



confine indespærre
 bar tremme
 fingertip fingerspids
 board bræt
 stench stank
 gallery balkon
 control booth kontrolboks
 chaplain fængselspræst
 cleric præst
 whizz suse
 crib tremmeseng
 huddle klumpe sammen
 hood hætte
 mitten vante
 insignificance ubetydelighed
 self-imposed selvskab
 distraction adspredelse
 guidance unit sikkerhedsaf-
 snit
 slot automat
 shack skur
 scrutinize undersøge nøje
 suspicious mistænksom
 cashier kassedame
 counterfeit falsk
 dismiss sende bort
 border crossing grænseover-
 gang
 federal statslig
 sentence dom

Taking Leave

edited by Paul Auster

For the last fifteen years I've been confined to a nine-by-
 seven cage of solid steel bars, squeezed between walls I can
 touch with my fingertips if I stretch my arms. On my right
 is my bed. Its mattress is as flat as a pancake, and next to
 5 it is a ceramic toilet, which is covered with a wooden board
 to keep the stench out.

I was in bed, on the verge of falling asleep, when my
 cell gate cracked. Any time it opened was a welcome relief.
 I jumped up, stepped out on the gallery, and called to the
 10 officer at the control booth a hundred feet away.

"The chaplain wants to see you. Get dressed," he said.
 I laced my boots, snatched my jacket, and hurried outside.
 A call from the cleric's office usually meant bad news. As
 I whizzed past my neighbor's crib I heard him say, "Is
 15 everything all right, Joe?"

"I hope so," I said. "I think I'm going to make an
 emergency phone call."

As I hurried across the snow-covered yard, groups of
 prisoners huddled together against the freezing wind.
 20 Blacks, whites, and Latinos bundled in multicolored hoods,
 hats, gloves, and mittens. Some were familiar, but most
 were just faces in a vast sea of lonely insignificance. A few
 walked endless laps around the yard, others stared at one of
 four TVs. Most were lost in self-imposed distractions, doing
 the best they could to kill time the only way they knew
 how.

At the wire gate leading to the guidance unit, I shoved
 my pass into the tiny slot of the guard's wooden shack. The
 officer scrutinized it like a suspicious cashier looking at
 a counterfeit fifty-dollar bill. Then, dismissing me like a
 30 foreigner at a border crossing, he said, "Go ahead." Relieved,
 I sprinted toward the building. At last I was going to speak
 with my grandmother, a tough eighty-year-old lady who
 could curse you out in a minute if you got her angry.

35 We had not spoken in several weeks, because my father,
 who had just completed a ten-year federal sentence, had

disconnected the three-way service at Nan's house as a condition of his parole. When I spoke to my father, he said, "Your grandmother's in the hospital, but she should be back in three days."

Although her health was deteriorating, I never expected such a sudden decline. I remembered our last conversation, when she had cried and complained about her swollen legs.

"Nan, you got to try and walk around, stretch your legs and get some exercise," I pleaded.

"I do. You don't understand. My legs are no good anymore. Last week I went to the bank and fell down on the sidewalk."

I tried to ease her pain by talking about the good old days, when we lived on Ninety-eighth Street and when Grandpa was alive. I pictured myself in the kitchen, watching her open the oven to peek at the golden-brown loaves of Sicilian bread she baked for me and my grandfather. Back then one of my favorite treats was a hot round loaf of homemade bread stuffed with chicken roll and washed down with a tall glass of milk. Those were great times, and now, here I was, clinging to them the same way my grandmother was.

But even as we spoke about the happy times, she had still cried bitterly. Her greatest fear was that she'd be forced to live in an old-age home.

"I want to die in my own house. I don't want to live with strangers."

"Nan, I promise no one's going to stick you in a home. Don't worry, when I get out I'll take care of you."

"Did you talk to the lawyer?"

"Yes, they're still working very hard."

"I hope to God you come home before I go."

"I will, Nan, you just take care of yourself." Although I was able to reassure her, my feelings of guilt lingered in my mind like the taste of spoiled milk.

Now, as I arrived at the chaplain's office, an officer said, "The imam wants to see you." The imam? I said to myself. Randazzo, my counselor, must have made arrangements with him to call my grandmother. Inside the small room, four Muslims were busy filling tiny bottles with scented oils. The room smelled like jasmine, musk, and coconut incense, penetrating and pungent, like the fragrance of head shops in the '60s. Imam Khaliffa was talking on the telephone. He removed the receiver from his ear and cupped

disconnect lukke for
three-way trevejs
service telefonservice
Nan bedstemor
parole prøveløsladelse
deteriorate blive dårligere
decline tilbagegang
plead bønfalde
sidewalk fortov
ease lindre
old-age home alderdomshjem
reassure berolige
linger forblive
spoiled fordærvet
imam en imam er en muslimsk
åndelig vejleder
counselor vejleder
scented parfumeret
incense røgelse
penetrating gennemtrængende
pungent skarp
fragrance duft
head shop forretning, der
sælger remedier til nydelse af
ulovlige rusmidler som f.eks.
hashpiber
receiver telefonrør
cup dække med hånden

mouthpiece telefontragt
impatiently utålmodigt
be cluttered være pakket med
funeral home bedemandsfors-
 retning
short-cropped kortklippet 5
soothing lindrende
confessional booth skriftestol
burly kraftig
garment beklædningsgen-
 stand
tan gyldenbrun 10
sneaker gummisko
disgust frastøde
reflection spejlbillede
hip hofte
holster pistolhylder
shackle lænke
graze græsse
leisurely roligt
surreal surrealistisk
smoldering ulmende
dart fare ud

the mouthpiece. In a soft voice he told the men to leave the room.

As they filed past me, he continued talking on the phone while I impatiently scanned the room. Although his desk was cluttered with bottles and papers, my eyes were drawn to one particular document that seemed out of place. On it I noticed my name written in bold letters above my grandmother's. It was a business letter from the Francisco Funeral Home.

The imam hung up the phone, and I asked, "What's going on?"

"Your brother Buddy called. He needs to speak with you."

Two days later, at 6:00 A.M., I was awakened by a young officer named Rizzo. He was thin, had short-cropped black hair, and a voice that spoke with the soothing calm of a priest in a confessional booth. Perhaps he also knew what it felt like to experience the loss of a loved one. I was grateful.

When we crossed the yard, it was windy, dark, and pouring with rain. Inside the administration building, a burly Irishman with blond hair and rosy cheeks approached me and said, "I'm sorry to hear about your grandmother." I put on the garments given to me by the prison for the trip: blue jeans, a white shirt, and a tan jacket. I wore my own sneakers. I glanced at myself in the mirror and was disgusted by my reflection.

At last we climbed into a specially equipped van with a thick Plexiglas partition separating me from the officers, who carried .38-caliber pistols strapped to their hips in black leather holsters. My legs were shackled by a twelve-inch dog chain, secured tightly at each ankle. I was also handcuffed with a belly chain. This was fastened to my cuffs with a master lock. To eat I had to bend forward and strain my neck to peck at a sandwich clasped in my fingers.

I had not been outside the stone walls of the prison for fifteen years. We drove past mountains, trees, and farms with black-and-white cows grazing leisurely on the grass. I felt like I was part of a surreal three-dimensional photograph. Soon we entered a valley that was covered in thick fog. It consumed us like the smoke in woods after a smoldering forest fire. Suddenly a deer darted from the

mist. It leapt onto the highway and into the front end of the pickup truck that was ahead of us. The driver didn't have a chance to swerve. I whipped my neck around and slid to the edge of my seat.

"Did you see that?" Officer Warren asked.

I peered out the side window, through beads of raindrops scurrying across the glass, and saw the deer sprawled on the perimeter of the roadway. As I strained forward in my seat, my shackles and restraints dug deep into my flesh. The deer's tongue dangled from her soft furry jaw, and her mouth was slightly open as she exhaled nervous, panting puffs of steam.

"*It's still alive!*" I exclaimed.

"Yeah, but she don't look good," Officer Warren said. I wanted to see her sprint back into the woods. Instead she lay motionless, as still as the fog hanging over the valley, as stiff as the trees.

By midafternoon trees were replaced by apartment houses and commercial brick buildings with an assortment of bubble-shaped, multicolored, bright bold letters. Some of the structures were boarded up. Finally we exited Lexington Avenue, passed the piers of Manhattan, crossed the Brooklyn Bridge, and emerged on Atlantic Avenue. The city was vaguely familiar, dreamlike.

I imagined myself in the old days, leaning on the armrest of my black 1983 Ninety-Eight Oldsmobile. I'd be listening to music with a thick joint burning in the ashtray. Inhaling the smoke of the sweet sticky weed, its pungent aroma drifting through a crack in the moonroof in swirling plumes. Once I had had it all.

On Atlantic Avenue there were rows of stores and bodegas and people buzzing everywhere. Beautiful women wearing tight pants, platform shoes, and leather jackets strolled by, swinging shopping bags. They swayed their hips in sync with the seductive rhythm and style that spelled attitude with a capital A in the barrio. There were furniture shops with sofas outside, a black homeless man begging, and an amputee in a wheelchair hurrying across the street.

When we pulled up in front of the funeral home, Officer Warren said, "Hold on. I have to check it out."

Two minutes later he appeared and nodded to his partner. Then, with Rizzo's assistance, I carefully climbed

swerve vige til siden

scurry pile

sprawl ligge med benene ud

til siden

perimeter udkant

5 exhale udånde

pant gispe

puff sky

motionless ubevægelig

assortment udvalg

boarded up tilskoddet

10 pier bro

vaguely vagt

armrest armlæn

weed marihuana

moonroof soltag

swirl hvirvle

15 plume sky

buzz styrte af sted

sway vugge

in sync i takt

seductive forførende

attitude selvbevidst holdning

capital stort

20 barrio fattigkvarter

amputee handikappet, der har

fået amputeret et eller begge

ben

25

30

35

40

in midstride mens man går
 crease rynke
 tether tøj
 impeccably ulasteligt
 saunter slentre
 wine barrel vintønde
 distinctive karakteristisk
 brogue accent
 encounter møde
 rabbit's fur kaninskind
 restriction forbud
 scrutinize undersøge nøje

out of the van. "Wait," Rizzo said, stopping me in midstride. "Let's take the belly chain and cuffs off first."

He inserted a key into the master lock and with a quick, practiced twist snapped it open. He reached around my back, unwrapped the chain, and then removed the handcuffs. I stretched and rubbed my wrists. They were swollen and red and had deep creases in them. Followed by Rizzo, I limped inside the lobby, taking slow, even steps to avoid tripping on the tether still attached to my ankles.

My brother Buddy appeared. He was tall and broad and impeccably dressed in a fine black suit. I could tell he was shocked and glad to see me. We shook hands and kissed. Then my uncle, whom I hadn't seen in fifteen years, sauntered in. He looked much older, seemed shorter, and was as round as a wine barrel. He paused for a second, studying me the same way I pondered him. Fifteen years was a long time.

"Joey," he said in his distinctive Sicilian brogue.

I wrapped my arms around him. "It's great to see you, Uncle Charlie."

"I'm a grandfather now," he said, proudly slipping a photo from his wallet. "Your cousin Joey and his wife had a boy. His name is Cologero."

I took the picture and glanced at it and wondered where all the years had gone. I remembered my cousin Joey when he was a teenager wearing a football jersey rushing out of his house in College Point to play two-hand touch. Now he was a father. I handed the photo back to my uncle and said, "Congratulations."

I stepped into the viewing room and encountered my sisters, Gracie and Maria. Both were drowned in black clothes. We hugged and kissed and each cried on my shoulder. I was quickly surrounded by other family members, including my father, whom I had not seen in ten years. His hair was pure white and as fine as rabbit's fur.

"You made it," he said.

We embraced. "Yeah, Dad, security cleared me."

Because of restrictions, I had not spoken to my father while he was away. I stood there and scrutinized him, searching for the man I had last seen on a visit ten years ago. I knew I'd never find him again.

The room was still and quiet. Chairs lined one wall and a sofa the other. There were tables with lamps on them, and

others that held crystal bowls filled with mints. At the rear of the room my grandmother lay lifeless, surrounded by an assortment of colorful floral arrangements. As I approached I could smell the familiar fragrance of freshly picked roses. I placed my hand on the edge of her bronze casket and gazed at her face. She was thinner than the last time I had seen her, five years ago. Her skin was pale and colored with a thick coat of makeup that made her look unnatural. She wore a smile that seemed more like a contrived grin. On her wrist was the same gold bracelet that she always wore on special occasions. It was heavy and adorned with several medals that jingled like bells when she walked. Now the charms – large solid-gold hearts and diamond-studded medallions inscribed with dates and heartfelt expressions – hung stiffly from her frozen wrist. She was dressed in a beautiful silk and lace pink gown that stretched to her ankles. On her feet she wore tiny pink shoes the color of seashells.

All these years I had expected this day. I just never thought it would happen so damn suddenly. Now all I had left were memories. Fragmented remnants of our lives scattered on the lid of her coffin. One was a picture of my grandmother taken in 1984, the year I went away, standing by the dock of our home in Howard Beach. Boats adorned with flags, some with fly bridges as tall as our house, floated on the surface of calm waters, waiting to cast off. She's wearing a pair of shorts and sneakers and has a huge grin on her face. And there beside her are the rosebushes she raised, exploding in brilliant full bloom.

At our house my grandmother usually kept large bowls of warm food in the oven. Pans of chicken cutlets and pasta, or meat and white potatoes, were always available for visitors who wanted to sit down and eat. On Sundays Nan always cooked a huge meal, large pastel-colored bowls filled with pasta, marinara sauce, garlic, and freshly picked basil. Then we passed around trays of meatballs, sausages, and meats stacked a foot high. I would wipe the sauce from my lips between mouthfuls of food and gulps of red wine mixed with 7Up. My grandfather wore a napkin tucked into his shirt and a pen in his pocket; he would busily grate a chunk of fresh ricotta cheese onto his macaroni. His arm moved in round, sweeping, circular motions. When he was finished, I took the cheese from him and did the same.

crystal bowl krystalskål
 contrived udspekuleret
 adorn pryde
 charm vedhæng
 diamond-studded diamant-
 besat
 seashell muslingeskal
 remnant levn
 scatter sprede
 surface overflade
 cutlet kotelet
 marinara sauce italiensk
 tomat sauce
 garlic hvidløg
 basil basilikum

semolina bread durumbrød
 gravy sovs
 surge strømme
 convulsion krampeanfald
 solace trøst
 extend række frem
 freeze fastlåse

When I used to come home after junior high school to a house filled with the aroma of sauce simmering on the stove, I'd snatch a loaf of semolina bread, tear off a hunk, and soak it in the sweet red gravy. Before long, I'd hear
 5 my grandmother say, "Get outa here, will you?" She didn't say it in a mean way, she said it proudly, delighted by the thought of how much I loved her cooking.

The time to leave arrived with a nod from Officer Warren. Everyone surged forward to kiss me good-bye. My
 10 uncle and I grasped each other one last time, and he said, "You were your grandmother's world, she loved you more than anything." Then my father held me and exploded into a violent, shuddering convulsion of sobs. We stood there clinging to each other like passengers on a plane about to
 15 crash, hurtling toward the ground. At that moment, with my dad's tears falling on my shoulder, I felt like I was his father and he was my son, and in the solace of my arms he discovered the safety I had once sought in his.

I walked to the van and extended my hands to Officer
 20 Rizzo to have the cuffs clamped on my wrists again. Instead, he said, "We'll put them on later, after we eat." This surprised me. I hopped into the van, slid close to the window, and peered out one last time hoping to freeze this moment that would have to last as a picture in my mind
 25 forever. I watched my uncle reach into his jacket pocket, pull out a cigar, and light it up, taking short, quick puffs. As we rolled away, I waved to him and wondered if my expression betrayed my sadness.

*Joe Miceli
 Auburn, New York*

Questions

1. What is Joe Miceli's family background like?
2. What did Nan mean to Joe Miceli?
3. Account for Joe Miceli's thoughts as he drives to his grandmother's funeral.
4. What sort of crime do you think Joe Miceli has committed?
5. Describe the conditions of inmates in America according to the text. Are they in any way different from prison conditions in Denmark?
6. What do you make of the incident with the deer?
(p. 148, l. 43 - p. 149, l. 17)
7. Explain why Joe Miceli wants to 'freeze this moment'
(p. 152, l. 23-24) at the end of his story?

For discussion

1. What purpose does a prison sentence serve?
2. Are there any alternatives to confining hard criminals to a prison cell?

Written assignment

1. Translate the following text into English.

20. juni 1977

Min mand er i heksens klør

Jeg er også en af de hustruer, hvis mand er trådt ved siden af. Endda med en to gange fraskilt kone med tre børn. Det viste sig, at hun stjal fra sin arbejdsplads og kom ind og sidde, men ikke engang da fik vi fred. Hun satte sin datter til at ringe til min mand og pressede ham til at besøge sig der, hvor hun er indsat, og nu prøver hun med alle kneb at få ham til at hente sig og køre for hende og datteren, når der er helligdage, og han skal også køre med datteren, når der er besøgstid.

Hun har fri hele tiden og siger hun, hun har problemer, får hun lov at tage hjem fra fængslet i otte - ti dage, så det er hårdt for min mand. Han er et stort nervevrag efterhånden, må svigte sin egen familie, fordi hun presser ham. Hun er den type, der kan regne den ud. Hun er ligeglad om manden går til grunde, hun ligger og styrer det hele derinde fra.

Han er træt af hende og han kan godt sige at han lige skal ringe til heksen og sige, at han ikke kan komme derind i dag.

Nu vil De måske spørge, hvorfor jeg ikke smider ham ud, når han bliver ved at springe for hende, men jeg har kendt manden i tredive år og jeg elsker ham stadig, og han er selv klar over, at han har dummet sig. Men der kommer nok en dag, hvor jeg kan knuse den heks, som hun har knust min mand og hans familie. Det er synd, straffen ikke er hårdere, for de har det altfor godt, de indsatte. Får det hele serveret på et sølvfad og så klager de alligevel.

Dotti

SVAR: Damen er utvivlsomt en strid person, men jeg håber ikke, jeg fornærmer Dem, hvis jeg tilføjer, at Deres mand så til gengæld er et fjols og at det i virkeligheden er hans egen skyld, at hele familien nu plages af hans damebekendtskab.

Medmindre hun har en ganske alvorlig klemme på ham, er der jo intet, der forhindrer ham i at springe ud af det besværlige forhold. Han kan da bare lade være at lytte til de signaler, der udsendes fra den anden side af tremmerne. Jeg synes ikke, De skal smide Deres mand ud, men De kan til gengæld gøre ham en stor tjeneste ved at sige, at fra nu af må han vælge mellem familien og den anden. Måske er det ligefrem sådan et stikord, han ubevidst går og venter på for at gøre sig fri og komme ud af en uværdig og naragtig tilstand.

Lise Nørgaard

*"Livet er ingen strøgtur – Damebrevkasser i 75 år",
Aschehoug 2001, side 235*

Assignment

Find the matching pairs: The *crime* and the *criminal*. After the game, try to memorise the vocabulary by translating all the words from Danish into English and vice versa.

poacher	forgery	assassin	swindler
poaching	forgery	assassination	swindle/ swindling
mugger	white-collar criminal	con artist	fraud
mugging	white-collar crime	con trick	fraud
perjurer	shoplifter	murderer	robber
perjury	shoplifting	murder	robbery
burglar	thief	rapist	kidnapper
burglary	theft	rape	kidnapping
abductor	abduction	attacker	attack