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# Imagine You Can Forget

Leo Cardez

Layout by Vince Moody, Photo by Donald Tong from Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/rear-view-of-a-silhouette-man-in-window-143380>.

Forget that you are tired of reading lackluster prison writing from wannabe inmate authors.

Imagine that you will be pleasantly surprised by an incisive poem (well, not a poem in the strictest literary sense, but poetic nonetheless) that cuts through the PC BS.

Forget that you are a boy raised in a cracked home. Forget that you had a father—he wasn't around anyway.

Forget that your mom tried but failed.

Imagine she is still in the kitchen calling you for a dinner of enchiladas and mole. Okay, forget that.

Imagine that you are not so needy—you are smart enough to know it is not your fault—you are stable and centered and feel safe and secure.

Forget that the system worked exactly as it was built to. Forget about justice—punch lines in a system hell-bent on feeding itself.

Imagine that instead of a mechanism that exacts fairness and mercy, you will be delivered to spend decades in a concrete jungle among apex predators.

Forget that you disappointed everyone you have ever known. Forget that your mother and sister held each other tightly in the back of the courtroom, sobbing quietly as you were described as a monster. Forget what they wanted for you.

Now, imagine you are a young man again: You make different choices, befriend different people, marry the right girl. Imagine hard and long all through the sleepless nights to come.

Forget that your childhood trauma was never resolved—the monster was never brought to justice—possibly the hardest thing to imagine you could forget. But forget that for the moment and imagine that you can stuff it into a secret chamber of your heart.

Forget that home—any home you have ever known—is a place of safety and love. Imagine that your new home is ugly with concrete and steel. Gray and decayed. People everywhere, all dressed the same and with the same lost look on their faces. There is no sun here, only cold. You want to run away, but running is against the rules.

Forget that they have taken everything from you, both what is seen and what is unseen, but nothing cuts deeper than the loss of your daughter. Forget her tiny face crinkled

up with joy as she danced in her pink onesie.

Forget her. Forget your family. Forget your friends. Forget the before. Imagine the Mind-fuck. Imagine the concrete jungle. Imagine the human warehouse.

Imagine living with keepers who are so clueless or evil or both that they let you hurt others and yourself.

Imagine that you talk like a nerd and that makes you a target. And you only find out because, at the same time, you learn you cannot fight for shit. Imagine that you survive the beatings, or rather learn how to take a beating. Imagine devolving into a creature that seeks the pain.

Forget that you were once a good-looking, intelligent, respected, and loved Superman to your young daughter, but Clark Kent did not live inside you. For that matter, forget that you are a father.


Imagine that your child will never return your letters, answer your calls, or visit you. Imagine forgiving her, but never yourself.

Forget that happiness was once a part of your life.

Imagine brief flashes of light in an otherwise dreary existence.

Forget that you believed in a merciful God—at least your idea of God—when you thought of such things.

Imagine that God watches but does not intervene. That he allows unwarranted suffer-



ing on a biblical (pun intended) scale. Imagine that you give a shit anymore.

Forget that you enjoyed the peaceful silence of nature where you could both lose and find yourself.

Imagine that noise is your new companion, filling every crevice with chaos.

Forget that food can taste good or have taste at all. That flavors can coexist in a perfect union that dances on your taste buds.

Imagine that you have permanently lost your sense of taste, and blandness is your new reality.

Forget that feeling of a loving hug or a warm embrace.

Imagine a life without significant touch.

Forget that you love the smell of fresh-cut grass, burning leaves, or cleanliness. Imagine instead the overwhelming stench of hot ass and fear sweat.

Forget that soft curves and warm colors exist.

Imagine that you are on another planet, Planet Mindfuck, where industrial white and hard edges cover every corner.

Forget that your cell is so cold your teeth chatter like maracas in the winter, and your cellie won't close the window because he is one part dick, three parts institutionalized.

Imagine that he has his moments of kindness.

Forget that I called him a dick.

As with all my new faults, they are a natural evolution of a life lived like a clenched fist.

Imagine that instead everyone is normal and you will make friends that you can trust.

All right, forget all that.

Forget that you are desperate for purpose, rudderless, unmoored, and floating farther into the darkness of a moonless night.

Now imagine that you have stumbled—wrong verb probably—into a hobby that becomes an obsession. Imagine that you will get better, recognized, and compensated: it is a crazy thought, but imagine it anyway.

Forget that you don't have writing software, education, or money for typing ribbon.

Imagine that your writing touches just one person—just one.

Forget that you are buried but not yet dead.

Imagine that you still matter. Imagine that you have worth. Imagine the unthinkable: You deserve a second chance.

Imagine or forget that you are truly alone. You think deeply about things that only frustrate you more. You can't help yourself.

But forget this—if you can—forget everything I said. Forget I ever imagined it even. Remember that the universe is unfair and the good guy does not always win.

Now imagine that this is your life—it is hard to imagine, I know. But you must. Forget that you can imagine and imagine that you can forget.