

## **Gustavo Guerra**

### *Reflection*

Writing was one of the last things I ever thought I would have had a passion for. In spite of my life sentence and contrary to reasonable expectations, I discovered I really love writing. But even more, I love writing with my friends. We all met through a program called Exchange for Change (E4C) that brings writing classes inside prisons. Currently, I'm taking a Poetry Workshop (an E4C class) taught by Georgia Franklin, a poet of some renown. We write to a prompt and then workshop the poems the following week. The poems I am now submitting are a result of this class. Overall, I've realized that my best work is those pieces that I have worked on with my friends, other writers who themselves use the written word, not only to communicate, but to create art of our inane existence.

### **Bad Habits**

*You are not for me.*

There I said it. It is released into the ether, into the repository of hard facts rarely spoken. It was supposed to empower me. Almost like the articulated sound waves would somehow mystically remove the sting of your voice echoing similar words.

*You are not for me.*

But here I sit, fingers hovering over keys with no thoughts to type. Words fluttering in my mind like half-seen shadows, like waking up hungover and grasping for a fading dream.

*You are not for me.*

How did you even penetrate my defenses? I like to believe that I am competent, able to protect myself. Knowing the cancer of my sentence, I am always hesitant, aware of the deterrent that it serves. That no one wants to love a blue-clad prisoner, a hard-faced murderer, a saboteur of all that is good. No one wants a future with someone with my past. No one wants me, at least not in that way.

*You are not for me.*

Still, I can't wait to sit across from you and talk for hours. To make you laugh. To watch your eyes squint when you're deep in thought.

Hope seems to be embedded in the DNA of a lifer. Hope that the laws will one day change. Hope that society will realize the cruelty of natural life sentences. I guess that's what makes it easy to hope you will one day change your mind.

## Frozen Margaritas

The taste of tequila on your lips,  
on your neck, excites me. Salt and lime  
adding passion as I drink you in.  
It started with a smile, a shy  
hello, your eyes alight with mischief.  
Your hair ablaze as you danced for hours,  
as you twirled strands of fire atop my  
unkempt bed. A sheen of contentment  
glistened your brow as you spoke with  
half-lidded eyes, of how you'd die  
for some flan.

But then, the light shined in my face  
and for a moment, I was lost.  
Tangled in a charcoal gray blanket  
the truth sank in. There was no fire  
haired vixen, no tequila,  
only the fading memory  
of salt and of limes.

### *Author Bio*

Gustavo Guerra discovered a passion for writing as a result of the nonprofit Exchange for Change which brings creative writing classes behind the wire. He battles daily to maintain a positive mindset and occasionally battles ogres in various D&D campaigns. He has been published in *Don't Shake the Spoon*, Vol. 2; *Hear Us*; *Scalawag Magazine*; and most recently in *ReSentencing Journal* from Tufts University. He is serving a natural life sentence in the State of Florida.