

Too High on the Mountain

Truth is oftentimes stranger than fiction. The events described herein are real; they actually happened. The names, however, have been changed to protect the innocent.

The room where they slept was inescapably oppressive. The ceiling was twelve feet high, but felt like half that. Dirty and dingy with its unkempt white paint and unfinished concrete floor, it had the feel of a recycled abandoned warehouse. It was about the size of a basketball court, perhaps a little longer, but not quite as wide. Bad Billy and Champ (as they liked to be called) once described it as half greenhouse and half kennel; kennel, not because it housed dogs, but because of the eighty bunk cubicles that filled the room - Bad Billy and Champ shared this room with seventy-eight others; society's outcasts, their shunned and their unwanted. Humans were kenned here, not dogs. No dogs were allowed; at least, not the four legged kind - and greenhouse because the two opposing side walls each contained an even thousand window panes. The front wall was all iron bars; the back, fronted by two double-wide urinals, six toilets, and four sinks that looked like watering troughs, was white-painted brickwork. The most prominent outside feature, was viewed through the massive greenhouse windows was razorwire, razorwire, and more razorwire. The weight of despair was palpable.

This scene is more typical than anyone will ever admit. It was late in the evening, following the 10:30 p.m. count - Bad Billy and Champ were both night owls, sleeping all day and doing...whatever it was that they did all night. Most of the inmates were in their bunks, but few were sleeping. The guards knew what was going on - maybe not on this particular night, but they knew the routine well enough - but pretended they did not. Hell, many of the guards, even now, facilitate it.

Telling the story, George says, "I got up to use the restroom. I looked over from where I was standing at the urinals and these two were sitting on the toilets smoking K-2.

What made this night unusual, if this is such a common scene?

"Well, while I was washing my hands at the sink I heard a noise behind me. I looked back over my shoulder and seen Billy slumped over. He had retched, and was now shaking

violently. Champ, who was understandably short of wits himself, was trying to keep Billy from falling off the toilet; he was losing the battle."

Was anyone else trying to help? What were you doing at this point?

"Most of the inmates, myself included, are hesitant to get involved in these situations, so nobody else was doing anything yet. I continued to observe from the sink, but then Billy started puking...again...then he went rigid, stiff as a board; then all hell broke loose. True chaos enveloped the scene. That's when the doctor showed up."

Oh, someone called for medical help?

"No. No. Not at all. This particular doctor was another inmate, Sam, who just happened to have been a doctor in life, before he was sent to prison."

Was the doctor, Sam, able to help?

"With the help of several others, Sam was able to drag Billy to an empty bunk where he would not attract too much attention. Knowing then that Billy would be reasonably well out of sight, Sam was able to make sure he was breathing somewhat normally. He also made sure that Billy was in a position that would prevent him from choking if he started throwing up. Billy remained as stiff as a board, but did not appear to be in any immediate danger. Sam agreed to keep an eye on him for a while, just in case."

A little while later, Sam said, "Let's get this crazy retard back into his own bunk before the guard realizes that he is out of place."

Again, it took several people to get him moved, but the move was accomplished quickly, and the rest of the night was uneventful, well, nearly uneventful. Billy did manage to spoil himself and his bedding before morning.

The next day, Sam was scolding Billy, saying, "You have got to stop smoking that stuff. You can't handle it. You're going to end up causing all of us a lot of trouble, and probably killing yourself in the process."

Billy looked at Sam like he was crazy, and said, "What? Why? What happened?"

Billy had no memory of the events of the night before. Were it not for his soiled clothes and bedding there would have been no evidence of anything being amiss. But this was not the first time this had happened.

Sam explained to Billy about what had happened, but seeing that he was not getting through to him, he told him, "The next time this happens and I have to play nursemaid to you I am going to roll you over and have my way with you while you are out and unable to protest or resist. At least I will get something for saving your butt."

Sam, it seems, was homosexual.

Billy looked at Sam, outraged, and said, "That's messed up, dude. That's really messed up!"

Sam replied smugly, "Exactly."

The event did repeat itself at a later date, but lucky for Bad Billy, Sam was no longer housed in the dorm.