

"Life, it seems, will fade away
Drifting further every day
Getting lost within myself
Nothing matters, no one else."
--Metallica
Fade to Black

"What did you hit him with?" the guard asked.

"I didn't hit him with anything," I replied, standing buck-ass-naked. When suspected of fighting, the policy and procedure is to strip you of all clothes to check for marks. I had none, and neither of my hands were swollen or cut.

"Who did it?"

"Go ask my cellie."

"You used something. That wasn't done with your fists. Your going to get more time for doing that. He looks like the Elephant Man."

"I have life without parole and ninety-nine years."

Now angered, he hand-cuffed me and off to the hole we went.

At two house, I was locked-in a shower-stall, secured with a metal-caged-door, equipped with a food port. Instead of removing the cuffs, the guard left them on and walked back toward the control center. Another guard, preparing to pass out food trays, saw me and asked, "Do you still have cuffs on?" with a quizzical look.

"Yeah," I said, and turned around, and stuck my hands through the food port, signaling for him to remove them.

Minutes later, the other guard returned, carrying a large

can of pepper spray. He stopped abruptly when he saw I was no longer wearing cuffs. (Excessive force may be used if a prisoner refuses to be uncuffed.)

"What was you planning on doing with that?" I asked as I gave him a "fuck you" grin. He didn't answer and walked back to the control center.

A short time later, a sergeant (also known as a white shirt) entered the wing with the guard--who wanted to mace me--in tow. Now the white shirt had a game of his own to play.

"How's it going?" he asked.

I didn't answer.

"I'm gonna need you to strip out." So I went through the usual routine of getting naked. (Apparently, they never tire of seeing my twig and berries.)

"Show me your hands. Yeah, doesn't look like you were in a fight. Who assaulted your cellie?"

"You should ask my cellie."

"If you don't tell us what happened, you could be down here for a year and given another charge. When you getting out?"

"Never."

Game over.

I was assigned to a cell. My new cellmate was a young guy, about twenty-two, weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds. He was back on a parole violation. Unfortunately for him, he attracted a booty-bandit when he arrived. Unfortunately for the booty-bandit, my new cellmate ate his food and smoked his dope (marijuana) without providing any sexual favors. After a few weeks,

the booty-bandit turned aggressive. My cellie, deciding that the safest place for him to serve the rest of his time (a year) was in the hole, requested protective custody under the booty-bandit's name. Game over.

I looked out the window and saw guards coming toward two house, escorting the prisoner that assaulted my old cellmate, along with his cellmate.

At the evening meal, he sent me a kite (a hand-written note). It said he didn't mean to get me locked up, said my cellie owed him money, and said he would take his weight and tell the ad-seg committee that neither I nor his cellmate had anything to do with the fight.

In the meantime, my new cellie and I were acquainted: He told me his story of being in the Honor Center (a place similar to a half-way house). On his first four hour pass, he went to meet a woman he met on a chatline. During the date, her car broke down. Before walking to her house, he talked her into having sex with him behind a big sign that said "Got Milk" on the side of the highway. He never went back to the Honor Center. Instead, he stayed with the woman until he was arrested a month later.

The next morning, the ad-seg committee assigned me, despite a full confession from the culprit. My next review date was scheduled for a month away.

A few weeks before being put in ad-seg, I was working on a petition for clemency for a guy and wanted to quote some scripture about forgiveness and picked up a bible from the chapel's office. It

was put in my TAS bag (temporary administrative segregation) when the guards packed my property. There are rarely any good books to be found in ad-seg unless you have something to trade--which I clearly didn't--so I pulled the bible out and thumbed through the book of Proverbs. I read Proverbs 30:20, which says, "This is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done no wickedness.'" I started to laugh but then felt uneasy.

The next afternoon, I had a noncontact visit. It was my girlfriend (I'll call her Eve). Eve wanted to know what happened and when I was getting out. She was in a lot of pain; her gallbladder was inflamed. I told her I'd be fine, but she needed to go to the hospital.

On the shuffle back--handcuffed with a bellychain and leg shackled--I felt uneasy again. Something was wrong, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

Back at the cell, I brooded over everything we discussed during the short two-hour visit. I thought about the weeks and months prior. Eve started spending a lot of time with Chris, a guy from the neighborhood. He was out on parole after serving four years. He was so ugly and unattractive, I didn't consider him a threat.

But since Eve started hanging around him, she started to get testy with me, started making up excuses for not visiting, for not answering her phone. Her distancing behavior began to dawn on me. She also refused to loan me \$3,000 to pay my attorney. Instead, she suggested that I get it from my dad. I told her I didn't want to get it from him, I wanted it from her. She finally

sent the money.

The more I brooded over the money matter, the madder I got. She wouldn't of even had any money if it wasn't for me advising her on how to negotiate a settlement after her daughter was shocked my a light pole while waiting for the school bus. The light company settled out of court for \$6,000.

Days later, my cellmate tried to declare a medical emergency--for some unknown reason--by kicking on the cell door to get a guard's attention. I heard keys from a guard approaching. Then all of sudden, the food port opened and a guard emptied a can of mace into our cell. My cellie was sprayed directly in the face and chest. He wasn't wearing a T-shirt. The guard then shut the food port and walked away. My cellie started screaming and yelling that he couldn't breathe. He began crying like a small child cries for his mother.

When the fog settled, my cellie tried to wash the mace off. Big mistake. The more he washed his eyes and body, the more it burned.

Evidently, guards could mace anyone, without warning, for kicking on the door. This I did not know. My cellie didn't know it either, but neither one of us forgot it. In fact, I often teased him, telling him to kick the door and tell the guard to bring our food trays in which he would reply, "fuck that!"

We were never given clean sheets or anything to clean with. My shower shoes soaked up the mace like a sponge. I found that out on shower night. When my shower shoes got wet, they would heat

up, setting my feet on fire, making me feel as if I was doing a firewalk at an Anthony Robbins' workshop.

My date with the committee finally came, and they released me from ad-seg. One of the ad-seg committee members said, "You can tell your girlfriend she can stop calling now. We are letting you out." Eve called them everyday for a month.

I was assigned to six house; the lamest house on the hill, full of child molesters, punks, homosexuals, and asshole guards. My new cellmate was broke, no T.V., no radio, no nothing. He was sentenced to life without parole for murdering a man he had been staying with. His direct appeal was denied. He had two weeks to file a postconviction motion. That weekend I offered to help him for nothing. I read over all his legal papers, asked him a number of questions, and then typed up a number of ineffective assistance of counsel claims. When I finished, he didn't even have the stamps to mail the motion to the court, so I paid the postage. After that, I immediately went to work on the clemency petition I was working on before going to ad-seg.

On August 28, 2005, Eve visited me. We had a good visit. She had her gallbladder removed; my attorney was paid; I was free from ad-seg; and my new cellie was tolerable.

The next day, a caption and two guards came to my cell. I was taken to the back office and told to call home. Eve told me that my dad had died the day before. She didn't know anything else. I told her I'd call back and hung up.

About ten minutes later, the door opened for our thirty minute allotment in the wing, and I shot straight to the phone. I called my aunt. She told me that my dad went out drinking and brought home a woman. The next morning, the woman couldn't wake him. His neighbor called the police, and at the age of sixty-two, my dad was pronounced died.

An actual autopsy was never performed. The death certificate listed natural causes as the cause of death. On August 31, 2005, my dad was buried. I didn't attend the funeral; the department of corrections' policy doesn't permit it.

My dad didn't have a will. Besides his pension, everything my dad owned was claimed as a free for all by my aunt and uncle.

I listed Eve as my power-of-attorney. My brother wasn't happy, complaining to my mother that Eve was going to take me for everything I received. One night, he went to her house with some papers for her to sign, but she wasn't there. Chris answered the door, and when he saw my brother, he became really nervous. My brother gave him the papers and left.

Eve had an attitude when I called her, suggesting that I put my brother up to spying on her. Her behavior made me suspect there was more to her and Chris being "just friends."

To make a sad cowboy song short, I confronted her several times. After a few weeks, she finally admitted to having a sexual relationship with Chris. We ended our relationship.

Within a few months time, I lost my dad, my girlfriend, and any hope of ever being free again. I gained the perspective that past is prologue, and that regret comes when the mind is idle.

--Zachary A. Smith