

Saturday 6:07 PM

It's pretty easy to get tired of prison life. It's pretty difficult to find any reprieve from it too. Often, the best you can hope for is time in your bunk. It's the closest thing to privacy you can get. There's an unspoken rule that says a man's bunk is his own private universe, you don't go there without being invited. Of course, there is the issue that 3 feet away is another bunk with another man in his own private universe as well. Sometimes these universes collide but, for the most part, they respect each other's borders. This is what we're stuck with, so we make the best of it.

Tonight, after 2 years in prison, I was feeling pretty tired of prison life and just wanted to relax in my own bunk (or universe). As I turned down the hall of my unit and headed for the bays, I saw about 15 men gathered in front of the showers. Some were flailing their arms about and raising their voices, while others were shaking their heads in exasperation and outrage. I haven't seen the men so worked up since we were all told we had to be moved to solitary confinement because covid had entered the prison camp. As I walked toward the men, I wondered what could be so upsetting, what brought about all this chaos.

Once close enough, I realized there were two separate arguments going on at once and they were both about poop. Apparently, someone pooped in the second to last shower and left the turd there in all its lonesome glory. The men's minds were in an uproar of anger and fear, understandably so. We live in a dorm with 100 other men and this can be chaotic, so we must implement some sense of order to make life bearable in here. Normally, showering is a very ordered process in prison. You bring your shower supplies, step in, pull shut the mostly clear shower curtain, remove your clothing, always keep your shower shoes on, turn the knob and hot water comes out.

That's it.

No surprises.

So a poop in the shower is certainly an element of chaos in our otherwise ordered lives here in Federal prison. The shower room is explored territory, we all know what to expect in there. Insert a turd and it changes the whole terrain, it becomes unexplored territory, it becomes chaos.

One of the two arguments is about who actually left the chaotic turd in the second to last shower. Some of the men argue over who left the shower room last, while others argue over who they think is "the nastiest motherfucka' in here". The other argument is between men

who seem to be slightly more advanced in their thought process. They are arguing over what to actually do about the chaotic turd sitting in the second to last shower. Some say, "Sweep it into a dustpan and throw it outside", while others say, "Cover it with a newspaper and stomp it down the drain."

The argument gets more and more intense as each man claims his idea is better than the previous man's. At that moment, one question runs through my mind, "Do the judges who sentence us have any idea that this is what goes on in Federal Prison?"

Just as quickly as the argument escalates into a high-risk situation, it seems the men reach a consensus on how to deal with the poop that is resting lazily in the second to last shower. It appears to be a 4 step process. I can't help but find it oddly fascinating that my life has amounted to this. To sitting in Federal Prison, listening to men fight over a turd for 45 minutes.

I sit back and watch the men get to work implementing their plan:

Step 1: Find the orderly and have him get every cleaning compound he can get his hands on and pour some of each one on the turd.

Step 2: Turn on the shower as hot as possible and allow the water to run over the turd as it shrinks in size.

Step 3: Be sure to return every 10 minutes to reapply the cleaning compounds until the turd is completely dissolved.

Step 4: Tell every other inmate not to use that shower for one week.

By 10 PM the turd is fully disintegrated and order is restored to the unit, just in time for count. The guards walk by tallying up the inmates and they have no idea of the chaos that was lurking in the shower a few hours ago. With count cleared, the men settle into their bunks for the night. Things seem quieter than normal tonight. As the men lay silently steering at the ceiling, I'm sure they're wondering, "Who pooped in the second to last shower?"

Sweet dreams guys...