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#1 * THE BEGINNING OF THE REST OF MY LIFE *

After waking up and opening my eyes to my present surroundings, it didn't take much evaluation on my part to realize that my last two days of events were more than just a bad dream. My setting consisted of nothing more than 1 solitary confinement room, 1 sink, 1 toilet, 1 six inch square window in the door, 1 thick blanket, and 1 really distraught individual. (Otherwise known as: Me.)

The stimulation of my now awake brain was cause for a bombardment of questions, but not the everyday morning questions of a free man. (ex. : What should I have for breakfast? Should I just call in sick today? And of course, I wonder if that chick pulled a caper \1/ on me last night?) No. These were the questions of a newly labeled criminal. (ex. : What have I done? Is anybody in my family ever going to speak to me again? And of course, Is there any toilet paper in here?)

A number of hours later, a couple of officers arrived for the purpose of relocating me to more of a long-term location on one of the upper floors. It's not like I had been doing any complaining about my current location. In all honesty, I'm actually a bit of a loner, and could see myself doing just fine without the need of moving in with the crowd. However, for some reason I really didn't see where I had much say-so in the matter. Therefore, throughout the process of patting me down and putting a set of handcuffs on me, the necessity for me to say anything didn't seem to exist.

The two officers escorted me down to the end of the hallway, where we approached and entered an elevator. The elevator ride took us from a floor with hallways of concrete block to a floor with hallways which resembled that of an aquarium. The bottom four feet of the walls were still concrete block, but the remaining distance to the ceiling was Lexan. \2/

Okay, I need you to work with me here. I mean after all, I'm not an author, I'm just a writer. I know, you're probably wondering what the difference is between the two. Well, my own personal opinion on how to tell the difference is rather simple. Just take a look at the cover of a book. If the person is a writer, then the TITLE of the book will be portrayed with the largest letters. If the person is an author, then their NAME will be portrayed with the largest letters. Makes sense, huh?

At any rate, I've been stumped for two days on this little section of my writing. I'm only talking about a thirty second span of time in the story, where the officers escort me from the elevator to the door of my cellblock. Yet, I can't get the words to flow just right, to include everything I want to get across to you. And. . . well . . . I really want you to be able to envision the scene. It will also help you to better understand a couple of future events.

This is what we're going to do. Let's just pretend we're sitting at a table, talking in a carefree manner that allows me to get past this next 30 seconds of my life. I'll even include anything you have to say. With that said, let's begin.

* FOOTNOTES *

1. A slang term for when a guy brings some chick home from a bar to . . . Well, you know, enjoy each others company. Then, after he wakes up, he finds that not only is SHE gone, but also all the money he had in his wallet.

2. A trademark used for polycarbonate. \3/

3. Any of a class of thermoplastics characterized by high-impact strength, light weight, flexibility, and used as shatter-resistant substitutes for glass. (Throughout my years of being in prison, I have always heard guys refer to this substance as "Plexiglas". However, that's not what it is. Probably the best thing to call them would be thermoplastic windows, but I refuse to write all of that each time I want to make mention of them. So, from now on, anytime I use the word window, just always remember that I have never been to a prison that had regular GLASS windows.)

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#2 * THE BEGINNING OF THE REST OF MY LIFE (cont.) *

Me : So we stepped out of the elevator, walked about ten to fifteen feet down the hall, and that was when the solid wall on my right began to simulate that of an aquarium. That was the cellblock they were going to put me in, but the door was at the other end. So during the remainder of my walk down the hall, I got a good look at what I was heading for. Everything clear so far ?

YOU : Yeah.

ME : Okay, good. Now this is the layout of the place : Along the windows was a day room \1/ that was 50 feet across and 30 feet deep. It consisted of a television and telephone against the front windows. Also, there were a few square tables scattered about the center with stools on each side, all of which were bolted to the floor. Then there . . .

YOU : Excuse me.

ME : What ?

YOU : Um, I was just wondering. How did you measure that big of a room so fast ?

ME : I didn't measure it right then. I measured it a few days later by counting the 12" x 12" floor tiles each direction.

YOU : I take it you didn't have much to do in there.

ME : No, I didn't. Anything else ?

YOU : Nope.

ME : Now where was I ? Oh, yeah. Then there were four 6 man cells along the back side of the day room, and a single-man shower in each of the 30 foot side walls across from each other. Does that give you a good idea of the layout of the place ?

YOU : Yeah. I can pretty much comprehend it all.

ME : Okay, great. Now, with everything I've shared with you, you have the ability to calculate:

- 1) This place holds 24 prisoners.
- 2) There is one sink and one toilet for every six guys.
- 3) There is one shower for every twelve guys. And. . .
- 4) There is only one phone and one television for all 24 guys.

* FOOTNOTES *

1. A room designed for reading, writing, and other forms of recreation.

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#3 * THE BEGINNING OF THE REST OF MY LIFE (cont.) *

(Back to my story)

After reaching the door to my cellblock, one of the officers removed my handcuffs as another officer in the control room pushed a button that opened the door. Then, without even introducing me to my new neighbors, he motioned for me to go in. I was immediately greeted by about half a dozen guys, one of whom was holding a business card advertising a well known lawyer.

GUYS : Hey, man. How ya doin' ? We been seein' ya on the news.

ME : (Not believing the hardy welcome I had just received. Perhaps the process of introducing me wasn't necessary after all.)

GUYS : Look, man. This is the guy you want to call. (I'm handed the business card.) That guy will get you out. He's really good.

ME : Uh. . . Yeah. . . Okay. . . Thanks.

A quick scout through the bars revealed to me that there were only two available bunks, neither of which gave the impression of a homey abode. I would like to be able to say that I evaluated the situation, and chose the bunk that was best suited for my well-being. However, I'm not going to throw out a bunch of bull\$#!+ here to try and make myself look like I knew what I was into, because I didn't. You've got to understand, I was among a whole different group of individuals, the type of guys I wouldn't even have hired to work for me. As I would learn later, the customary procedure of a guy being brought in was:

- 1.) Him noticing a few faces he was familiar with from out on the streets.
- 2.) Him getting comfortable with some old friends. And. . .
- 3.) Him bragging to his buddies about what he was arrested for.

The first few hours consisted of not much more than sitting on my bunk, strolling around the day room, and having a few conversations -- none of which I started -- with my new neighbors. Considering my new address, I was relieved that nobody had tried to give me a hard time. . . (Let me rephrase that.) Nobody had given me any kind of problems. Oh ! And I even got to meet a RAT. \1/ Of course, he didn't come right out and say that. He said his name was. . . Well, I suppose to be polite, I should use an alias instead of his real name. So I'll just call him John. \2/ Extremely nice guy, I'll have to admit. He seemed so concerned for my well-being, and was ready to listen to everything I had to say regarding my recent felony. It was nice to know that I had found somebody that I could be open with and trust. Unfortunately, for some strange reason, he was moved within a couple of days. I believe it was to some section called. .

. How did that go ? Protective Custody ? I wouldn't find out what all that meant until I met with my appointed attorney, some time later.

* FOOTNOTES *

1. A snitch, informer, nark, tattletale. . . A prisoner who tries to obtain information regarding the reason for which you are arrested, so as to use it as leverage towards lowering his own sentence.

2. Actually, his real name was Howard Norton.