only problem is that I don't have a home anymore... That is a story for another time. One thing was made clear to me during this long, strange trip in that the punishment of prison is not hard labor, being locked in a cage, or having angry guards berate for any or no reason at all. The punishment of prison is loss; sure as the sunset.

When my brother Bobby died I was at a loss for words. He was my hero growing up: superior athlete, great fisherman, and loving big brother. He died young (53 years old - I am 52 today) and left behind four children, an ex-wife, a mother, a father, two sisters, and me - his little brother who was locked away in a cage at the Maximum Security Prison in Shirley, Massachusetts.

A stranger had to take one of the Pall Bearer places at my brother's funeral. I could hardly stand it - that messed me up - and I am still not over it today. I never got to make amends and say the "sorry's" that needed to be said. My dear brother was diagnosed with cancer and three short months later he was gone. I punched the cement in my cage.

Some years later I got one of those prison intercom calls no one wants to get. They summoned me to the social worker's office and she told me I needed to call my mother. I placed the dreaded call and found out that Superman was dead; my father had passed suddenly in his truck. I could not believe it; I would never see him alive again - how could this be? I almost could not process it, but I needed to comfort my mother as she had just lost her husband, and best friend of 62 years. How could I be sad? But I was, and it was made worse by the fact that I could not travel to my mother's side to be there for her. No beating at the hands of a jackbooted guard could ever cause that pain.

My brother and father are tuna fishing in Heaven, and for that I am happy, but somehow God saw it fitting in his providence to also take my 22 year old nephew David a couple of years ago. He was Bobby's son. I was stunned that cancer claimed this young innocent. Again my mother was devastated and I could do nothing but punch another wall. May the seas in Heaven be always calm for Robert, Bobby, and David. I will see them all someday.

If you were to ask me the question about prison punishment and what it means, I would answer unequivocally that it is loss. Freedom is a precious thing and I never knew just how precious until the loss of it impacted me through these losses. I had hoped to make amends with my wife upon release. I truly looked forward to the effort. My dear Raynee passed at the age of 49... There are not enough walls to punch.

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