

Not So Serious:

A mini-collection of poems from my  
time of incarceration



James Kilgore, 2013

## **Anyone Who Says a Prison Is a Hotel**

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Has never stripped  
Done liftyournutsackspreadyourcheeksandcough  
Before going to kiss his mother in the visiting room.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Has never developed an intimate relationship  
With all those who have scratched their presence  
On a cement ceiling  
Fatal '98  
Crips forever  
Woods rule  
Puro Mejicano

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Has never listened to a shank sharpen to a fine edge  
In the cell above  
Wondering if it's for you

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Has never scooped goulash  
Off his tray with his i.d. card  
Because he left his spork in the house

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Only knows the kind of dump truck  
That carries garbage  
Not the ones that discard human lives

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Doesn't understand  
How much ten, twenty or thirty years is  
Out of a person's life.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Doesn't know what it means  
When she stops writing  
And refuses your phone calls.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Doesn't know what it means to hurry up  
And wait and wait and wait and wait  
Then be told you're too late.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Has never had to stay ready  
So they don't have to get ready  
Has never has to sleep with their boots on.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Doesn't want to solve the problem  
But just lock it away  
And pretend we'll all live happily ever after.

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Doesn't understand a thing  
No entiende nada

Anyone who says a prison is a hotel  
Can go to hell.

## **Birthday Celebration**

Lockdown birthday

The cells holds a treat

One specialty teabag

English Breakfast

The instructions say

“steep 1-2 minutes”

I give it three

I’ve got the time

The plastic cup hits my lips

The celebration begins

It’s been a great year

Do I sing Happy Birthday to myself?

How do I blow out the candles?

## **Not So Serious**

Young Crip

Told me he'd never had

A serious argument

With his mother

Just the time

He dragged her out of a crack house

Drove her home

Then handed her his heat

"Just shoot me," he told her

"Because what you're doing is killing me anyway."

At least she didn't pull the trigger.

That would have been a serious argument.

## **A Haircut**

The barber

Shaves the hair away

So the swazi tattoo

At the back of the man's head can shine.

White pride profiled.

This hot house of hate

Heated up another degree.

## **For Nikiwe**

1984

A time of meat and bread

A bus to town for 16 cents

Nikiwe sat in the middle of the class

She sparkled

As she sharpened her tiny pencil with half an old razor blade

And solved her simultaneous linear equations

X was equal to three, y was four

No problem.

Today she can't find x

There is no y

Pencils are no longer in the equation

The rich have eaten Zimbabwe

And left Nikiwe

Only a razor to swallow

## **Stuck on Lockdown**

9/19/09

Locked down

I'm constipated

My own private hell

Locked down

Nothing but stinkin' gas

In my cell

Locked down

No fibre

No Metamucil

Locked down

And blocked down

It just ain't no thrill

Locked down

Let me out

I'm tired of this trap

Locked down

Open up, please

Then maybe I'll crap



## **Election 2008: The Morning After**

As he fastens the shackles  
On a black diabetic  
So he can walk him  
Two hundred yards to the nurse's office  
For his insulin shot  
The guard, a veteran of fifteen years  
Asks no one in particular  
What it will be like to have a President  
Who refuses to wear  
An American flag lapel pin.

## **High Speed Chase**

This mind of mine  
Once gave me a torsion-air ride  
Now I bounce along the road  
Lost  
Shock absorbers worn  
Hard changing gears  
Can't quite recall if I'm in first  
Or second.  
No idea how to use that GPS.

Too much information perhaps  
Life on one too many continents  
Then thousands of days  
In concrete houses  
A diet of under-cooked carrots  
And spider web tattoos

Finally I check the rear view mirror  
Red lights flashing  
Sirens  
This can't be happening to me  
The highway patrol of age  
Has got the wrong man.  
If only I could remember where I put my license and registration.