

# White Ink

Jacob Bernstein

**Department of Corrections  
Offender Operations**

**Memorandum**

To: Patmos, J.  
Inspector General  
Department of Asset Evaluation

From: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Date: [REDACTED]

Subject: Security Assessment- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

CAUTION: CONTAINMENT PROTOCOL HAS BEEN BREACHED.

During the night of [REDACTED], inmate #61-17 made use of a foreign substance, breaching stimuli containment protocol.

On the morning of [REDACTED], #61-17 was transported to emergency services and placed under suicide watch.

The attached document was found in the cell of #61-17 by [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and is also being placed under the evaluation of your department.

Evaluate the severity of contamination.

My space is limited so forgive me. It has been some time since I have known the touch of another. I don't mean this in any sense other than the obvious truth of my predicament: I am alone— but I have you now. I don't have any inclination as to who will read this, but I know that someone will read this, otherwise, I will die alone. Dying brings me no solace, my life ended long before I met you. If it were possible, I would introduce myself, but that was taken away. I can remember somethings, basic human functions, I thankfully still remember how to write, at least I still have that, they didn't or couldn't take that from me, but the rest, the rest escapes me. Sometime ago, longer than I can remember, I awoke here in my room with only a few items and amenities: there was a bed, a sink, toilet, a mirror, and a typewriter. There's really nothing else. Nothing besides the empty air, the empty walls, and the empty color. I think it's a whiteness, but I only know that because my typewriter came with paper and ink. Ever so faintly on the bottle of ink, under the right light, I can make out a different shade of this color that everything is those words read: WHITE INK. That ink is the same color of the paper. The typeface is indistinguishable when I hit the keys. I found no initial use for it. The typewriter, in my mind, was some form of sick joke. It was useless. Writing words that neither I nor anyone else could see. Who would write something if no one else could see it? This became my only comfort. I wrote for what felt like days. I wrote on the same few pieces of paper, over and over again. I would stop and pretend I could see the white ink, that I could read the beautiful words. I wrote sordid poems and prolonged plays. Gripping novels and raunchy romantic stories, all of them became the only respite from the emptiness of my life; the loneliness never left me. The

light never dims, and it never falters. An eternal sunshine is my only blessing in the darkness of the self. Yet, I know for sure that I am not alone in this world. Every now and then, a slit in the walls opens and rice streams down from the opening. I lick every morsel of the floor and relish what I can. Tasteless. It is never enough to alleviate the hunger that I feel daily, it's only enough to sustain what little life I still cling to. This food must come from someone. Someone knows I exist, just like you. They're just like you. They know about my plight as you do. I hope you do. I can't seem to remember another color. This sameness is stitched to my skin, the white fabric that covers my whole body encases me in the blankness. I've tried pulling at it, I want to know what I look like, what color my skin is, I hope it isn't the same as this empty room, but it never budes, never tears. I can see as much in the mocking mirror they left for me. You might ask about my eyes. I've gazed into my own glassy reflection only to find that my eyes are bleached. Stained by the whiteness, my eyes have lost their color, or it was taken. I don't know which, but it doesn't matter, all I see is white anyway. Whenever the white fabric pulls on the hooks gouging my eyelids, I remember how they look, wincing at that empty stare, my stare, always unable to force a tear. Life continued like this for some time. I slept. I wrote. I ate. I defecated. That was always something, I would sit on the toilet and let the machine lock me in place, it would pull things out of me then release me when it was done. I wondered where the hole in the fabric was down there, but I could never find it. When I blink it pulled on my eyelids, when I ate my lips, but I can't remember the words for how that, that thing, made me feel. There was only a sameness in the pulling of my body throughout my days, nothing more and nothing

less. To keep sane, I labored what seemed like eons over the typewriter, but I had no audience, no person to write to. No eyes besides my hollow gaze could read the white ink. In my madness, I could almost see the print on the page, the intricate stanzas, and the sprawling paragraphs. I wrote for myself before I found you. It's funny really, you were there the whole time, I just didn't know it yet. From the very moment I awoke in this strange place, to my coming last breath, you were always here with me. Before I found you, I found some comfort in memorizing what I had written. They couldn't take away any new memories. I liked saying the words aloud to myself and remembered quite a bit. Nothing I can recall was of any good but there is one:

*And I shall go to thee a mind without a trace,*

*And I will be without the words or grace.*

*And I know not of what I could ever say,*

*And I think not of what I could keep at bay.*

*And I will fall before the lights dim,*

*But you will stay no matter how grim.*

That cost me a lot of space, but I hope it was worth it, I hope you like it. I can't think of a good title, but I bet you could. Since I've been here, I have never been good with poetry, but I like this one. I think I was someone who always liked poetry that rhymed and this one is pleasant to me. I like to think it would have been pleasant before all of this too. The poem means something, I don't know exactly what, but it sounds pretty. I can't remember what is outside this room, but I'm sure it is full of pretty things, things that are full and imbued with other things. I know I'm not good at making poems, and I didn't stick to the meter too well, but that's the beauty: it's

mine. It's yours now too. I do not have much that I can call mine but I'm glad that I can give this to you. It's the least I can do. I have taken enough already. There's so much I want to tell you but I'm running out of ink. You must forgive me. I think it's only proper that I divulge how we got to this current situation, how we got here, how I found you. I was sitting at my typewriter, staring at the paper. I let my fingers glide over the keys, feeling a small resistance of the action, but I couldn't press down hard enough for them to type. Something was unwilling to write, be it mind, body, or both, but nothing happened as my movements slowed. My fingers rested on the keys as I could no longer think of something to type, I couldn't lose this. There was a flutter in my chest, like a breeze had gotten into my clothes, or those things from the toilet were in my chest. The wriggling and writhing sent me recoiling as I lost control. In a moment of panic, I kicked my beloved typewriter into the accursed mirror. Each item offered the only reflections available to me and in a moment of terror I had nearly destroyed both. The typewriter guzzled up one of the few pieces of paper I had but it nonetheless survived my fit, the mirror did not fare as well. Shattered, I knelt down to retrieve my typewriter. But in that moment, I found you.

**You are everything to me, you are my everything.**

I shard of glass sliced my finger as I clawed at my poor typewriter and then, you were there. I've never seen something so beautiful, so vivid. You came streaming out of me in the most brilliant and deep hue. Rich and viscous you ran down my hand as I trembled with glee. I saw you. And you were as beautiful then as you are now. You filled the ink cartridges with your hearty color and gave birth to this document. I don't know what you are, but thank you, thank you for everything, for being my everything. It's been more and more difficult to find you and I worry

that you'll leave me. I've been taking the shards of glass to my flesh in order to fill and refill the typewriter, but I see no more use. This is my last page. I can't speak for long but the gift you've given, the life beyond death, I thank you; whatever you or I have done means nothing now; there is solace in company and that's all I need. Without you, I'm as good as dead. I love you. Please. Please don't leave me. I'm not ready. There's so much more I have to say to you. Please. I still needed you. I don't know what I'll do when you're gone. I'll go mad. I'll use the glass shards in other places. It never pierces the cloth, the blood clots underneath, but it dries and hardens, and that part of the cloth isn't useable. I'll use you in one of my eyes, that way I'll get all of you. There's more of you, I can feel you on my face, inside me. Fill me more with your warmth. Please don't leave me, I can give you more, I can tell you so many more things. Please.

**Department of Corrections  
Offender Operations**

**Memorandum**

To: Patmos, J.  
Inspector General  
Department of Asset Evaluation

From: [REDACTED]  
Department of Termination

Date: [REDACTED]

Subject: Security Assessment- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thank you for submitting the prisoner evaluation of #61-17. The evaluation was read by the committee on [REDACTED].

Prisoner termination request has been denied. Inmate #61-17 has been relocated to the initialization facility.

The committee found [REDACTED] to have an unsatisfactory exposure level. For reporting the contagion and becoming carelessly compromised, [REDACTED] has been relieved and referred to the Department of Termination.

Please report to the Department of Termination for an evaluation immediately