

****The day this post goes live (March 15th,2022), I will be leaving prison and heading for a halfway house in CT. I will continue to maintain this blog, offering stories, insights, and information from my prison experience. As well as the new journey I'm embarking on now. Being my last day in prison, I thought it was about time to share a story about my first day in prison. Enjoy part 1.*

It didn't start off so good. I doubt it ever does. I was in a small room not much bigger than a bathroom. A stranger stood a few feet away from me, I was naked, he was staring at me. I've done this once before, so I knew what was coming next.

"Pull back your upper and lower lip, bend your ears down, run your fingers through your hair."

I did as the man said.

"Turn around, squat..."

You know the protocol.

Looking back on it now, I wonder if this was worse for me or him. This is something he does routinely and will continue to as long as he keeps his job as a prison guard. He's had this experience many more times than I ever will. We both did what we could do to act as if all this was normal. But if either of us took a moment to think about it, we would have easily concluded that this is not normal, this is not what life was meant to consist of for either of us.

"Now get dressed!" the guard barked at me.

The pants he gave me were at least five times too big around my waist. Another guard arrived and asked my shoe size. "Eight and a half," I told him.

"All I got is nine," he said.

"I'll take whatever you give me," I answered.

The first guard was quick to respond, "That's a good attitude to have."

The second guard chimed in eagerly, "That's right, you better take what we give you!"

With that, they both walked away after locking me in the small room. I sat on a bench against the wall and did my best to meditate. I was completely unaware of time and had no idea how long it took for them to come back. It felt like forever.

As they escorted me down the hallway, I held my pants up around my waist, or else they would have fallen off. I was led into an office where a lazy man read off a ton of rules in a voice that implied he couldn't care any less if I was getting everything he said - I wasn't. It was all so overwhelming.

"This place is not like you see in the movies. You're not gonna get raped or stabbed," the lazy man said.

Coming to a minimum-security prison I already understood this, but his apathetic tone offered no reassurance.

"Now sign here," he said, pointing to a piece of paper, "This says I told you everything you need to know."

After listening to him, I had more questions than answers, but I signed the paper that said he prepared me for several years of prison life in less than two minutes. He then directed me to a bench in the prison hallway.

"Wait here until medical comes for you; they're understaffed today, it might take hours."

I sat on the bench as inmates walked back and forth past me. They all seemed curious and eyed me with interest. Eventually, some men stopped and asked me redundant questions like, "Are you new?" or "Is it your first day?"

As a new guy, you obviously stand out. You're wearing oversized clothes, cheap blue or orange slip-on shoes and if none of that gives it away, the look of overwhelm or confusion on your face certainly will.

One guy sat down next to me and began asking more in-depth questions.

"What kind of drug addiction program were you in?" and "What was it like?"

I explained I was mandated to take a program after I was arrested for drug charges, but I did not use drugs myself. He went on to explain all the drugs he used and sold throughout his entire life. Once he found out I was from CT, he became even more interested in me.

“Do you know a man with the last name that starts with the letters M-A-O, he made jewelry, I sold drugs to him.”

I had to confess that I did not know this “M-A-O, jewelry, drug” guy.

“Oh...if you knew him, you would know him. He buys drugs...” he went on aimlessly talking. I caught the names of various drugs as he listed them off. He couldn't stop rambling about nonsense and all the drugs he dealt with. This guy wouldn't shut up. I wanted to ask him to stop talking, I had enough on my mind considering it was my first day in Federal prison. But as a new guy, I didn't feel comfortable being rude. So I sat there, listening to him go on endlessly in my ear. He was quite possibly the most annoying person I ever met. I did my best to ignore him and my aggravation. Thankfully, another inmate came along with a guard who pointed me into a room across from the bench. I got up and left the annoying inmate to himself.

Inside the room were a bunch of uniforms, blankets, sheets, boots, toiletry supplies, and more stuff all behind locked cage doors. The guard unlocked the doors and the inmate began filling a large mesh laundry bag with supplies from the shelves, which he seemed to be grabbing at random.

“How long will you be here?” the guard questioned enthusiastically.

“I got just under five years,” I replied.

“What gets a guy just under five years?” the guard quickly asked.

“Marijuana,” I answered.

With a big smirk on his face, the guard laughed out the words, “FUCKING FEDS!”

I wasn't quite sure what to make of this.

He continued on for a few minutes, cursing the feds. Then he began laughing about how “crazy” he was. Much like the inmate from the bench, he began to list off to me all the psych meds he was on while the other inmate laughed.

I stood there thinking to myself, “Man, even the guards just want to talk about drugs here.”

The inmate handed me a pillow and a heavy overflowing mesh laundry bag. It had no handles, which made it difficult to carry, especially considering I had to use one hand to

hold up my oversized pants.

I sat back down on the bench before medical finally arrived several hours later. They asked an array of questions, drew a lot of blood, did a TB test, and drew even more blood. They drew so much blood. Then they told me to come back tomorrow because they needed to draw even more blood. I had to wonder if they had some kind of scheme to sell it to a blood bank and pocket the money for themselves.

Once medical was done with their bloodletting ceremony, a guard informed me I was assigned to "Unit 2, Range 6, Cube 47, Upper Bunk." I had no idea what any of this meant. I looked at the guard slightly unsure of what to do with this new information.

"Go there now!" He ordered.

The minimum security prison consisted of four buildings scattered around the compound. The admin building, which I was currently in. It housed the prison chow hall, library, barbershop, commissary, visiting room, and "the bubble" (a place where guards sat all day, staring into their phones, sleeping, or sneaking drinks of alcohol). The other three buildings, Unit 1, Unit 2, and RDAP consisted of inmate housing. Apparently, I was to find my own way to to my new living arrangements...