

Kicking Ass for a Living

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Course: English 101

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Assignment: Narrative

I was once a fearful, timid person. I was a sheep. I was quiet and kept to myself. Because of that, I am not sure what compelled me to work for a correctional center. To this day, the answer eludes me. One explanation may be the adrenaline rush I felt during peculiar events. Such events happened plentifully at Spur County Correctional Center. The emotions of an adrenaline rush burst in me like a firework, and made me feel like another person.

My first encounter with that emotion is stained vividly in my mind. It happened a week before Christmas nine years ago. All the inmates were glum since they would not be home with their families for the holidays. I cannot say I was happy to be there either. At nineteen, at that happy time of year, who would want to walk those cold, stone, monochromatic halls? The gray, chipped cement floors were waxed and shined like the moonlight on a lake. The once white walls were now dingy yellow from years of cigarette smoke and grime. The only source of light came from dull yellow bulbs every few feet in the center of the halls. I should not exclude that my co-worker for my station was Officer Lee. I would have preferred going to the dentist than to have worked with him. He was overweight, lazy, and arrogant. He did not want to do any work unless he was able to beat up an inmate. This left me with all the paperwork and most of the cell checks. He always looked for a fight and sometimes caused them. He was a caveman eager for the chance to show how strong and dominant he was.

On one of his rounds in solitary confinement, Officer Lee got what he had hoped for. He presumptuously boasted on his holiday plans, and an inmate threw feces on him. He called on the radio, "Code one in C-block!" This meant an officer needed assistance. The first person to arrive was Lieutenant Stalwart. He looked like Mr. Clean. He was tall, muscular, and even had the same shiny bald head. He was all brawn, but also must have had enough brains as he had made it to the position of lieutenant.

We briefed Lieutenant Stalwart on what had happened. He scolded Officer Lee for his actions, but we still had to calm the inmate. Lieutenant Stalwart stepped to the cell to talk with the inmate. He gave the inmate a chance to calm down and come out of the cell willingly. The inmate made his choice as he reached through the bars and tried to grab the lieutenant and yelled, "Come and get me asshole!" Lieutenant Stalwart gathered all the officers that had arrived. We briefed on what we had to do. Our first steps were to get our padded body suits on for protection. Next, we prepared the shackles, handcuffs, and shields. We then designated who would be in charge of them. My duty was to handle the shackles. Officer Lee was in charge of the handcuffs. Lieutenant Stalwart and another brawny officer took the shield positions. While we got ready, the inmate had prepared as well. He stripped down to his boxers and greased himself with shampoo. It was time to enter the cell. Lieutenant Stalwart called to central control, "Lock open C-block six."

The metal doors screeched and rattled as they slid open. The inmate began to charge. Lieutenant Stalwart and the other shield officer returned charge. They looked like football players charging at each other once the football was thrown into play. There was a loud thud as the inmate struck the wall. The body lubrication had failed and he was pinned between the wall and the shields. He continued to kick and scream as loudly as he could. I entered the cell next

and Officer Lee followed with the handcuffs. Since the shield officers had him pinned against the wall, I had access to shackle his feet, but it was not as easy as I thought. He kicked me to the floor. I was down long enough for a small bit of shock to set in. I had never been in a fight before. My heart raced and I began to perspire excessively. My eyes were on fire as I had gotten shampoo in them when I had wiped sweat from my face. My arms and legs trembled, but I had to get up and try again. I was finally able to get the shackles on him. I then changed position to help hold him while the handcuffs were put on. Once we restrained him, all the officers stepped in to carry him away. He fought and spit at us the entire way to the medical detention cell, where he spent the rest of the night. Finally, we had to write our statements and reports.

The power-hungry officers continually bragged about their involvement. I sat quietly in the office to allow my nerves to settle. My fears of being injured or worse subsided, and I came back to my senses. That particular incident was over as quickly as it began. It seems that ten minutes of exhilaration is what held my interest at that job. A meek, timid person walked into that cell and never came out. The mouse I once was is now a ghost. Situations at the correctional center remained traumatic, but having this change of persona made them much easier to handle.

Ms. Cutrer's Comments: The assignment for this essay was that each student was to write about an event that contributed to making each of them the person that he is today. Amanda was able to vividly and exactly capture this single, graphic incident which has remained indelibly printed in her mind.