



# **Prisoner in the Kitchen: The Car Thief, the Murderer, and the Man Hired to Feed Them**

*William Bonham*

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Winner of Simon & Schuster's memoir contest in conjunction with AARP and the *Huffington Post*, the memoir of a man's coming-of-age as a civilian cook in a maximum-security prison.

In 1973, recent Montana transplant William Bonham desperately needs a job. Hoping to take advantage of his background working in restaurants and diners, he finally comes across a listing for a position offering great money and benefits—at Montana State Prison in Deer Lodge. He takes it.

As food service supervisor in the kitchen of the maximum-security prison, Bonham oversees a kitchen crew of convicts that prepares and serves each meal. Among his staff are Earl, a homely baker; Aldrich, a timid young dishwasher; Smoky Boy, the prison's most feared and respected convict; Mackey, who claims to have cooked at Seattle's Olympic Hotel in his pre-incarceration life; and Reed, a cook whose calm, witty demeanor wins over Bonham.

Over the next year, Bonham comes to care for his crew. Although he knows that these men have committed unforgiveable crimes, Bonham forms a camaraderie with them that borders on friendship—until a late-night incident calls his judgment into question.

Told with humor and empathy, *A Prisoner in the Kitchen* is the redemptive tale of Bonham's transformation from a bright-eyed optimist who sees the good in everyone to a man who understands and revels in the complexities of human nature.

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