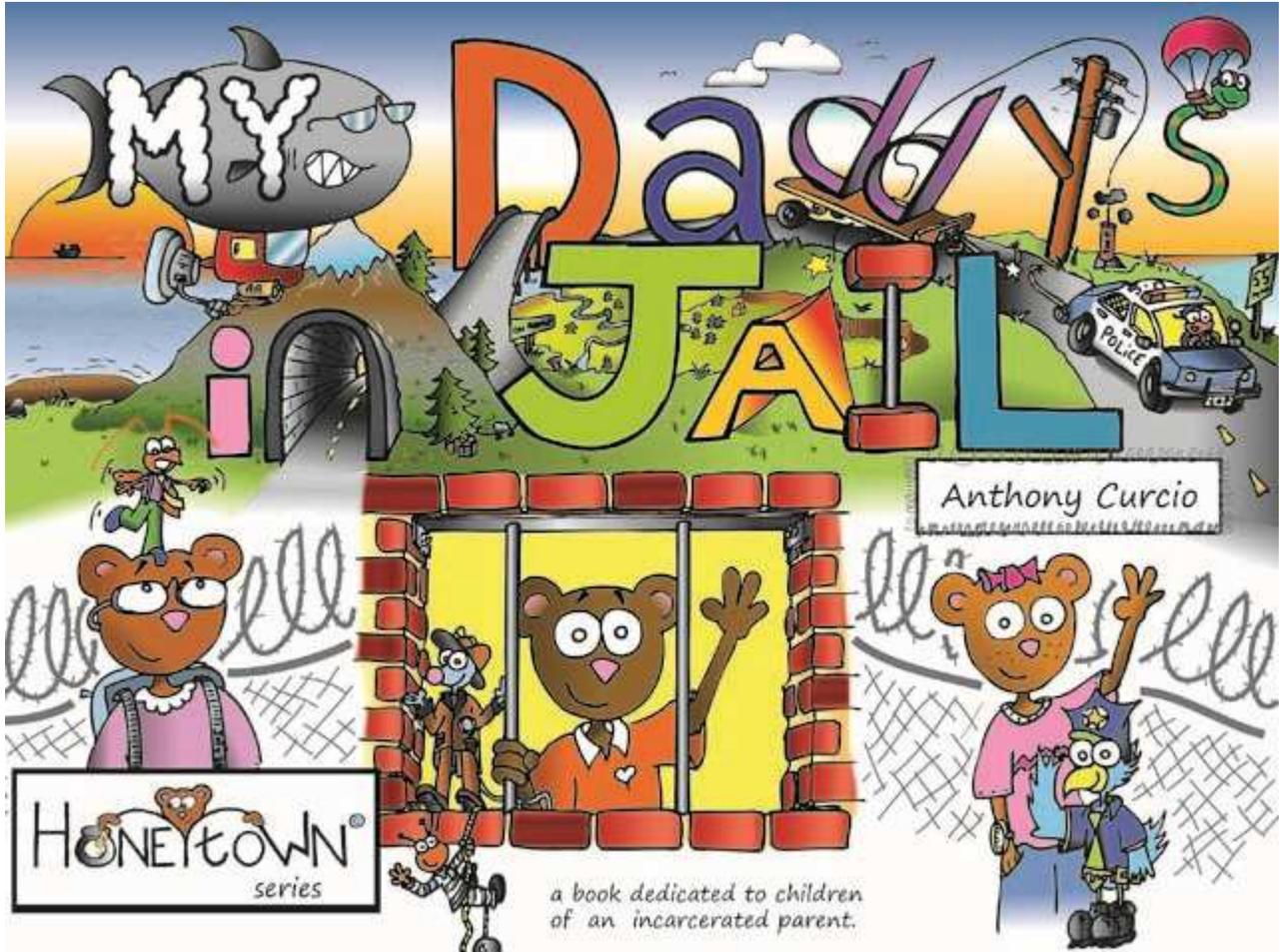


THE EX-CON WHO WANTS TO EXPLAIN PRISON TO KIDS

By Bert Burykill



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For all the true crime junkies out there, the name Anthony Curcio might ring a bell. He's the guy **responsible** for one of the most meticulously-planned armored truck robberies ever performed—as in, he put up a Craigslist ad to get unemployed landscapers dressed like he was to show up at the bank and confuse the cops. (I'm pretty sure he borrowed that tactic from the *Thomas Crown Affair*.) He actually got \$400,000 off a Brinks truck during his heist, but an unlikely witness and some DNA evidence led to his getting caught and he got sentenced to six years in prison in 2009.

Now he's on work release/house arrest, living again with his wife and two young daughters, and trying to get his life turned around by writing children's books (you can see a bunch of

'em on his **website**), including one aimed at kids whose parents are locked up called *My Daddy's in Jail*. He also wants to be a public speaker to warn young people about the perils of prescription drug addiction, which was the devil that got him robbing armored cars in the first place.

I reached out to Anthony 'cause I like speaking to other ex-cons, especially when they're doing something good and I can document a success story. I got the sense that the five years he did in prison left him with a lot of bottled-up positive energy. I experienced the same thing when I was locked up: I became hyperactive, like everything was going to happen in the future and I needed to use every second as valuably as I could. Anthony puts me to shame though—he managed to write a memoir about his life of drug addiction and crime in prison called ***Heist and High*** and get it published upon his release earlier this year. He told me he mainly wants to make people aware of how dangerous prescription drugs are.

“It is crazy to me that the most addicting and damaging drugs are the ones prescribed to us by doctors,” he said. “I hope that by telling my story, it will help someone (and their families) from experiencing the hell that I did.”

Anthony was an all-American type of guy with a life that seemed pretty perfect from the outside—a good-looking football star who was dating his high school's cheerleading captain. He was developing a drinking problem, but other than that everything was going perfectly. Then he got an injury that threw his promising football career into doubt and introduced him to prescription pain pills, which quickly became his new love. Before long he was running all kinds of scams so he could feed his addiction, including his failed heist.

This summer, he participated in a **20/20 special** in which he tried to focus on spreading awareness about painkiller addiction, but instead got slightly ridiculed for the brazen nature of his crime. The reporter is kinda making fun of him for getting caught after doing all these ridiculous things, and you can see Anthony still takes a little pride in it 'cause he *almost* got away with it. It's tough to deal with a crime once you've committed it, 'cause now it owns you; you are part of it forever. I don't think Anthony wants to own this one.

When I spoke to him, he didn't sound like a sociopath who would orchestrate crazy bank heists. Anthony says all the right things and seems to have a good grasp on reality—so how do you really explain him committing a serious, premeditated crime like that? There's no logical explanation for why a criminal does what he does, which makes it difficult to explain our actions to anyone, let alone our children. This bummer of a video is only a little bit of a start:

A study from back in 2010 said that **one in 28 kids has a parent in prison**, and I bet all of them are wondering shit like, “Why did this happen?” and, “Does my dad love me?” It's very difficult to answer those questions, but Anthony's giving it a try with *My Daddy's in Jail*.

“I originally created this book for my two daughters while I was in prison,” he told me. “I wanted them to know that it wasn't their fault and that I loved them no matter what. It is now my goal that any child who is in a similar situation has access to this book.”

He hasn't raised much cash on his **Kickstarter page** so far, but he's still got a month to get \$7,500. (The money, he says, is so he can distribute the book free of charge to places like

elementary schools and libraries.) He's also trying to put together the picture books he was working on while he was in prison—it seems pretty obvious that he made them to connect with his daughters, and I can imagine the pain he was going through behind bars for five years apart from his kids. It sounds like things are still pretty rough for him on that front.

"I'll be with my family now, the four of us, sitting at the dinner table and they'll be saying 'remember when?' and I sit there clueless," he told me. "I missed out on so much. I will forever regret this lost time... Some day when [my daughters] are old enough to understand, I will have that talk and try to explain things: I was selfish; I was addicted to drugs and I made some horrible decisions."

I can't tell you how many people sit in prison and complain but don't do anything to make it better. That's the main thing that impresses me about Anthony: many people don't do shit about their situation when they're locked up, they just complain and complain, but he's taken this awful event, where he tried to rob an armored truck at the ultimate low point of his life, and attempted to make it positive. If we accept that his actions were truly the result of a severely debilitating drug addiction, then it's possible that Anthony's moral compass was never really all that broken—maybe he's just an example of what happens when a decent person falls prey to drugs.

I am sure some people will continue to write Anthony off as a con man or a crazy true-crime story, but he's making inmates look good for a change. That's not a small thing—whenever you tell anyone you were in prison they usually make an excuse to get the hell out of there. But Anthony's got a great way of explaining his situation that a bunch of us ex-cons should probably write down: "I can never change my past and the crimes I committed, but the worst crime of all would be if I remained the same person I was. Today, I can look myself in the mirror and be happy with what I see. I am a good father and a loving husband and there is not a day that goes by that I am not thankful for being given a second chance."

*You can donate to Anthony's Kickstarter **here***

*Bert Burykill is the pseudonym of our prison correspondent, who has spent time in a number of prisons in New York State. He tweets **here**.*