

A SPARK in The dark

636416

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A YEAR SET OFF FROM THE PAROLE BOARD CAME IN THE MAIL THIS WEEK — AND IT WAS MY ONLY MAIL, A FILLING THAT WAS LABORIOUSLY INSTALLED IN A LOWER MOLAR BY THE PRISON DENTIST FIVE YEARS AGO HAS CRUMBLLED AWAY BIT BY BIT THIS WEEK, THE ONLY PENCIL THAT I OWN BROKE IN HALF IN THE MIDST OF WRITING A LETTER AND IT HAS RAINED JUST ENOUGH EVERY DAY THIS WEEK TO CANCEL MY ALLOTTED HOUR OF FRESH AIR AND EXERCISE OUTSIDE. IN ALL IT HAS BEEN ONE OF THOSE KINDS OF WEEKS WHEN NOTHING GOES RIGHT AND SO ON THIS DAY, THE LAST DAY OF THE WEEK, I LAY UP INSIDE MY CELL DETERMINED TO DO NOTHING AT ALL PASSING THE HOURS OF THE DAY AWAY AIMLESSLY AND MINDLESSLY LISTENING TO THE SOUNDS OF FALLING RAIN AND THE RESONANT RUMBLING OF THUNDER.

Time CREPT SLOWLY BY AND AT SOME POINT IN THAT ENDLESS STRETCH OF AFTERNOON BETWEEN LUNCH AND SUPPER I SUCCEMDED TO THE TEDIUM OF IDLENESS AND WAS LULLED INTO SLEEP BY THE MESMERIZING BEAT OF RAINDROPS TAP TAP TAPPING ON THE PRISON WALLS. IT WAS A DEEP SLEEP, A TRANQUILIZING AND SOOTHING SNOOZE AND I WAS FAR FAR AWAY IN DREAMLAND WHEN THE STEEL PLATE COVERING THE FOOD SLOT IN THE CELL DOOR DROPPED OPEN WITH A COLOSSAL BANG OF STEEL STRIKING STEEL AND I LEAPED OUT OF BED STARTLED AND HALF ASLEEP ASSUMING IT WAS CHOW TIME. I AM NOT ONE TO MISS A MEAL I TELL YOU AND SO I STOOD AT THE CELL DOOR WAITING EXPECTANTLY FOR A TRAY TO COME SLIDING THROUGH THE OPENED FOOD SLOT AS I HAVE AND IT HAS HUNDREDS OF TIME BEFORE BUT NO TRAY CAME SLIDING IN, AND IT TOOK ME A MINUTE OR SO IN MY MUDDLED AND DROWSY STATE TO COME TO THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WAS NOT CHOW TIME AT ALL BUT THE MAILMAN AT THE DOOR INSTEAD, AND AFTER EXAMINING THE MUG SHOT ON MY PRISONER IDENTIFICATION CARD LONG ENOUGH TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE BURR HEADED AND GLARING VISAGE WAS MYSELF HE PUSHED A BROWN PAPER WRAPPED PACKAGE INSIDE THROUGH THE OPENED SLOT ADDRESSED TO ME.

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It has been a while since I got a package in the mail from BOOKS TO PRISONERS and I tore into it in unabashed haste and hope and discovered to my GREAT JOY one book in the lot that looked irresistible, a PAPERBACK TRAVEL LOG with a cover image so intriguing that I opened it at once intending to scan the introduction only but once I began reading in it I could not pull my eyes away and continued on fully absorbed in the travels within until the sounds of the food cart rolling into the cellblock roused me from it. But now that the chow cart has come and gone and left me feeling sated and sociable with an ample portion of tuna casserole slowly and deliciously winding its way through my inner self let me tell you about this irresistible book that has a photograph of an old locomotive engine on the front cover. It is an accounting of a long journey by trains that begins in Boston and goes all the way down to the bottom of South America. The author a great wit and entertainer dispenses oodles of absurd anecdotes along with fascinating historical and geographical data en route from page one to four hundred and he is so meticulously attentive in his descriptions of all he sees and those he meets along the way you come to feel like you are there too, sitting one seat over with your face pressed up against the window pane and dont you know I wish I was. Oh man Oh man I wish I was!

With no television, no radio, no window and no company a book is a momentous event in my 8x12 universe, a spark in the dark, and not long after the food cart departed three quick raps on the cell wall preceded a note tied onto a string that came sliding in under the door, both from my neighbor eager to know if I got some books in the mail ???

Books to Prisoners is a group of volunteers that mails books

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FREE OF COSTS TO ANY PRISONER REQUESTING SOMETHING TO READ. They OPERATE SOLELY on donations OF BOOKS AND POSTAGE, TAPE AND PACKAGING, TIME AND LOVE. BOOKS ARE GREAT COMPANIONS AND THE ONLY RELIEF FOR MANY PRISONERS LOCKED AWAY in SOLITARY CONFINEMENT ISOLATED FROM OTHERS FOR YEARS. BEFORE I SAT DOWN TO WRITE THIS I TIED A BOOK ONTO my NEIGHBORS' STRING AND WHEN he GETS SOME BOOKS in THE MAIL I WILL SHOOT my STRING / NOTE OVER TO him. THANK YOU BOOKS TO PRISONERS. BELOW I HAVE LISTED SOME ADDRESSES FOR THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEND A SPARK INTO THE DARK AND FOR THOSE WHO NEED A SPARK:

D.C. AREA BOOKS TO PRISONERS (nationwide)

P.O. Box 34190

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20043-4190

BOOKS TO PRISONERS (nationwide)

40 LEFT BANK BOOKSTORE

92 PIKE STREET

SEATTLE, WA. 98101

INSIDE BOOKS PROJECT (TX. ONLY)

827 W. 12TH

AUSTIN, TX. 78701