

The F. I. B. Story

The residence hall at the boarding school I attended consisted of classrooms and a small cafeteria on the first floor, and then two dormitory suites on either end of the second floor (like a barbell) with the security desk, stairs, elevator and lobby in the middle, separating the two.

I lived in the West End, the freshman dorms, where the showers and the toilets were in separate rooms halfway between the dayroom and the security desk. As an American, having this arrangement was unusual for me and required some adjustment – especially after the F.I.B. Story.

The incident in question happened late one night when Mr. Hines and Mr. Everett were working the third shift at the security desk. After 10pm, the residence staff went home until breakfast, leaving us with these two men which were more babysitters than student advisors.

Mr. Hines was a huge Welshman who cast a wide, thick, and hairy silhouette as he ambled towards the dayroom with his ever-present coffee thermos in hand. By contrast Mr. Everett was elegant dandy, a tall jet-black islander with a pretty Caribbean accent, crisp upmarket clothes and a sophisticated demeanor. The two could not have been more different, but both had worked at the academy since its creation so they were widely respected as finishing school veterans.

I was taking a late shower, near bedtime to insure privacy. As a young, healthy teenager I got a bit distracted under the pulsing showerhead and ended up with shaky knees and shriveled fingers but very relaxed – perhaps TOO relaxed. I had overstayed my shower time and I was in quite a bind – and I apologize ahead of time for this explanation.

I simply couldn't control my bowels to the point where I could make it to the actual water closet next door. A few nights before I had barely survived shit free, hobbling down the hall by squeezing my knees together and literally waddling the last few steps. One would think walking like a penguin in pain would have taught me something, but no, I was a teen. And now, the die was cast – desperate times call for desperate acts in the trash bin.

Yes, I had found a bagged wastebasket and used it in THE most inappropriate way, but believe me, I had no choice. After the shame, I looked around paranoid as I got back in the shower to clean up. Collecting myself, I simply planned to revisit the crime scene in half an hour with a fresh baggy, make the exchange and rid the evidence out of the bathroom window - no crime, no time.

I dried off, grabbed my robe, and turned off the light as I left. I got back to my cot and started listening to 'Dark Side of the Moon' on my Sony Walkman and reading a MAD magazine. After a bit I got sleepy and nodded off.

I don't know if it was the baton banging against my bed or Mr. Hines yelling at my head, but I was jolted awake and upright in under two seconds. I immediately knew what had happened and what this was all about, while my bewildered bunkmates staggered around in confusion.

“Get up ‘ere you vermin”, he belched, “everybody on ‘the line’, NOW!”

‘The Line’ the Welshman spoke of was a seam on the carpet in the dayroom. We would line up on it before activities to get briefed - sometimes for pep talks but often for a scolding.

We were now in a formation to get screamed at, coming towards four in the morning. Mr. Everett, looking at us like flies on shit, was already in the dayroom with the house lights full ablaze and a small sack in his hand. A paper sack. Mr. Everett never used a paper sack, ever.

“Oh Shit”, I silently screamed in my head and ironically my bowels shifted as my stomach sank.

After Mr. Hines had aligned us, Mr. Everett stepped forward with a rehearsed sounding announcement with a dead serious yet slightly bitchy look.

“At exactly three thirty-seven this morning, Mr. Hines and I discovered a..” (and at this point he paused to contain his obvious disbelief and outrage) “a feces in a bag in the gentleman’s shower room.” The entire room erupted into stifled giggles and swallowed laughter.

Mr. Hines barked, “Easy lads!” and tapped the baton on a table. Mr. Everett then continued, searching for the right words.

“This...this F. I. B as we’ll call it, is an abomination and a disgusting smear on the image of this revered institution, furthermore the culprit blah blah blah”.

The impact of his words was a bit negated because we were all busy wondering what ‘F. I. B.’ actually stood for - we ultimately settled on **Feces In a Bag** but I zoned out of his lecture a bit.

I snapped back to attention when Everett reached in the sack and the FIB was revealed. Mr. Everett seemed truly in pain as he, with tissue in hand, pulled out the sealed but clear baggie featuring a real dollop of my disgusting poop. The tall man held it out as far from his body as he could while Mr. Hines announced that until someone confessed, we were all to stand in the line formation without sleep, beyond breakfast if necessary.

Of course I didn’t want us the stand bolt upright the rest of the night, so here is my confession.

There was another American named Wade that was in line as well, and he did not have a good reputation. I knew that everybody thought the culprit was Wade because he had the kind of personality that really would shit in a trashcan, especially after a drink. He also was enough of an asshole that he would never admit to anything, and thus a vexing problem for all.

I, on the other hand, was never in trouble and considered a bit of a brown noser because I was so respectful to the staff. This reputation was well-earned PR but untrue in fact, I just didn’t get caught.

Back in the dayroom, Mr. Everett had disappeared with the FIB with only the odor of his cologne remaining. Mr. Hines was seated in a well-worn chair with his arms folded, glaring angrily at the line of bewildered British snots. By then, I had formulated a plan and spoke up.

“Mister Hines, can we talk, like a meeting?” I whispered.

“You lads do what ya gotta do, but you’re all staying on that line until I’ve got someone to apologize to Mr. Everett”, he explained. So, I spoke to all thirteen of us and made my case.

“Look fella’s, we all know who REALLY did this and we all know he is NEVER going to confess, right?”

As planned, everyone nodded and looked at Wade, who immediately became defensive and sputtered some retort – but I looked at him sympathetically and put out my hand as if to say, ‘hear me out’ and he refocused.

“Guys, we all wanna back to sleep, right? And I’ve got the least demerits this month and we all know the deal - so just let me take the hit this time and we can end this right now – cool?”

My friends were ecstatic, so with everyone onboard, I came forward and told Mr. Hines to “Get Mr. Everett, I’m ready.”

While he was gone everybody gushed about how grateful they were, and that I was the hero of the house for sure – extra snacks for Scott.

Except for Wade, who was dead eyed with disdain.

When the islander returned, I stepped forward in an overly ceremonial way and spoke like the valedictorian of our class.

“Mr. Hines, Mr. Everett, esteemed classmates and noted alumni, I first wish to say that in the course of human endeavors there comes a time when one must...” The big Welshman cut me off, he was having none of it - while my friends were burping laughs through their hands - save for an very angry Wade .

I couldn’t help but continue to be an asshole, after all I would be punished soon, so at least I could get a good laugh out of it.

“Mr. Everett, I wish to step forward and confess that I, indeed, did willingly, but without malice or forethought, form and deliver an FIB, a “feces in a bag” in the men’s bathroom.”

I paused for effect, “I am prepared to face your judgement and your punishment with this apology. I am truly sorry that you had to find it like that, it was just an accident and...”

And again Mr. Hines breaks in “No, no what’s this BS?” He was moving around like a confused Bigfoot then barked, “Everybody knows it weren’t YOU Pearson, who the fuck are you trying to fool?” I was gob smacked.

Twisting his arm across his own chest he pointed, explaining “We all know it’s HIM and you’re protecting him!” Of course, he was pointing to Wade. I tried in vain to regain control of the situation and reiterate that I REALLY was the culprit but my voice got lost in the melee. Mr.

Hines and Mr. Everett got into it, while Tom, Wade and I were screaming threats and insulting each other and the other roommates were taking sides.

Mr. Everett blinked the bright house lights a few times, reminding us of who was really in charge and civility returned.

He then announced that he believed my statement that it was an accident, so I only got 10 minutes of Time Out and 10 demerits - the minimum penalty. Time Out involves pondering your crime while sitting in a corner without speaking or moving - I should've gotten HOURS for this stunt – but I escaped justice and responsibility.

But in this moment Wade, who figured out I actually DID shit the shower room, involuntarily screamed “What the fuck?!” in outrage. The annoyed islander responded, “and there’s ten for you Mr. Anderson, so now you have company Mr. Pearson!”

It was the longest ten minutes of my life, but afterwards I was the hero of the West end – sort of.

A year later when I graduated, I found Mr. Hines after the ceremony. He was still as grumpy as ever, but I was cheeky enough to whisper in his ear “I really did shit in that trashcan, sorry Mister Hines.”

We locked eyes, then he took a swig from his thermos, which was definitely not coffee, and said, “At least you were being honest mate, I should apologize to you for t’inking yer was ly’in.”

And with that, all the satisfaction of being as asshole was suddenly erased, and I actually felt bad - for the first time really. Soon I found a corner in the gym, away from the crowd and evaluated my feelings. I found a chair and sat down to think about it, without speaking or moving, for exactly ten minutes.