

Foraging for life

Envision a 6'x11' concrete bathroom, with bare walls, pitted through out the half century of coatings of paint, with bunk beds in place of a bathtub; and here, year after year after... you find a place where life seems like an abstract thought, rather than an experience. Decades of idealizing life as something experienced out there relegates this toiletry existence—what the hell is that smell anyway—to little more than a caustic plane of consciousness: "Hey celly, how 'bout a courtesy flush, huh?"

This weeks post involves my celly: an individual stuck in the throws of paranoid schizophrenia. This diagnosis, supported by his antics, could be quit amusing, if not so tragic in reality; or, by the way, if I wasn't a character in the theatrics of his mind—"No celly, that isn't a pink elf in a dress, speaking French," and if I'm needing some entertainment, "as anyone can see, its more of a yellow hue. Now, for the love of all thats good and just, can I get a courtesy flush!"

I had known my celly for years before a moment of serendipity brought us into a domiciliary relations. I was doing my morning rounds, checking in on those who are typically aster for that time of day, when I discovered him teetering precariously, on the top bunk. As innocuous as this may

sound, this isn't the case. You see, he also suffers from periodic epileptic convulsions and nerve damage, all of which affords him a bottom bunk clearance. Aside from the obvious imperilment, his deposing from the bottom bunk, coupled with his challenges, left me questioning the character of his celly.

Just the night before, I had a conversation with the occupant sharing my living space, about carines in heat and Christianity. After confering about "Bitch" this and that, and the resultant 'laying on of hands', a mutual conclusion was reached; thus, a bed in my cell became vacant, and in an act of obvious self promoting aggrandizement (ask any officer) my challenged compatriot was coronated ruler of the bottom bunk terrain in my quarters.

Now, if I could just get him to flush that damn toilet.

The satirical depiction of the events surrounding my moving in my celly, are products of my institutionalized perceptions and paradigms. The 20-plus years in the prison industry, where the system views convict actions—no matter how altruistic in intent— as manipulation perpetrated towards some nefarious eventuality. In governing

So, convicts are relegated to a sub-human refuse as a life position, as opposed to people—the overwhelming majority, coming from dysfunctional origins—whose made poor choices.

A lot of convicts do continue to do life at others expense; a product of evolved dysfunction, doing life the only way they know how, building up self-hate while using and victimizing along the way. People though, mostly of which would choose to do life functionally. Conditioning, from the formative years up, is hard to overcome, particularly when you survive in an institutional setting where the sub-human standing seeps in, to reinforce the worthlessness, add to the self-hate, and eventually leave you feeling lifeless. This is the society I live in.

Foraging for life. Looking for opportunities to demonstrate that I am better than what the system says. Looking for those serendipitous moments of self-governing, in which I can feel as if I am alive, and the system is just an abstract thought.

Nicholas Leon
141815