



# The Creative Writing Issue

INMATES AND OFFICERS FROM ANY DOC PRISON CAN SUBMIT ARTICLES TO STATEVILLE SPEAKS

## A MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW

Donald McDonald

**H**is eyes opened slowly. White light singed his thoughts into focus as his mind reeled with questions. "What, where, how," he thought as his head slowly stopped throbbing from the bright hospital lights and blinding white screaming walls. A face with brown friendly eyes stared down at him. She had dark smooth skin, a motherly yet business-like smile with concerned wrinkles creasing her forehead.

"Are you okay, Sir? Do you know where you are, or what day it is," the nurse asked sending his head throbbing again. "You were in a car crash on the expressway. Your test show that you have no obvious injuries. But you did hit your head pretty hard on the steering wheel. The car was registered to a Sheila Fard. We've been trying to contact her but we can't seem to locate her. Could you tell me your name please?"

"I," but before he could finish, pain lashed out across the front of his brain attacking his head. "I, don't know. I, I can't remember anything," the stranger whispered in an futile attempt not to anger the pain demon molesting his head.

"Okay, just relax then, the loss of memory is probably temporary. Let's give it a few days and see. Your doctor's name is Kaun. She will be up to

see you once we move you to your room some time soon," said the nurse as she thoughtfully disappeared from above him.

Wishing the pain away, the stranger to himself fell into a dreamless sleep. No images or memories came. He was without a present. He was a tree without roots, empty, he just was . . .

Later that night, as consciousness found him, he remembered the pain from the last time he opened his eyes and tried to slowly open them so as to not alert the demon again. This time there was no pain; not much light either. He thought it must be night as he also remembered the nurse's words, but nothing else. Panic seized him as it dawned on him that his mind was a blank photograph. He had no past, no present. He tried to probe his mind but no images would come. He had no mother, no father. He was homeless. He could remember no birthday or even his name. Oh, he could think of many names, sure, he just couldn't think of his own.

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*"If Only" Cont...*

out at the corner. Once they discovered I was selling they got mad. When they confronted me I was terrified. After the first hit I was on the ground crying. They said if I ever sold on their block again the beating would be worse. When I whined that all I wanted was to get some food, the leader took pity on me. After that I started selling for him and spent most of my time with the gang. For once I felt welcomed and each time they asked me to do something, it was always something I was able to do, not requiring any book smarts. For the first time I knew what pride was. I was proud of my accomplishments, never reasoning whether they were right or wrong. They always felt right and garnered me acceptance. The first time I contemplated right or wrong was after my arrest for murder and a sentence of 20 years in prison.!

you to say. You don't close your eyes and see nothing. You can imagine the faces of your family and friends. You know who to love and who to be afraid of. You have your experiences and those of your parents and their parents to help you decide what to do. If I never get my memory back, all that will be lost to me forever."

The voice was quiet for a minute and said thoughtfully, "Yeah, that's one way to look at it. But maybe you don't want to know your past. What if you don't like it. I know I don't like mine. Nothing but hardship, pain and suffering."

"But at least it's your hardship and pain," said the stranger. "Why be a blank slate. People need a foundation to build on. A compass to judge which direction to go. Even a man in the desert needs his shadow to tell him which way to travel, or how much time he has to get there. If I can't remember, I'm just a man without a shadow, a stranger to my self and everyone I meet."

Suddenly an alarm started sounding down the hall and the two stayed quiet as busy feet rushed back and forth in the hall. "Code Blue," a female voice sang out trying to match her voice with that of the alarm. Two people stopped outside their door and spoke to each other in hushed hurried voices; neither of the two in the room could understand what was being

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*A Man with No Shadow Cont...*

"Who am I, where am I from?" he asked his self quietly in the dark hospital's bed. "Not my bed."

"Well, now that's a good question, isn't it," a strange voice said falling out of the darkness from his left.

Momentarily surprised, he told the voice, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you. I was just thinking out loud."

"You didn't wake me, but I am interested in your question.

"Who am I," said the descending voice. "That seems to me to be the question that everybody is concerned with these days. Everyone seems to be more concerned with who they are more than who everybody else is."

"It wasn't a philosophical question. I was in a car crash and can't remember who I am," replied the stranger.

"I'm sorry to hear that, but maybe, just maybe that's a good thing," said the voice.

"A good thing, that's easy for

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e sat hunched over his  
desk staring at the book  
for what seemed the  
longest time. He scanned  
the titles of the various  
texts and magazines he had stacked next

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# Your Move

## Part One

Jeffrey Boswell

It was a very pleasant day in June, almost 66 degrees. I was in a small park on Lake Shore Drive, waiting to meet a dear friend of mine, Pam, for dinner and maybe a movie. It was around 6:00. The sunshine was wonderful & the light breeze was a comfort. I was enjoying both. My cell phone beeped as I sat on a bench overlooking a small pond with a few ducks seemingly enjoying the day as much as I was. The call was from Pam, explaining that she was running a little late but that she should be there by 7:00. With a little time to kill, I was sorry I hadn't brought a book along with me. Surveying the small park I observed two gentlemen engaged in a game of chess. I wandered over. I hadn't played the game in years, but I did appreciate the challenge the game gave one's mind. No sooner had I approached the table and the game was at an end. A young man with a smooth pink face and choirboy eyes, which gave him an innocent demeanor belied by a disquietingly eager smile that came and went like the flickering of a serpent's tongue, was saying "checkmate." The other gentleman looked upset and said he had an appointment to keep and rushed off abruptly. The young man looked up at me with a sly smirk and said, "Care to indulge?" and pointed to the chess board that was already set up to play. Not recalling him resetting the pieces was strange, yet it was a fleeting thought, because the chess set captured my attention. The board itself was mirrored, like it appeared to be made out of marble, transparent and gold squares. The pieces were gold and platinum. The pawns were like little scorpions. The rooks,

knights and bishops all had wings on their backs, faces half flames, half human. The queen had wings and a veil covering her face. The king had no wings and no face. I was mesmerized by the exquisite board and pieces and, feeling challenged, like this was no ordinary game, I sat without thinking and said, "Why not? I have time." The young man's smirk was gone and his eyes now reflected an age-old wisdom as he said—"yes, time"—as though the word itself held an extraordinary meaning to him. His voice seemed to be deeper as his gaze rose upon me, eyes unwavering: "Ahhh, the game of the gods," he said as he pushed a scorpion-like pawn (kp to 4).

"Your move, sir."  
And once again his eager smile came and went with the flickering of his tongue.

*To be continued the next episode of  
Stateville Speaks... |*

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# If Only

## Part Two

Joe Dole

My time spent in prison was the most positive experience of my life. It was a life-altering moment that led me to leave a life of crime behind. I met with a counselor to discuss my goals and interests and to make a blueprint for rehabilitation. The next week I was enrolled in G.E.D. classes and received my diploma 2 years later. In the following years I was assisted in picking my courses to work toward a college degree in my field of interest. I received my bachelor's degree in six years. A Pell grant paid for it all.

Once I was enrolled in school and had an eye on the future I turned my attention towards the necessities of the present. I got a job working in the factory

# Lockdown Prison Heart

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Lockdown Prison Heart is a collection of powerful essays written by incarcerated men and women within Illinois Correctional Facilities

making minimum wage. This allowed me to send money home to support my child as well as buy necessities at the commissary and start a small savings account.

I was shown respect and compassion at all times, and this in turn

*Continued on page 7...*

JUNE 2006

# The Creative Writing Issue

## The World We Make

Angel Torres

We make the world in which we live  
By what we gather and what we give,  
By our daily deeds and the things we  
say,  
By what we keep or we cast away.

We make our world by the beauty we  
see  
In a dark cell with songs or words we  
preach,  
In a butterfly's wing, in the pale  
moon's rise,  
and the wonder that lingers in  
midnight skies.

We make our world by the life we  
lead,  
By the friends we pick, by the books  
we read,  
By the pity we show in the hour of  
care,  
By the loads we lift and the love we  
share.

We make our world by the goals we  
pursue,  
By the heights we seek and the higher  
view,  
By hopes and dreams that reach the  
sun  
And a will to fight till justice is won.

What is the place in which we dwell,

A cell or a palace, a heaven or hell  
We gather and scatter, we take and we  
give,  
We make our world—and there we  
live. |

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## Where Have You Gone, Black Man?

William Jones

The black man is an endangered species  
due to the simple fact that he makes up  
42% of the prison population. Eight out of  
ten people murdered in the US are black.  
Tens of thousands of black males  
have the AIDS virus in the US and  
millions through the rest of the world.  
Crack use in the black community  
is at an all-time high. The number of black  
males who graduate from high school is at  
an all-time low. Unemployment for white  
males is 7% and for black males is 15%.  
Where have you gone, black man? I can't  
say for a fact where you are, but I know  
for a fact you had some help getting  
there. |

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## Unadulterated Truth

Jonathan B. Bartlett

Dark and lonely nights  
Visions of archaic sites  
Dreams behind every bend  
Always in search of your true friend  
Words too deep to ponder  
So in lackluster squalor you wander  
Walking through life like it was a peach  
Never getting involved with negative  
speech  
They have ways of seeking you out  
Every time you swear this is your last bout  
But what is life if not a game?  
And who are you without your name?  
If life is too short for a regret

Then why even fret  
If existentialism holds true  
Then most likely we're stuck like glue

*If Only Cont...*

taught me to be compassionate and respectful to others. For the first time in my life I watched the news and followed current affairs. I developed my own opinions on matters of religion, morals and my future. I looked forward to accomplishing something positive with my life.

When I left prison I was alone again but I was prepared and with my savings could support myself until I found a job. I now take an active part in society and cannot imagine ever breaking the law again. I'm saving for my own house, share custody of my son and help out with numerous charity groups. Life is good.

## Part Three

Per instructions, this entire story is a work of fiction. Part 1 is fiction because I made it up. It was not my life but some version of it is reality for thousands of kids across this country. More unfortunate though is that Part 2 is also fiction and in today's "correctional" environment cannot be a reality for anyone. In a time when education is nonexistent in maximum security prisons and continually stripped away in others, when Pell grants are no longer available to prisoners, when jobs are almost nonexistent and pay only pennies per hour, when inmates are not allowed to save any significant amount of money or keep an inheritance because the state will seize it to pay for the "costs of incarceration," when first-time felony offenders can be sentenced to life imprisonment or death, when there are no second chances, when upon conviction someone is stripped of his claim to humanity and made an outcast and labeled a monster, Part 2 is not a possibility.

My question is this: How can society expect people to change after living through a version of Part 1 without being given the tools of Part

