

## Dear Maurice,

I write to you, my younger self, to give advice on ways to improve yourself as your future approaches. I'm the future you. I have seen things you have not. Maurice, the things that you will endure are dangerous and life-threatening. But you will rise to every occasion and be a strong survivor. There are ways of avoiding these dangerous situations, but you must be willing to listen to people who are giving you good advice. If you had the mind that you have here in the future, you could see what lay ahead of you and you would keep your eyes open. Remember, anything can happen and you must be ready.

With love from your happy companion, the future you,

MAURICE W.

JOHNATHAN D.

## End of Days

Being in jail thinking of you, dreaming of all the things we can do. Sitting in jail for all this time, thinking of your body being close to mine. It's been a whole year of me not there, and you with someone else is something I can't bear. But I'll be home soon and back by your side, and my feelings is something I won't be able to hide. I'm writing this poem showing affection, and me being home with you is how you're going to have protection. Me being with you this long has taught me a lesson, so when I come home I'll never touch another woman. I'm trying to show you how much I love you, and that everything I say in this poem is true. So if you feel the same way just go on and say that you'll be with me until the end of our days.

## Thoughts on Changes in the Juvenile Detention Center

I feel this is not a safe place. Kids stay, fighting and sometimes they feel like hurting themselves. I think this place needs more employees because when people get tired or take off of work there are spots open. They need more people to work. I think they should hire people that do the right thing. New employees need to have experience with places like this. I think they should have more facilities but make them smaller. I hope they would have more money so we can have more hygiene stuff. Smaller facilities would help the kids to be safer and have more attention. In here, some kids don't even know where they are. It is so big that they get lost and just do the same thing they did on the bricks. Some staff talks to you and makes you want to stay away from here. But some staff just get paid and go home. They don't encourage us not to come back.

CORTEZ W.

## Dear Little Larry,

I'm 14 now and I been doing bad. I don't want you to go through the same things I been through. I have been in and out of jail and keep committing crimes. I want you to do better than I did. I was having guns, fighting, shooting, getting shot at, selling drugs. When you get to be my age, I just want you to do better than I am. I didn't go to school that much and when I did go to school I was fighting, getting suspended, or running the halls. Just do better than I did in school. I'm writing this letter to tell you don't do the same things I did. The things I did I could be dead or in jail for a long time. I was stealing cars a lot, selling drugs at night. When I was 13, one night I was hanging out with the grown people trying to steal a man's car. He came out and shot me twice in my leg. I thought I was dead. My mom was scared and we prayed to the Lord that I can walk again. He blessed me. I just want you to do better than I did. JTDC is not a place to be. You don't want a grown man or a grown woman telling you what to do in jail. I need you to do better. At least you can try to do good. I can't make you change, but by writing this I'm trying to help you to see what may happen to you. I don't want you to end up in jail. Just promise me you will try to not come in this place. I was young when I did those things that got me locked up. I need you to do the right thing.

With love,  
LARRY W.



Atlas along with his brother Menoetius sided with the Titans in their war against the Olympians. When the Titans were defeated, many of



## A Letter From My Older Self

Dear Reynaldo,  
I know you did a lot of stuff in the past, but you need to get your mind right. You are a daddy and you are going to be seventeen. Cook County jail is where you are going. You almost did your whole juvenile life in jail and you don't want to spend your whole adult life in jail. Do you want your little brother to be in the same position you are in? How do you feel now? I know stuff happens for a reason. You got to think about the future. Take care of your son because you don't want him to do the same stuff you did when you were a little boy.

Love,  
REYNALDO

## When Your Hero Falls From Grace

When your hero falls from grace there is no one to take their place. And then you fall on so far. To any hope you are nowhere near. You're somewhere close to your deepest fear. When your hero falls from grace there is no one to take their place!

ISAAC C.

## Nick of Time

Dear Mom,  
I love and miss you with all my heart, and you've been with me from the very start. You are my very best friend and I know you're going to be here until the end. Not being home with you brings me tears because I've been around you all these years. So when you think of me, let it be happy thoughts and forget of every time we fought. I miss you very clearly. Sitting in here makes me think clearly. So don't worry and get all upset because I'm locked up and the state's making me sit. I'm cool and everything's fine. I'll be home just in the nick of time. Oops, I almost forgot. Someone's got a birthday. So don't start to clean the knives and cut the cake. Just wait, because I'll be there to see that day.

JOHNATHAN D.

## Years of Tears

ISAAC C.  
Over the years I've cried many tears. The days and the months combined. And through the tears I could not see. I thought I would not see forever. The years of tears of which I have cried. Are the results of my dreams, which have died.

## Dear Dwight,

I know what you been doing out there. You are making bad choices. I want you to know that I made promises in life that I wasn't able to keep. I did not realize what the real world was like. Now I know what's legal and what's not legal. Dwight, I know it is hard out there for you, but you have to be a good young man. I know that you been in and out of jail, but you are not a bad person. You are someone that has made some decisions that were wrong. Dwight, you know that someone like you comes to jail and they stop caring about themselves, but you are a smart young man and you know what life is all about. Life is about family, freedom, and lots of good things. Dwight, you need to get out of the street and back in school. Go out there and check on your family, look for a job, and feel free. Thank you, Dwight, for listening to my words.

Love,  
DWIGHT

## Dear Grandmother,

I wish I had listened to you back then when I was 12, when I first started to sell drugs. You tried to tell me that the street life was not for me, but I did not listen to you, so my life started to fall apart. Then bad things started to happen. I lost my mom and dad then I lost my brother and sister. Then I started to get locked up at the age of 15. My life was all about CJTDC at the time and after all this time I'm still there with the same things going on. In my life now I have a new way of doing things, so when I go home this time the only thing JTDC will have of me is my past.

From,

SHANTAY J.

## Dear Isaac,

Damn boy, how old are you now? About nine? As you read this, I am locked up and trying to let you know what to do differently so you won't end up like me.

First of all, don't steal from your mother like I did. It will get you nowhere except where I am now. And that's somewhere you don't want to be.

Secondly, appreciate everything you got out there in the world like your family, friends, freedom. Without these things you are nothing. You hear me? Nothing!!!

Thirdly, live and love life to the fullest. Let man, you know I love you because without you I would not be me.

But anyways let me get of here so they can lock this glass door I'm behind. Alright?

Love,  
ISAAC

## Letter to My Younger Self

Dear Mairiarenne,

Just wanted to stop by and tell you some things that might help you. First, act your age and go to school. Educate yourself. Second, enjoy being young, because when you get older you are going to miss memories you had and trust me, I should know.

Third, respect your elders and yourself. Don't let others take advantage of you.

Fourth, stay away from negative people that you know can get you in trouble.

Enjoy life and listen to people who really care about you.

Xoxo,  
MARIARENNE  
(YOUR OLDER SELF)



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## Dear Mom,

I know I have been acting like I'm a fool lately, but I've had a lot of time to think about the things that I've done. I've also thought about what hasn't happened, and I've realized that you were the only one there to love me through thick and thin.

I want to thank you for all your love. I wish I could have returned some of it at the time. I was too busy in the streets, getting locked up for things that didn't make any sense. I was stubborn and kept doing it over and over again.

I took the time to look at my life, and realized that I'm headed in the wrong direction. I'm going down the path to nowhere. I remember you telling me when I was younger to do the best I can in school because in the end it will pay off. I always took it as a joke, but now that I dropped out of school, there are kids younger than me in my grade. Thinking about it makes me feel ridiculous. If it weren't for your advice, I wouldn't have made it this far. I want to say from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Sincerely,

ANDREA O.

## Dear Eric,

Big brother, could you please help me out with my life plan to be successful? You made it in life. You be a person with a lot of heart. If you could see your little brother out here struggling, my father not helping me out. Please help me with my homework. Try your best to help keep me out of trouble. I need to stay in school and keep my head in the books. I want to learn more about the world out here and be a role model for your brothers. I don't know what is on Cordero's or Wendell's minds, but what is on mine is learning, getting out of jail, and showing people that I can be somebody. Most of all, to those who depend on me, I'm sorry I am letting you down by being in jail, but I'm just starting to do well.

Eric, my destiny is to stay out of jail, be a good person like my mom wanted me to be. Please help me to do this. I love you.

ISAAC

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