

2023

Timeless Regrets

Jeffrey A. Shockley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/mend>

Recommended Citation

Shockley, Jeffrey A. (2023) "Timeless Regrets," *Mend*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 9.
Available at: <https://surface.syr.edu/mend/vol1/iss1/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mend by an authorized editor of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Timeless Regrets

JEFFREY A. SHOCKLEY



December 20, 2022

Good morning. It is 2:37 a.m.

Again, I find myself unable to sleep. Awakened out of a restless slumber, with my mind racing like an inexperienced driver new to the Daytona 500. Navigating through reflections on my past, which remains ever present in the (prison) time I am doing today.

Layout by Troy White. Photo by Nicola Barrs from Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-man-covering-face-with-hands-7926617>.

My timeless regrets.

In prison this hour is when one may find some solace, peace even, because the normal boisterousness of life within is at its quietest. No inmates in the dayroom sitting around the stainless steel tables with matching seats welded to the table base.

Adult men, mostly seniors now, with a few younger prisoners mixed in, give instruction on how to pass the time without losing your mind: playing cards, chess, or dominoes and carrying on, among other things. There has been a recent increase in prices through a method called shrinkflation. The product sizes have gotten smaller, but the prices go up.

Some loud laughter comes from a few guys sitting on steel stools bolted to the floor, each in front of one of the nine numbered telephones hanging on the wall. They're talking to loved ones while blocking out the anchorperson from one of the local news and sports stations bellowing from the 27-inch wall-mounted televisions no one is watching.

Tossing and turning, I lie awake, holding back tears arising from the pain. A life suffered through as the hour draws near when the machine of correction and rehabilitation will begin to rise again, listening as the population begins to stir and awaken again, as if it were the movie *Groundhog Day*.

In this, will I find myself distracted from personal thoughts?

I'm determined to be strong while I try to remain ready to help anyone who may ask. I do not want my chaos to detract from another's experience or hope. Is it not my duty to give back?

Am I the only one who over time has

longed for or wished for a different childhood? Fought through things done or not done? Longed for different life outcomes that could have changed my trajectory so I would not have ended up where I am?

Holding only myself accountable for the choices and decisions made along this journey.

However...sometimes, like now, I wonder, What if...?

Hope ever erased by timeless regrets.

Life happenings I'm still too ashamed of or embarrassed to mention. Being older, I question why things happened in my life.

My mother gave me to my grandmother at such a young age. I traveled from pillar to post, like a host in the lives of those I claimed to love, but I was not present at the times when it mattered the most. Missing the developmental years and adult lives of my children, not sharing my life with my siblings because the five of us were raised separately. On weekends I would go to Philadelphia to visit, or they would come to Grandma's house in the suburbs for a visit, often because the adults had been fighting violently again.

With the many good things that have been done with my life, in my life, how could it be that here I now reside, afraid of a future that is still uncertain, haunted by a past that is no more? I write to stay alive, which gives me a new fear of rejection. What if they don't like me?

Wanting to escape into sleep, I lie here in this makeshift coffin called my bed in the wee hours, wrestling with timeless regrets.

Who am I to feel this way? My daughter, I love you.