

Adult Group

1st Place

Untitled

By Jeffry Manion

6am key tag to the control officer

A walk through the sally port

The clang as it shuts

And the day begins

What will the day bring

How will the inmates be

Hoping for the best

Preparing for the worse

Relive the night shift

A short briefing

The night has been quite

And I hope it stays that way

A trip to the chow hall

Work assignments given

Paperwork to complete

So far a quiet day

Angry voices from the cells

A fight on the tier

Call for backup

So much for a quiet day

The tension is palpable

You feel it every time you walk the tier

And it's your job to keep it from exploding again

Can't wait for 2pm

More paper work

Incident report

Disciplinary offense report

It seems that all we do

A bang on the door

A quick look at the clock

It's 2pm and your relief us here

But I'll have to do it all again tomorrow

Everyday is the same

Everyday is different

Doing a life sentence

Eight hours at a time.

2nd Place

Spoken Word

By: Purshia Adams

Before Advent, but after All Souls,
pink roses continue
to flank the hollowed husk, summer
having intruded on fall,
shell nearly eclipsed, caught in the shadow
of the “new” cellhouse,
the last old cellhouse, and the mess hall’s
imposing remains that leave
something to recall and imagine—
the chapel: walls and scorched beams.

Auburn homage, three tiers of confinement
before numbers were given,
steady turnover until
a dubious first (yet the last
of its kind), indifferent to the scaffold
and awaiting rescue
by brothers in arms who never arrived,
dangled for seven minutes—
decay set in as occupancy
doubled, not counting the bugs.

After condemnation it rose again,
sanctified and adorned with
murals of a soft-focus savior
co-opted by old cons
knowing his way, through these doors, offers passage
to freedom, a path without
its own salvation strategy, set alight,
last words akin to Proverbs
—“he that will not hear cannot judge”—
in bitter Ash Wednesday cold.

3rd Place

“Lord’s Prayer”

By: Dzevad Vrabac

Dearest God of Word,
no doubt only death is certain. A condemned
man has a privilege to know the date and
the hour of a departure. A foresight paid
in the most sacred currency – a life.

Last supper as the feast for the eyes:
boiled lobster with drawn butter, rolls,
sweet potatoes, asparagus, a tossed
salad with dressing and a piece of
Pecan pie with melted caramel in a cup
of coffee for digestion, a cigarette and
with a good book conversation.

In the case of State’s power of a justifiable
homicide, no longer a justly punished
criminal, I am the scapegoat for the public
justice and validation.

In accepting the meal in the cell, 60 feet
from the gallows, I forgive your all – the judge,
the witnesses and the executioner. May the midnight
noose absolve my foolishness too? Crimes of passion
cannot be deterred. Love’s blind.

Amen.