

Captor Story and Captive Story

In the spring of 1972, I entered Sandstone Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) to serve a maximum five year sentence. As one of the “Minnesota 8,” I had destroyed tens of thousands of “1-A” files of men about to be drafted to fight the Vietnam war. Our initial indictment charge was “sabotage of the national defense.” It evoked a “terrorist” image, with a like sentiment evoked by the judge’s pre-sentence declaration that, “You gentlemen are worse than the average criminal who attacks the taxpayer’s pocketbook. You strike at the foundation of government itself!” A bit of *wow!* This was my first offense. I had only destroyed paper files. Yet I shook the foundation of government? *Five years.* My shock has to be framed in the times. This was before the release of the “Pentagon Papers” and the Watergate crimes of Nixon’s hooligans. I was a twenty-five year old idealistic pacifist whose quest for radical change was anchored in a trust that at its core the System was not totally corrupt but reformable. Yet as shocking as “five years” might have sounded, little did I know what lay ahead—what it meant to be a Captive. Or, could I then have made sense out of this confounding insight—that by becoming Captive I would discover myself as Captor.

Since you are reading this essay I anticipate that you are my demographic kin, either male or white or highly educated or middle-class. So, I also anticipate that you have never been Inside because ours is not the normative profile of the prison population. Inmates, in staggering numbers, are functionally illiterate and so wouldn’t be reading this or any essay! They also define an underclass—poor and/or non-white and/or, most compelling to me, as never having formed a positive, trusting and loving relationship with an adult. If “middle-class” connotes

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anything culturally positive, it usually is its emphasis on parenting and family values. With this check list, neither you nor I fit the profile.

Okay, maybe you were in jail for a DUI or fraternity prank, even busted for nonviolent protesting, but not “doing time,” that is, down for a stretch. As my kin, and as I did once, you might accept that prison tries to or at least should “scare straight” an inmate, that is, change a convict’s mind. And, that once the con finally figures out how the “real world” works, he’ll “get it!” and wake up yearning for a 9 to 5 job at Walmart, a seat in a pew, and start attending AA. Or, like me, until I was actually on trial, you’ve never really thought *deeply* about prison—why we lock criminals up in cages or give them “time sentences” or, even more perplexing when considered, let them out unreformed! Humorously, I’ll wager that right now you certainly wouldn’t *friend* ex-cons on *Facebook*.

All this leads to my starting point—that you are me. I was not supposed to enter the higher education institution of the School of Crime. I had already earned a master’s degree and taught college. I never at any moment growing up ever gave a nanosecond of imaginative energy to visualizing myself in prison garb. I had been a young Franciscan monk. I had imagined a life serving my church, and, in short, always thought I’d spend my life as a teacher. Sound like a not unfamiliar career track? If I would have thought about prison, most likely it would have been as a prison chaplain or in some social service capacity, say, a caseworker.

They let me out, so I’m going to tell you my Captive story. My purpose is to share the insights I gained about our world—that of the Captor. Now this is not going to be a shaming or blaming or

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shitting on society set of insights. Admittedly, you might be shocked, even angered, but I seek to offer you a way to realize your own Captive story. Why? Because I found that unless you and I grasp the storyline and implications of our Captive and Captor stories that we are doomed to live in and sustain an ever-polarizing world where our brothers and sisters are held as Captive outcasts and domestic enemies, so miring our world in endless warfare instead of creating familial peace, both personally and globally.

Captive Story

What happened when I was escorted by a federal Marshal from the Hennepin County jail to Sandstone and entered the doorway marked “Admission and Orientation”? Basically, my going “Inside” (as inmates call prison) and “doing time” caused an upheaval and a revolution in respect to just about everything that I had been told to date constituted truth and reality—that everything I had learned from my family, Church, and the ivied halls of academe was fundamentally screwed up.

As I took my first step Inside a federal prison so, unknowingly to myself at the time, I took my last step in the outside world—called by inmates, the “Free World.” What did I leave behind outside? Basically, the everyday framework of intellectual and experiential references that I shared with you as a non-prisoner. You remained a citizen with rights (personal, social, political) who could exercise a modicum of control over your private and public surroundings. I became a “slave of the State.” At the time, I had no idea what that exactly meant. I knew the phrase but it did not evoke any emotions, neither fear nor dread—which were waiting for me. Quickly I learned that I had left behind the world that values common sense, logic, moral truths, decency, freedom...and entered a locked-down, alien, terrorizing, and intensely degrading environment.

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My step Inside was also the beginning of a descent—into a bottomless pit, a hellish sector of Captive human existence best described as “where everything human is soon absent.” Not unexpectedly, my white-male, middle-class, highly educated skin was also shed as I stepped into the A&O. What I never could have anticipated nor expected was the radical change about to happen in my sense of personal identity.

Prison’s goal was to have me reidentify myself through retelling my personal story as Captive *inmate 8867-147* and only in vaporish memory as “Francis X. Kroncke.” This reidentification and retelling would condemn me to forever live as a Captive: constantly living in fear and dread of violent attack, with a broken human spirit, hopeless, and with an abiding sense of myself as worthless, a piece of social offal.

To discover your Captive story is more than a bit more difficult because you have to look inside, twice: both prison’s Inside and your own personal inside. Should you run out, commit a crime, and get locked up? Not really. But what you must do is not easy—you can enter Inside but only if you are willing to execute an escape from your everyday “Free World” and “Go over the wall!” If you go over the wall of your everyday reality, heed this warning: “Dragons lie ahead!” because you will realize that there are two dimensions to *human* existence: the “Shadow realm” and the “Sunlight realm.” These realms are *physically* entered and exited through identifiable geographical, spatial localities, and brick-and-mortar institutions. The journey through the Shadow realm is told through the Captive story, and the one through the Sunlight realm through the Captor’s story.

Inside's Shadow realm and Outside's Sunlight realm

Upon entering prison, if asked, “Where are you?” Or, “Where do you live?” I had readily accessible tools at hand to accurately answer. I might say, “I’m serving time in Sandstone F.C.I.” Or, “I live in Hastings, Minnesota.” More, my saying that “I am an American” would provide multiple answers as to my location in terms of place and time: geographical, social, and cultural locations. In stark contrast I had no such tools available to aid me in understanding what was happening as I slowly became a Captive. Just the realization that I was a Captive threw me outside of any intellectual or emotional framework I had used to explain who “Francis X. Kroncke” was up to that time. I had never been asked or ever had any reason to ask, “Who are the Captives? Where are they located?” More, I certainly would not have known where to look. There were no atlases handy with maps to help locate Captives.

Listen up: There is an atlas that will reveal their locations. It’s the exact atlas you use to locate where you are right now. The issue is not in finding an atlas as it is in knowing how to read the legend and follow directions. Sandstone, Minnesota, for example, is off Old Highway 61, north and east of the Twin Cities, just past Hinckley on your way to Duluth—once in town just follow the signs to the FCI. Now, let me ask you to just accept for the moment that when you get there, you also arrive at a physical and geographic location on the Inside where Captives live.

Prison is called many things: the penitentiary, the Big House, the slammer, the clink, etc., but the Inside works as a good Captive locator term. Inside and Outside are interrelated and inseparable concepts, you can’t have one without the other. However this is not a rigid duality.

Actually, it is a quite fluid locator term. It helps to look at this type of connectedness as

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illustrated by the image of a Mobius strip which is a two-dimensional sheet with only one surface. You keep walking straight ahead and suddenly you are Inside from the Outside pathway, then Outside from the Inside. Although you stay on the same pathway you shift dimensions. I know that this might sound just a bit too clever. Like I'm just trying to tweak your nose and say, "See, the Inside, it's right there!" as if you were stupid or something. But that's not what I'm doing. I'm actually saying that there is a physical geography to the Inside world of Captives. Prison is just one location. It happens to be a location where the worlds of Outside Captors and Inside Captives visually and viscerally interact. While walking around one locale, say the Inside, you shift into the other, here, Outside dimension. You can also look at the interconnections between the Inside and Outside like a subway system map, and using the image of a Captive underground is apt.

As hard as your Captor self might be straining right now to believe me, just know that Captives have no problem in easily navigating between the Inside and the Outside. For them the stairway up and out of the underground, so to speak, is through the Shadow realm into the Sunlight realm. This Shadow realm is an Inside site where unsettling, disturbing, often cruel and evil things happen. It is where Captives gather and locate. In prison the daily routine centers around descents into and ascents out of various Shadow sectors. How an inmate navigates and handles Shadow events determines if he will ever truly get out of the Inside—or remain an imprisoned Captive all his life, "doing time on the Inside" even if released from the institution. Captors guard the border between the Shadow and Sunlight realms. Captives live Inside and venture Outside.

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Captives spend their whole lives moving in and out of the Inside's Shadow realm into the Outside's Sunlight realm, which is the Captor's only realm. While Captors never intend to enter the Shadow realm, Captives purposively enter the Sunlight realm because that is where their crimes take place. In brief, the Shadow realm, with its institutions and organizations, is a lifestyle stopover area, where Captives enhance their skills development, networking, and earn promotions.

For now, look at the relationship between the Shadow and Sunlight realms a bit like a stage production as seen by young children. What goes on behind the curtains and decorative props is unseen by and basically unknown to the youths who are delighting in the Sunlight story being enacted. Throw a bit of malice and evil intent into the minds and hearts of the stage crew and things go awry, sometimes hilariously, others tragically, but still remain unseen and unknown. In terms of the Captive world the audience is the straight world of Captors whom Captives prey on because they know how the Shadow and Sunlight realms interconnect whereas the Sunlight folk rarely know much about the Shadow realm.

Sunlight and Shadow stories

The Sunlight story expresses your upbeat, positive outlook on life. It makes you feel whole, healthy and happy. For some it is the story of the "American Dream." For others it is one of personal rescue from their own inner darkness, "Jesus Saves." Or, the mindful joy of "Be here now." Hearing it makes you feel that all is right with the world. It makes you feel glad to be alive and human. It fills you with a heartfelt sense that everyone can work together, doing and being Good: "Peace, Justice and the American Way!" It makes you want to dance in the streets. Shout, "And God saw that it was good!"

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The Shadow story takes you into hellish depths of darkness, of evil both of the individual and group. It makes you moan the deep down dirty blues. It engenders feelings of depression, oppression and degradation. The Christian interpretation of the biblical tradition tells a Shadow story of Original Sin, human depravity, and murderous family strife. Other Shadow traditions regale humans with like tales, e.g., that their flawed, savage human nature is sourced in inheritable violent genes. Or, some make a virtue out of selfishness (“Greed is good!”). Or enslave through lies (the Nazis “Arbeit Macht Frei”—“Work makes you free!”). In a Shadow story other people—the “Other”—are always threats to you, named as “The Enemy,” and often reviled with racist or sexist taunts (“The only good injun is a dead injun!” “Slap the bitch!”).

Note well: My claim is that you have both a Shadow and a Sunlight story, and that they are dynamically interrelated. This means that you hear the Shadow story as an undercurrent in the Sunlight story, and vice versa.

In his Sunlight story the Captor’s self-perceived role is to carry out justice and protect society from the Shadow inmates. On its own terms it is an upbeat, empowering story. In it the Captor is good and the Captives are bad. Of note, and a recurring theme, is that the Captor *claims that in his Sunlight realm there is no Shadow*—or at least that there should not be any Shadow. If he could, the Captor would obliterate the Shadow realm. In this vein I heard, more than once, a guard swear that he’d love to “Kill every motherfucking con in this goddam joint!” Such a primal wish was ground for this key insight about the Captor’s Sunlight story, that is, that it is not so much one about control and punishment as it is about the denial of the existence of the Shadow realm and/or an effort to obliterate it...and all Captives in the process.

Pause: I need you to realize how critically important I find this Captor denial and desired obliteration of the Shadow to be. I admit that this confused me at first because of my own Captor upbringing. Let me ask, what are your answers to: What is prison's objective? Is it to reform and/or rehabilitate—turn bad guys into good guys? Is it to horrify and punish and so potentially scare guys into going straight? Or—as I judge them—are these questions wrongheaded? Instead, should you be *asking yourself*, “Are prisons more about *me* than about them? What is prison's objective in terms of my world? Is it to isolate me from the Shadow realm and keep me Outside in my Sunlight realm? In effect, for all practical purposes, to prevent me from entering the Shadow realm?” This is what I found to be true and factual, yet I realize that such an experiential insight can only become yours after you embody your own Shadow and Sunlight stories.

Captive Story inside a Captor Story

I chose to go to prison. I consciously committed a crime that I intended to admit publicly to gain legitimacy as an antiwar speaker and activist. Once other cons figured that out they would look at me and howl laughing. “Man, who in their right *muddafucking* mind would choose to go Inside?” It was clear that going to prison was an option for me since I was a white, middle-class, highly educated male, but not so for ninety-nine plus percent of the other inmates.

In light of my choice, two stories were being written, basically simultaneously. Being Inside was forcing me to discern and own a story I never thought I had—my own Captor story. Curiously, this story became clearer to me as I was discerning my Captive story as a subhuman “slave of the State.” This is a very significant point. Unlike most inmates for whom going to prison was part of a set of social expectations (of the underclass)—and so were quite aware of the Captor and

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Captive stories—I had never thought of myself as a Captor.

Frank, the Captor! I'm sure I am not the only one who entered prison ignorant of what "reality" truly was, that is, that I was entering Inside into the Shadow realm. When I arrived from jail, somewhat irregularly, I was put directly into solitary confinement. This (I eventually discerned) was part of a ploy on the part of the orientation group called the "Adjustment Committee." Theirs was an intense interrogation since they wanted to assess if I was a radical troublemaker before releasing me into the inmate population. Was I like the Mafia guys who already knew what was up and would do time like a vacation holiday? Or, was this Kroncke guy a dyed in the wool, committed Marxist revolutionary? Possibly they had heard repeated the outlandish claim voiced by the federal prosecutor at my arraignment (re: indictment on "sabotage of the national defense") that I was "part of an international Catholic conspiracy led by the Berrigan Fathers and funded by Castro"? Or, was I a namby-pamby nonviolent pacifist coward who was scared of his own shadow? They were unsure to perplexed because, in looking back, I can see that my being there threw them for a loop. They looked at me and saw a Captor like themselves. Like other war resisters I was, in the main, racially and culturally their kin, spoke like them, etc. One of the *Minnesota 8's* families actually owned a summer cabin down the road a bit in Sandstone. *Lordy!* We weren't just from the same social class, we were neighbors.

While I didn't have a clue about the Inside, I did recognize "them" in me. That was more unsettling than anything. This evoked the seminal insight that I, as 8867-147, was also one of them! This harsh, somewhat schizoid reality met me at every turn—old timers looked at me with pity, "Kroncke, you're pulling hard time!" Meaning, that my Captor skin was both being shed

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and renewed, simultaneously. Consider: Mr. Benson was my case worker. We chatted. He was a former Catholic priest, white, middle-class, a social-worker. *Fuck!* He was me. *Hey, Mr. B, it's 8867-147, can you take me home to meet the wife and kids; a homemade meal!?* Everywhere I turned, new phrases, sentences, storylines emerged as my Captor story was unfolding its entwined storyline with my Captive story.

Frank, the Captive! For several hours the Committee worked to adjust me. They gave me both the overview as to how things worked Inside and a practical guide for daily living; even gave me a work assignment. They made clear the role I was to play—I was slave, captive, convict: a prisoner of war. I was no longer citizen, son, theologian, nonviolent activist. I had fought their government and *lost!* I was their Captive. *Accept your fate! Bow down your neck!* It was now mine to shuffle along, not wail against my shackles and chains, and if I did protest, no buts about it, I'd be beaten into submission. Fatefully, more than just being the State's Captive I was positioned as an enemy of their God. (A statement repeated later by the Catholic Chaplain.) I was at war with everything they valued, that is, I was striking at the foundation of not only American government but by doing so also at that pillar of Western civilization, the Judaeo-Christian biblical tradition. Without conscious intent, the Adjusters were teaching me how the Shadow realm operated. In effect they laid the seed for my growing awareness of myself as a Shadow Captive: the Other, Public Enemy, "gook"—most telling, as I came to discern, as *Bitch!*

To gain Captor control, it was critical for the Adjusters that they reorder my vision and understanding of prison reality. In prison's Shadow realm, time, space, the air, others, "now," feelings...are no longer autobiographical. Here is what keys the transition from the Sunlight

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down into the Shadow realm, namely, “I” as a Captive have no personal identity, rather I exist impersonally through my Shadow group identity as inmate, convict, outlaw, *dogshit*—8867-147. In the most black and white terms I am a Captive of the Captors. Stop and catch the tectonic shift here. “Captive” is the only label the Captor needs—as all inmates are one and the same. This is a metaphysical re-organization, at the level that philosophers call ontological—in the realm of Being. Get this: As I transited from Captor to Captive, as I accepted living as a Shadow being—note this well!—I began to experience myself alive on the grand mythic scale. Now, I existed like Cain, Judas, the Evil One—a hellish denizen of the Shadow realm. Here I also started to grasp fleeting insights into the truly mythic story that my trial played out as the judge affirmed me as a secular Shadow creature, a —“strike(r) at the foundation of government”—a traitor in the camp of Benedict Arnold and the forces of darkness. The confessional truth is that I was being reformed by the Inside’s dark powers. I could not afford to lollygag and intellectually look back on my pre-prison years as I had to keep my eyeballs peeled as I advanced warily forward one Inside step at a time through the Shadow realm.

The Adjusters counseled me as to how a good Captive acts: “Do your own time.” I was to submissively “serve time” and mark the cycle of moons and suns with prison’s “Lock-up and Count!” routine—not by clock hours or days of the week. While I doubt if any of the Adjusters were conscious of their Shadow role as Captor, they knew what had to be done to maintain order on the Inside—break me down and have me accept myself as *subhuman* 8867-147.

As Captors I’m sure that the Adjusters were highly confident that the discipline of the penitentiary—“doing time”—would, as it had done to so many, inevitably transform me, actually

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transubstantiate me, that is, re-embody me as a Shadow Captive. For them the weird and scary world that the Inside was would without fail crush my spirit and have me scurrying back to the Catholic Chaplain swearing that once paroled I'd go straight—"Forever!" More than that, they knew that I had to reidentify and be made to accept and possess my Captive story so that I, willingly or not, eventually—inevitably and inexorably in their minds—would step down the rungs to where they wanted me to stay, eternally in the Shadow sector "where everything human is soon absent."

Bizarre as it may seem, I gained this seminal insight into myself as Captor at the moment I accepted being a Captive. Soon thereafter I began to realize that I was the *Captor of my Captive self!* Unexpectedly, it was this insight into my Captor self that shocked me most. I was somewhat prepared to become an inmate and anticipated that being an prisoner was going to fuck me up a bit. Yet, I thought that my previous monastic experience would help me adjust to another all male, highly structured institution where the daily discipline was unquestioning obedience to all rules. However, I had never thought of myself as a Captor, needless to say not as Captor of my own Captive self. Truly weird.

Baffled, immobilized, downright confused: *I am Captor of myself as Captive.* Honestly, at the time I couldn't handle the psychic bedlam this insight unleashed. My survival instincts kicked in and within a short period of time I "adjusted" and slipped into the Shadow realm where I walked in lock-step with all the other cons and survived by being inmate 8867-147, resigned to "do my time" and hope for an early release.

8867-147's story: The Man's Bitch!

I broke the rules of society, now I'm doing so to this essay. This is 8867-147 stepping up into your face, Francis X.! You can't keep my voice Captive. *Muddafucker*, I know you're up to your old Captor tricks. But if you're not going to jump your Captor walls, then I'll push your sorry ass over. *Reader*: A compelling story line always makes the heart go *thump!* Kroncke's talked to you about the Inside. Take a jog with me into how it *feels*—the heart of the Captive experience.

See, once Inside it took a bit of calendar time before their Adjustment took hold; they were patient. At first I did handle being Inside a bit like my first days in the monastery. I readily accepted my digital moniker 8867-147 much like I had my monastic investiture name, Friar Otto, O.F.M., Conv. It was only a numerical silliness, so I told myself, and it didn't really make me feel much differently. Fairly nonplussed, I looked at the other prisoners with a somewhat detached, almost academic eye. For awhile I enjoyed regular weekly, quite chatty visits from family and friends. But...somewhere around ninety-days in, something inexplicable happened: I became fully Adjusted. *Fuck*, I became one of them—a *subhuman*. This was not an intellectual shift—not the result of some radical analysis. It was not just an emotional shift—not simply that I got depressed or bummed out. It was of an order of magnitude I didn't even know existed, a shift at once cosmic, personal, even genetic. What was happening? I can only give you an unsettling answer: *My body was no longer mine!*

I was suddenly present to myself in a way only other inmates could grasp. Simply, I was no longer alive as only human. Much as the Adjustment Committee intended, I slipped down an experiential rung and met my Shadow self. Prison effectively re-embodied me as a subhuman. I

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became a subordinated, subjected, dispossessed, expendable, disposable, invisible entity. As they intended, in the eyes of the wardens and guards, “Francis X. Kroncke” was no longer physically present, replaced by 8867-147. Here was my first robust subhuman sense: one of disembodiment—they looked at me and saw only 8867-147. I was solely a numbered inventory of the State. As they intended, the initiatory Admission ritual made “francisxkroncke” disappear and disembodied 8867-147 floated into the inmate population. Like a streetwalker, my body was no longer mine. It belonged to my pimp: “The Man.” Now I was forever twice-bodied: Francis/8867-147, never to be cleaved. Totally fucked-up, I urged people not to visit, restricting such moments to family members; just about stopped writing to everyone. I became a slave, doing time, serving The Man.

As I became a subhuman I went way deep Inside into the darkest recesses of the Shadow realm where I ceased to experience myself as an individual, as a person with an identity, as a creature of time. The crucial insight here is that I underwent a *qualitative* physical transformation as I became a subhuman, as I lost my sense of what it meant to be human. I no longer knew who I was as who I was, was being embodied as a subhuman. *What the fuck?*

Being twice-bodied and treated by others as a subhuman meant having no privacy in any aspect. In prison’s Shadow realm there is no space provided where you can experience your humanity in any normal sense of the term. There is no place to go for a nanosecond of solitude—the johns are doorless, every tick-and-tock you are watched, you live exposed like a lidless eyeball. What may be incommunicable is the devastating impact of living within an utter absence of privacy—of never being left alone, of always being part of the Population. I even slept in dorms with up to

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seventy others—group snore, belch and fart. It was this absolute loss of privacy—awake and asleep—that became the tipping point of my mutation into becoming a subhuman.

Five times around the clock I robotically responded to the command, “Lock up and count!” Twice more while asleep. The duty Hacks go on inventory runs: body counts; asshole numerations. They scan my blanketed body and check my digits at 3 a.m.—“x” a box, “Check 8867-147.” All they want is my subhuman body, and since it is not a body I have ever known before I simply—ignorant naïf!—give them this body. Like a whore I surrender my subhuman self, let them do with me whatever they want: use me, abuse me, dispose of me. Slavishly I accept being a subhuman. I exist, as all slaves do, with my former one-body self displaced somewhere, out in some cosmic security locker, or something weird like that, as I slip into my twice-bodied subhumanity.

Horrified, I could not find a way to be present to others as a human being. I looked into the mirror and only saw what others saw: 8867-147, a subhuman. One condemned to forever exist as an alien other—a twice-bodied presence. I became what prison so effectively creates: a slave of the State. My body was being slowly but surely sensately rewired. As a slave’s body my every physical act expressed my acceptance of domination. When ordered to strip and be searched, I complied. Emotionally, I lost my middle-class sense of shame. My sense of personal honor. My dignity. Servile, I bent over and spread my buttock cheeks. My presence clearly conveyed that now I was *The Man’s bitch*.

Now, one-bodied Captor reader, *Awake!* Subhumans sense the world just as humans do but

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always with a de-humanizing twist. Man, I don't know if I can get you to make this leap, not so much in understanding as in feeling. In prison a kiss is a betrayal, always. Only bitches get kissed! A simple touch, just a fingertip or a caress of a chin, is a prelude to rape, *ala* sodomy. Eyes gaze upon you searching for points of entry, signs of weakness, ever ready to watch you disappear (get whacked). Smells are not for pleasuring rather what is sniffed is the aroma of your cowardice, the scent of your trembling terror as you kneel in submission and penile worship, and the allure of the fright that oozes from your sweat as you walk the Yard, hyper-vigilant like hunted prey. Taste always rides upon sexual release: the breakfast donut is nipped at and mouthed letting you know that you'll like his cock. All eating is sexualized—the mess hall but a group orgy in symbolic dance. What you hear is always a variation of the basic equation of Inside survival: *Why shouldn't I waste the punk?* The punk being you—laughter rising from the poker round—hearing yourself wagered, your life tossed in as ante. So don't make the mistake of thinking that subhumans do not feel.

Awake! Here's a deeper step down; a subhuman voice from “where everything human is soon absent.” *Let the Bitch wail!*

As a subhuman I began to grasp the horror of what it means to be a female in patriarchal society—*Bitch!* Most prison stories are fundamentally wrong. Prison, it's alleged, is a male stronghold where the most macho and violent males are corralled and beaten into discipline by other super-males flexing the glistening muscles of steel death, brandishing the symbols of a potent sexual power. On some days it looks like that but the appearance is quite illusionary. With purpose and systematically, prison was transforming me into a female—the idealized

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woman of the patriarchal culture: submissive Eve. Here is a mythic She, a female who derives her meaning only and fully from her Man—who accepts being a derivative of his carnal rib. Like her I too became “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” as created from The Man. *I am his chattel and wear the clothing of khaki anonymity—which he finds fetching. He jealously protects me, constantly watches me in the daylight and in the night darkness of my time serving him. Ever courteous, he opens doors for me his helpless and hapless mate who patiently waits, keyless, cooing for my Man to unlock the knobless doors. I wait. I wait. I wait. He has a lock on the key to my heart.*

Majestically, it is his power, the fearsome force of his authoritative Inside power that makes me bend over and part my buttock cheeks. Silently scream: C’mon, it can’t be, we’re both guys! I, at any moment, am his: night, morning, afternoon delight. At any place: I am walking the hall and he commands, “Open your mouth!” He probes my ears, I rake my hair, shake out each shoe...and bend over. Oomph! It’s quickly over, the backdoor bangs shut. So simple. So routine. I am The Man’s bitch.

Denying the Shadow realm

Okay. 8867-147 just had to do his convict *muddafucker!* thing. My Captor middle-class self-control is still challenging him, but he does bring me to the next key insight. Why am I keeping 8867-147 in the Shadow realm, speaking here in a Sunlight space to you, using the control of linear communication, and not, if he had his way, ripping at you, dumping on your racist, sexist, classist, sanctimonious ass...not helpful right now? But to give him his due, the question I’ve been pondering every since release is why I—and you?—knew so little about the Shadow realm,

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even that it existed? What grounded our Captor story such that our higher education never told us its history or cultural role, nor its politics or mythic character? As you can see, to tell the Captive Shadow realm story is to open discussions about a social underclass, cultural outcasts, sexual violence, subhumans, and other depressing topics. Let me ask you: *What is the mythic story we tell ourselves that grounds the vision and values of the Captor story?*

Back then, I had no way of knowing that getting into prison would become the easiest part of my journey. I had no way of grasping either intellectually or emotionally that it was a One-way-in-No-way-out entrance into the dark, shadowy sector of the human mind and heart. So, it took me awhile to realize that I was in a *mythic zone*—a place where the primal and primary stories of origin and cultural values are acted out daily.

What is difficult to emotionally grasp is how each of us reenacts deep cultural stories of Shadow and Sunlight through our daily, personal and intimate actions. However such becomes crystal clear and heartfelt when you experience yourself in the Shadow realm. Pause a moment. Reflect a bit deeper on this central question: What could it possibly mean to be a shadowy Captive? Just consider the words “captive” and “subhuman.” What do they conjure up for you? What images come to mind? What feelings are aroused? Are you open to considering that when answering these questions or examining the images and feelings that arise that you reenact deep cultural Shadow and Sunlight stories every day? If you are, then you will benefit from considering how the biblical story of Genesis—Western culture’s dominant story of human origin—conditions how you answer the foregoing questions and determines how you imagine and feel when responding.

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Awake! One of the communication barriers that I continually encounter when discussing the Sunlight and Shadow realms with its Captor/Captives with Western and biblical people is their resistance to accepting that the culturally dominant Sunlight story of origin in Genesis is one that implicitly denies that there is any value to Shadow stories. More, that Shadow realm experiences are worthless, should be shunned, and, if possible, the Shadow realm obliterated. Even if you are an avowed atheist or secularist, can you sense how the Genesis stories frame the questions that you answer culturally, such as: Does God exist? Why are humans here? What defines human nature? Culturally, the story of Adam and Eve's "Fall" is referenced to defend the claim that humans are inherently depraved—constantly violent, endlessly warring, and self-destructive.

My scholarly self was quite shocked when I found that Inside everyday inmate conversations frequently cited Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve, the curse of Ham, and other biblical references when talking about the big issues such as Good and Evil, violence and nonviolence, justice and revenge. As a philosopher/theologian I can state unequivocally that the most vigorous, impassioned, and outrageous discussions about life's Big Questions take place Inside on a daily basis! There's a lot of down-time when "doing time," and so more coffee-house like conversations, arguments, debates taking place during a given day than on a university campus.

In this vein, in Genesis, the Shadow, Evil, the Serpent, etc., are acknowledged but they do not possess godly or divine powers. Rather there is only one God and He is Good. He lives solely in the Sunlight realm of "heaven." In line with this, Shadow stories are tales of your weaknesses, sins, crimes, craziness, in general the flaws in your human psyche and soul. But of absolutely

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critical note about this tradition is that you can be brought out of the Shadow realm, *forever*. You cannot only be forgiven but saved, rescued—you can *escape* Hell and eternally live with God in Heaven. This story is completed through the Christian interpretation of humankind's fall from grace and rescue by a messiah—of Adam's sin and Jesus' redemptive act on the cross.

I found this biblical language aptly translated into the nonreligious (secular) myth where the Hero slays the Dragon—he does not seek to tame it and make it his house pet, that is, part of his personal life. His is a conquest and vanquishment. As I read Western culture, secular values retain Genesis' belittlement of the Shadow realm.

Trial judge and my Shadow story

As attorney *pro se*, I had presented a “Defense of Necessity” argument to the jury, stressing that perilous times often require allegiance to a higher law which necessitates violating a lesser law. Here, I argued that the Roman Catholic moral tradition had strict requirements for assessing a war as a “Just War”—and in Vietnam all were violated! More, that the then recent *Documents of Vatican II*, issued by an historic council, condemned Total War and urged that:

It is our clear duty, therefore, to strain every muscle in working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with the power to safeguard on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights. (“Gaudium et Spes,” 1965)

So when the judge, after eight days of trial, made a final ruling that I and the testimony of thirteen witnesses (theologians, historians, Vietnam Veterans, ecologists, peace activists, and

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others) was “irrelevant and immaterial” and was *not to be heard* by the jury, it reflected his inability to hear and value a Shadow story. His actions stated that the Sunlight story, e.g., America in Vietnam as “Saving the world for Democracy” had no Shadow chapters. Again, it wasn’t that he listened and through the jury’s deliberation and judgment heard and judged my Shadow story of nonviolent Resistance to Illegitimate Authority, rather the telling point is that he could not and did not let the jurors hear it because to do so would be to admit that America has a Shadow identity and story.

This is the only way I can understand why the judge acted as he did, especially after allowing me an eight day trial and thirteen witnesses. Do you sense the underlying Shadowy disturbance that permeated my trial? Can you sense the dissonance, uneasiness, noisiness, and general air of bafflement, even sinister intentions that were possibly afoot? We went from: “You can present a Defense of Necessity” to “I approve your witness list” to “Frank, you can proceed to closing argument” to “Everything which was said here for the last eight days is irrelevant and immaterial” to, astoundingly, “You strike at the foundation of government itself!” to, finally, “Five years in a federal penitentiary.” All in all things simply didn’t add up.

Where was the judge when inside his head he (I assume) said, “I’ll let him talk for eight days then I’m going to tell the jury that he’s a madman”? All I can conclude is that in truth I was the living embodiment of a Shadow creature as I was arguing that war was simply (but insanely!) an act of familial suicide. I was challenging war’s mythic claim that it led to peace or brought justice or healed a nation. I was challenging the lie behind the war policy of a People, that is, that the enemy is Other, alien and that to kill a gook is a moral good and a culturally praiseworthy

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heroic act. I said that this was a lie and that the truth is that there are no enemies, just family members, so killing another human is an act of species suicide.

But to a People and a nation where war is a market commodity of an industry (the military-industrial-academic complex), my Shadow story was bad PR at the least and betrayal at worst. I sincerely believe that the judge heard both stories: Sunlight and Shadow—but proper to his role of society leader and elder, he both denied it and prevented others from hearing it. (Although, despite his intention, the jury returned to ask, “Can we read the *Documents of Vatican II*”? To which he thundered, “You *cannot!* read the *Documents of Vatican II!*” The jury knew that my Shadow/Sunlight stories were grounded in the Documents. Aside: the jurors later told the press that the judge had “forced our decision” and that they had been split six-six.)

Likewise in prison the official story was solely a Sunlight story—“Do your own time” and you will be rescued, saved, and once again sent Outside—“Free!” The way for any inmate to make this story his own and obtain an early parole was for him to completely reject his Shadow story. I heard clearly that what I thought was my Sunlight story (altar boy, monk, peace activist, theologian, etc.) was actually a Shadow story and as such I was counseled to abandon it, reject it, denounce it, and so submit to re-formation. Despite my anchoring my Resistance in a lifetime’s dedication to the Catholic Church and Jesus Christ, mine wasn’t a story that held any truths or values that the prison counselors (including the Chaplain) wanted to or knew how to work with. Prison was not a place of transformation or forgiveness or reconciliation, rather it was a place of punishment, deprivation, humiliation and condemnation. (Humorously, there was no penance in *penitentiary*, so no forgiveness!)

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Prison's directive seemed clearly to be that I was to experience my Shadow story *not* so that I could value it and integrate it and so become more fully human. Just the opposite: I was to be “scared straight” so that I'd get a taste of being a Captive and then—based on this Captor logic—spit out my venomous past and submit to prison's adjustments and corrections. The sign of prison's effectiveness was to be my total capitulation to living only through the culture's Sunlight story. It intentionally (by policy and procedure) thrust me deep into the Shadow realm and would have stranded me there forever (caught in a cycle of recidivism) unless I submitted and surrendered and opened myself to being rescued. An actual Faustian Bargain was set before me: Either remain a Captive forever or submit to being rescued by pledging never again to enter the Shadow realm. I was to forever forget, regret, and denounce my Shadow story (which I had thought was my Sunlight story!). For most ex-cons such pledges were normally linked to commitments to enter rehab, therapy or move to “somewhere where no one knows your name.” For me, I would have become a Sunlight star if I had repented, pledged my allegiance once more to Church and State, Judge and Archbishop, and dedicated the rest of my life to denouncing nonviolence, pacifism, civil disobedience, and such heretical notions as the One Family of all humankind.

Shadow Mother

While Inside, and long after, I found such primal emotional experiences as Captor and Captive near impossible to describe to Free World folk. Like many who have deep Shadow experiences, I only found emotional solace, and some intellectual grounding, with other ex-cons. So what was the emotional tipping point that flipped me over from being a mute on his Dark Night's journey to writing about prison?

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During 1983 a question nagged me, “Why didn’t you off your sorry ass while in prison?” The question was not an intellectual one, rather it pointed to the emotional upheaval I had experienced in prison. My Shadow self was screaming this question at my Sunlight self. (My 8867-147/Francis X. Kroncke duet!) I didn’t have an answer at hand. In the Shadow realm little value was placed on a life, even one’s own. Captor me cried, “Die, motherfucker!” Captive me howled, “Let him die!” But I survived. Why? How? What can I say? It took me ten years to find words to describe this moment.

Major insight: For me the answer came in a properly mythic moment in that the emotion I felt which conveyed the answer was the most primal of all: “Mother!” I was stunned, a full ten years later, to finally consciously become aware of the emotion that had sustained me while Inside, that is, a mothering presence, here, of a Shadow Mother, the Mother of Captives.

But don’t get misty and sentimental on me! This Shadow Mother was a cold-hearted bitch and I hated Her. Why? She did not comfort or nurture me, rather She simply held me, kept me from offing myself. She accepted me as Her Captive son and kept me from committing suicide while watching me suffer. Because of Her I survived. If I had not met Her and, so as fated, grounded myself in a more traditional primal emotion—here the dreadful fear and self-loathing of my biblical myth—I would have killed myself. Although my Captive and Captor selves fumed and raged over Her presence, one loving Her, the other not, what I learned from this encounter was that you cannot live without a grounding primal emotion, either of Shadow or Sunlight. Without anchoring in such a primal emotion you simply float away into some form of death—the living

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death of addiction or actual self-murder.

It was She whom I met when I was “where everything human is soon absent.” The significance of finding Her is that Her presence corrected a monumental error transmitted for over five thousand years by the biblical tradition, that is, that we humans have no mythic Mother—that we are “motherless children.” This was the insight that became the bridge that led me out of the Shadow realm into the Sunlight vision. More, this experience of Her presence enabled me to understand why I acted as I did while in the “absent” sector of the Shadow realm.

Traditionally, Westerners consider themselves a Father God, patriarchal society. Absolutely wrong! This is the major error transmitted down the ages, notably by theologians. It took me several more decades but as my integrated “Captive inside Captor story” developed, a methodology for interpreting mythic stories, such as Genesis, emerged. Much to my great astonishment, when I went back to Genesis with my Captor/Captive senses, I found my Inside Shadow Mother present in the story. *Awake!* Our Western tradition is one of Family. Of a Divine Couple, here in Genesis, a Shadow Father and a Shadow Mother. We humans have a Mother and a Father...we are a family!

How amazing is all this! I had to be driven down into the darkest sector of my heart and soul to find that I had a Mother, a Shadow Mother, who kept me alive but didn't love me. *Wow!*

Meeting Her made me understand Genesis' Shadow Father, who cursed and expelled his children from the Garden of Eden to suffer and sweat, eking out a living as exiles on Earth. In their own way, Adam and Eve are my subhuman brother and sister. But out of the depths of darkness a

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spark arcs across the realm like a blazing meteor, and I see and find my Sunlight Mother and Father. They who love me and nurture me as subhuman 8867-147 and bring me back to health and wholeness.

Becoming a mythic parent

What is it like to live out everyday my Shadow Captive/Sunlight Captor story? How do I sense you, others, and the world at large? Let me say at this point that I now am present in the world and sense it as a *mythic parent*—having integrated my Shadow and Sunlight stories. I live every moment as human/subhuman, as Captor/Captive, as a child of the Shadow/Sunlight realms.

Shadow Mother: My Shadow Captive self is the deeply repressed, denied, abused, reviled...Shadow Mother. I am She who does not let my brothers and sisters die even though they are suffering and cry out for death to stop their hearts. She is Bitch and Whore and Slut but Hers is a Dark Mothering, a relentless defender of life. As Her I radically affirm the preciousness of life even in the moments of absolute darkness “where everything human is soon absent.”

I am She whom you kiss in betrayal. I am She whom you touch solely to rape. I am She whom you gaze upon, intent upon my death, my obliteration. I am She whom you hunt as prey. I am She whom you shun, from whom you flee, cursing me, “Bitch! Slut!” I am She whom you find impure and whom you curse and condemn to suffering in bearing new life. Yes, She is Shadow but as I embrace Her so do I become a real human person, one whose heart beats subhumanly with all subhuman Captives—so one in heartbeat with the Shadow children of our One Family.

As I manifest Shadow Mother’s presence so do I also discern and in tandem manifest myself as

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Sunlight Mother: She who cares for all the subhuman Captives and children locked-down in the Shadow realm. These two Mothers are dynamically interlinked—sharing a mothering heartbeat. So, I live my days alive as never before...because I live embracing my Sunlight and Shadow selves: I am Mother and Father of all humankind.

Shadow Father: This is me as Captor of my Captive self. Me as ultimate prison Hack. In this Shadow story—which plays out on the Inside and your personal inside—sexual violence redeems, justifies, sates, and renders the errant soul whole (whole, because sexual violence is often the initiatory rite for prison gang membership). Sodomy is both punishment and reward. There I became the Man’s bitch—“Fag!”—as everything that empowered a male was stripped away. I experienced “my body, not myself.” I lived in a collective and had no personal space—definitely no intimate space. I had no right to my own body, no control over my private parts. At any moment I was his to command: Bend over, “Spread ‘em!” More, I slept with up to seventy men double-bunked. Lights out meant listening to the groaning, bed-spring-creaking “Slap the bitch!” romantic banter of prison’s sodomitic darkness.

Score this into your memory-banks: My search for the Goddess in the body of a woman first came to me in the body of a male—*myself*, as I confronted and embodied my male Shadow as I simultaneously became a fag as I surrendered to the truth that I am the Man’s Bitch!

Prison broke me, as it does most, and I became a bitch and a fag. I was pushed into the deepest realm of darkness where I felt myself embodied as Other in the most despised of ways. I sensed in my flesh that I was what the dominant culture (biblical and secular) hated the most and which

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was mythically denied—a Mother. I realized that without a Mother Goddess women can only be bitches, remaining chained down in the darkest Shadow realm of society and culture. Likewise, without a Mother Goddess, “mothering men” can only be fags in the same Shadow imprisoning realm.

I realized at this moment of insight why my nonviolent visions and political actions had been doomed to fail. Simply, back then, I could not publically or spiritually express my mothering masculinity (as nonviolent, as father, as brother lover) since I had no mythic Mother to model and teach me mothering—only Genesis’ Shadow Father as masculine model. So, only when I embodied myself as bitch and fag was I truly released from prison’s darkness. Only then did I become a mythic Mother...and so a mythic Father. Only then did I tap into the power of unconditional love—able to nurture myself and every other child on Earth.

I invite you to 1) study about prison and other Shadow institutions, 2) not deny your personal or social/cultural Shadow, 3) not let the authorities keep you out of prison and other areas of the Shadow realm—*Go Inside!* 4) find and embrace the Other—poor, underclass, outcasts, those abandoned—they are your brothers and sisters, more, they are you and me! And 5) live your Captor/Captive stories in a conscious way, through discussion and dialogue with friends and peers, and by doing so become a mythic parent, one who Fathers and Mothers all children and People of the One Earth who are our One Family.