

PEN PALS WANTED
Wednesday
January 11, 2017

Even on the "best of days," being in prison is difficult enough, but being incarcerated thousands of miles from your family and friends is a punishment too cruel to contemplate. Visits are all but impossible, and the companies who've negotiated contracts with the prison system to provide telephone service (collect call only, of course), charge such outrageous fees that, after a short time, it's simply not possible to accept the charges, no matter how much they want to hear from you. As if this wasn't bad enough, your conscience refuses to provide you with any peace, as you're constantly tormented with the burdens you're placing on your loved ones. After a short time, your only means of communicating is the written word, sent via the aptly nicknamed "snail mail." At first, your loved ones try their best to respond, but as time drags on and your chances of succeeding on appeal gradually diminish, the responses start coming slower and slower, and with decreasing frequency. It's not intentional, and it's not meant to be cruel, but if you're like me, and had a familial relationship already strained to its breaking point, then it doesn't take much to surpass the point of no return.

As the years slowly and painfully pass, the anger and disappointment gradually fade away, only to be replaced with an overwhelming sense of depression. You reach out for help, only to learn that treatment is more time consuming and aggravating than the depression. The years continue to pass, and slowly, you start to develop a sense of understanding and maturity. You start reaching out again, trying to rebuild old relationships, only to find out that, with the passage of so much time, old friends have moved and forwarding addresses have long expired. The only way to find them anymore is with Internet tools like Facebook and Google, neither of which are available to you.

One day, someone opens your eyes to making new friends through the mail, with the use of the Internet. "There are places in which an inmate can place an ad," you're told, "places visited by people looking to write to inmates," and it dawns on you, you write a blog for a site that's visited by hundreds, if not thousands of different people on a daily basis, so instead of spending money on ads which limit everything from how many words you can write to how many pictures you can post, why not say what you've got to say on your blog and hope that someone takes an interest and writes directly to you?

With that said, are any readers interested in forming a friendship with someone in my position? While it's true that I'm in prison, and therefore, unable to do many of the activities traditionally performed among friends, this applies only to the physical activities, i.e., coming over for a BBQ over the weekend, going out to the club, swimming, etc. While I can't do any of these, I can do other, more important things, things like lending a shoulder to lean on, an ear to listen or advice for a problem. For me, writing is a pleasure, which means that you'll always have a letter in your mailbox with another on the way.

I recognize the fact that introductory letters are difficult. If you're anything like me, you're worried about whether or not you're going to spend all this time and effort opening up to a perfect stranger, only to be rejected in the form of not receiving a response, however, you need have no such concerns with me. I don't care anything about your race, political affiliation, religious preference, sexual orientation, criminal record (or lack thereof), or anything else for that matter. We don't even need to share a like for any of the same activities. If anything, it's the differences which make life interesting and enjoyable, while at the same time providing the basis for an interesting conversation or debate. From the conservative to the alternative, I'm willing to write them all, all you need to do is take the next step. Send me a short letter letting me know a little bit about yourself, maybe include a picture or two. Are you involved in a relationship of any sort? Or are you single, for whatever reason? When it comes to writing to an inmate, what are you looking for? Someone to exchange letters with on an infrequent basis? Or someone to faithfully exchange letters with, possibly even meeting in person at some time in the future? There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, just information which helps guide the course of the friendship.

If, after giving this some thought, you want to write but you still can't figure out what to say, then try this: forget the introductory letter and send me your name and address. All letters will be responded to. No burden, no worries about being rejected. And while it's not a requirement, feel free to include a picture, or several pictures, just no polaroids, as the prison won't allow them for fear of people hiding contraband in them (not that **you** would ever do anything like that!).

As far as more information about me, I'm a 6'1", 160 pound single white male with reddish brown hair and blue eyes. I'm only writing this in the hopes of making new friends, either exclusively through the mail, or eventually in person. While I'm not actually looking for anything romantic, this isn't to say that I'd be opposed to something if it came up. Life's too short, and I'd be a fool to turn down something meaningful if it came across my path, regardless as to how we met.

Computers are definitely a passion with me, as is developing databases and websites, both of which I hope to pick up when I get out. In addition to computers and software, I also enjoy making things, whether it's doing some remodeling on the house or making jewelry. Obviously, the prison isn't going to allow me to do any remodelling on my cell (although you'd be amazed at what I can do with a few sheets of cardboard), they do allow me to make various pieces of jewelry out of beads, some of which I've entered into a number of art contests. I consider myself to be an extremely intelligent person, capable of learning anything that interests me. So far, I've taught myself basic electronics, criminal and civil litigation, database design, website design, automotive repair and a number of other miscellaneous skills that are bound to come up handy over the course of time.

If you've reached this point, then there's probably a pretty good chance that you're interested, even if subconsciously, so take a chance. Drop me a line and share your contact information with me and let's see what happens next. :)

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