

## Waterless

Water. Our body is made up of over 70% of it. It's a twist of a faucet or a bottle top, a push of a button, or a lifting of a lever away from most. Yet here I am, in a prison cell, thirsty, a putrid smell permeating from the toilet, just a few feet from where I sit on my bunk. I can't even open my window the chase away the odor because doing so will let in the smell of newspaper wrapped feces, which us inmates call burritos or land mines, that have been dropped from the windows and that have been baking in the sun. The mixture of the two produces an other wordly, inhuman smell that even a fly would find offensive.

The water gets cut off in this prison at least once a year, for some reason or another. They are always fixing a pump, a pipe, or a valve. It has been off this time for three days and the smell is overpowering.

Notices are posted on the windows in the dayroom but we can't read them because we are "racked up" and our cells are thirty feet, or more, away from them. We're told what they say and it's that the water is unsafe for consumption, something to do with low pressure. More like no pressure! We're told we're allowed to purchase water from commissary, but not allowed to go to commissary.

Water is finally brought in to flush our toilets and it's brought in three or four times a day after that. Of course it's not enough and it only partially removes the contents and stirs the smell to another level, which seems impossible. We're also brought water to drink three or four times a day, depending on the officers working, and that means that



most of the time, like today, it's less than that.

The water that we're given to drink is shipped in in big tankers. It sits in the sun, and after a few days starts to taste stale, which is even worse than the "waterhose taste" that it has tasted like since it arrived.

Port-a-pottys are also brought in and there's nothing like answering nature's call in a plastic oven. Of course, we tear them up, taking the mirrors, dispensers, and anything else we can get loose. I doubt if they will be brought back again and I don't know if that's a good thing or not.

Once the water is turned back on, it still isn't over because the water isn't safe to drink. Not until it's boiled, which we can't do in our cells. Of course, it doesn't matter because as soon as the water is turned back on, everyone tries to flush their toilet at the same time, causing the sewage to back up and over-flow on to the lower floors. When this happens, the water is turned back off until the pipes can be unclogged. This leaves us with no way to clean up the mess in our cells and in the dayroom.

Every year there's a problem with the water. Sometime it's for a few days and sometime it's for long periods of time. But every year there are issues. It seems funny to me how with all the problems with the water, my sink runs nonstop and so does several toilets, showers, and sinks. Weeks will go by with hundreds of gallons of water being wasted before they are, if ever, fixed.

I hope that we don't have to go through this next summer, with the water being turned off, but I know that's a wasted hope, so I'm already stocking up on "news paper and bottled water".

End