

Dear Casey,

Feels weird to be writing to you, knowing this is the last time. Time seems to have sped up in the last few months, funny that because it used to go by so slow before. Twenty years on Death Row, can you believe it?

I kept all your letters and I always liked hearing about what you've been doing in the free world. You and I never met face to face, that's okay, we're continents, if not light years apart. I don't hold it against you. You are the closest thing to family I got here.

The day I killed the cop is one I'll never forget. You could say it haunts me every day. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time, or I was. That's all in the past now, anyways. If I could take it back, I'd do it in a heartbeat. I keep thinking of the way my life could have gone if I had just walked on by instead of going into that liquor store with my friend's gun on that rainy Wednesday evening, looking for a quick way to make some money. I was only twenty-one, young and stupid. I ain't rehabilitated of course, that would be bullshitting you. I totally deserve to be here, and to be honest, I deserve to die for what I did.

When I saw his pregnant wife (his widow, I guess) in court, it kind of shook me up. She was in pieces, man, and when she cried she took out pieces of me too. I never seen such hate in her eyes, but mixed with fear or something else. I felt like a monster. I suppose I am a monster. My momma could see that, and she never came to the trial and that was that.

So here I am. Twenty-three hours a day with one hour in the yard, three hundred and sixty-five days a year in my cell which is eight feet by eleven, three meals a day served at eight-hourly intervals. I got two hours, fifty-nine minutes to go before I take a trip on the Stainless Steel Ride. You heard of painting by numbers. I live and die by numbers.

I wish I could go back in a time machine and tell my free self some home truths, impart some wisdom, if you will. I'd say, "Reese Jayden Wallis, if you keep on going the way you do, you gonna end up behind bars and you won't see your forty-second birthday." But my young self probably wouldn't listen anyways, I was a know-it-all back then, a rebel, a dumbass if truth be told. Still, I'd try to speak some sense to Young Reese. I'd say, "Look at what you are gonna miss out on. I never learnt to drive, flown in a plane, gone to college, owned a house, got married. I will never know what it is to wake up and think to myself, today I can do anything I want. I could go down to the beach for a swim, have drinks in a downtown bar with my friends, teach my son how to fish."

And don't get me started on food. I would give anything right now to bite into a fresh, ripe cherry, just picked and still warm from the sun. Or to hear the sound of a bottle of Bud being opened - that click, that hiss, that glugging sound you get when you pour it into a glass, to feel the cold wetness of the water droplets that chills your fingers, and the taste. Oh God, I would do anything to have just one mouthful of sweet, cold beer, to feel it swirl and fizz in my mouth, then the hard icy stream flowing down my throat and into my belly.

I won't even get a special last meal, cuts to funding means I get the same as everyone else. If I could, I'd have the beer, a real bloody rib-eye with a blue cheese sauce and a side of fries,

the cherries, a slice of warm apple pie and a large scoop of creamy vanilla ice cream. But I'll just have to hope for that in my next life instead.

How do I end this letter? I want to say I'm sorry to the cop's wife, but it would just be words. I could never make it right for her or their child, guess he or she is all grown up now, fatherless. Maybe it would have been better if I had never been born into this life, that way he'd still be alive. But I don't have control of Fate, no one does, and Fate does what Fate wants.

My time is nearly up. Thanks again for your letters, they helped me get through some hard times. I'm gonna read them all one more time, maybe I'll laugh and maybe I'll cry. Don't be sad, I'll be at peace soon. Maybe you could have that last meal for me.

In spirit, always,

Reese