

# DREAMLAND

BY ANTHONY PAUL GRIFFIN

The morning dew's presence would last only another hour, however others had long prepared for this new day. Ladybugs travelled over and under the expansive rail running from the Processing Center to the roadside; a path well-worn, practically invisible while harvesting aphids, interspersed in the algae located on the underside of the railing. A small contingent broke rank, exposing their existence by venturing to the top portion of the rail, before flying away. 201355 lifted his vines, what he saw caused an audible moan to emit, a moan of disappointment, and disbelief - at least half of the branches were now barren; three plants were destroyed entirely, their base severed, cut in half. Before night fell, a multitude existed, clinging together in clusters; after the preplanned and organized invasion only eight tomatoes remained out of harm's way. The invaders were now burrowed deep, safe, hibernating; the morning's dew clung to the grass, protecting, covering, obscuring their existence. Two – cutworms - remained on the stalks, as if too full to move, exposing themselves to inspection; 201355's frustration intervened however, preventing him from seeing what he should have seen. The cutworms' successful invasion was aided by a light shower which blew through the area at 2:00 a.m., washing away the remaining organic pesticide applied the evening past. The pesticide worked in part - the new organic blend, contained at least two inert ingredients which served as an aphrodisiac – attracting and enticing their kind. The inert ingredients remained stable - clinging, while the other ingredients either dissipated in strength, separating and then flowing gently in the

renches formed by 201355. One could readily concede the new and improve label was in fact true to some extent.

Pigeons scurried, cooed and harvested the stale bread tossed on the concrete by 20185, even though he had been instructed to stop feeding them - every time he was told not to - he did. This morning differed, the pigeons dared not coo, remaining quiet. A slight breeze from the northeast was the sign of their presence, creating a fluttering sound as the wind intermingled and dispersed throughout the flock. They, and 20185, had long decoded each other's code, knowing the meaning of their sounds and movement and his words. 20185 had named each of them, and they apparently have accepted the name bestowed, coming when called, staying when told to stay. 20185 had been long characterized as a socio-path, one possessive of a borderline personality disorder; his caring for his flock seemingly inconsistent with his history; - but it was not. He had assigned names, knew their personalities, and was capable to discussing the variation of the hues displayed in their feathers. 20185 also could provide their weights with astounding accuracy, preferring to calculate and measure in metrics believing the same to be a more accurate scale, somewhat akin to the measurement his ears performed when noting the difference between their distinctive voices. Others noticed their interaction, but none of this was their concern; it was expected that 20185 timely prepare breakfasts, lunches and dinners for the Warden and his front office staff – no other expectation, no other expectation.

This morning, the morning ritual was disturbed when a falcon tired of waiting extricated Jake and Mona from the flock. Sadie sat in the window knowing full well she would have been blamed if 20185 had not seen their demise. She wiped her face, twisted her head and watched the pigeons take their last flight, albeit an involuntary one guided and controlled by another. Sadie remained quiet about her own conquests, even though she too had eyes for Jake and Mona.

She caught two wood rats around the time the storm began its path through the area this morning. The storm blew north – north east, they however travelled a different path. A path they had traveled for the last three weeks, save moving around the traps placed in their path – a nuisance they had long adapted. Their movement was connected to the Warden’s decision to lay an additional patch of concrete, a decision compelled by his former habitats. Warden Jacoby Jones was a city boy now assigned to a rural setting. This new move found him spending little time adapting, or even attempting to adapt; he instead elected to pave the creek bed, remove all the vegetation near the buildings, and with the excess concrete cut a pathway through the meadow into the adjoining fields; a ribbon almost broad enough to accommodate two vehicles travelling in opposite directions. The wood rats had travelled down the southern wall, then an eastern path before heading north to enter the pantry. Sadie trapped both coming out of the pantry, while hanging from a ledge. She hit the first one so hard he landed against the opposite wall, disabled and unable to escape. The other she mortally wounded before he was able to attempt a futile defense. When the sun announced its presence over the eastern horizon, Sadie pretended to be famished – a false gentility - rubbing, purring, gently turning in a clockwise motion against 20185’s leg; all occurring prior to her taking her perch on the window’s sill. The wood rats’ presence was just an afterthought; the tawny crazy ants cleaned and removed the remaining portion of Sadie’s gift.

20314 was scheduled to be released at 7:01 a.m. She carried a white cotton-blend bag which contained what remained of her worldly possessions and a check co-signed by both the Governor and the Director of the Correctional Division. On this morning, fifty other men and women were to be freed, standing in front and the rear of 20314. 20314 made two steps toward

her long-awaited release, before stopping, then turning to reenter the building; others stepped around, oblivious to her movement.

In 1985, the Processing Center was located elsewhere. This all changed when the Warden Smith issued a memorandum providing, “All inmates are to exit in a single file-line, in a manner respectful of the institution from the eastern wing.” In 1990, stainless rails were added on both sides of the walkway, no records exist with regards to the rails’ installation, even though the inmates in the Fabrication Shop worked for a week making the rails, then another two weeks installing them. Since 1993, 20444 spent at least five hours a day wiping the sides, and tops of the railing, but never the bottom. 20444’s grandmother use to tell him he spent a lot of time doing absolutely nothing – his behavior differed little years later. His imperfect cleaning habits mattered not, few possessed fingers elongated enough to fit under and around the rail, maybe 210239, 23339, 34555, 53301, and 77321 – but none of them were scheduled for release any time soon. Fencing was added in 1994, enclosing the walkway, extending upward and over. In 1995, the walkway was extended for some 350 feet, ending next to the bus depot to Dreamland. The 1995 extension was accompanied by an additional restriction - public access was prohibited. This meant, upon release, the only way off the property was by taking Dreamland’s bus. No longer were family members permitted to drive to the Processing Center. The previously allotted parking spaces were marked reserved; remaining empty because the spaces were no longer needed, in that in the same year the number of employees were reduced. No one could ever make sense of creating additional parking spaces at the same time a reduction-in-force was being implemented and a state-wide hiring freeze was put in place.

The loading process was completed at 7:50 a.m. - all, except 20314, were now seated. The bus left the depot at 7:51, at 7:52 a.m. 20314 stepped back in the building. The guard

securing the entry way stepped aside, not sure what to make of this seemingly insignificant act of defiance. The guard ordered those behind 20314 to continue boarding.

Dreamland's new gleaming white buses, all unmarked, save the blue lettering identifying their make and model, were modern, the best money could buy. Their seating capacity was 110; the older bus' capacity was half as much. Dreamland was in the process of replacing the entire fleet with the larger buses because on most releases the smaller buses were required to line up three to four deep. On today's date, only one bus was required, idling the entire time, prior to smoothly moving away from the depot.

Dreamland is located on the main road, situated 5.5 miles away from the Processing Center. A one story brick building constructed in 1951 during the Warden's second cousin's stewardship. Now painted white, the front door remains a testament to the building's institutional past, an industrial grade aluminum frame with bullet-proofed glass inserts. The previous signage can be seen under the most recent coats of paint – "IMC Processing Center." The insides of the facility differ to some extent, in other ways its history is still seen – heavily waxed, pea gravel concrete floors, and the white fluorescent light fixtures still anchor the building. The grids on the light fixture look as if they are miniature windows, with framed lattice work. The walls which existed previously now removed and repositioned, leaving an open dining space. Those same light fixtures now take on the appearance of ill-positioned lily pads; remaining in the same place they had prior to the walls being removed and repositioned. The restrooms remain located on the western wall. The kitchen, now smaller, is located in the back; a room too small for any serious food preparation. The paneling remains the dominant feature of the building, however now white paint covers the First and Second (FAS) grade hardwood (mahogany). Dreamland's owner contends he covered an ugly laminate, even he

knew the wood came from the patch of magnolias located in the bottoms. The paint too is industrial grade, appearing to be the same paint covering the outside of the building, and the buses. White serving plates are stacked in stacks of a hundred near the entry to the kitchen, not perfect matches, but close; purchased over the years when restaurants in a five county area went out of business, partly attributable to the cutback and hiring freeze. Dreamland only purchased the white plates.

Dreamland sits on three hectares of concrete (the equivalence of 7.41 acres), extending from property line to property line. Its busiest days are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – the release days at the Processing Center. No one has yet to question why those whose release days occurs on the Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays are held until Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, that said – Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are Dreamland’s busiest days. Dreamland receives the list of those to be released the night before, ostensibly to determine a head count. The head cook uses the information to place his order. The rumor had long since spread that Dreamland’s doesn’t prepare the food on site; instead the food is driven over from the Processing Center thirty minutes before the buses carrying the newly released guests arrived. The truth be damned - the sign on the outside of the building advertises freshly prepared meals - again, true to some extent.

Dreamland birthed after the prison riots in 1985. Five civilians died, including the Governor’s sister-in-law, Madgelyn. He, Governor Gary Smith, made it his personal and political crusade to expose and “to hold all involved accountable.” His was a law and order campaign, telling anyone, everyone, what he dreamt, “others were involved in her death.” The Governor’s family’s connection to the prison system extended farther than his sister-in-law’s death. At the time of the riots, he was the Warden, a position he inherited from his cousin,

Roger. Madgelyn was married Gary's younger brother, Ralph, who was the Warden at the Scales' Unit, situated two counties away. The riot started as a sit-down, a refusal to work. Those participating congregated in the Processing Center. Madgelyn remained in her office, even though given an opportunity to leave, typing any and all communications between the Warden and the inmate. Her involvement was not by happenstance - she had previously approached her brother-in-law about her concern.

“These women aren't getting pregnant by themselves.”

“What do you mean pregnant by themselves?”

“There are at least five women who are in their first trimester. Contact visitations are prohibited and even if we did allow contact visits, none of them have had any visitors in the last six months. None of this is rocket science Gary.” Gary's response didn't require Madgelyn to be a rocket scientist to interpret his response.

“What do you expect me to do?”

His response accompanied his walking away, almost as if fleeing, making clear his intention not to discuss the matter further. Before he was able to escape, Madgelyn screamed, “Do something with these girls' complaints. You are, by the way, the Warden, not their friend. Hire more female guards, do something! Prevent access to the shower area by the male guards! Do something. Create a law library on these grounds, this is the only unit in the system without a library – Gary, do something!”

Her words caused the future Governor to stop briefly, turning in her direction for the first time. “Does Ralph know about what is going on?”

“No I haven't bothered telling him.” ... But she had and yes he knew. The day of the sit down, the Warden refused to enter the Processing Center, even though five of his staff members

remained, communicating with him while he created a Temporary Command Center, set off some fifty yards back. Madgelyn walked the notes to the Command Station, and then turned and walked back to her office. One note read: “We are not in harms’ way; twenty six inmates, refusing to work. Located in the main hall; will not work, until they talk with Warden.” Madgelyn scribbled on the note her previously expressed concerns, “*address their complaints, Warden.*”

Warden Smith did not address their complaints; he remained steadfast, refusing to enter the Processing Center. He instead organized a tactical force from the unit, complimented with members of the State Police. The notice of the sit-in was transmitted at 8:46 a.m. on July 5, 1985. At 10:00 a.m., the Warden labeled the sit-down, “a riot situation”. No one understands what precipitated his relabeling the acts of the inmates. Warden Ralph Sweet called his cousin at 11:00 a.m.; Warden Smith refused to take his call. Ralph called his wife at 11:30 a.m. The telephone service and electricity to the Center was cut at 11:31 a.m. Madgelyn was able to tell Ralph she was fine, “they are refusing to work until someone talks to them. By the way we have been told ‘we are free to leave at will’ ” - at that point, the services were killed.

Ralph began his trip to the IMC at 12:00, not because his wife told him to come but because his side hurt no matter what he did to alleviate the pain. He calculated he would arrive at the unit between 1:30 and 1:45. The Tactical Force was in place by 1:30 p.m. The press was in place at 2:00 p.m. They Tactical Force entered the Processing Center at 2:15 p.m., killing five civilians and twenty five inmates. Ralph was delayed by the traffic barricades placed in all directions, one hundred yards back from the Tactical Force. An additional security force was placed twenty five yards from the Tactical Force’s staging area. Ralph tired of waiting, exited the running vehicle, then breached the barricade, flashing his State identification to the security



detail, and then sprinted faster than he had ever ran – screaming - yelling - for the breach to stop. He witnessed the Tactical Force enter, heard the screams, explosions and gun fire. With his body in a prone position, Ralph cuffed his hands against his face praying for a miracle, crying, screaming, wrenching. The lingering scent of Madgelyn’s perfume remained imbedded in his hands, causing him to heave and burrow himself in the soil, while wishing that the life from his body dissipate, as he felt it dissipate from hers.

“The Commission’s report is flawed”, the Governor announced after his landslide victory. The final report was issued the day after the election, one year and 124 days from the now fully labeled riot. All the deaths were attributable to the dead twenty five inmates. A brief reference to weapons found on the site was included in an oblique footnote identifying the weapons as “office scissors, four in number”. The report found that “the riots were the proximate cause of the deaths,” ... “in violation of state law and institutional policies, each of the inmates engaged in the offense of felony murder, leading to the death of themselves and others.” All the bodies were located in one room, “the Administrative Assistant’s office, Madgelyn Sweet’s, the Medical Examiner concluding they were all in a sitting position when killed, arms locked, heads down, forming in an imperfect circle.” The complete copy of inmate’s petition, last seen on the Administrative Assistant’s (placed there after she and the Warden had their argument the day before) was nowhere to be found when the state investigators entered the crime scene. The Commission’s report included a copy of an incomplete petition, the complaint section missing; the document consisting of a signature page, with twenty six signatures. Twenty five of those signing, signed by using number and name – all found at the scene; the twenty sixth – an illegible, disjointed line. The report described the signature as “akin to hieroglyphics, imperceptible and impossible to distinguish.” The autopsy reports attributed the

twenty five deaths to “bullet wounds, a downward projectile, consistent with an authorized raid after a siege.” Fifteen of the autopsy reports revealed the deceased were in the first trimester of pregnancy; this information was not excluded from the main body of the report released to the public (under a privacy exception found in state law). The notes walked over by the Administrative Assistant were “somehow lost in the confusion” - words attributable to the Warden. The report contained no mention of Ralph talking to his wife minutes before the telephone lines and power were cut. From the day of the siege to the day of the report, no one listened to Ralph, dismissing him and his dissent as that of a sick man, one who never worked another day after the death of his wife’s death was confirmed. They found him in the same place that he had fallen - silent, catatonic – frozen in time and space. Six months of hospitalization and treatment didn’t help. Alcohol failed to ease his pain, the same with the pills the doctors readily prescribed. He used both anyway – his punishment and self-hate – the same as the actual physical abuse he visited upon himself. Ralph Sweet became for all practical purposes the invisible man. Not seen, not heard – not a word mentioned of his complaints in the official report.

The Processing Center was sold as surplus property four months after the riots. This act required inmate processing to move from the building situated on the main road back into the prison compound. Upon taking office, Governor Gary Smith issued an Executive Order requiring all releases take place at one central location, “including male and female prisoners”; this meant inmates from around the State, male and female, were to be transported to the Processing Center for release. At the time of the riots, only females occupied the prison grounds surrounding the center and only females were released through the IMC. The Governor’s order also required all releases to take place “only on Monday, Wednesday and Friday”.

The sale of the center was required to be posted in the newspapers under state law. When the *Capitol Times* questioned the failure to follow state law, the Governor ran interferences. By now he was a state hero, elected by a landslide, recipient of a multitude of awards, now a lay official in his church, the largest congregation in the State. The center was sold to the Governor's previous business partner. The name Dreamland – was bestowed by an investigative reporter with the *Capitol Times* – “a dream price, an equally imaginative posting in a non-existent newspaper, and a built-in clientele - Dreamland”, Kathleen Sullivan wrote. Sullivan's reporting received the recognition of her colleagues, but it mattered not, the sale was final, and on each Monday, Wednesday and Friday the Executive Order played out to a predictable normalcy.

On this morning, the bus arrived at Dreamland at 8:10 a.m. As has been the custom since the building's change of ownership, the basic breakfast remained free. Cigarettes, sodas, alcohol are sold at market price. Limited check cashing service is provided (limited to the amount of the check written by the State, less a 7.5% percent service fee); wiring services is provided (\$3.50 for the first \$50.00 dollars; \$5.50 for any amount between \$50.00 and \$150.00 and \$10.00 for any amount greater than \$150.00). Dreamland bragged their wiring service was cheaper than Western Union and Wal-Mart – this too, their brag, was true in part. Commercial bus service normally arrives around 11:30, meaning most, if not all of those released remain in place for at least three hours.

Prior to the property's sale, the Warden, and now honored governor, told of his belief the plans of the known and unknown conspirators would have all been revealed if the Processing Center was wired, never mentioning there was no need for such - members of his staff were present and were free to go and come. After his election to the state's highest office, his honor

converted his beliefs to a dream - a story he told readily, repeatedly and without much prompting on late night television, to any newspaper reporter, at every campaign stop. His dream evolved over time – “I dreamt it is still possible to find the killers of my sister-in-law.” When anyone dared question the minted hero, his defense was that of “a blessed man” (his words) and “one who for the rest of his life will seek the truth” (again, his words). Strangely, the tragedy provided the Governor an incredibly compliant and pliable audience. Prior to leaving the prison system, Warden Smith wired all 150 tables, and both bathrooms. The details of the wiring remained buried in supplemental invoices. Kathleen Sullivan was pulled from the story after she made the right request, using the right magical words, to the state’s public information officer.

The State Police was ordered in January 1, 1986 to provide at least two undercover officers, with instructions to mingle with the subjects upon releases – and so they have - 3 days a week, for 28 years, for a total of 4,032 days of mingling. The tapes, later disks, and now digital recordings are made available to the officers whenever requested. In 2000, when the State updated their computer systems, all conversations are simultaneously downloaded to the State Police’s Data Center, obviating the owners the burden of maintaining the records.

20314’s movement was not planned; she stepped sideways out of the line, then two steps backwards, placing her back in the Processing Center. “Excuse me. Excuse me”, she mumbled while moving, grabbing her stomach at the same time. She was allowed to visit the restroom; when she reemerged she noticed the loading process was almost complete. The guard motioned for her to fall back in line, but she did not move.

“Am I free?”

“Yes, you are free, now get in line.”

“If I’m free, I intend to walk out the front door, a free person.”

“There is no other transportation. To make the bus, you have to get in this line.”

“You said I’m free.”

“Yes, you are, but get in line.”

“I think I rather walk.”

20314 served a forty year sentence, day to day, no good-time, no credit for time served; six parole hearings since the riot, with each ending in the same word, “denied”. She had avoided trouble - there was no ready explanation why she was not accorded good time and why she was required to serve every day of her sentence. When the writ writers encouraged her to file something, anything, she moved back in the shadows determined to remain alive. She was told she was free and took the guard at his word, moved around him and proceeded to walk out the front door, no longer 20314, but Amaryllis B. Toussaint. The name Amaryllis a gift of her father, or maybe, even her mother. Her mother, Delilah, a god-fearing woman, captivated her father, Rufus, with her scent. Rufus said Delilah’s hair smelled like fresh amaryllis – which it did – her mother’s garden was the source of her perfume - crushing and mixing - always having available a touch of her intoxicant whenever Rufus was near.

The undercover officers stationed at Dreamland called back to the unit informing them their count was missing one inmate at 9:30. By this time, Amaryllis had cleared the first security barrier, and elected to abandon the roadway, crossing the prison’s pastureland. She had just cleared a fence separating the state’s land and private pastureland minutes before the call made back to the unit. Her trip was aided by absolutely gorgeous weather, inviting and encouraging her as she walked. The wind formed an envelope around her, cooling and pushing at the same time. The sun bathed her now greying mane, intermingling, renewing and reminding her of the preciousness of life. The pasture land told of picnics, births, revivals and deaths. Birds of prey

dared not approach – hers was a journey of life, she enjoyed every step even though the journey had no identifiable end-point.

The guard, John Leetz, allowed her to exit out the front door, reporting her refusal to board to no one. His supervisor found him located in the break room drinking coffee. When asked why he had not reported 20314's act of defiance, he shrugged his shoulders and replied, "Because she was free." He was fired within minutes. At 9:45 a.m. a call was placed to the Governor's office by the Warden. Governor Smith had called the Warden two days before asking him to call him when 20314 was released. The Warden did not understand the nature of the call, but readily agreed to do so. He had called earlier that morning, when the inmates were lined up for boarding, never knowing Amaryllis's deviation - never to board the bus, walking pass his office, out the front door, down the steps while he talked. Her long anticipated appearance at Dreamland was not to be. Governor Smith was entering into his last year of office, after twenty eight years of service – still the hero, still telling the story of his sister-in-law's death, well-invested, a friend of law enforcement, and now recently updating his stump speech to speak to "the sad and untimely death of my cousin, Ralph Sweet."

After receiving the second call – that 20134 had not boarded the bus - the Governor made three calls, one to owner of Dreamland, his third cousin, another to the head of the State Police, and the last call to the *Capitol Times*. Riley Smyth, the third cousin, was identified in early reports as a former business partner of the Governor, without reference to their distance relationship (on their mothers' side). There is some dispute whether the original spelling of the family name was Smith or Smyth. Riley's father elected to retain Smyth, this slight distinction has served its purposes over the years.

Riley was now nearing his sixty sixth; no one understood why he reported to work every day, particularly when the facility ran on its own. For each inmate released, the accounting records revealed that at least half of the State issued check was spent at Dreamland; the amount increased by an additional \$25.00 if a relative visited the facility, in that their breakfast was not free, and one-third of them bought at least one souvenir. Two years after the riot, Dreamland leased the parking lot back to the State. The lease was attached as a rider to a supplemental bill entitled, “tire purchases for state vehicles”. A second supplemental appropriation entitled, “lease of critically needed space”, set of the terms: tied to the cost of living, included an additional provision covering the yearly overhead expenses. This last bill meant Dreamland was appropriately titled by Kathleen Sullivant – providing its owner an additional \$300,000.00 yearly, a lease now in its 26<sup>th</sup> year.

The third call was to the *Capitol Times*, directed to the young reporter who had written the anniversary story, Cassandra Leetz. Cassandra had been with the paper now for two years. “I believe we have identified who was in fact the twenty-sixth rioter. She was released this morning, inmate number 20134”, were the Governor’s words. Barely a hello, as if scripted. She, Cassandra, recorded the call, on direction from her editor, remembering the Governor had on two occasions accused the paper of misquoting him.

“How did you discover this information, Governor?”

“From a reliable source, I am not at liberty to tell you at this time.”

“Do you know the location of 20134? Do you have a name?”

“No, I do not know the inmate’s immediate whereabouts. Her name is Amaryllis B. Toussaint. I have enlisted the help of the State Police.

“Thank you Governor, thank you.”

The original reporter was now only a part-time employee. Management referred to her as a legacy employee – one bridging the paper’s past and the “new age, new generation, new paper – a digital adventure.” The new slogan grated every inch of Sullivant’s existence, “somebody still has to sit in the meetings to keep watch, someone still has to request the documents and then read them, ‘new age, new generation, new paper’ – a digital mistake” – was her rant over coffee, tea or bourbon. She now worked from home, contributing one to two articles a month, mainly puff pieces on personalities. The paper used her name and status in the profession to attract attention to the chosen favorite personalities – actors and actresses, entertainers, the rich and the nouveau rich, “thugs and thuggises” (her words again). They dared not assign her to a substantive piece; she was now at the age in her life and reporting where she had a hard time biting her tongue, curtailing her voice. “Non-sense!” was her favorite word. Said swiftly – as if her tongue touched something too hot, cold, or bitter – pulling away, snapping at the same time when said. “I believed the Governor is responsible for his sister-in-law’s death.” No sooner than those words flowed from her mouth, settling in her then editor’s ears, did her career path begin its inevitable detour. The editor told the owners, the owners spent little time contemplating the subject of the paper’s integrity and ordered her moved. “Awards or no awards, move her!” So she was. No doubt the stories she told of personalities were thorough, enjoyable and one of the paper’s assured money-makers. She has now grown tired of worshiping wealth and its inherent pretentiousness, now contemplating resigning her position within the next year. After the Governor’s call, her more youthful version called her, while she waited for her next interview, a clothing designer who knew nothing about clothes and design. He was a hip-hop artist lending his name, oblivious of his inadequacies.



“Can we talk?” – They did for two – three minutes - while Kathleen walked, bundling her materials while leaving the restaurant. Her insides understood she could be fired, but firing under these circumstances would be a wonderful refrain. While she walked, she could be heard repeating over and over, “that bastard.”

John Leetz left the unit at 11:30 a.m., fired and not understanding exactly why he was fired. He had worked for the State for thirty years, and a grand total of thirty days at the Processing Center. He was nearing his fiftieth birthday, wore jeans every day, owned twenty guns, ten knives and three fishing boats. He also knew every line to everyone of Bruce Willis’ movies. His favorite - 16 Blocks – played on a loop, every night. Firing him was not a death warrant for him – he mumbled yippee-ki-yay under his breath, turned in his badge, and then let his grandmother’s gifts to him (foresight and intuition) guide him – he left the facility looking for 20314. He didn’t know why and he didn’t question why, he learned long ago not to question his grandmother. Instead of turning to the west toward Dreamland, he headed to the east, as if told the path of her flight. He located Amaryllis Toussaint fifteen miles from the unit walking on the opposite side of the roadway.

“You need a ride; I am going your way.”

“Sure.”

Although he had changed from his prison uniform, Amaryllis recognized him immediately. His jeans and dress shirt did not tell, but his face did – the same face – one which reacted but did not react when she refused to board Dreamland’s bus; the same person who didn’t cause a commotion when she walked out the front door, even waving to the Guard Tower for them to release the gate. She remembered his face as she still remembered the faces of the thirty people who died years before. The Governor was right - she was number twenty six; the

long unaccounted signature who was saved by forgetting to place her inmate number, and an upset stomach, a stomach which would not settle the morning of the unexpected raid. When the initial breach occurred, an explosion was followed by screams; the noise told her to remain hidden in the recesses of the restroom. When the screams grew silent, he heard a distinctive voice command others “to clear her desk, remove the computer”. When the noise grew closer she removed the ceiling tile, hoisted her body into the rafters. She then travelled the width of the building, removed the roof louvers, exiting, rolling onto the roof. She then heard the same distinctive voice ask, “Is anyone alive?” - She fell - a fall of twenty three feet from roof to the ground, if you include the roll off the roof - an additional fifteen feet would be part of the total. Even though Amaryllis was on the ground for less than seventy five seconds (enough time for her to regain her breath), she felt as if she was exposed for an hour. Fear pushed Amaryllis through the garden, hidden and protected by the corn stalks in full bloom. She entered a now unguarded infirmary, her assigned job location. At the time the infirmary was located in the same complex as the Processing Center. After the Investigative Report was issued, the building was torn down and the land, with the Processing Center, was sold. She had grown accustomed to living in the shadows, at times pretending not knowing how to write her name, to exclusively printing, forever abandoning her swiggle. When investigators came looking for anyone with the “like signature” no one knew anything, some because they didn’t know anything, others because they weren’t telling.

“Where are you headed?”

“I don’t know ... I don’t know ... away from here.”

“Get in.”

While Amaryllis settled into the seat she saw two State troopers pass, as if searching. She slid lower in her seat, although free she didn't feel free.

"Why did you stop?"

"I was fired this morning, for allowing you to walk out the front door."

"Really?"

"Yes, really, and I figure, if my allowing a free person to be free is enough to fire me, then it is enough for me to find you ... and help you." When John paused between "you" "and help", Amaryllis's heart sank further than it had sunken in years. When he finished his sentence ... "and help you", she laughed and he laughed; a deep laughter, something she too had not experienced in years.

"I have been a state employee for 30 years and 30 days. All of my bills are paid, all my credit cards are clear and I believe I can drive you anywhere you want to go."

"I don't know where I am going. My parents are dead, I was an only child. I have no children." When Amaryllis mentioned children she choked up, held on to the door a little harder, a little longer before continuing. "I don't know. Please just drive."

"Okay, I will drive until I tire, then we rest, and then we travel some more. But can you give me some hint why you are so important. Seems to me those troopers were sent out looking for you. I know I didn't violate any valid policy, not that I know of - because I allowed you to walk out the front door - doesn't make sense; give me at least a hint." The pine trees flowed pass the window, the cutworms remained dormant, and the flock of cooing pigeons reappeared at the kitchen door - the continuum of life continue to play out as Amaryllis listened.

The state police's rapid exit from Dreamland was because of the command from their supervisor, in search of "a possible escapee, whose time may have been miscalculated" – but she

was no escapee. There were actually three troopers on the roadway, two of the three cars saw her enter John's truck and continued travelling at a high rate of speed, tipping their hat in the process. Thirty minutes later, Mr. Smyth at Dreamland announced this was the last breakfast, "eat up, enjoy". He had decided to retire, and was closing the facility after today's day; the ladybugs continued their work, consuming, travelling, and consuming more. Some deviated in flight; most did not. The crazy ants continued to move in all directions, befuddling all others. Mr. Smyth's announcement was not something he dreamt – he was given no other option. Dreamland would be no more. The same as the wood rats Sadie had devoured the night before, no option remained.

No one remembers who suggested the State capitol first. John had a niece who worked for the paper - he may have. Amaryllis remembered reading Kathleen Sullivan's story and wondered why her investigation stopped - she may have.

"Hungry?"

Amaryllis laughed again, oh so content – not a self-centered contentment - she still responded, "No I'm okay. I can wait." The red streaks in her hair, as if colored by the petals of the amaryllis, bounced as she laughed. "Every day is somebody's birthday", was John's response said in laughter, not knowing the line belong to Mos Def and not Bruce Willis. It mattered not.