

# Submarine Duty

by Scott D. Culp

Like serving in an old World War I diesel submarine that's been depth-charged and laying at the bottom of the ocean, the re-circulated air and claustrophobic anxiety of prison provides a close estimation of your fellow prisoner under pressure. This morning I witnessed

someone "who obviously has mental health issues" ~~scram~~ profanities at a nurse.

Ohg! After some quick conflict resolution, "on the nurses' part" the malcontent sailor was brusquely taken out of line and hustled into the dark recesses of the prison. The lattice of coincidences in my life have always seemed to affirm and define my identity with every single act of defiance against the established laws and customs of our Nation.

For centuries we were referred to as Rogues and assigned to a lower class, and relegated to the back alleys where the dark arts are practiced. Now another set of the same values has determined that every aspect of my human condition can be summed up with a diagnosis of type-1 bipolar. I've always been an individual who has varied markedly from the standard, but after an exhaustive survey of

the repository of my thoughts and experiences  
I now know the importance of medication,

"especially at the bottom of the ocean".  
Navigating the dangerous waters of prison  
with mental health issues has most of us  
swimming towards the safety of the tiny  
desolate islands of ourselves. County Jails and  
Prisons are completely unprepared for the task  
of responding to the mental health epidemic  
facing our nation's justice system. Not only  
is there no training in recognizing and  
assessing prisoners who are symptomatic,  
their draconian use of force to instill order  
contrast sharply with the accepted practices  
currently being pushed forward in justice reform  
legislation. In a system with self-serving  
checks and balances the level of policing  
brutality, "Fanned against the current of  
mental health awareness" is starting.

The predominant approach to treating prisoners  
has been punishment over rehabilitation, but  
when those flashlights are directed in the  
eyes of prisoners with mental health issues  
the cold indifferent attitude is replaced  
with a juvenile smirk at the flared nostrils

and dancing eyes of the trapped animal  
before them. It's afternoon now and  
the nurse is back with a smile on her face.  
Wow! I wonder if she has any idea what  
that small display of humanity does for us  
forlorn prisoners on submarine duty.

The End