



Time of Grace: Thoughts on Nature, Family, and the Politics of Crime and Punishment

Ken Lamberton

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“I hole up in my own cozy cubicle and write, considering ways to make the approaching Thanksgiving holiday not just another day in this place. In prison, hope faces east; time is measured in wake-ups.”

Time of Grace is a remarkable book, written with great eloquence by a former science teacher who was incarcerated for twelve years for his sexual liaison with a teenage student. Far more than a “prison memoir,” it is an intimate and revealing look at relationships—with fellow humans and with the surprising wildlife of the Sonoran Desert, both inside and beyond prison walls. Throughout, Ken Lamberton reflects on human relations as they mimic and defy those of the natural world, whose rhythms calibrate Lamberton’s days and years behind bars. He writes with candor about his life, while observing desert flora and fauna with the insight and enthusiasm of a professional naturalist.

While he studies a tarantula digging her way out of the packed earth and observes Mexican freetail bats sailing into the evening sky, Lamberton ruminates on his crime and on the wrenching effects it has had on his wife and three daughters. He writes of his connections with his fellow inmates—some of whom he teaches in prison classes—and with the guards who control them, sometimes with inexplicable cruelty. And he unflinchingly describes a prison system that has gone horribly wrong—a system entrapped in a self-created web of secrecy, fear, and lies.

This is the final book of Lamberton’s trilogy about the twelve years he spent in prison. Readers of his earlier books will savor this last volume. Those who are only now discovering Lamberton’s distinctive voice—part poet, part scientist, part teacher, and always deeply, achingly human—will feel as if they are making a new friend.

Gripping, sobering, and beautifully written, Lamberton’s memoir is an unforgettable exploration of crime, punishment, and the power of the human spirit.

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