

Fight with Evil

By: Joshua Aston

His name was Evil. He was the fourth cellie in my first month of being locked up. It was the first time I'd been locked up & was definitely going to be the last, and the process of meeting new people in this stressful environment was exhaustive. The first cellie of mine lasted a day while I went through orientation. Neither of us really slept; I suspect we didn't know or trust each other well enough. I got moved to another pod full of new & wild kids the next afternoon. The next cellie was a white boy that was full of excitement & drama. That only lasted a month before I got sent to the hole, a punishment for handling a situation wrongly. The concept of the "hole" was terrifying & I was obviously scared shitless; especially when I walked into a cell with my new cellie. He was a big white boy they all called 'Big Country.' I met him as he crawled out of the mattress. We wore only our boxers & were given no bedding when placed on the bread loaf program, but we got along well together & enjoyed each other's company for the next week. After that I met Evil.

Evil was a young tough skin head that had been doing time in lock up since he could remember. He was the same age as I was, only sixteen, but he was already scarring his body with tattoos; which would be a lifelong endeavor for most, but not him. He had some terrible art done, but what can you expect from a prison style tattoo done by youths. There was a swastika on his chest along with the words 'white power' & so much more. He wasn't a terrifying guy except for his tattoos & lower bite, he was only 20 pounds heavier than me putting him at 145 pounds.

I saw a tattoo of four lonesome dots & when I asked what they meant he said, "my-crazy-white-life!" One dot for each word. I had no doubt his life was crazy. Mine was turning out to be pretty crazy too, I thought.

In the earlier part of the months we lived together as cellies he convinced me that I wasn't a white boy unless I got the four dots. "Every white boy should have them," he said. I was white & didn't know much about the world in general, especially this one, so I succumbed to peer pressure. He broke out some ink & a needle. The ink was made from crushed up pencil lead & shampoo, & the needle was a sharpened staple attached to a pencil with string.

Evil was always reminiscing about fights he'd been in. Doing time in Adobe Mountain, another juvenile detention center, he fought every day when he wasn't in isolation. He fought everyone, including staff. A lot of times he fought simply because he was the minority racially. Because he was white he was often jumped by boys of different skin color. He'd learnt to stick with other white boys while looking out for other white kids. Those, however, that refused his help and or to click up with his band found themselves at his mercy as he beat them down until they understood they were going to suffer unless with him. It was a cruel part of him & he prided himself for it as well as being a great scrapper.

I didn't always see eye to eye on things Evil said, but I rarely voiced my opinion. I mostly just listened to his endless stories. When he wasn't talking to me he spent time yelling in the vent to the adjacent cell where two other white boys lived: Gary & Bear.

I first met Gary & Bear when I was on Bread loaf with Big Country. They had stopped by the cell front to extend their sympathies for irregular diet restriction of the "loaf." They were generous. Their life stories were similar to Evil's although they didn't turn out as skin heads nor as intense as he was. We talked about why we were locked up as adults. Bear got arrested for driving around in a stolen car, but was fortunate to be getting out in almost three months. Gary was also driving around in a stolen car, but with a friend. They were high on meth when they decided to visit a grocery store to steal some vodka. The store manager took notice & confronted him. As he did Gary pulled a just stolen serrated kitchen knife & stabbed him in the arm. "It was like stabbing salami!" He said to me.

They asked about me; and at first I was afraid to tell them the truth. These were hardcore kids. They'd convinced me I wouldn't survive unless I started acting tough. "They charged me with murder," I said reluctantly.

Then they asked me who I killed.

"They say I killed some guy." I said; thinking I could deceive them. "I don't know the guy." The last bit was just as honest as the first claim. I didn't know the murdered victim. I'd just started reading some of the police reports but I hadn't been able to finish them, they'd made me sick to my stomach. It put me in a panic to think that people thought I was capable of killing someone. And it sickened me more that it excited people.

Gary & Bear asked me more things; "what race was he?"

"He was Mexican," I answered remembering the reports & gruesome crime scene photos.

It thrilled them to hear it. Suddenly Bear was sliding commissary food under the door. At first I was surprised. Then relieved. I didn't feel so weak. I knew I could survive. Gary & Bear locked down & I shared the food with Big Country. I made friends so far & in the one place you'd expect to find none. The price of those friends came with a cost I realized later that night. As I sat on my bed I began to feel guilty about deceiving them & maybe myself. I wondered if I could survive long enough before my lies caught up with me. I threw up twice before the night was over.

Fortunately, Evil didn't bother me with too many questions about my case & I didn't have to tell any new lies. I just let him read the 300 pages of police reports & he assumed it was all true. After that I never had to worry about telling anyone anything or fitting in. I stayed quiet about it. A lot of people based their assumptions on what the newspapers said or what others talked about. I never stopped to think of the potential ramifications it might have on my case & how could I when my survival was immediate & instinctual.

Eventually, Evil & I struggled to get along, if we ever did. There was no common ground between us. At a young age & having had a deprived life I hadn't much character, but enough to know I

wasn't like Evil. With all Evil's background it was inevitable that I would be exposed. I wanted to say I'd been in plenty of fights but I came up blank with ideas on how to sell it, so I told him the truth; that I'd never been in a fight. I thought he'd laugh, instead it made him angry. Being already intimidated I began to feel unsafe.

Time progressed & we constantly argued over petty things. I didn't trust Evil & wondered if at any time I'd fall victim to his violence. So I avoided him any possible way I could. However, it was difficult when considering we spent 23 hours a day together in a 6x12 ft cell. Instead of talking to Evil I spoke with Gary in the vent; Evil did the same. I slept a lot & pretended to sleep while he was awake. Books were scarce, but they helped me keep my distance.

The point came when Bear was going home & Gary was on the look out for a new cellie. He didn't want to play the lottery & wait to see who the guards decided to chuck in with him. He told one day, while Evil was at school, that he wanted me as a cellie. He'd fight anyone who wasn't white, he said.

I was excited suddenly. Evil was getting on my nerves with all his antics & orniness. Gary & seemed to have more in common & he wasn't an idiot like Evil was. I was starting to enjoy all the in depth conversations we were having. Also I was afraid I'd get a non-white cellie after Evil went home, which could be at any time. I'd never feared another race before simply based on the color of their skin, but every white boy I'd spoken to in here was impressing it upon me how important it was to keep a weary eye on them, so I moved in with Gary. He spoke to the guards & made it happen that day.

Evil wasn't happy about it when I told him, probably because now that he had to play the lottery; but nothing made him happy. He was so angry all the time. A part of me tried to rationalize his situation. I thought he'd love the chance to fight some more, but I realized quickly that he really didn't like fighting or rather he feared losing. His tales of glorious fights were a front. Gary told him that it was for the best considering that we weren't getting along.

Gary was a good cellie. He was a year older & much bigger than myself by at least 50 lbs. He was a tough kid too, having scrapped a lot. He didn't talk much about it, but he was good at it. In the six months we were cellies he'd fought twice. Once he fought two boys at a time. No one was a challenge for him.

I learnt to play spades & other card games I'd never heard before. He'd also shared with me the details of what prison was like. Having grown up around convicted felons, he knew all about it. Friends, on the streets, who'd served time in prison wrote to him all the time. In prison everything was racially divided; race was a new concept for me, so he taught me. However, prison politics weren't a thing in juveniles, but he educated me on it all knowing that one day I'd more likely than not end up in the adult system.

Gary became a sort of big brother to me. He stuck up for me & taught me to always do the right thing. I became more confident & less intimidated by everything & everyone. Many times we snorted our medications, which seemed silly at first. I'd never seen anyone do before, but here it was the thing

to do. I'd only ever smoked weed & drank alcohol, so pills were new to me. I took a pill called welbutrin; we called it a 'wellie'. At least a tenth of the population was given welbutrin. The drug is an anti-depressant & within two weeks of being locked up the psychologist visited with me to prescribe it with no effort on my part. It was almost mandatory for him to give them to anyone in my situation; that is someone who is facing the death penalty.

Twice a day, at least, Gary & I would snort the crushed up willies up through our noses. We'd get amped up & talk endlessly. Some nights after we'd saved up a handful we would stay up 'til the sun came up while snorting a line every half hour or so. In juvy's there was no unwritten rule that said we had to stay quiet, unlike the adult system, so we yelled in the vents & out through the doors, talking to each other & keeping others awake. It was a crazy good time depending on which end you were on.

Eventually Gary & I began to have our own issues. The squabbles were petty of course. He worked out a lot & would want me to join & it bothered him when I wouldn't. When it was my time to clean the cell it bothered him that I wouldn't clean it his way or in his time. After a while with someone for so long & all the time it gets sickening. You just ant space & varity. He got annoyed when I didn't want to talk (or rather listen) to him or play card games. I'd never dealt with this before, so I struggled. We'd had more good moments than bad but it got bad several times where he raised his fists & threatened me with violence. He always felt afraid of hurting me, so backed off everytime.

One day he was complaining to Evil about me while he was out on his dayroom time. I sat on my bed listening, but also trying to read. Gary said he sometimes wants to drag me off my bed & beat me up, but said also he could never do it. Evil was all for it, but wanted to do it himself. I became a little afraid as they spoke so casually about me. Evil tried convincing Gary I needed a ass whuppin' to toughen me up. Gary agreed but he too was afraid for me. I believed he began to see himself as my big brother too. He assured me there was nothing to worry about, that I didn't have to fight. I was relieved that he still looked out after me even after our petty problems. Silently I promised to try to be better.

Evil asked if I was scared. I obviously told him no & that I had nothing to prove. He argued that it was inevitable that I would have to fight someone & itd be best it was over nothing. He wanted to prepare me, to know what to expect. What was it like to take a punch, I wondered, and why was everyone so obsessed with violence.

Gary spoke to Evil & convinced him to let it go; and again told me it would be fine, that I wouldn't have to fight.

"Fuck that!" I said as the subject was about to die.

I just wanted to survive & I agreed with Evil's logic. I will eventually have to fight & it's best I learn from him what I can. Evil was surprised.

"What?" Evil said.

"Fuck that," I repeated, "lets fight!"

He turned to Gary "I got to do it now, Gary. He called me out."

Gary turned to me. The look on his face was full of pride, but his words were: "I just got you out of having to fight him."

"I know but he's right. I know he's only doing it to help me."

Evil was now jumping up & down; realizing it was really happening. He smiled at Gary. Then he smiled back & they both laughed. It was fun & exciting for them. I jumped off my bed, crushed up some willies & Evil, Gary & I snorted them.

We agreed tomorrow after I came back from school we'd fight. Evil was supposed to "cap" his door; which would prevent it from locking where he could then slide it open. Gary told us to make sure the fight happened right in front of the cell, so he saw it all.

I didn't think about the fight all day until I came back to the pod & waited in the sally port. There was another kid I'd gone to school with that was there. He knew I was about to fight & was having trouble concealing his excitement. I was nervous; afraid of how much pain I might experience. Would he break my nose or knock me out. What if I cracked my head open on the floor. I was also afraid of getting disciplinary that would follow. I didn't like getting in trouble; it scared me to be judged & penalized. In this case the penalty was bread loaf for 14 days. Normally people would lose their visits, phone calls & commissary, but I didn't get any of those things. Still I didn't like the feeling of doing something wrong.

It was time.

The door leading to the dayroom began to open. I stood there not just with the other kid but a guard. She was very new to her job, less than a month, so we didn't know her name. It didn't matter, we all called her Harry Potter anyway on account of her pixy hair, round glasses & boyish looks. She was nice, but I was scared of her none the less. I didn't know what she'd do while we fought.

We all walked through the sliding door & that was when I caught a glimpse of Evil hiding in the shower room. He was goose-necking it to see that it was me coming in but pulled back out of sight, so the guard couldn't see him until the time was right.

I walked to my cell & stood in front of it pretending to wait for the door to open. Gary looked back at me, through the window, while trying not to smile. Suddenly, Evil stepped out of the showers. He looked like a bull dog the way he walked & tensed his whole upper body. The guard was already yelling commands at him but he wasn't listening.

I stood there waiting. I hadn't thought about what I'd do in the moment & it was evidently clear as Evil met me where I stood & raised his fists. The first punch came fast & that's when my own fists came up & out. It was instinctual; I don't know how, but it was.

That first punch hit me below the eye. It didn't hurt. In fact I didn't feel any pain in the entire fight. We exchanged blows, all of them aimed at the head. Evil swung wide & I stayed narrow throwing

jabs with my left & right. As we pivoted I saw Harry Potter pointing her canister of mace at me & trying to spray me with it! I was shocked. I wasn't the aggressor here. She shouted at us to stop fighting as she tried to mace me. And fortunately for me she wasn't sure how to work it & I never got sprayed.

Evil thought I'd had enough as he lowered his fists, but I reacted instinctively again & jabbed him one last time in the face. I didn't mean to do it, it just happened. I feared he'd feel the need to get the last punch or get up set thinking I sucker punched him, but instead he walked back to the shower.

Outside the pod came a rush of a dozen guards. It was a heart pounding moment & I didn't know what to do, so I moved to my cell & stood in front of it again.

During the fight everyone who could watch watched & shouted their excitement. Those who could see kicked at their cell doors. And when the guards moved in quickly it got louder. The guards shouted at me to get down on the ground, but as I began to obey they pushed me up against the cell front. My face was pressed against my neighbor's window as I was handcuffed behind my back.

While the guards assessed the situation & discussed plans about what to do with me my neighbors & Gary were calling out my name & congratulating me. They told me I got the better of Evil. My neighbors kissed the opposite side of the window where my face was. It was strange I supposed but they were excited.

The guards ushered me out of the pod & in front of the main control. I stood there in the hallway wondering what my fate was. Kids who usually fought didn't end up on bread loaf, they simply got sent to the hole, but I was already in the hold. Isolation was a possibility but that was always after a consistent & constant amount of trouble caused. More than likely I'd lose my phone, visitation & commissary privilege, which didn't matter. What did bother me is this infraction was going on my record. **To the guys I had to live with I wanted to be seen as someone who was tough & didn't have anything to lose but to the outside world, my family & friends, I didn't want them to believe I was a monster when I wasn't. What's done is done I suppose.**

Several minutes later a nurse conducted a well-fare check & said I was "okay". I returned to my cell. Gary was happy. He recalled all the events as he saw them play out. He even told me that he had thought I would p.c.-up before the fight. I was happy to put away any doubts that I wasn't tough enough to survive; not just his doubts but mine as well. For never having been in a fight, I did good, Gary told me. I had fought Evil & won.

I slept good that night.