

(Adams Co. Jail)
June 9, 1965
11 days

I remember when I used to hear of sentences being handed out in court--1 year in jail, or 6 months. "God," I'd think, "that lucky bastard got off easily. At this moment my reaction would be more like - "6 months! That poor sonovabitch!"

Speculating about prison, imagining what it would be like is no substitute for actually experiencing it. It's a lot worse than you imagine. You know beforehand that you're going to feel deprived, cooped up, that you'll want to get out. But once the door clangs harshly shut, the keys jangle in the trustee's hands as he locks the hall door, the bolt thumps to secure your cell door--well, then you get a more accurate picture of it all.

Take off your shoes and climb into your bunk--there's nothing else to do--and lie back. Bars all around and cold steel walls covered with scratches forming names, obscenities, crude pictures. The bed is hard, you wish you had a pillow, glance at your wrist to check the time but remember with a twinge of frustration that your watch as well as all your other belongings are in the front office. You lie there blank for a couple of minutes, then sit up, legs dangling over the bed, looking for something to distract you. Bars. Faint smell of urine and disinfectant. The oppressiveness is closing in, you start getting tense, your stomach begins to tighten, uneasy. Then you realize that you are getting tense, push it down, take a deep breath, and try to relax. Lie down again. You have to keep control so you start thinking of something else. We might have been killed--at least some of us--if we had gone on marching. God,

150 whites with dogs, guns, clubs. I wonder how many of us in all were arrested. Not too many hopefully, or bond will be tough to raise and we'll be in here forever...keep cool, forget about jail -- (?) 150 men--that's going to have to be considered next time we demonstrate. Are people going to be willing to continue? What do they feel about the deal, the arrests? Goddam, I've got to talk to Dory! I wish to hell I was out of here...Like in a circle the same thought keeps recurring. You toss up again, cursing the police, the jailer and the bars. Stand up and walk to the cell door, hands on the bars. Try to walk back and forth but the cell is too small so you have to get on the bunk again. The people in the hall know what you're here for and their faces are sullen, resentful, hostile as they stare at your cell.

You lie down but you're up again, restless, tense. You've got an idea what claustrophobia must be like. Again you force yourself down. Close your eyes and relax. The images of the march, the snarling cops, the fear and nervousness and hesitancy which swept the demonstrators--you too. That fades and you're lying there again and the walls and bars start closing in. Damn! there must be something to do except sit!

After awhile you relax again, and gradually you adjust to the existence. You don't know when bail will come through--it could be anytime, and that knowledge is frustrating. The trustee jangles the keys 10 times a day as he goes in and out of the main door (which you can't see) about his chores. Each time you hear the keys, you stop whatever you're doing, your stomach gets fluttery and you strain your ears to hear

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if he's coming to the white cellblock--to call your name...But he never does. You know that the chances are 1 out of 500 that this ringing of keys means freedom, but the same nervous reaction, tense expectation wells up, then the inter(?) damn gloom and, and Jesus Christ, how long is it going to take? What the hell is coming off outside? You're positive they'll spring you within four days, and on the fourth day you wake up anticipating something good--your reaction to the keys is ever more intense. But the day goes by. By 5:00 you've surrendered hope, although never all of it. So you know that by Sat. you'll be out and the days in between are long--it might be now! After Sat. you figure what the fuck. And also sometimes a furious impotent blind rage. "Where's the goddamn bond? I know damn well it doesn't take this goddamn long! They're probably drinking beer at the White House..don't give a damn. Jesus Christ, wait til I get out of here and raise hell!" But you calm down and know well that every effort is probably being made..that there must be some kind of a hang-up outside. But the feeling keeps coming back until around Monday. A visitor told you that (?) wouldn't accept your bond because the signer was madam of that whorehouse on N. Rankin St. That brings a smile.--Cool person to have sign my bond. And you hear that you'll be a federal prisoner now because the petition was filed to remove the case to federal court. You have to wait until the U.S. Marshall takes you to the federal prison in Jackson before they can bail you out now.

So its been three days I've been waiting for the Federal Marshall. You've read everything in the jail. You wish you could sleep but you know you'll be awake till at least 2:00 A.M.

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like every other night. And its only 11 now--that's why you're writing this--it passes time.

Thoughts keep drifting thru your mind. Like, that visioh of walking out, feeling light as a feather, the sun, the fresh air, your friends with you. Then in the car over to the White House for a splurge. A quart of frosty cold beer--Schlitz or Budweiser. And a whole fried chicken. Oh ecstasy; what more could one ask. This reminds you that you're hungry. The last meal of the day at 2 P.M.--beans, mashed potatoes, and cornbread. has worn off. It's a long time from 2 till 7 A.M., the other meal. And not much to look forward to--cold syrup, three slices of bread and a morsel of sausage. Or else grits and bread. It's funny--the food is lousy, but you look forward to meals, partially because you're hungry. But also, the day is measured by food. Breakfast wakes you up--then some more sleep, talking with the other inmates and waiting for lunch at 2. Then the wait for coffee at 7. As you drag on your cigarette and swallow the last of the lukewarm bittersweet slop, the next thing you're looking forward to is cold syrup and bread.

You try to sleep, knowing you won't . Toss, turn, twist--the folded up mattress cover is a lousy pillow, digging into your temples, gouging at your cheek. Try to plump it up and its better for a minute, then gets harder and harder. You lie there obstinately. A mosquito whines. Goddamit haven't I got enough trouble without!..Discouraged grunt emanates from your mouth and a restless yet listless sigh flows out. The whine stops and you feel a small stab in the middle of your back. Your hand lashes out but it can't quite reach the spot and the little fucker is warned off. You spring halfway up, eyes blazing, full of

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resentment, frustration, self-pity, hatred. It's no good trying to sleep yet. A low, bitter intense snarl--"Ah shit!" That's a pretty apt summarization of jail.