

CELLIE

There's nothing normal about adjusting to this existence we now lead. If you're lucky, you're able to find someone comfortable; one of mutual respect and interests, whose habits can be tolerated in such close quarters. Life is never easy in a two man cell. We all eventually have trouble with a cellie.

Wally was different. Sort of an old hippie like me. Only he grew up in a different town. We'd both fell into the trap of drugs and the criminal lifestyle that goes with the culture. Now, about the only vice either of us indulges in regularly, is coffee and cigarettes. We've got similar tastes in books and music. So alot of our time is spent reading and jamming to the oldies station.

There's plenty of dope in prison. These days, it's getting harder to find plain old fashioned weed or tobacco. These young-uns like their synthetics: Fentanyl, Suboxin, K-2. I suppose it's alot easier to smuggle in, and a hell-uv-alot harder for the dogs to smell it.

I usually wake up early to piss. I try to be as quiet as I can while I fumble around in the dark looking for the lighter. I roll me a smoke and notice Wally just laying there staring at the ceiling. "Hey bro, You got that lighter?" Motherfucker aint blinking or nothing. He wont even answer me. "WALLY! You okay man?" Then I reach out to nudge him and get his attention. I jerk my hand back as if

cl'd been shocked by a jolt of electricity. His skin is as cold as the concrete floor.

I flick on the light, immediately going into panic mode. His pants are wet and there's a trail of coagulated foam running out of his mouth, down the side of his face. His skin is encrusted in the dry salt of tears and sweat. For a split second, I drift off in my mind, wondering how long I've been sleeping under a dead man. Then I snap back to reality and start flushing every bit of contraband in our cell. I feel a tinge of guilt about my selfish thoughts. However, truth is, they won't write a dead man a disciplinary case. Shit! I'll be lucky if they don't try to charge me with the old guy's murder.

Count hasn't even cleared. They've yet to roll the doors for that first out of the day. I'm hollering for somebody to get the guards, and I'm pissing a lot of people off. People scream back at me to "shut the fuck up!" Then it gets strangely quiet after I tell them that "Wally is DEAD! Get the fuckin' law up here NOW!" Next thing you know, all hell breaks loose. It's complete pandemonium as people slam lockers and bang on the bars with cups.

About a mile away, a herd of deer are munching on the fresh new grass in the stubble of a hay field. It's barely light enough to see. I'm angry with myself. Here I am, all spiralling

away in my head, because I feel some kind of way about my day getting ruined. Poor old Wally is never going to get to see another sunrise again.

The doors open and I go out to lean against the wall next to the windows. A sargeant tells me to turn around so she can cuff me. Once we get away from the other guards and staff, she tells me, "look... you're probably okay in all this. You're not in any trouble. It's procedure. I just gotta do my job ya know."

I only had to be in seg a couple of days. They searched my stuff and asked a bunch of questions. Turns out Wally had been dolubling up on the nic's tenk and fentanyl patches. Both arms and legs had fresh patches. Plus the marks on his skin suggested he'd been at this for quite some time.

They asked me if I thought he did it intentionally. I said I didn't know. We'd talked about damn near everything these past few months, but suicide was never mentioned. Wally was a lifer. Even if he did see death as his only shot at release, that is strictly between him and his creator. Our demons are extremely personal matters. Lord only knows, I got plenty enough of my own. There's simply some things folks don't talk about in here.

submitted by Brian Fuller