

A FLOATING FEATHER

and Other Musings

by

RODERICK “SEADOG” ORME

Florida Death Row · 1992–2026

Edited by

SAMANTHA WAINWRIGHT

and

JEFF HOOD

With a Foreword by Jeff Hood

A Floating Feather and Other Musings

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The manuscript reproduced in these pages was sent by Roderick Orme to Samantha Wainwright through the Florida Department of Corrections prisoner messaging system in the months before his death on April 23, 2026. It has been lightly edited for legibility while preserving the author's voice, including his irregularities of punctuation, capitalization, and syntax. The editors have intervened only to clarify, never to improve.

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*For Roderick,
who learned, too late, what a feather is for.*

—

*And for Anthony Floyd Wainwright,
killed by the State of Florida on June 10, 2025,
through whose absence this book found its way home.*

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EDITORS' NOTE

This book did not start as a book. It started as a stream of messages typed on a prison tablet by a man on Florida's death row, sent through the Department of Corrections messaging system to a woman in the United Kingdom who had no idea, when the first message arrived, what these messages might mean. The man's name was Roderick Michael Orme. The woman is Samantha Wainwright, one of the two editors of this book and the widow of Anthony Floyd Wainwright, killed by the State of Florida on the tenth of June, twenty-twenty-five. Roderick sent the manuscript to Samantha in pieces over many months. After he took his own life on April 23, 2026, she gathered what he had sent her, and she sent it to Jeff.

We have preserved Roderick's sentences as he made them. He did not always know where one ended. He did not always know where the next began. The text drifts, the way a man drifts who has been alone for thirty years inside a room that is mostly his own mind. We resisted the urge to tidy. We have corrected obvious typographical errors, supplied a missing word where its absence broke the sense of a clause, and reproduced his erratic capitalization as he set it down. We have not smoothed his voice. The voice is the whole point.

This is not a book of innocence. The author of these pages did a terrible thing. We will not pretend otherwise, and neither did he. Jeff's foreword names what he did, names the woman he killed, and names what the State of Florida tried for thirty years to do to him in return. We have placed those facts at the front of the book on purpose. They are the soil in which the rest of this writing grew.

The book belongs to its readers now. Roderick is dead. He cannot defend, explain or amend a single word.

FOREWORD: The Feather Arrived After He Was Dead

I am still sad to no longer be in the company and service of my master the eagle, but I no longer lament my condition and nor do I fear my demise.

— Roderick “Seadog” Orme, A Floating Feather

I. The Hand-Off

Roderick Michael Orme was not my friend. I want to say that at the top, because I have written about men I sat with at the end of their lives, and this is not that kind of book. I never visited him or wrote to him. The manuscript came to me through Samantha Wainwright, who is one of my closest friends, and whose husband Anthony I had the honor of accompanying to his death by lethal injection at 6:22 on the evening of June 10, 2025, at Florida State Prison in Raiford.

Roderick sent the book to Samantha through the Florida Department of Corrections prisoner messaging system, a screen-to-screen channel that the state monitors, charges by the message, and could have shut down at any time, in the months after Anthony was killed. Of course, Roderick knew Samantha through Anthony. After Anthony was executed, Roderick sent her a parable about a feather, a set of musings about love and friendship, and the things a person sees clearly only after being locked in a small room for 30 years. He also sent a short note asking if she might find a place for the words after he was gone.

She held the pages through Roderick's suicide on the 23 of April 2026. A few months later, she emailed the whole thing to me. She did not have to explain why she was sending it. She said only: I think you'll find this fascinating. I want us to publish it.

I read it that night. I agreed with her about both. Fascinating is the right word, although it is not a word I would have reached for first. The man writing these pages is the same man who killed Lisa Redd in a motel room in 1992. The two facts do not fit easily inside the same paragraph. I told Samantha yes. I am still telling her yes.

II. What He Did

Before I tell you anything else about this book, I have to tell you about Lisa Redd. She was 34 years old. On March 3, 1992, in a motel room in Panama City, Florida, Roderick Michael Orme sexually assaulted her, beat her, and strangled her to death. He had been her boyfriend, once. He had called her for help. He was 28 years old, and he had been smoking crack cocaine and drinking for days. He had been a commercial fisherman, a boat captain in the Gulf oil fields, a merchant seaman. He had completed Marine Corps boot camp. He had been an addict for most of his adult life. None of that explains why he did what he did. Nothing does.

What I am going to do, because we are at the beginning of this book and there is no way around it, is say her name out loud one more time. Lisa Redd. Her family's loss is older and larger than anything in these pages...and we do not pretend otherwise.

III. Three Sentences

Florida sentenced Roderick Orme to die 3 separate times over the course of his 30 years inside, and each time the sentence collapsed on itself for a different reason. Each time the state put Lisa Redd's family back through the machinery of a penalty phase as if grief were something you could re-litigate.

The first sentence came in 1993, after a jury in Bay County voted 7 to 5 for death. 7 to 5 is the kind of margin you would not accept on a board vote at a small-town nonprofit, but in Florida in 1993 it was enough to send a man to the electric chair.

The second sentence came in 2007, after the Florida Supreme Court ordered a new penalty phase because the original jury had not been allowed to hear evidence of the defendant's bipolar disorder. A second jury, presented with more of the picture, voted 11 to 1 for death.

The third sentence came in 2022. In 2016 the Florida Supreme Court, following the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Hurst v. Florida* earlier that year, had held that a death sentence required a unanimous jury verdict, which neither of Roderick's prior juries had given. The case was sent back for a third penalty phase. By then, Roderick had stopped fighting. He told the court he did not want to put his parents through another trial. He told the court his parents had died while he was waiting. He told the court that he could not carry what he had done any longer — that if giving up his life would bring any peace to Lisa Redd's family, that was the right course of action. He waived mitigation. The judge, after finding him competent to make this decision, imposed death a third time.

Read that paragraph again, please, slowly. The man who wrote the book you are about to read was, in the end, asking the State of Florida to kill

him as an act of moral repair. He had decided his death was owed, and he was trying to pay.

Florida did not get to collect. On April 23, 2026, after 34 years inside, Roderick Michael Orme took his own life in his cell. I will not describe the method. I will say only this: He had told the court four years earlier that he could not bear what he had done. He had told the state, in the only language the state listens to, that he wished to die. The state had taken four years and counting to get around to it. He stopped waiting.

The third death warrant that had been drafted on his name went into a drawer. The drug supply that had been earmarked for him was reallocated. The chamber went to somebody else. There is always somebody else.

IV. What the State Does

I am not neutral about the death penalty, so let me say plainly what I believe. Since January of 2023, I have stood in the witness rooms of execution chambers in 5 states and watched 11 men die at the hands of governments that claimed to be acting in my name. I have prayed Psalm 23 over men strapped to gurneys. I have watched a man die over 22 minutes under a nitrogen mask. I have held the hands of women who have lost their husbands. One of the women I held was Samantha.

In 2025, the State of Florida executed 19 people — the highest number in the state's history, more than double its previous record of 8, and roughly 40 percent of every execution carried out in the United States that year. Anthony was the sixth of them.

I tell you this because the man who wrote this book lived his whole adult life inside the apparatus I have just described, and you cannot read his pages honestly without understanding the room those pages were written in. He wrote about a feather floating through the wind. The wind in question was a fluorescent-lit corridor of green concrete, 23 hours a day, for 34 years, while the state outside the wall negotiated the protocol by which his body would eventually be opened. The state took Anthony first. The state was lining up to take Roderick next. Roderick stopped waiting. He sent these pages to a woman who had just buried her husband at the state's hand, because he understood, in a way I am still trying to understand, that she of all people would know what to do with them.

People sometimes ask me how I can hold both things at once — the woman in the motel room and the man on the row. The answer is that I do not hold them at once. I just hold them as best I can.

V. Why Publish This

I want to be honest about why I agreed to edit this book. It was not because I knew Roderick. It was not because I owed him anything. It was not even, in the beginning, because I had any clear conviction that his words would be useful to anyone outside the small circle of people who already think the way I think about the death penalty. It was because Samantha sent me the manuscript and said it was fascinating, and when I read it, she was right. I found it fascinating. I have spent most of my adult life talking to men who have done terrible things, and I have never read a piece of writing by one of them that goes after the question of what a discarded life is good for with quite the patience this one does.

Samantha's job, and mine, has been to give the words a chance at the service Roderick wanted them to perform. We have not vouched for him. We are not asking you to forgive him. We are asking you to read what he wrote with the same attention you would give to the writing of anyone else who spent 34 years trying, badly and slowly and with many setbacks, to understand what a human life is for.

VI. On the Floating Feather

Roderick called the parable that anchors this book *A Floating Feather*. He came back to that title across all four parts of the story and in every message he sent Samantha about the manuscript. He believed the feather was floating. I want to take that title seriously, because I think it is the part of the book most likely to be misread by people who think they already know what a feather does.

Feathers, in the literal physics of the world, do not float. They fall. They are heavier than the air they move through, and what looks like floating is the air pushing back against the falling, and the slowness of the fall is just the long argument between gravity and grace. But Roderick was not writing physics. He was writing the inside of a man's mind during a slow descent, and the inside of that mind is exactly where the word floating lives. To float is to be held — by the wind, by the water, by whatever it is that runs underneath the visible world and refuses to let a small thing slam straight to the ground. Roderick believed he was being held. He had every reason in his outward circumstance to believe the opposite. He chose floating. The title belongs to him.

His feather, you will see, is plucked from the body of an eagle without warning or explanation. It does not understand why. It feels cast off, useless, marked for death. Over the course of the parable it is sheltered under by a lizard, ridden on by a colony of ants, worn as a wedding ornament by a young woman named White Dove, and finally picked up by a bearded human being called Abe who needs a quill to write a document. Each encounter, the feather protests that it is nothing, that it has no purpose, that it should be left alone to die. Each encounter, it turns out to have been exactly what was needed.

It is not a sophisticated parable. It is, in some places, a clumsy one. Its theology is a folk theology, stitched together from Sunday school

and Lakota imagery half-remembered from a paperback and the kind of weary wisdom you pick up working boats in the Gulf. The animals call each other brother and sister. The Creator is named without much specificity. The lessons are spelled out at the end in case anybody missed them. I tell you this so that you know I have read it carefully, and I am not pretending it is something it is not.

And yet. There is a thing this parable does that more sophisticated writing rarely manages. It tells you, in a voice that does not flinch, that a creature whose original purpose has been taken from it is not, therefore, worthless. That a discarded thing can still be a vessel. That the wind that lifts you up and the wind that drops you on the bank of a flooding stream are the same wind. He was writing about himself. He knew he had been cast off. He had cast himself off. He was trying to find out, in the language of an old story made for children, whether there was anything left of him that could still be of use.

VII. The Last Page

Roderick signed off the way an old sailor signs off, with a phrase he had used a thousand times on a thousand boats: Over and out, call me Seadog. I left it where he put it. I want you to come to the end of his book and meet the man who came to the end of his life still believing he had a voice on a radio and somebody on the other end listening.

Samantha was the somebody on the other end. So am I, now. So, by the time you reach the last page, are you.

Roderick Michael Orme is dead. Lisa Redd has been dead for 34 years. Anthony Floyd Wainwright has been dead since the 10th of June, 2025. Carmen Gayheart has been dead for 32 years. The State of Florida is shopping for pentobarbital. Somebody else's warrant is in a folder on somebody else's desk. The wind keeps moving.

Here is the feather. Read it slowly. Pass it on.

The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood

North Little Rock, Arkansas

June 4, 2026

A WORD FROM SEADOG

Call me Seadog, ole salty, or captain. I answer to all these and a few other names I won't repeat.

See, I grew up on the water mostly, and as I worked almost exclusively on the water in one fashion or another, I have been a commercial fisherman, a boat captain in the oil fields, and a merchant seaman. But whether skiing, surfing, fishing, scuba diving, or just swimming along the ocean, I have a true affinity for all things dealing with the water. Whether on the pond or the endless ocean it did not matter, as the sense of peace, serenity, and freedom was always present.

Now I purposely took the name of Samir, which means storyteller, because I fancy telling a yarn or two. True, the stories I tell these days are very different in nature than the ones I used to tell perched on a stool in a smoky bar or anywhere I could find a captive audience.

That's right. Fish tails, as most would call them. But is not truth sometimes stranger than fiction?

What follows are a few fish tails. Find the truth between the lines.

A FLOATING FEATHER: Part I

Once among a community of plumage belonging to a great eagle there was a feather.

One cold crisp autumn day, as the great eagle soared high in the sky, floating effortlessly among the mountain tops, the eagle did a strange thing. He reached right back, grasped the little feather in its beak. He pulled the feather free from its mooring of flesh, and as a result, much to the chagrin of the feather, he found himself dislodged from his community of peers. It happened so fast that the feather one moment was serving his master in the ability of flight, and the next moment he was spiralling helplessly upon the currents of brother wind.

“Master, master, why have you cast me away? What have I done to offend you?” But the great eagle paid no heed to his pleas, and already the distance between the feather and the eagle had grown considerably. The feather watched sadly as the eagle continued to fade from his sight, and finally the feather could no longer contain his troubled emotions and he cried out: “Oh me, truly I am cursed and have no apparent worth or value, for my master singled me out from my brothers and cast me away.”

Suddenly the feather’s lamenting was halted by a voice that seemed to come from every direction.

“I am brother wind,” said the voice, “and you, little brother, are surely not cursed and have great value.”

“Untrue,” cried the feather, “for if it was so, why would my master have cast me away to drift aimlessly upon your currents? My value must be no more, for even after I was cast aside, my master was still able to fly amongst the clouds without the slightest change or difficulty. So obviously I would have no use to him, and my life had lost all meaning.”

“Little brother,” said wind, “surely you know you were not carrying the entire weight of your master? Rather, you were many working together to allow your master the ability of flight. If your master had removed all your brother feathers until only you remained, you could not have supported or carried the weight alone, and your master would then have been called stone and sunken to the earth as the stone sinks to the bottom of the stream. For the creator of all life would never task any creation with more weight than it can bear alone, nor does he allow anything to happen without purpose and reason.”

“If this was indeed true,” said feather, “then why would the creator of all life disgrace me by taking away my sole purpose in life? Or shame me by leaving me to just drift aimlessly upon your rolling shoulders?”

“No one can ever fully comprehend the wisdom and design of the creator, for how can a finite creature ever comprehend infinite divinity? But one and all may take comfort in this universal truth: the creator’s love encompasses all, sustains all, and fulfils all.”

The feather was full of fear and uncertainty and continued to feel more and more disoriented as he lunged one way then another, spinning, whirling on the wind’s invisible force, spiralling along an unknown course.

“Oh, woe is me,” cried feather. “I have lost all control. I am void of all direction.”

“Little brother, do you not realise you are still a thing of flight, and that while your path may now lead you to new uncertain places, your final destination has not changed? Try and take comfort, try and have faith in what may lay ahead. For now it is time that I release you from my grasp and allow you to be on your way. But take heart, for we shall meet again.”

Before the feather could protest, the wind released him and he began to glide back towards the earth. As feather slowly descended the sky, his

mood, like his attitude, continued to fall, until he came to the canopy of a great forest. As he passed through the branches of brother tree, pleading that some outstretched limb would grasp hold of him to stop his harrowing fall, feather's pleas went unanswered, and finally the little feather came to a stop, resting upon a huge bed of falling leaves.

"Great," cried feather, "this day just keeps getting better. On top of everything else, I now have been cast into a graveyard of dying leaves. Now only death awaits me."

MEMORIES GREAT AND SMALL

Why do I now recall these childhood memories? Do I time travel back across the fields of last moments in time? Learning beforehand, but to do so will surely bring warm fondness for that long-lost little boy, and yet also cause me great sadness to once again have to say goodbye to him as I return to present time.

But the love I had for him, and the joy his memory fills my heart with, far outweighs the pain, fear, and sadness I endure when we part.

A FLOATING FEATHER: Part II

Now, in a graveyard of dying leaves, surely only death awaits. But no — there came a chorus of giggling from all the leaves around the feather, and a wonderful rustling voice saying:

“We are all sister leaves, and we belong to this growth of mighty oaks you see all around you. My sisters and I find your distress of death puzzlingly amusing, but please know we mean you no disrespect. Many a time have we fluttered a greeting to your kind as you have soared overhead. We have watched your masters build homes among our brother’s limbs and raise their young, but never have we heard you fear death.”

“Little leaves, how is it that you don’t fear death?” feather asked.

“The mighty oak has taught us that death is as much part of the circle of life as living itself, and if we spend time only focused on the dying part, we will miss out on all the joys that this short life offers. So when brother snow approaches and brother sky begins to turn grey and cold, we know our time to leave our master is close at hand, and then we shall depart brother branches and fall to mother earth, where we return back to the place of our ancestors’ birth.”

“So you know how and when you are to die?”

“Not exactly,” said sister leaf. “We know the signs to look for that indicate a time that we may perish, but the wise old oak of many seasons says none can know for certain how or when death will come. So treat each new day, each new moment, as possibly one’s last. Spend such a moment enjoying life and not fearing death, because only the creator knows such hidden truths.”

UNLIKELY FRIENDS

I believe in the saying that we have all heard in our lives many times — that a person is most fortunate to find even one true friend in his or her lifetime. This is usually proven true both by time and by the quality of the relationships in life we share with people. Especially in times of crisis, because nothing will separate the chaff of disillusion from the seeds of true friendship faster than when one is truly in need of a friend.

Now I also have come to firmly believe that one of the reasons we are unlikely to have even one solid friendship in our lives is because we tend to limit our scope in whom we might attempt to befriend. Of course, this does not necessarily make us bad people; it simply makes us human. I am alluding to those times in life when our path crosses with someone briefly and we prejudge them based on superficial observations — things such as dress, culture, speech, general physical appearance — and then make a snap decision as to whether we will pursue a friendship with these individuals.

Again, we all certainly have our individual personalities and apply specific criteria when seeking friendship with another person. But what if in our pursuits for new friendships we are too narrow in our vision towards others? We do not then allow the possibility of missing out on someone who could be a friend indeed. Whether we apply the principle of opposites attract or common interests or seeking new relationships, we can never be completely sure either of these rigid standards will bear the sweetest fruits of friendship. Because friendship, like fruits upon the vine, takes care, patience, and time to truly ripen.

I have been truly blessed in recent years to have encountered some special people in my life. As a result I found not only good relationships — in some cases I now have the very best friendships I've ever known in my life.

I thought over this in recent times and it made me realise something most amazing and most beautiful in nature. I cannot ever fully express the level of gratitude I have in my heart for those who have befriended me, and I certainly cannot do justice to the amount of love and respect I hold for those people. Their true display of humanity towards me. For they are far better human beings than I have ever been in the past or may ever hope to be in the future.

When I consider the nature required of anyone who would be willing to reach out to someone like me, who is, let's be honest, seen by most in society only as someone to be feared and avoided — perhaps they are right? But my friends do not treat me as if they fear me.

I am truly moved by this level of human compassion and courage, and it has motivated me also to strive to be kinder and more accessible to those I encounter.

So for all of you wondrous folk who were willing to look deeper beyond my rough exterior and scary reputation in honest friendship — I say thank you. I say I love you dearly. And I say may God's grace always guide you to better tomorrows.

A FLOATING FEATHER: Part III

Suddenly, the head of the most strange-looking creature popped up through the leaves next to the feather.

“Who are you?” the feather startled with fright.

The decrepit old creature replied: “Please keep your voice down, lest he finds us, for then I shall become his meal this day. But who are you? And from whom do you hide? I am brother lizard, and I have just narrowly escaped the hunger of brother snake. But he stalks me even now, and I need a place to hide. Can you help me?”

“How can I help you? I cannot even move or hide myself. Why don’t you just hide amongst the leaves?”

“Because the snake is wise to that. Please help me.”

“I guess so,” said feather. “What do I do?”

“Nothing,” said the lizard. “Just allow me to crawl under your strands and quill so I can grab hold and move my body to your shape.”

Brother lizard grabbed hold tightly and became one with the feather in body and in shape — and not a moment too soon, because suddenly, quietly, the head of snake appeared from beneath sister leaves.

“I know you were here somewhere. Come, please, to the hollow of my stomach.”

Brother snake searched all around, looking under the scattered leaves carefully, but he barely paid any attention when he came across the feather. He simply slid over it and soon after moved on to continue his search.

When brother lizard was quite sure he was safe, he let out a deep sigh of relief and crawled from under the feather.

“Thank you,” he said. “Thank you, brother feather. Today you have been the vessel that delivered me from feeding brother snake’s hunger. How can I ever say thank you?”

“No need to thank me. All I did was lay still and give you a place to hide.”

“No — you gave me shelter and safety, and that is no small gift. By helping to save me, you have also helped in saving my family and community. I am therefore in your debt, and if there is anything I can do for you, please ask.”

“Well,” said feather, “can you reunite me with my master the eagle, so that I may once again soar through the skies?”

“Oh, feather, no. I’m sorry. I cannot do this.”

“Then please at least carry me away from this gravesite of leaves to a place where I may pass away in peace.”

As brother lizard began to drag the feather away, sister leaves wished him well and again reminded him not to fret so about what he had lost, as he might miss whatever he might now gain.

In time feather chose a nice clear piece of earth, free almost of leaves, next to a small creek for his final resting place. Feather bid brother lizard thanks and farewell and tried to settle down and accept all he had lost.

Before long, though, something happened. Brother rain came a-calling. So it rained and rained and rained some more. As mother earth could no longer absorb the moisture fast enough, feather found himself in an increasing pool of water.

“Great,” exclaimed feather. “I guess my end is to be drowned.”

Suddenly feather felt himself slip the mooring of earth and start to move along the top of the water again, until he realised finally he would not be drowned but once again had become a slave to the control of yet another force.

As feather was carried slowly along brother water's surface, he began to hear a chorus of startled voices from close by.

Before feather could make out what the voices were saying, he ran aground on a slightly raised mound of earth. The commotion around him was quite chaotic.

"Oh my, oh my, oh my," seemed to be coming from every grain of dirt around him.

"Who's there?"

"Me. I am brother ant. My community and I are in a terrible state."

"So am I," said feather.

"You mean that you too are about to be drowned, as my brothers and I are about to be?"

"I cannot be drowned, as brother water cannot penetrate my body enough to drown me."

"How wonderful for you," said the tiny ant. "Unfortunately for me and my family, the rain has caused the stream to rise, flooding the ground. Soon it will swallow up our home and drown us all. If brother water has not the ability to drown you, could me and my community take shelter upon your back until the rain subsides? This way, even though we will lose our home, we will remain safe from drowning."

“I suppose so,” said feather. “It’s not as though I have any other purpose to perform at present.” So brother ant and all his community quickly climbed on board brother feather until not one ant was left behind.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

So much has been written about love — this elusive, invisible emotion that we encounter everywhere and yet can never actually catch, or hold in our hands.

I realised later in life that for many years I had not a clue to the true nature of love. I made a costly mistake young in life and mistook love for physical chemistry and gratification. I always thought of lovers as bringing only pleasure to my life, and so I measured love only by how good someone made me feel, by what they brought to my life. For all of those of you who truly loved me, I am sorry for not recognising that.

As I learned that my perceptions and conceptions about love were wrong, I also learned another important lesson, which is why some people are so reluctant to admit they are wrong about any core ideal they may have. I always just assumed. Do we remember the teaching about never assuming anything?

It was due to ego and pride — and perhaps this too is at times true? For what other explanation could there be at times when incontrovertible exculpatory evidence comes before a court, leading to someone's release, and yet we still see the prosecution on the evening news saying, "Well, I still believe so-and-so is guilty."

But even in this worst-case scenario I have a newfound respect and understanding as to how someone can feel so shaken to the core when they believe for so long they are right about a certain belief, only to find out that they were wrong.

Of all the supposed love affairs that I thought I was experiencing, only one withstood the test of scrutiny in time, so I did actually get it right one time — and this was with my ex-wife. It was a love-at-first-sight kind

of relationship, and within 48 hours of meeting her I told her that I loved her, and that I knew someday we would be married.

To her credit she tried gently to let me know I was off my rocker, and that marriage was not even a blip on her radar. Some 17 months later we were married.

Sadly, in time, my flaws — my addictive nature — would suck the light out of our marriage, like everything else good I ever had.

Even though I was very much put off balance by my realisation of preconceived notions in the area of love being so wrong, I still in time have become grateful and fortunate to have been able to see past the veils of my own ignorance into the shadows of love. And I will forever try to be a reflective vessel that shines light on those I love.

One of my main concerns about the whole concept is that we have desensitised the real meaning of love to ourselves by overusing the word too much. I love that song, I love that car, I love that colour shirt, TV show, shoe, sports team, etc. First of all, none of us truly love any of those things. Why do we believe we do?

One thing I have learned in here is that I now fully recognise — and thereby better appreciate — the real values of so many things most people take for granted on a daily basis: a job, self-worth, ice cubes, the smile of a child, laughter, swimming, sunsets, sunrises, walking outdoors, flowers, and of course the pure and wonderful charity of a smile or helping hand to a stranger. For expressions of kindness and love cost nothing, and yet how those actions make your fellow humans feel are priceless.

I also learned what it was to always give something to someone with no expectations of compensation. Because if I only gave things to others with the agenda of reprisal in mind, did I give these things with love?

Love is often answered with hate. I could never hate the individual, only the actions of said individual. For even the foulest of human beings is still a creation of God, and must be shown proper compassion out of respect to the one who created them. Also, none of us know when the worst of us might be brought to the best of us, or when our experience on the road to Damascus might come.

The principle of love that seemed to hit me the hardest and brought some of the biggest changes in me was the concept of unconditional love. Because many of us, I imagine, only saw this application as giving my love regardless of how others acted. I also thought this only applied to immediate family — that I only had an obligation to love them unconditionally. But of course I was wrong on this also. For it is easy to love those who already love us. The more difficult and more needed task is to love those who do not love us, or do not share a kindred spirit of any kind.

But here is what I did not understand about the principle, and was the cause of so much chaos and pain in my life. While the first part of this principle certainly applies — that I give my love without conditions — I also must learn to accept the love others give me without conditions. For so long I would analyse the actions of those who professed love for me, and if I found their actions lacking in what I either wanted or expected, I would then question the validity of their love for me.

Since none of us can ever really know the contents of any others' heart, how can we doubt or judge the truthfulness of their love? Love is as unique as the individual who gives it. So, like snowflakes, we may see or look for the similarities of love at a distance, but upon closer inspection we will find that no two people love in the exact same way. All those times I felt unlovable — unloved — because those who proclaimed their love to me did not line up with how I wanted to be loved. I had to learn

to not only give love unconditionally, but we must all also allow others to love us without conditions.

So love one another freely, my brothers and sisters, and let's all stop making things so complicated by placing conditions on something that was designed to be unconditional.

A FLOATING FEATHER: Part IV

There was no part of feather not covered with his tiny passengers — and not a moment too soon. Suddenly the rising water pulled feather from his mooring and out into the rushing stream.

For some time the feather, along with his rescued passengers, bobbed up and down along the stream's winding path. Meantime, brother rain ceased to cascade from brother sky, and brother sun released his bright warm rays of light upon mother earth, which began to dry up the soggy ground.

As feather approached a sharp bend in the stream, he and his passengers were pushed up onto a protruding bank of ground. Exhausted but quite safe, the ants began to disembark the feather onto dry land.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you,” came the farewell of each and every grateful ant as they climbed off.

“No need to thank me, for I did not really do anything. And now I have carried you far from where you once lived, and this too makes me sad for you.”

“No need to feel sad,” said brother ant, “for now we get to build a new home, plus we get to explore and enjoy our new location.”

Feather watched in awe the army of ants marching, winding columns in perfect synchronisation. As one ant would enter a small hole in the ground, another would exit. Before long the new structure was of considerable height, and now the ants would enter the opening at the top of the new home until the whole community had disappeared beneath the ground except the one little ant.

"You have been of great service to me and my family," said the ant. "Feather, I so wish there was something we could do for you in return."

"I fear there is none who can help me with my plight. So go, be with your family, and leave me to my end."

No sooner had the little ant disappeared out of sight than brother wind came calling, and with a gentle motion whisked the feather back up into his grasp.

"Oh my," said brother wind, "you certainly have travelled far from where I last left you. Tell me, how did you come to rest next to the home of brother ant?" Dejectedly, feather related all that had occurred since he had last talked to wind.

"So it would seem you have been very busy, and of great service to those in need."

"All I did was allow others to hide under me and ride upon me. But in both cases, I didn't do anything. Please release me from your grasp so that I may face my end in peace."

The feather began his slow graceful descent, this time coming down upon a vast open meadow. And he heard a strange laughter, the likes of which he had never heard before.

"Who's there?"

"Oh my gosh!" puffed an out-of-breath voice belonging to one who had been running wildly amongst the tall grass, laughing uncontrollably. "It is I, sister human being, and I'm called White Dove by my tribe. You, brother feather, appear to be from the great eagle that soars in the sky. My people believe that to find you is a sign of good fortune. So help me decide over a serious decision I am faced with. As soon as I saw you

descending the great sky, I knew my prayers had been answered, and I now know what my decision is to be.”

“Sorry, White Dove, but my falling out of the sky is only a sign of my own bad fortune. I have been cast away by my master the eagle, and now my life no longer has place or purpose. Once I was a thing of flight, but now I am nothing more than discarded debris. So how could I possibly be of use to you?”

“A young brave from our tribe has asked me to join his path in matrimony. He said, ‘White Dove, find safety in my arms, laughter from my lips, and love in my heart.’ I hope I will start a new life inside the shelter of his lodge. I have loved him since my time can recall, yet I still felt a small concern, because marriage amongst my tribe is until the trail of life ends. So I prayed to the great grandfather, and he has answered my prayer with you, little brother.”

White Dove reached down with her long slender brown arm to retrieve the feather from among the grass. She held him high above her face and answered his question. “As I said, little brother, to find you is an omen of good fortune. But besides this, the brave I am now to marry is called by our people Soaring Eagle. So now I will be his wife. I would be most honoured if you would allow me to adorn my headdress with you on my wedding day. Would you agree to this request, little brother?”

“Yes, you may. Since I have no other purpose left in this life. Only — what will be my fate once your wedding has passed?”

“You would be cast back into the wind as I found you, for my people believe it is right to return a good omen back to the state in which it was first discovered. So once we are married, my new husband and I will cast you off from the top of the mountain of howling winds.”

On the wedding day, the slow rhythm of drums called forth White Dove from her family’s lodge to join the awaiting Soaring Eagle’s side. As she

appeared from inside the lodge, Soaring Eagle could not help but smile from all the joy his eyes now beheld. Soaring Eagle slowly took in every detail of the beautiful vision approaching him.

After the ceremony, both White Dove and Soaring Eagle stood atop the edge of the mountain of howling winds. Neither human spoke as they smiled upon their little brother the feather and cast him into the current of swirling wind.

“Hello again, little brother,” said wind. “Tell me, please, why did sister and brother human cast you off brother mountain’s peak?”

Once again the feather related to the wind his recent experience, and once again the wind was most impressed with the tale.

“Surely you must now see the wonderful purpose you just performed?”

“All I was is a trinket, simply an embellishment of White Dove’s headdress. Please release me from your grasp so that I find my end in this life.”

“Very well,” said wind. And once again feather began to descend to mother earth. Except this time feather was unaware just how fast and far the wind had carried him from where White Dove and Soaring Eagle had cast him free.

This was a very different landscape. Winding paths made of stone crisscrossing each other, and all around these paths were large square structures that had human beings both entering and exiting.

Feather touched down on a stone path that was near a very large and impressive white structure. Suddenly, feather was approached by another human being, but this time it was a male, and he looked most different than the bride and groom whom he was just with. For this man was tall, with lighter skin, and he had fur covering his face. As this man reached

down to pick feather up, feather thought to himself, what is it with these human beings? Why do they keep disturbing me from my fate?

“Forgive me, little feather, but I have been pondering over something of great concern,” said the human being, “and thus I have sought guidance through prayer and meditation. The sight of you falling from the sky has seemed to set straight in my heart and mind the course I must now follow. So if you would be willing to assist me, I would like to make use of your ability to help me accomplish the most difficult task.”

“You mean you need my ability to assist you in flight?”

“No,” chuckled the human. “You have a strong and rightly shaped quill, and I would like to use you to write a most needed document.”

“I don’t know what writing is. What is a document?”

The human explained, and the feather agreed that he would assist in the task on one condition. “Name it,” said the human.

“Once you have finished your task, I wish to be set free to find my master.”

The man agreed. And for many days and many long nights, the man dipped the feather’s tip into black water and then scratched his blackened tip on something called paper, on which the man left behind markings and symbols which the human explained to be called writing. And this was a great form of silent language that humans used to communicate across great distances with each other.

Countless days passed until finally the human sat back, let out a long sigh, and said: “There it is, finished! I can now only pray that those who hear and read these words will in time understand and accept the truth they convey.”

Early the next morning, the human carried feather outside to a warm and sunny day.

“Feather, I am taking you back to a place where I can cast you back into the wind. I cannot thank you enough, brother, for your service.”

“I wish I could feel worthy of your gratitude,” said feather, “but I do not. Perhaps if you were to explain to me the purpose for this document, I could better understand the service I have provided.”

This is what the man told feather about what they both had been writing:

“As human beings, we are each uniquely different as individuals, from one human to the next. Our differences on the surface may in many cases seem so subtle that they’re hard to perceive, while other differences are so great we sometimes forget we are still brothers and sisters of the same family. However, this is not where the true heart of our individualism beats. For our true individuality is based upon the quality of character, which is exposed by interactions throughout life.

“Now the outside differences are vast, true enough — but similar to the feathers of the great eagle, which in appearance vary greatly. Some bigger, smaller, stronger, weaker, faster, thinner, longer, shorter. Not only this, but each feather will vary in shades and colours — sometimes these are very subtle changes, and sometimes there are shades of very different colours. Together, however, the eagle knows that with each feather, no matter how different from the rest, each feather deserves equal respect and care, as each serves a purpose. Therefore none is of greater or lesser importance, because not only is flight possible through the aid of each individual feather, but the quality of this flight is incumbent upon each feather working as a whole community, and not as individuals.

“We humans sometimes allow our feelings of self-worth to cloud our minds to the reality that just because we are unique as individuals, this does not make any one of us better than the least of us.

“You, dear feather, allowed me to transfer my thoughts into written word, which will hopefully serve to change the hearts and minds of many people — which in turn will hopefully serve to improve the quality of life for all mankind, long after you and I escape the moorings of the world. There are many who believe that you, little brother, possess the ability of greater effects and power than the hardest of swords forged in the flames of progress — that your blade, when wielded by the hand of wisdom and truth, truly cuts deeper into the hearts and minds of others, yet it only leaves behind the wound of discarded ignorance. From this wound, the scar of guidance lingers, for as long as your words remain alive, so do you.

“Little brother, we are both very different creations of life, yet we are still dependent upon and benefit from each other’s existence in different ways.”

Feather didn’t speak a word, for even though feather now understood better the document, he also now began to better understand what brother wind tried to help him see. But as many answers fell into place, it seemed to bring about new questions.

Suddenly feather realised that he and the man were moving closer to the edge of yet another mountain.

“Well, little brother, I guess the time and place have arrived for us to part company,” said the man. “Again, thank you for helping me with my difficult task.”

“You are welcome,” said feather. “But I feel it is you who have helped me more. I will never forget all you have said. But when I tell others about meeting you and the document we wrote, what do I say?”

“Call me Abe. As for the document we wrote, I hope it will be well received. It won’t be at first, I fear,” he said, “but I believe one day these words will serve this country well.”

Suddenly winds began to swirl all around them, and the man set feather loose upon the invisible grasp of the wind. The man watched as feather danced his way higher into the sky.

OVER AND OUT

The wind carried feather higher into the air.

Said feather: “Little brother wind, to be ignorant of truth and knowledge does not equate to foolishness. It is only foolish to allow ourselves to remain blind and closed off when truth and knowledge reach out to one’s heart and mind.”

“And what have you learned?”

“I have come to believe that while any creation may have been born with a specific purpose and function in life, with time and change they may also serve in the aid of other purposes; that all life shares a most connected existence; and that all creatures actually depend on one another to help sustain life’s delicate balance. That even in death, life is propelled forward by the cycle of one life ending while another life begins. I am still sad to no longer be in the company and service of my master the eagle, but I no longer lament my condition, and nor do I fear my demise. I see now that the creator of all life loves me no less and no more than his other creations, because the love of family is not increased or subtracted from contingent on the different status or function of each family member — but because we are simply family. So cast me free to soar and land wherever you intend, because I know now that even you, the wind, are directed by the one who guides us all.”

But before the feather could say anymore, he found himself in the firm grasp of the most familiar talon.

“Master!” exclaimed the excited feather. “I did not think I would ever see you again.”

“My choosing to set you free was done not as a punishment, but rather as a reward for your unfailing service to me. I wanted to give you a chance

to see that you could be more than just a thing of flight,” explained the mighty eagle.

“Oh, master, I have so much to tell you — all I have seen and learned,” said feather.

“All in good time. But first I have a request of you, little one. Since your departure I have taken a mate, in hopes to start a family, and since the eggs will come any day from my mate, I am building a nest to keep our young safe and warm. I would like to use you to help feather our nest, so you would serve not only to keep our young safe, but I would ask that you share the knowledge you have learned with our young ones, so that when the day comes and it is time for them to leave the nest, they will do so with a better understanding and appreciation for life.”

The little feather could not even speak at first, for the honour his master was now bestowing on him caused the words of Abe to come to mind.

“Of course I will be a source for your nest, and the voice of knowledge to your young. The gifts you gave me that day you set me free have truly changed the world around me, for I now see things very differently than I once did. And for this I will be forever grateful.”



Are we not all like floating feathers in this life? Being buffeted and guided by the winds of time and change — whether we are the ones who by our own wind bring about change, or the ones who are subject to change by the trade winds of others. Few of us would ever deny that there are certain universal truths in constant motion, one of which is the principle of cause and effect.

The story of the feather is meant to be simply didactic in nature. Yet how many of us have suffered the same plight of the feather — in that through circumstance and chance, we felt without purpose or value in

life? I believe most would agree that this symptom has plagued all our lives at least once. But as we see the story unfold, the feather comes to understand that even in the worst of conditions his existence is still able to aid others' lives around him. Whether the feather was being used to hide under, ridden upon, or wielded by a wise person, it provided great aid to all the lives it came in contact with, and therefore played a role in cause and effect.

We humans, having the highest form of intellect, are charged with a great responsibility. Not only should we help to care for one another as brothers and sisters of flesh; we must also look towards the welfare of all life on this planet. Because the fabric of life is not merely a complex, beautifully woven weave — but like any fabric as a whole, if we neglect or allow any single thread to be removed, it will begin a cascading effect that can and will cause the fabric as a whole to deteriorate.

A wise man once said the only way to change the world is to change ourselves. So if we strive to answer the call of our better angels and nature, we will be a continuous source of positive cause, and will bring about effect that can better serve all. So my dear brothers and sisters, my hope, my constant prayer for all of us, is for fair winds to guide us, and to enable us all to find peace and purpose.

Over and out,

Call me Seadog.

A FINAL WORD

HAVE BEEN ON THE ROW FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS AND WAS RECENTLY ASKED THE QUESTION BY A TRUE SCHOLAR, DOES LAUGHTER EXIST HERE AND IS IT A COPING MECHANISM? I TRULY HAD TO CONSIDER THE LATTER BEFORE I COULD ANSWER WITH ANY CERTAINTY, BUT AS FOR HE FORMER PART OF THAT QUESTION, ABSOLUTELY LAUGHTER ABIDES WITHIN ALL THIS STEEL AND STONE! WHICH LEADS TO MY POINT OF WRITING THIS,

MY FRIEND OF TWENTY SOME YEARS WHO IS NO LONGER AMONG US BECAUSE HE WAS EXECUTED LAST YEAR, WAS HANDS DOWN ONE OF THE FUNNIEST PEOPLE I'VE EVER KNOWN, AND TRUST THE PUP WHEN I SAY, I KNOW FUNNY BECAUSE I'M PRETTY COMICAL MYSELF WHEN THE MOOD IS UPON ME.

MY FRIEND WAS ONLY A FEW CELLS DOWN FROM ME THE DAY THEY SIGNED HIS DEATH WARRANT AND TOOK HIM AWAY. WE'D BEEN ON THE SAME WING AGAIN FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND HE WAS ONE OF THE PEOPLE I WOULD SEEK OUT IF OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF AND WE COULD BE NEIGHBORS, AND NOT JUST FOR THE LAUGHTER. BECAUSE MY FRIEND FLOYD LIKE MYSELF, AND MANY HERE, THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH HIS HEART, BUT DUE TO A WIDE RANGE OF VARYING TRAUMA, HIS MIND WAS TROUBLED AND NOT LIKE WHAT MOST WOULD LABEL AS A NORMAL BRAIN. UNFORTUNATELY WE'VE NOT PROGRESSED QUITE ENOUGH TO WHERE PEOPLE WOULD PREFER TO STUDY

THOSE OF US WITH UNDERLYING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN HOPES OF FINDING A REMEDY BECAUSE IT'S EASIER, NAY, CHEAPER TO JUST USE US AS STEPPING STONES IN A POLITICAL CAREER. LABEL US AS REAL LIFE HANNIBAL LECTERS AND LOCK US AWAY OR GOD FORBID PUT US DOWN LIKE AN INJURED ANIMAL.

NONE OF WHICH SERVES ANYONE LEAST OF ALL THOSE IN SOCIETY WHO MAY ONE DAY ENCOUNTER ONE THESE TROUBLED SOULS WITH NO IDEA THE REALITY OF WHAT HEY MAY FACE. INSTEAD OF LAMENTING A FAMILY'S GRIEF AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, HOW ABOUT TAKING THE TIME, INTEREST, AND YES, MONEY! TO FIND A BETTER DETERRENT TO HOMICIDE SO ANOTHER FAMILY DOES NOT BECOME ANOTHER CRIME STATISTIC!

SORRY, BIT OF A SORE SPOT FOR ME, BUT I WANTED TO TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT MY OLE PARD FLOYD. FOR SOMEONE WHO HAD ENDURED AND THEN SUFFERED SO MUCH IN HIS LIFE, HE WAS STILL MOST OF THE TIME ONE OF THE COCKIEST, UPBEAT, AND FUNNIEST PEOPLE I'VE EVER KNOWN. IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR US TO LAUGH SO HARD THERE WOULD BE SOME SORE RIBS IN OUR NEARLY FUTURE.

THOSE WONDERFULLY DEEP, EARNEST BELLY LAUGHS OF SUCH INTENSITY THAT THE WALLS OF THIS PLACE WOULD DISAPPEAR FOR A TIME. AT LEAST UNTIL THE BREATH RETURNED AND THE NOW WATERING EYES WOULD CLEAR FROM WHATEVER HUMOR WE WERE ENJOYING. TO FIND SUCH BREVITY IN SUCH A COLD AND AUSTERE ENVIRONMENT CAN LITERALLY MEAN

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENDURING AND THRIVING,
AND UNFORTUNATELY EVEN LIVING AND DYING!

THE DAY THEY CAME TO GET MY FRIEND I WENT FROM
A NORMAL STATE OF MIND TO THAT OF GREAT SADNESS.
YET AS SOON AS MY FRIEND WALKED IN FRONT OF MY
CELL FOR THE LAST TIME, HIS DEMEANOR WAS THE
SAME AS THE FIRST TIME I SAW HIM IN THAT HE WAS
BOUNCING ALONG WITH EACH STEP, HAD THAT BEEN
SHIT EATING GRIN ON HIS FACE FULL OF CONFIDENCE
AND STOICISM, AND ALTHOUGH I WAS ALREADY
SMILING, THE SMILE NOW BECAME QUITE REAL AS WE
SAID OUR GOODBYES, WHICH ARE AND WILL REMAIN
OURS ALONE TO KNOW. BECAUSE ALTHOUGH THERE
HAVE BEEN TEARS OVER THIS LOSS OF LIFE AND
COMPANY, THERE HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE
MORE LAUGHTER THAN SADNESS WHEN HE POPS INTO
MY MIND

SEADOG

AFTERWORD

I first became aware of *A Floating Feather* back in 2022. It had been sent to a penpal of Seadog's and he had asked her to forward it to me as a fellow writer. Honestly, it was very different from the book you have in your hands now.

At the time, Seadog had already decided to forego any future appeals. He seemed remarkably at peace with that decision, convinced it was what was best for everyone affected by what he often referred to as "the mess I'd made." The manuscript I received was thoughtful and reflective, but it felt distant. The pages were filled with ideas, observations, and carefully considered arguments, yet they did not seem to come directly from the heart. They told me what Seadog thought. They did not yet tell me who he was.

I thanked him for sharing it and put it aside. Looking back, I do not think either of us knew what it would eventually become.

As much as it is possible to have a best friend on death row, Seadog was that for my husband, Floyd. Their friendship stretched back years before I entered either of their lives, forged through circumstances that only men living under the same sentence can truly understand. They shared stories, frustrations, hopes, disappointments, and a kind of humour that often flourishes in places where it should not logically exist. Floyd spoke about Seadog so often that I felt as though I knew him long before we ever exchanged a meaningful conversation ourselves.

Over time, I came to understand why their friendship mattered so much.

Seadog was intelligent, endlessly curious, and capable of reflecting deeply on almost anything. He could be stubborn and frustrating one moment, then unexpectedly compassionate the next. He had an extraordinary ability to move from discussing philosophy, faith, or history into telling

a story that would leave you laughing out loud. Like most people, he was full of contradictions. Unlike most people, he spent decades with little choice but to examine them.

After Floyd was executed in June 2025, Seadog and I became closer still. There was no formal moment when that happened. It occurred gradually, through conversations, emails, and messages exchanged across an ocean. Grief has a way of stripping away superficialities. It leaves very little room for pretence. In those months after Floyd's death, Seadog became one of the people who understood certain parts of my loss without needing them explained.

Around that same time, something else began happening.

Without ever explicitly announcing what he was doing, a new version of *A Floating Feather* started arriving in my inbox. Sometimes it would be a chapter. Sometimes only a few pages. Occasionally it was a reflection, a memory, or an entirely rewritten section. Weeks passed. Then months. Slowly, the manuscript transformed into something altogether different from the version I had first encountered.

The change was impossible to miss.

The earlier manuscript had come from Seadog's mind.

This one came from his heart.

The man emerging through these pages was no longer concerned with defending himself, explaining himself, or persuading anyone of anything. Instead, he seemed interested in understanding his own life and sharing what he had learned from it. The writing became more vulnerable, more personal, and more honest. It wandered at times, repeated itself at others, and occasionally became sentimental. Yet those qualities only made it feel more human. The polished distance of the earlier manuscript gave way to something far more valuable: sincerity.

What struck me most was that despite the circumstances under which it was written, this is not really a book about death.

It is a book about life.

Again and again, Seadog returns to the ordinary things people outside prison often overlook. Friendship. Love. Laughter. Sunrises. Ice cubes. Kindness from strangers. The comfort of belonging. The importance of purpose. Reading these pages reminded me how easily most of us move past the small gifts that quietly make life meaningful. Years of confinement had taught him to recognise their value in a way few people ever do.

What many readers may not expect is how funny he could be.

For all the seriousness contained within these pages, Seadog possessed a remarkable sense of humour. Death row humour tends to be dark, absurd, and wildly inappropriate, but it is also one of the ways people survive. Some of my favourite memories of him involve laughing so hard at one of his stories or observations that I had to explain to other people why a man sitting on Florida's death row had become the funniest part of my day. More often than not, the explanation only made the situation seem even more absurd.

That laughter mattered. It reminded me that no human being is ever entirely defined by the worst thing they have done, the worst thing that has happened to them, or the place where they happen to be confined. Joy still exists. Friendship still exists. Humour still exists. Humanity persists.

As the manuscript neared completion,

I began to see how much of Seadog himself was hidden inside the feather at the centre of the story.

The feather believes it has been discarded. It believes its purpose ended when it became separated from the eagle. Again and again it insists that it no longer has value, only to discover that it continues helping others in ways it never anticipated. It becomes shelter, transportation, inspiration, a tool for communication, and a source of wisdom. The feather spends its entire journey learning that worth is not determined by what it once was, but by what it continues to give.

Only later did I realise how closely that mirrored Seadog's own struggle.

When I finally reached the closing pages and read the words, "Over and out. Call me Seadog," I felt I understood him better than I ever had before. Not completely—none of us ever fully know another person—but enough to recognise the man behind the stories. The sailor. The storyteller. The friend Floyd loved. The man who had spent years searching for meaning and had ultimately chosen to leave behind something gentle.

Before his death, Seadog told me that I would know what to do with the manuscript when the time came.

As it turned out, I did.

Or perhaps more accurately,

I knew who to trust with it.

I entrusted the manuscript to my close friend, "The Rev. Dr." Jeff Hood. Jeff had accompanied Floyd to his execution and had stood beside me through some of the most difficult moments of my life. He was one of the few people whose judgment I trusted completely. More than that, he had spent years listening to voices most people never hear and taking seriously stories many would rather ignore.

I also knew something else: Jeff is a damn good writer.

He possesses a rare gift that extends beyond his own work. He understands how to recognize another person's voice and preserve it. Many writers and editors approach a manuscript determined to improve it. Jeff understands that sometimes the highest form of creativity is restraint. He knows the difference between helping a book become what it already is and trying to transform it into something else entirely.

When I sent him Seadog's manuscript, he immediately understood why it mattered. Neither of us believed the book was important because it was written by a man on death row. It was important because it was honest. Beneath the parable, the reflections, and the stories was a human being wrestling with questions that belong to all of us: purpose, regret, friendship, forgiveness, love, and what it means to leave something worthwhile behind.

The book you now hold exists because of a chain of trust. Seadog trusted me with his words. I trusted Jeff with the responsibility of helping bring those words into the world. Together, we tried to honour the voice that arrived in my inbox one chapter at a time.

This book is not an argument. It is not an attempt to redeem Seadog, nor is it a request that readers reach any particular conclusion about him. It is simply the record of one human being trying to understand his life and make peace with it.

Whether you admire him, disagree with him, forgive him, or struggle to do so is your own journey.

My responsibility was much smaller. My responsibility was simply to make sure the feather landed.

If these pages have moved you, challenged you, comforted you, frustrated you, or lingered in your thoughts after you've turned the final page, then they have accomplished exactly what Seadog hoped they might. More than anything, he wanted to be heard honestly. Not

through headlines, court records, opinions, or assumptions, but through his own words.

For all his faults—and he would have been the first to admit he had many—he never stopped searching for meaning. He never stopped believing that people could learn, grow, and become more than the worst moments of their lives. Whether he was right about that is for others to decide.

What I know is this: behind these pages was a man who spent years reflecting on friendship, love, purpose, responsibility, and grace. A man who cared deeply about the people fortunate enough to call him a friend. A man who left behind far more kindness than most people would ever expect.

I am grateful that I knew him.

And I am grateful that his voice has found its way into your hands.

Samantha Wainwright

May 31, 2026

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RODERICK MICHAEL ORME (1963–2026) was born in Florida and grew up on the water. He worked as a commercial fisherman, a boat captain in the Gulf oil fields, and a merchant seaman. In 1992, at the age of twenty-eight, he was arrested in Panama City for the murder, sexual battery, and robbery of Lisa Redd, for which he was convicted and sentenced to death three separate times over the course of the next three decades. He spent thirty-four years in the custody of the Florida Department of Corrections. He took his own life on April 23, 2026, before the state could carry out his third sentence. *A Floating Feather* is his only book.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

SAMANTHA WAINWRIGHT is the widow of Anthony Floyd Wainwright, executed by the State of Florida on June 10, 2025. She lives in the United Kingdom and remains in contact with several of her late husband's friends from death row. This is her first book.

THE REV. DR. JEFF HOOD is a Catholic priest (Old Catholic), theologian, and founder of the Execution Intervention Project. As a spiritual advisor to death-row prisoners across the United States, he has accompanied eleven men to their executions, including Anthony Wainwright. He was nominated for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize. He is the author of countless books about the theology, social justice and the death penalty. He lives in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

ABOUT COMPLICIT PRESS

COMPLICIT PRESS is the nonprofit publishing imprint of the Execution Intervention Project. Complicit Press publishes books that bear witness to executions, expose state violence, and amplify silenced voices.

Complicit Press maintains two series. The Abolition Series takes the long view, drawing on legal history, sociology, moral philosophy, and investigative reporting to make the case that the death penalty is a living injustice. The Intervention Series publishes works of direct action and witness — first-person accounts, manuscripts from inside, and arguments for mercy in individual cases under active warrant. *A Floating Feather* appears in the Intervention Series.

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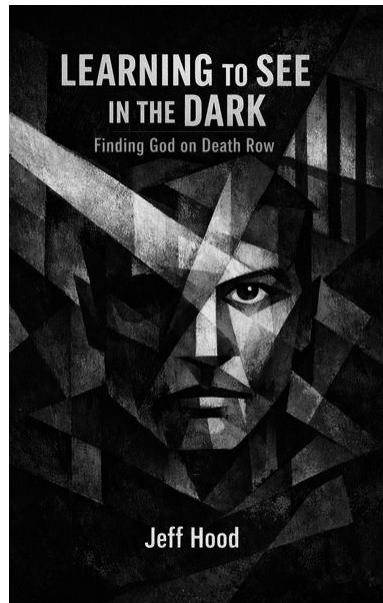
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Did you love *A Floating Feather and Other Musings*? Then you should read *Learning to See in the Dark: Finding God on Death Row*¹ by Jeff Hood!



The Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood has walked into execution chambers, stood beside men the state was preparing to kill, and witnessed what few ever see: the final hours of human consciousness under the shadow of state violence. Drawing from years accompanying men through their final moments, Hood describes a God who does not intervene, does not rescue, and does not explain—yet refuses to abandon.

In *Learning to See in the Dark*, Hood offers spiritual testimony born not in sanctuaries, but in death row cells and execution chambers. When identity collapses, when beliefs fall apart, when prayer goes unanswered,

1. <https://books2read.com/u/4jkQVY>

2. <https://books2read.com/u/4jkQVY>

something deeper remains: awareness itself, presence, a sacredness the system cannot execute.

Through meditations on silence, identity, divine "contamination," and the liturgy of dust and echoes, *Learning to See in the Dark* invites readers into a stripped-down spirituality that does not depend on innocence, redemption, or certainty. Unflinching and contemplative, this book is a manual for meeting the formless, unkillable awareness that remains when everything else is taken.

Read more at <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jeffhood/>.

