

The Good officer

There is a plague in prisons, one of a biblical magnitude. From the long landings to the perimeter wall. They appear in many forms. Some slither through the corridors serpentine. Their forked tongues venomously spitting out negative I.E.Ps for the smallest of misdemeanors. Others less discreet, obviously bumble down the landings tripping up stairs. Their shirts barely tucked in. Moist sweating profusely even on the coldest of days. The "Gobs" "Skews" "Jinglers" known by many a worse name too crude to mention. Officially known as prison officers. An often genderless creature seemingly void of emotion.

A perception often sadly recipitated by them about us. A reched mess, fallarn in week old kit. Endless faces with endless issues. A relationship built on a screwed power balance. They have it all, we have none. However this isn't always true. Not long ago fleetingly yet dignitly, I witnessed an event. One that illustrated the true balance.

Only a few minutes into precious association, there was a fight. Due to the outburst of violence. All prisoners were ordered back to their cells. That's when it happened we refused. That's when I saw it. The look of confident indifference that an officer possessor was wiped away in a second. In its place a look of fear. Faced with forty or so angry prisoners. The true realisation that they were outnumbered, powerless.

After a panick, The pushing of an alarm, and a short scuffle. We were back in our cells. In a split second the embers of pure mutiny, doused and drowned in a flood of reality and officers.

A truly delicate ballance it really is that exists in this world behind concrete and barbed wire. A ballance kept at an even keel, by that of another breed of officer. The Good Officer.

For different prisoners there are many kinds of good officer. Officers that show favouritism, turning a blind eye to criminal activity. The new officer who tries to be your friend easily taken advantage of and useless in conflict. There's the officer who follow procedure, and every rule to the letter. reliable unlocking your door. Giving little empathy however. Not giving the slightest care to a prisoners plight. Just waiting till its time to clock off. Inevitably all of these examples end up causing for instability.

They are a rare breed but they do exist. The truly good officer. The kind of officer that shows humanity and compassion. They will understand why a previously polite prisoners behaviour might change due to outside factors. They will occasionally give you an inch a yard if needs be. In turn they will be given the same back. If dinner is delayed or exercise cancelled. There will not be an uproar. Trust is built up, and there is an understanding that the officer would have done his or her best. They are nobodys fool. Treat everybody equally. Friendly but nothing gets past them. Will exert their power only when is required. The truly good officer creates good prisoners. When you see them on shift you have a feeling of relief, because for at least that day. The chaos is kept in check.