

ADMIT TWO

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Crime & Punishment Collage Photographs & Poems

by

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ADMIT TWO

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the numbers speak

Liz Calka

2.3 million	(people in the United States confined)
1 for every 100	(adults in our country)
1 in 10	(children have a parent in prison, on probation, or on parole)
-	
1 of every 100	(prisoners will be raped; many more will remain silent)
3,400	(prisoners wait on death row)
-	
2,225	(juveniles sentenced to life w/o parole; aka, death by incarceration)
73	(of those children sentenced to death by incarceration at age 13 or 14)
-	
Hundreds of billions	(of dollars spent on punishment)
-	
The whole thing a	catch
22.	

Poetic Justice

Robert Johnson

Build prisons
not day-care
Lock 'em up
What do we care?

-

Hire cops, not counselors
Staff courts, not clinics
Wage warfare
Not welfare

-

Invest in felons
Ripen 'em like melons
Eat 'em raw, then
Ask for more

-

More poverty
More crime

-

More men in prison
More fear in the street

-

More ex-cons among us
Poetic justice



the law*Liz Calka***I.**

When my father came home from work,
I would hear his boots on the dining room floor as he left his
40 caliber Glock to rest on the top of my mother's china cabinet.
That's where it always was
where young children with big imaginations couldn't reach it.
Rather than observing the hole it was burning through the oak,
the danger it presented,
the ticking time bomb it really was,
I used to forget it was there.
Playing with his handcuffs (toys) instead, laughing as he pretended to arrest me
remembering the time he visited my 3rd grade classroom and
showed us how to dust a plate for fingerprints,
feeling proud.

-

II.

I never thought twice about the fact that my father
was a police officer
until I became a teenager, trying to
accept the conflicting images that
were being presented to me.
Now I edge around that china cabinet
with caution, avoid walking past it
whenever possible.
I see my father leave in the morning,
ready to save the world,
and now I understand the heaviness of his boots as he
traipses into our dining room after work.
I see the weariness in his eyes.

Busted*Robert Johnson*

Busted, sittin' in a squad car
knowin' you're gonna go far.

-

In a manner of speaking,
this wasn't the life you were seeking.

-

You thought you'd make a big score
Now you face the prison door

-

held wide open,
just for you
by the men & women in blue.

-

In a split second
your life was
split in two.
You'll never be one again,
never be just you.

-

You're the person you knew
and a criminal, too. Down the road,
even you will confuse the two.

-

Maybe you're not a big offender
maybe not a bad one, either.
Only time will tell.
But once we tag you a criminal
we hate to let you go.

-

So this much you *do* know:
Nothing will ever be the same.
Your world moves in slow mo'
it unfolds in a different frame.

-

Busted, sitting in a squad car
hands cuffed tight, wrists red and lined,
looking in the rearview mirror
at the life you left behind.



captivity*Liz Calka*

When you are being trapped,
you don't know that it's happening.
Someone flings a net over your head,
maybe lures you into an abandoned parking lot,
tricks you during a court hearing.

-

When you are being trapped,
it's impossible to see the future that you face.

-

But once they've got you,
you'll wish for nothing but
to see the sky.

A Zoo Near You

Robert Johnson

A decent zoo captures
in miniature, the
natural environs of the
animals within.

-

Prisons don't capture
the free world of the
ranging felon.

-

They turn their world
upside down and
inside out.

-

If prisons were more like zoos
maybe we'd visit them
and share our families
and our food
with the captives.



dinner at san quentin*Liz Calka*

While picking through my dinner last night
I found some words

Salty

Tasteless

-

I picked apart your superiority,
spat out your stereotypes,
chewed on your assumptions for awhile.

-

Criminal

Offender

Were the only words my dinner offered to describe me.

I came to the conclusion that I am dangerous,

I realized that I would always be misunderstood.

-

Then I found a grub.

Like the French

Robert Johnson

Maryland executes people like the French did
 Not with a guillotine but during a given week
 With no warning of the day or time

-

“The condemned shall be executed During the Week of X,”
 Maryland Officials solemnly proclaim, Where X
 Marks the end of your sorry life and
 We’re sorry we can’t give you the particulars;
 have to worry about security, crowds, publicity —
 So we keep the press guessing
 And your loved ones
 And of course you

-

We don’t serve special last meals, either
 We don’t want to be confused with the French
 Who probably fed the condemned something delightful
 Cutting edge cuisine on the eve of the guillotine
 A last meal to be remembered, if not by prisoner,
 Then by a society that savors each meal
 As if it were the last morsel of pleasure
 Served up in this life

-

No, in the Maryland death house we serve what’s on the regular prison menu
 Which is on a par with dog food
 Almost, anyway
 Dog food comes in many varieties
 Dry and wet, some for tender tummies
 A few have yoghurt mixed in
 Prison food is pretty much one size fits all. Badly.
 Stuff is so worked over you’d think it was digested and
 Served up from an intestine near you

-

Don’t coddle the condemned
 Don’t eat with them either

-

The day you get a really, really
 Bad meal on death row is probably your last—
 Last taste of Maryland
 A sorry imitation of France
 Where we hold the Freedom Fries
 And other Free World treats
 On some principle I can’t follow, and
 Decent folk find hard to swallow

EXIT

MADNESS

7p

the firing squad*Liz Calka*

A friend once told me about firing squads.

She said

“One of the five shooters gets a gun that shoots blanks,”

she said.

“This is so that they can all tell themselves they’re firing the gun with the blanks,”

she said.

“This is so they don’t have to believe that they’ve taken a life.”

-

I don’t know if I believe what

she said.

But then again I never believed I would live in a system of madness where it was legal to take a life in the first place.

when the gurney comes for you*Robert Johnson*

death row ain't that bad, he said
but what did he know
he was homeless at 9

-

needle ain't that bad, he said
but what did he know
he was a junkie at 12

-

i got hope, he said, life ain't that bad
but what did he know
his life ended long ago
long before death row

-

starting with a child-mother who bore him
with labor pains and growing pains
and a life bound to whim, not him
at the end he said, death ain't that bad,
i'll be strong, get thru
this much he thought he knew
a certain wisdom born, he said,
when the gurney comes for you



Little Miracles*Sonia Tabriz*

So as I sit here I wonder,
Is this really all there is?
Little obsessions?
Thrills we create for ourselves,
titulations
we magnify in our minds, to
distract ourselves from despair?

-

To distract ourselves from the fear we feel,
That these creations all around us,
that surround us,
are nothing,
because in the end,
each of us will live and die alone.

-

Nothing conveys.

-

We live.

-

We die.

-

And the details,
what happens in the middle,
doesn't really bear weight.

-

At the end of the day –
my day, your day –
these little distractions are all we have

-

Minor miracles to live by
In your house
My house
Even the death house

Note: All photographs were taken by Liz Calka. “Poetic Justice,” “Busted,” and “A Zoo Near You” are reprinted from *Poetic Justice* by Robert Johnson (Northwoods Press, 2004). “when the gurney comes for you” and “Like the French” were written In Memory of Wesley E. Baker, executed by lethal injection in the city of Baltimore by the State of Maryland on December 6, 2005.

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Sonia Tabriz is an honors student at American University majoring in Law & Society and Psychology. She is an award-winning artist and author as well as the Editor-In-Chief of *Tacenda Literary Magazine* and Managing Editor of BleakHouse Publishing.