

PART TWO

Vancouver Pretrial

Doing Time with Picard and Data

*The trouble with our times is that the future is not
what it used to be.
- Paul Valery*

GOING from Oakalla to Pretrial was like going from the prehistoric caves of Spain to the Starship Enterprise. Pretrial is the highest-security institution in North America, and the most high-tech prison in the world. It is definitely the wave of the future for criminal justice, in philosophy, structure, and methodology. And location. The downtown districts of large cities are unusual places for prisons.

When it opened in August of 1983, Vancouver Pretrial Services Centre was the *nouvelle vague* in corrections design: not a skyscraper, but very CN Tower in spirit. It occupies one city block - across the street from the Vancouver police headquarters and across the lane from the provincial court building - and is connected by tunnel to both.

In theory, Pretrial was to replace the West Wing of Oakie, which had been the British Columbia super-max remand wing. But after the construction of Pretrial, it became evident that, given the demographics and crime rate, Pretrial was not going to replace the West. After I transferred to Pretrial, the ministry had to reopen the West Wing. For a time, Pretrial was the remand centre for Vancouver District (with some flexibility - for extremely heavy-duty, high-profile

criminals) and Oakalla max remand was for prisoners who had been taken into custody outside Vancouver jurisdiction.

Even getting to work at Pretrial was tough. There is no place to park at the jail, so line screws went in forty-five minutes early to drive around one of the roughest parts of Vancouver to find a space. Pay parking was prohibitive for line staff; only brass and administrative staff could afford it.

At Pretrial, you were taking your life in your hands if you went to work in uniform. Burnaby, where Oakalla was located, was full of guards. Those who lived near enough walked to work in full uniform without the slightest worry of being stared at or hassled. Everybody went to work in uniform at Oakalla. A place which has no staff toilets is not likely to have a staff change-room.

I tried going to work at Pretrial once on the bus in uniform. I almost got gang-bashed by a herd of drunks who I'm sure didn't even know one another. One guard got pelted by beer bottles just walking the few blocks from his car to the joint in uniform. You had to come in wearing civvies, and carry in your uniform, then change in the locker-room. Needless to say there was no overtime paid for the parking and changing time.

At low-rise Oakalla, only a maximum of five tiers high and spread out over spacious grounds, you could see great distances and spectacular views, which had a soothing effect on both staff and inmates. At Pretrial, there is only north and south. All views from the tiny windows facing south revealed only the street below. It was forbidden - and irresistible - to shout out the windows. It would buy a prisoner fifteen days in the hole. And on the north, only certain rooms, mostly on the northwest side, gave you a view of the harbour and the north-shore massif. At Oakalla, except for the noise the cons made and the televisions, when on, it was quiet; at Pretrial, it was like trying to sleep in a flophouse with the window open - sirens, drunks, traffic, and endless white noise. And deafening unit doors which fired like weapons.

Vancouver Pretrial discipline and training for guards was a grotesque caricature of military law. Those who came there from military service could not believe the measures being instituted, jackboots style.

The attitude of Pretrial management was that everyone should behave the same way, have his hair cut the same way (only Mountie moustaches, no beards), every uniform should be identical to every other uniform except for insignia of rank and the custom designs of the Most High.

The net effect at Pretrial was to grind the individuality out of everyone. And the harder the brass ground, the more we tried to find ways to rebel against it. But in that high-tech atmosphere, Big Brother was watching from every direction, inside and outside the building.

At Pretrial, management went crazy about the nonsense of "conduct unbecoming an officer." which had never been a part of corrections practice. One guy was suspended because he was on tranquillizers prescribed by one doctor, fired the doctor, then got another prescription from the new doctor; he was accused by the institution of playing the multiple-prescription game and suspended. He appealed and came out on the good side of the inquiry and came back to work just long enough to tell them to shove it. Another had his family fall apart, attempted suicide, and was suspended. Another (whose brother was a cop) blew close to the limit on the breathalyzer, was relieved of his licence for twenty-four hours, and was suspended. If you drank and frequented the Police Athletic Club, you had to watch your ass. If you had one too many - even if you took a cab home - it got back to the brass and you were looking at a suspension. Even your life off duty was made the business of the prison.

There was no room for the safety valve of humour at Pretrial - no pranks or put-ons or the armour of gallows wit for self-defence. Management attempted to clean up the language at Pretrial, too. It was unbecoming for an officer to swear, for example - except, of course, for the brass.

All the things that humanized that funky place called Oakalla and made it tolerable were summarily banned at the holy vertical jail known as Pretrial.

Everyone had to be capable of functioning on a tactical team. Everyone trained. An hour on afternoon shifts was devoted to physical training. Most of that time was spent with a partner wearing pads; you beat the shit out of him or her with a truncheon while an "animal trainer"

supervised. Or you practised karate moves: the horse stance, the T-stance, this stance, that stance.

When the trainer commanded "Assume the horse stance" to those of us circled around him, I began free-form dancing around like an idiot with serious palsy.

"What are you doing, Mr. Yates?"

"The horse dance, sir."

"Stance! I said `stance'!"

"Oh, certainly, sir. I misunderstood you." The horse stance requires you face your non-existent assailant frontally, tighten your buttocks, and "stick your balls forward." Needless to say, I never used this manoeuvre under any circumstance. Nor, I think, did the female guards.

I did this to the poor gung-ho bastard time after time. The rest of the team would collapse on the floor laughing. But he couldn't nail me with a disciplinary write-up simply because I hadn't heard him clearly. I was never written up or reprimanded at Pretrial; I planned my moves carefully.

This jail tried to substitute physical structure, formidability, and show of force for the traditional Oakie-style human contract between line staff and inmates. The idea was to make all staff as robotic and interchangeable at as many jobs as possible. But some areas, like classification and records, are very intricate. Sentence management in general - which is the business of dealing with warrants, habeas corpus, Crown counsels, and lawyers - requires years to learn. Yet, at Pretrial, they threw green people into these jobs and chewed their asses off when they screwed up.

Backfires were frequent. For example, a rookie guard screwed up the papers of a low-level hit-man in for murder and on his way to court. They fell into the hands of a rookie sheriff at the courthouse. The sheriff told the hit-man he was released. The con walked straight out the door without even seeing the inside of the courtroom and was gone for several months before they apprehended him and dragged him back to Pretrial. God knows how many hits he carried out in the interim.

And it was idiocy to throw just anyone into a position like Central Control, where you have people coming on shift, people going off shift, people going to court, people returning from court, bays to be opened for vehicles, doors all over the building being accessed, elevators rising and descending with doors which must be opened only at secure moments, whole units going off to library, gym, rec room, cons going off to visits, and two radio frequencies (internal and radio contact with vehicles outside) to monitor. All this was the responsibility of two control officers who tried to run the whole show with parallel equipment and a huge bank of closed-circuit monitors. Rookies and long-time staff have been known to emerge from a shift in Central Control as gibbering idiots. Some people are more predisposed for "multi-tasking" than others. Some who are lousy in Control and lousy at the pressures of segregation are, at the same time, extremely good living-unit officers.

At Oakalla each line officer learned the ways of the jail by spending about a year and a half under the watchful eye of a seasoned old-time guard who knew every brick in the building by its first name; you were chewed out every time you made a bad move in handling the cons. Pretrial hired young people straight off the street - often students from the Simon Fraser University criminology department, since the emphasis at Pretrial was on hiring people with degrees - and put them in classroom training, then shoved them on a unit with the idea that they were in charge, that they were gods. And some of them tried to play god - with unfortunate results.

Those of us who transferred from Oakalla to Pretrial for all formal purposes went along with what we were told to do. But once on the living unit with the door closed, we carried on with the staff-inmate contract that was pure Oakalla. Ironically, those screws who were ex-Oakie generally ran Pretrial. It never seemed to dawn on management that if the ex-Oakie staff were getting into the least amount of trouble and assuming the greatest responsibility, the Oakie experience must not have been all bad.

Some of us approached the brass with the proposal that rookie staff rotate into Oakie for six months. It would give Oakie staff a look at their

destiny, aside from the obvious benefits for rookies. It went nowhere. Many of the experienced staff transferred back to Oakalla after a few months.

There are times when one's duty is very clear. That is perhaps the chief attraction of maximum security, especially maximum-security remand institutions like Pretrial. Very little of the rational, sentient human being is required. There is little to no nuance in the code of behaviour for either prisoner or guard. A prisoner gets up when told. He cleans his room when told. He showers when told. He goes to bed when told. He grinds out a cigarette on the wall-to-wall carpeting and he can expect fifteen days in the digger.

It's not much different for the guards. You train and train until decision-making is ground out of you. You shine your shoes until they look like deep-brown obsidian or you get written up. Your insignia will appear exactly a certain number of inches up your sleeve or you will be written up.

At Vancouver Pretrial, Fridays were clean-up days. The operations director came around with a senior correctional officer, or with the program director accompanied by an S.C.O., and each cell on the unit was checked.

I called these men, along with the district director, the Most High. You never knew the exact time that they would show on the living unit. Should one of the cons have to use the skitter in his room shortly before they arrived, and should he shed a single pubic hair while doing so, and should this hair be discovered, the unit officer would be written up.

This is a typical Friday inspection: Each con is standing by his door. The Most High enter at the firing of the unit door (goddamn, I hated those ear-splitting electronic locks). They first goose-step over to the shower area and side-step to examine each stall. There is mumbling and whispering. The S.C.O. is writing on the clipboard. They then proceed to each cell and finally the kitchen area.

While the Most High converse about finding the odd waste in the bowl of a shiner, the lowly unit officer can stroll ahead to the next room (in which case the Most High will likely change their pattern of room-

checking), or head out the door to the staff station and have a smoke.

If they find the curly hair they're looking for, the officer's ass is grass. But he won't find out until much later, and not from the Most High. Via the chain of command he will learn of his disfavour and the likelihood of his being written up from the tower principal officer, who will do the chew. If he is in sufficient disfavour, the tower P.O. will tell him what time he is to report to the office of the S.C.O., accompanied by a shop steward should he wish one; a formal verbal or written reprimand is in the offing.

He is, of course, expected to penalize his unit, in the event of a less-than-perfect inspection, with restriction of TV or recreational privileges. But there isn't a hell of a lot you can do to penalize a whole unit. You can't charge them all and send them to segregation. The standard response to too much heat from the line staff is, "Whadaya gonna do, put us in jail?"

Unless they absolutely despise the unit officer, the cons are very co-operative about the Friday inspections. It isn't hard to convince them of the value of cleaning the place thoroughly at least once a week to prevent scabies, lice, and other conditions more dire even than the heartbreak of psoriasis.

It is the job of the unit officer to "keep a lid" on his unit. This is sometimes very difficult when the cons know that heavy heat is coming down on the unit officer and he is not likely to be in a decent mood.

This was often the case on Fridays. One never knew at what time the Most High would be around. There were twelve units to be checked for the inevitable pubic hair. One never knew in what order they would be checked. If an ex-Oakalla buddy happened to be in Central Control, one could call down and ask him to "give you six" (prison lingo for "watch your ass, here comes trouble"). But one could also presume that the Most High would come up with some tactic which would thwart the warning.

Inasmuch as the dreaded door might pop any time between 0800 and 1500 regardless how hard the prisoners had worked cleaning up the

unit, it is reasonable to assume that of between thirteen and twenty men on the unit, someone is going to have to use his shitter during the wait. Here comes the *pindejo* (the curly). Unless the officer is prepared to stand in the centre of the living unit and dash into the cells and check each time a prisoner enters one - and some people have blond or white pubic hair, which in the wrong light is impossible to see - the Most High will find that hair.

Word went around that the Most High on Friday reached into their gaunchies and ripped out ten or twelve pubic hairs and planted them.

Personally, I don't believe this. I think rather that the S.C.O. on duty was required to subtract the proper number of curlies from his pelt of less rank. This would be much more in keeping with military law gone berserk at Pretrial.

One became accustomed to fearful Fridays. In this atmosphere of childish rigidity, line-staff morale plummeted.

Then came the invention of the Magical Mystery Tour. On any day, at any time of morning or afternoon shift, the door could go and *surprise!* The Pubic Patrol.

The prison guards I have known and worked with for what has become a considerable chunk of my life are a fairly resourceful, intelligent, and imaginative lot. If they screwed up excessively, they were promoted at the earliest opportunity (a principle which holds true in all bureaucracies and large private-sector structures) to keep them from starting trouble that might result in media black-eyes for the institution. But never, never have I met one so resourceful that he could keep a group of men busy for eight hours scrubbing floors and skitter bowls, wiping ashtrays, floors of showers, and counter tops.

Morale went through the basement floor and the volume of linestaff turnover became astronomical. We often went off shift emotionally exhausted because of rage. But I never went off shift fatigued because of more intelligent activity than the human brain was designed to handle.

Condition Yellow

*You can check out any time you like,
But you can never leave.*

- The Eagles

HAD.BEEN at Pretrial no more than two weeks when I experienced my first Condition Yellow (C.Y), "a life-threatening situation to which all unit officers must respond." There had been many Condition Yellow drills - each treated as though genuine. Not even Central Control knew a dry-run C.Y from an "officer-down" C.Y

There was no such thing as a Condition Yellow at Oakalla, because there was no need for such a directive. If there was a scuffle, a howl for "staff up!" over the ancient intercom was enough to produce back-up.

The Condition Yellow phenomenon, like so many other procedures, is just another paramilitary affectation in an institution that has deluded itself into believing it is the ultimate in corrections professionalism and had, in fact, taken the Keystone Screws to altitudes undreamt of even in Hollywood.

But at Pretrial, when the voice booms over the PA. system at ninety decibels "Condition Yellow, Six North," procedure demands that you run to your unit door and wait for it to fire. Then you dash like a dog on a kitchen floor around the corner to the elevator lobby. These are centrally controlled elevator doors, so the two unit officers spin like tops waiting for the doors to open. Central Control then takes the troops to the appropriate landing and they proceed north or south. Unless Control

has become a two-screw hysterical sharkfrenzy (which happens disconcertingly often), the door leading to the problem is open.

At the time of one Condition Yellow I was working in records, which is located on the lowest floor. I was in my mid-forties, my partner, Bentall, in his mid-fifties; he was lean and long of leg but a very heavy smoker. We flew back from our computer terminals and almost damaged one another trying to get through the narrows of the doorway. I let Bentall lead, and lead he did, until we got to the records doorway, where the rookie with the flat - this was a manual door, one of the few, for reasons unknown - was so nervous that he couldn't get the flat into the huge slit of the lock. There were six or eight of us pushing to get through and screaming at the rookie, which only made things worse. Bentall finally wrenched the flat away from him, unlocked the door, and the herd of turtles went bouncing off the walls up the narrow hallway, which was carpeted. Control had us on camera and cracked the door to the elevator lobby at just the right moment. The first man banged the door back and plunged through, only to hit the waxed tile floor of the lobby and fall on his ass. Several guards right behind fell over him. Bentall and I managed to keep our footing.

The Condition Yellow was in visits. This meant we had to get through the door to the administrative area. The S.C.O. was cowering inside the doorframe of his office (wise man) wincing; he could well imagine the number of staff who would half-kill themselves by the time we got to visits and end up breaking the Workers' Compensation bank.

We hurtled through a right turn past the offices of all three of the Most High: the district director, the operations director, and the program director. These were empty. With less adrenalin up, this might have tipped us that something was up. I can remember rounding that turn with my body-weight ahead of my legs' ability or inclination to stay under it, into a lean to keep from hitting the steel doorjamb, and seeing S.C.O. Murdoch's face as he closed his eyes to save himself from witnessing a disaster.

I made it.

Ahead was the maze of the open business area, now an obstacle course. The secretaries in the steno pool and the accounting flunkies didn't know where to hide. One was spun aside into a divider, which came down with a crash on an expensive electric typewriter. One officer made it no farther than this and was off for several weeks with a nasty ankle and various contusions.

Having cleared this forest of booby traps, we slammed against one another again as we went through the door to the telephone operator's lair (she had backed her chair into a protective corner between wall and switchboard console) and headed up the four stairs to the door to visits.

When we entered, there stood the Trinity who comprised the Most High. And one very small Japanese man with very thick glasses. All were staring at their watches, timing us. The operations director had a body alarm (the one assigned to visits) in his hand. He had activated it to show the foreign journalist what a Condition Yellow at the highest-security institution in North America looked like. There were no visitors other than the Japanese journalist.

The room was filling with brown uniforms. My brain noted that my forearm hurt like hell from smashing against something. I looked at my partner. He was ashen and his knees were wagging. Even the youngsters looked bagged.

The Great One looked up from his watch and almost smiled. The Japanese journalist was beaming.

"Forty-three seconds. Not bad. Return to your units." was all the Great One said.

The first Condition Yellow occurred before they had even opened the place formally, while we still had some empty units. Management decided to have a dry run of a riot/hostage-taking on one of the empty units.

The prison, modelled on those in San Diego and Chicago, is designed to prohibit any more than twenty inmates getting together for purposes of mischief at any one time. But if they do, it is not easy to hear them. At Oakalla, anything shouted loudly and clearly on Five

Left could be heard clearly on One Right. But at Pretrial, a unit on the south could be trashing itself and not be heard across the landing on the northern unit.

In this mock riot were a melange of veterans from Oakalla, rookies, and cops (V P D.) from the cop-shop across the street.

Essentially, it was an exercise for the Vancouver city bulls' SWAT team. They came along to supply concussion grenades, tear-gas, and other toys (the tear-gas wasn't used because it was determined it might be detrimental to the decor), and to gather a supply of laughter to last for many years to come. The wise Oakies were not at all interested in putting on greens and playing inmate, although weighed against losing points with the big bosses, some of them finally did.

We knew that this was an industrial-strength re-enactment of the infamous Zimbardo experiment, in which a university professor had divided his class in half between prisoners and guards, to tremendously violent effect; nevertheless, Professor Zimbardo published a paper based on the experiment that has become famous among ratrunner scientists. We had been forced to study the project when we trained at the University of British Columbia's Justice Institute.

Volunteers took the roles of inmates. Many rookies (read here: those hired straight in from the street with no peace-officer experience, although one had an M.A. in something) volunteered for the inmate dress-up. Rookies will volunteer for anything. They made a wonderful meat squad. If any were lost, the experienced line staff would still be intact to run the new jail. The greenhorns had no idea what was coming at them.

Normally, in a hostage-taking situation (whether cop lock-up, courthouse, or prison), the officers who run the place do not participate in the negotiation.

A team is brought in from city police, RCMP, or Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit. If a hostage-taking occurred across the street at the police lock-up, then the Pretrial negotiating team would be employed.

Each team has designated negotiators who have been to school to learn the techniques.

First, a command post is set up (in this case, downstairs) and then,

if the negotiations go on for long, they bring in the high-tech stuff. For example, you can string fibre-optics up through the plumbing, emerging at a toilet, to determine positions of perpetrators and hostages and watch everything go on. And, if need be, sound equipment can be put in place to hear everything.

On this exercise, they made perfunctory contact with the hostage unit. Then took their ERT (Early Response Team, SWAT; there are now many names for these teams which include the negotiators, the rigging experts, the sharpshooters, and others) and split them into those who rappelled from the roof, those who came up the fire-stairs, and those who went in the main door at the order of the leader at the command post located downstairs. They had pistols, M-16s, concussion grenades, the works.

First they lobbed in the concussion grenades, then the team entered with M-16s blazing. They sprayed every cell, even the showers. Had there been real hostages and real bullets, nothing would have been left alive.

But lose some they did. One went off to the hospital with both eardrums shattered; he had tried to chuck a concussion grenade back whence it came. Chuck Foote, who drove him to the hospital, told me the injured guard went into shock on the way to Emergency and he had thought he was going to lose him. Not a lucky guy. It's likely several others lost some hearing with that many grenades and pop-guns going off in close quarters.

The Most High read the event as a great triumph; this is the light in which they read all their scripts. They had proved unequivocally that, first, only small riots could occur in Vancouver Pretrial Services Centre, and, second, once they had their own SWAT teams trained, such riots could be suppressed with acceptable loss-margins of personnel.

Management's nightmares were later realized when they had a real riot on one of units. The rioters were not many, but they found to their ecstasy that the fire-hose boxes were located inside the units (another great Pretrial design enigma). After the guards shattered the glass of the door to the unit (we don't know why they did this, inasmuch as they could see that the cons had the hose and it was

charged with water), the inmates blew guards all over the elevator lobby and kept them from entering the unit with the strong stream of the hose.

No one on shift knew how to turn off the water. By the time the proper authority (who guarded such knowledge with his life and his job) was contacted, the water had seeped down through several units on the south part of the building, even into the administrative area where it ruined equipment, carpet, wallboard - the usual stuff that water damage does. Having seen the damage of several riots, I would guess that this little one cost about as much to patch up as a minor riot in one of the wings at Oakie - calculating the difference in capitalization costs between an aging dungeon and hi-techy Pretrial.

"Condition Yellow, Six South!"

South, South? What the hell is Six South? I well knew what Six North was: the seg unit. But Six South? The duty roster didn't even list anyone for security on Six South. It was the general assumption that the hospital unit was still under construction there, not yet staffed. The all-units alert didn't figure.

The south part of the building had some architectural peculiarities which later caused consternation. For example, although the doors of the hospital were accessed like all the other doors in the prison (they could also be keyed with a flat in case of emergency), they opened inward instead of outward. Doors that open inward are not a great idea in a prison, especially when there is anything movable inside which can be wedged against the door to block it. No one could explain this.

I was on Five North at the time, and so it was fairly easy for me to dash out to the elevator lobby, jump in, and be one of the first to respond. Bill Corelli, a friend of mine, was right there with me. Control had already opened Six South East, the main door to the hospital. In we went, leaving the door open for others to follow. We could hear conversation coming from room 6S07.

When we looked in the door of 6S07 we could see Sally Hengest, a nurse, cowering in the southeast corner, and a halfbreed kid I was

fond of and had had in the West Wing of Oakie several times, name of George Charbonneau, in the middle of the north wall holding a chair above his head. He screamed when he saw us: "If you come in here, I'll kill her and I'll kill you!" and so forth - all the things you might expect of someone hysterical and terrified and resolute.

I knew this kid. He wasn't very big. He didn't work out with the yard apes. He had an acne-ravaged complexion and thick glasses. He was quiet and liked to read. He frequently engaged me in talks about Melville, Hemingway, and Faulkner. He had been in federal and had a couple of years toward an English major. He most certainly was not violent.

I looked at Bill and switched places with him so that I'd be closest to Charbonneau. No shields had arrived, no sticks, but Sally didn't look like she could hold out much longer. Bill and I made eye contact and nodded. He knew I wanted to be closest to Charbonneau because I knew him. We walked straight into the room and over to Sally Hengest.

There was blood all over Charbonneau's part of the room. Hackles of blood flew out above his collar like feathers on a fighting cock. Charbonneau kept moving side to side and waving the chair - not to threaten us but to cause himself to bleed faster.

As we passed him I said, "George, hang on, just stay where you are, I'll come back and whatever the problem is I'll help you deal with it. You got nothin' against the nurse and you sure as hell got nothin' against me."

He tried to muster a threatening expression as we crossed the room, as though he were going to swing on us. He didn't. Corelli and I each took Sally Hengest under an arm, and with me still between Charbonneau and the nurse, we got her out. At the door, her knees went out from under her and we carried her the rest of the way. But she gathered herself up very quickly and got busy getting equipment ready to deal with Charbonneau.

Charbonneau was still waving the chair about.

"Yates, I got nothin' against nobody, but you got to let me die. Shut the fuckin' door and let me die. I won't hurt anybody."

"Hey, hey, what's the problem? I got a selfish interest in having you

around to argue about literature.” Where was the back-up? Bill and I wondered whether we should go in Oakie-style and try to get the chair away from him. I thought he would have parted the hair of one of us.

Finally more troops arrived, and cuffs and sticks and shields (these were the pre-Mace days) and all the rest of the paraphernalia. Charbonneau stood there, chair still brandished above his head, and bled and bled.

“Yates, keep them away . . . Ah, shit . . . Man, I talked to my com-mon-law... Ah, shit... She's . . . Ah, shit . . . Just keep them away. You owe me, man. From Oakalla and from here. I never caused no trouble on the unit, man.”

One never knows just how fragile incarcerated people can be. Apparently he had talked to his girlfriend and she had Dear-Johned him by phone.

The first problem was that the moment we got Sally Hengest out, Charbonneau was smart enough to realize that the more he flailed around the quicker he'd bleed to death. This man had cut his carotid artery on one side and the jugular on the other side, and there was so much blood that we never noticed, almost until he was ready to be transported to the hospital, that he had cut his wrists as well. Whatever the woman had said to Charbonneau, it was sufficient to bring him to this.

A guard owes any inmate who doesn't disrupt his unit. Both inmate and guard know this. And from bit (remand or sentenced time) to bit, each calls in his markers as needed. The inmate needs something from personals or a special phone call. The guard needs a particularly vulnerable young inmate looked after. It is an invisible ledger, but it is real. The more institutionalized the inmate, the more often he comes to jail. The ledger fattens.

At Oakalla, inmates shaved with the old Gillette double-edged razors which had to be opened with a wrench (kept at the desk on Two Landing) to change the blade. It was a one-for-one exchange. One razor per tier. At Pretrial, to establish the new high-tech era in prisons, in the inmates' doggie-bags (government issue toiletries)

they handed out Trac-Twos and Bics. With the aid of a cigarette lighter or matches, it was very easy to get the blade out and make a weapon out of it for purposes of homicide or to cut your own throat. Or to set up booby traps for guards when they came around to frisk the unit for drugs, weapons, or other contraband. There is nothing quite like running your fingers along a ledge and having three fingers laid open to the bone by a well-planted razor-blade that has been Christ knows where. Once you get a little jail-wisdom, you do not go in and frisk without gloves on and something like a toothbrush that you can run along that ledge in order to knock things off that you're not tall enough to see before you ever, ever, ever put your hand up there.

The hospital was the last unit finished at Pretrial and nobody had spent much time figuring out how it would be manned and what the security procedures would be. It was not even being used yet. As far as anyone knew. It was reasonable to have a nurse over there working on the set-up. It was not reasonable to have a prisoner over there with no security cover. This was a suicidal con's dream come true.

The beds were all very fancy. They could crank up at the foot or at the head and they could be nicely dismantled to make a miscellany of weapons. The commons area, like the main unit, had wall-to-wall carpeting. But there was a walkway of gleaming unscuffed linoleum around it that was white beyond white and highly polished, as well as new.

By this time, everyone had arrived: the district director, the operations director, the director of program, S.C.O., tower P .O., and every guard in the tower. We had the doctor, we had the psychologist (who would have been interrupted from his usual description to the cons of his tennis game, his Italian shoes, and how much money would come into his hands should certain of his wife's relatives benevolently die), we had the psychiatrist (who also had a law degree and therefore doubled his money and doubled his fun). Everybody was stumbling over each other outside the room, but nobody was going in.

Before the helmets and shields could get through the door, Charbonneau chucked the chair and dove onto the bed, where he

correctly calculated that he could wedge himself very well. He hung onto the bars of the headboard and wound his feet through the bars of the footboard.

Although I had hunted and fished, and once even assisted with the slaughtering of a pig, and had to do with all manner of events involving death and blood, certain things came to me in this instance as though revelation. Blood just escaped from its human container is a very greasy liquid. When there is much blood, it has the consistency of hand-lotion.

Some of our largest and strongest guards were present. Some of them (mesomorphs) weighed in the vicinity of three hundred pounds and bench-pressed their own weight with ease. I can remember having Charbonneau's wrists in both my fists, attempting to hold them still, with hands over the top of my hands trying to add strength (hands bigger even than mine, and mine are big); there were hands covering his arms to the shoulder. But he was twisting his arms any way he wished, as though they were in a sleeve of ball-bearings, so lubricious was the on-flowing blood. And so plentiful.

He wagged his head from side to side as much as he could and he kicked his legs as much as he could and he used our strength against us to make his heart pump faster toward its last pump.

We soon acknowledged that, given where he was in the bed, despite that we were a veritable uniformed centipede, we simply could not restrain him with our strength or our weight, much less use other restraints. It was impossible.

Finally, someone with some common sense suggested that we attempt to get hands and feet free of headboard and footboard at once and carry him to the open area of the floor.

This was not easy, but we accomplished it. We lifted him from the bed, carried him, as he screamed in protest, past the doorframe (this took more than one try because he managed to brace himself against it) and laid him on the floor - on the very white and glistening linoleum floor.

Many things about this incident amazed me, certainly the great strength of a man as slight as Charbonneau. During the times I had him in jail, he had never seemed truly committed to anything, other

than an on-and-off relationship with this or that woman - there had been several in the time I had known him. But he was clearly committed to suicide. He was committed to his death as he had been committed to nothing in the twenty-five years of his life.

Once we had him on the white linoleum, we managed to get a pair of damnable Australian cuffs on him (Pretrial had to have a try at these newfangled cuffs, which were very difficult to get on and get off). The wounds he had inflicted on his jugular and his carotid seemed not to hurt him at all; yet, although the cuffs were on only just tight enough to restrain him, he complained of the great pain of the cuffs.

Although many of us from Oakalla had dealt with attempted suicides and successful suicides there, here in this new setting we looked to the medical staff to tell us the proper thing to do. Had we been without medical staff - as we were at every moment of crisis I can remember at Oakie - we might have been more effective and relied on our own training and common sense. The medical people simply argued among themselves. Finally it was decided - or someone simply ducked into hospital control and emerged with them - to apply some gauze pads.

It fell to me to steady his head between my knees while others restricted his torso and legs to prevent movement as much as possible, mostly with the use of weight rather than strength. We were being fairly successful. I was steadying his head with my knees and hands when the doctor handed me some pads and told me to apply direct pressure. It is a very strange feeling to have your fingers two knuckles deep in a wound, and stranger still to learn how very hot blood is inside the body.

All the time I was holding George's head, he was staring up into my eyes. Each of us looked at the other as though standing upsidedown, with eye contact the only place to look. He was pleading that I let him go. I explained that I couldn't do that for reasons of duty that he knew perfectly well, having been to jail as often as he had. This discussion and direct pressure did not stop his bleeding, nor did it stop me executing my duty to prevent his death. Amid the great confusion, someone had called an ambulance, paramedics, and the trauma team

of the Vancouver Fire Department, all of whom went into huddle after they arrived to decide who was going to do what.

This sticks with me: the incredible inkblot-like pool of blood which appeared behind George's head like a black halo, the blood very, very dark violet against the spotless, white linoleum - the darker because it adhered to the smooth surface of the floor and had more surface cohesion of its own and, therefore, was deeper than it might have been otherwise. The floor near the head was not full of droplets or splatters, just one large, dark blot that expanded in high contrast against the white linoleum, its edges very sharply defined. It began to eliminate the shape of his head with its dark hair, and I was left only with his eyes staring into mine, making the same request long after his verbal pleading and his attempts at violent motion had ceased.

He was becoming weak and somewhat faint. He was bundled up by the various uniformed people and taken off to the hospital. A door closed. We were all left standing and sitting and kneeling more or less in the positions that we had been doing what we had been doing in. We were looking blankly at one another and then at ourselves with our three or four different kinds of medical and security uniforms ruined by the copious blood. We were suddenly very aware of the blood as a thing in itself rather than something that related to an emergency, and then as wet memory turning cold, but sufficient to replay again and again in our minds what had just transpired.

I don't know how long we stood there and milled around not saying very much because the actions had said all there was to be said. It was the end of morning shift and there was nothing much to do except wash, change clothes, and go home. As the prison began to put itself back together, someone of high rank, entirely arbitrarily, ordered that we throw away the uniforms that we had been wearing and not attempt to have them dry-cleaned.

Someone asked, "Even the shoes?"

"Affirmative."

I stood at the sink and rinsed off the blood. I rinsed it off my hands, my face; it had splattered on my glasses, in my hair, in my mouth. I had never liked the taste of my own blood when I had cut myself and always marvelled a little at people who sucked on their fingers when they cut

them. In the urgency of the situation, I don't believe the taste of the blood registered that day.

It seemed to take a long time to get dressed. Before I could get out of the men's locker-room, someone came in and said we had to report to the boardroom before going home. Someone else pointed out that the overtime was rolling. I finished getting rid of the blood except for the bits around the cuticle and under the nails and went to the boardroom. Not everyone who had participated was there; doubtless some had got away early.

S.C.O. Percy Deverell was there conducting what was later to be called a "debriefing." He spoke about what a wonderful job we had done. The incident was discussed and critiqued, but I have no idea whether anyone "unloaded" anything - and "unloading" is the point of debriefing. (If a debriefing is a buffer against trauma, I don't know that it works.)

As the debriefing proceeded, the prison received a call from Vancouver General Hospital, where Charbonneau had been transported. One doctor and most of the medical staff were still in the building. The hospital informed us of good news. We had saved his life with perhaps a two-minute margin. None of us was so ingenuous as to receive this news as due to anything but brute luck.

The hospital informed us of bad news. The prisoner had hepatitis B. But the hospital did not tell us what to do in view of this fact.

People began to group into little clumps and argue about appropriate action. One clump decided to go off to Vancouver General Hospital and speak to experts there. Another chose to go to St. Paul's Hospital. By this time, I was convinced that no one had any idea what to do about anything.

Our own staff physician said, "Oh, I don't think there's anything to worry about, unless you have a break in the skin; I'm going home and just take a shower." This did not make a whole lot of sense to me, knowing that blood had gone up my nose and into my mouth. If one had a tiny cut, say a paper cut, who would know if there was a break in the skin?

I went to the telephone and called my own doctor. I was sufficiently rude to the receptionist, who told me he was busy with a

patient, to get her to put him on the phone. I explained to him about the confusion, and he said that the rest of them could do whatever they wanted to do, but I was to do as follows: "Bring your ass out here to Burnaby. I'm going to stab it with a syringe full of gamma globulin." I did. And he did. Then he sent me home.

I stepped under the shower at about 1800 hours. When I came out of the shower I lay across the bed, intending only a nap. I didn't wake until time for work the next morning.

When I arrived, the first thing I heard was that Charbonneau, in the middle of the night, with two maximum guards present, long after the stitches, transfusions, and sedation had all been administered, managed to get his hands sufficiently free to tear at the stitches and set himself haemorrhaging again. This too was thwarted.

The last time I heard of him he had gone off to a federal institution. He never returned to Vancouver Pretrial, but by then he was already convicted. Working in records, I could have pulled him up on the computer at any time and learned his whereabouts. I never did. Something in me was determined that it was none of my business where he had been sent or whether his Corrections Services in number had been cancelled or reassigned because he was dead.

A couple of months later, when I was visiting a friend in Toronto, we were speaking of a mutual friend who had attempted suicide repeatedly when I pulled this story out of the deck and told it for the first time. When I began, I found I was no longer sitting, but pacing up and down the living room, swallowing frequently and pausing because of nausea, and my eyes kept welling up.

By this time I had been in corrections long enough that I had seen many people as bloody as this person was. I had seen them shot. I had seen them dead lying on bunks and floors in pools of their own blood. I had helped take them down from having ripped themselves to shreds on concertina wire during escape attempts. I'd never had any problem (with the possible exception of my first encounter with a stringer) discussing these events with other guards or nurses or whomever. But I had never talked about Charbonneau.

This was probably the first time in my experience in corrections that I realized that certain occurrences go to places where the intellect

cannot pry them out, clean them, and neutralize them. When I trained at the Justice Institute, I not only read *Adaptation Syndrome* by Hans Selye (the world's leading - and, incidentally, Canadian -authority on critical incident stress), I also followed up with more reading from the bibliography. And my years of dealing with emergencies had proved to me that I was mentally prepared (and had been commended for it) for thinking clearly in high-pressure situations and walling off things deleterious to my mental health. And yet, here, three thousand miles from where it had happened, simply giving the barest details of the anecdote, I was losing control of myself. And it had nothing to do with my fondness for this particular inmate. One tends to be fonder of inmates who do not cause trouble than of those who do.

Charbonneau was not special. He was familiar. He was not a problem. I had seen others with whom I had probably more in common take their lives. I had known plenty of writers with whom I had much in common attempt and commit suicide.

I'm not sure to this day why I was unable to control myself in telling that story.

Or looked at another way: why I *was* able to control myself.

I did not burst into tears. I did not throw up on my friend's rug.

And I did finish telling the story.

High-Tech Fleas

The economic and technological triumphs of the past few years have not solved as many problems as we thought they would, and, in fact, have brought us new problems we did not foresee.

- Henry Ford 11

SHORTLY after Pretrial opened, the Most High of the Most High happened to step into an elevator when a rookie was doing his first hour or two of training during one of the busiest periods of the day. The poor rookie-in-training in Control managed to get the door of the elevator open and the Most High of the Most High entered. It happened that the experienced guard beside him, while a very good Control officer, was a piss-poor teacher and had very little patience during busy times - especially with those in training who couldn't monkey-see, monkey-do instantly and remember it forever.

The Most High of the Most High spent fifteen or twenty minutes in the elevator, pressing and pressing the button. Every now and then the kid would answer "Control." The Most High would order him to take him to this or that floor and open the door. The kid would get him to the floor, then lights would go off all over the place and he wouldn't remember to open the door.

When finally released at the Control level, the Most High of the Most High demanded access to Control, ordered the kid into the elevator and trapped him in there for an hour. The Great Presence perhaps felt better after this exercise, but it likely didn't teach the kid simple procedure: when you hit the button to move an elevator, you

keep your hand on the button; it is a physical reminder that there is someone in there and he is to be let out after you check the landing monitor to determine it is safe to do so.

A couple of incidents indicate the degree of discomfort those of us from Oakie had with the newfangled weapons and electronic security.

"Mister Yates, this is Acting Principal Officer James Larabee. We require your assistance with two gentlemen from Two North. The moment the doors was cracked, they came out like they was at Caesar's Palace and tried to go fifteen rounds. I'm bringin' them up to your loving care until Warden's Court."

"Bring the first one up."

"Comin' up."

I plunked down the phone and turned to my shift back-up in segregation, Raymond Nicholson, who was shining his shoes. It was 0700. I had just arrived, and had yet to put mine on. "Jimmy Larabee is bringing up a couple of scrappers." I checked the board. "Let's put one in seven and the other across the commons in eleven. I don't want a screaming match."

Nicholson nodded, took the flat, and popped the doors manually to check the cells, marching across the common area to the beat of a drummer only he could hear.

Per procedure, Jimmy looked in the glass of Segregation Control before radioing for Central Control to crack the door to Six North. I nodded. Then I went out with Nicholson still in Seg Control. I took custody of the con and Jimmy changed places with Nicholson to oversee the frisking and lock-up of the prisoner.

No one transfers into seg without a skin frisk. Mandatory procedure. I removed the cuffs and requested that the scrapper remove his clothing, which Mr. Nicholson would examine closely item by item.

The kid - taller than either of us and skinny - erupted into invective. "You fucking perverts. I'm not taking off my clothes. Fuck you." I was sleepy and not at all in the mood.

He looked at me and the colour of my hair. "Fuck you, you old prick. I know Tae Kwon-Do." I glanced back at Jimmy and gave him a bored look. Jimmy was expressionless, holding his P.O. clipboard in

one hand and the radio and the Seg Control body-alarm in the other. Beside him was the red phone, an emergency hotline straight from Seg Control to Central Control which had a blastingly loud and unique ring. On the wall, not two feet away, was the intercom with its prominent red button. Hit it and Central Control would answer. By radio, by body-alarm, by hotline, Mr. Larabee might launch a Condition Yellow or call for "back-up on the double."

The Segregation Control idea is not bad in that those inside it are completely safe physically. But it's very bad in that it is as soundproof as Central Control. But Central Control has an intercom between elevator lobbies and inside. Seg Control does not (a little more costshaving, I guess). The kid was dancing and working himself up and making volumes of white noise out of which all I could hear was "Tae Kwon-Do . . . Old prick... Tae Kwon-Do . . . Old prick." His shoulderlength locks were bouncing around as he danced. Finally, he grabbed a stance and started some kind of martial-arts manoeuvre. There was an arborite table nearby and four chairs. On this table we piled clothing after each article had been searched.

I pretended to turn away in disgust from the martial-arts hero, then whirled and grabbed his long hair in both hands and shot him across the arborite table, knocking it over and the four chairs to the winds. Before he could regain his feet, I grabbed his hair again and placed his Adams' apple against the hard, sharp edge of the table. Nicholson had moved off to the side to spectate, as was Nicholson's habit. "Nicholson, get the fucking shoes and pants, you asshole," I growled. Nicholson took his time because the kid was trying to kick his face off, and every time he felt Nicholson messing with his laces he yanked the foot away. Nicholson was on his hands and knees like a mustachioed terrier racing from one foot to the other. The kid was not overly muscular, but his adrenalin was off the top of the scale. He didn't seem to feel the bite of the table. Nicholson was getting nowhere with the shoes and the pants and I was tiring. If he got loose, this idiot was going to grab a chair and destroy the place -us first.

I was looking straight through the glass at Jimmy. He was watching, absolutely transfixed. I began mouthing "Back-up . . . Back-up

. . . Back-up." I could feel my grip slipping on the kid's hair and he was trying to get a solid karate punch at my nuts. He was pounding hell out of my thighs. I was getting nowhere with the attempt to have the delegate from Trinidad read my lips. I tried ESP: "Jimmy, for fuck's sake, hit the alarm and get some people in here. Pick up the fucking red phone [you didn't have to dial it, just picking it up set it off in Central Control]. Squeeze the button on the radio and tell them Condition Yellow." Finally, Jimmy came out of his hypnotic state. I grabbed a tighter hold. Damn, I was getting the shit punched out of my body below the waist, but thankfully not the target (my right thigh and hip were black and blue for two weeks).

I couldn't believe my eyes. With all that emergency shit to hand, Jimmy was so stupefied by the electronic possibilities and dazed by the spectacle through the glass that he reached down and grabbed the *black* phone and began dialling. He listened and hung up. It was busy. This was a bright man but, under pressure, he simply could not bend his mind around the options before him. He dialled again. Then hung up again. I was losing it, and Nicholson had given up on the shoes and was standing off to the side again looking bewildered. Jimmy dialled again, and this time I could see his mouth moving.

"Condition Yellow, Six North! Condition Yellow, Six North!" Decibels leapt from operations seventy to emergency ninety. Wade was security on the opposing unit, the hospital; he was first man in the unit door. He was huge. The two of us put the wildman on the floor and sat on him until the rest of the staff arrived, at which time we manhandled his clothing off. When told to bend over and spread his cheeks, he looked around at the twenty or so screws around him and did so.

My thigh hurt like hell.

I took him by the collar and marched him into his cell. He hadn't said a word since the herd had flooded through the door. I started out the door to lock it.

He yelled, "You old prick..." and launched some kind of a round-house Bruce Lee kick at me. Not much talent, this guy. As his leg came around, I grabbed his ankle, and charley-horsed his thigh muscle hard with my right, then dumped him on his bunk on his head.

He was rubbing his thigh muscle and looking, for the first time, a little intimidated.

"Enough with the `old prick' shit. Can you dig it?"

"Yes - yessir."

I went out and locked him down. I was wiped. I went into Control and sat down to take inventory of my corporal damage. Jimmy was still standing there. I said, "Mister Larabee, kindly hold some staff back and process your other fighter. I'm gonna sit here and lick my wounds."

He did and they did. Jimmy knew exactly - afterward - what he should have done. I didn't bite his ass off for getting me hammered up. We'd worked the Old West together and he had been one of my training officers. And, very important, he was the only person in the branch who collected my books.

With both cons as quiet as the rest of the unit, we settled in for the shift. I did tell Nicholson that as a guard, he was a great used-car salesman.

No more than half an hour after I locked down the Tae Kwon-Do Kid, he was at his window and knocking on the door. I took the flat for the slot where you slide in trays and gimped over to his door and unlocked the steel flap.

"Sir?"

"It's Yates. Read the tit-tag."

"Mr. Yates, I want to apologize. I was really mad as hell but I wasn't mad at you. I had no call to take it out on you..."

"Yeah, I know. Apology accepted. You okay?"

"My leg hurts."

"Christ, I hope so. You want the nurse to have a look?"

"No, just a charley horse."

"Walk around in the cell and exercise it. It'll go away."

The kid was so well behaved (he pulled thirty days in seg for fighting and causing a Condition Yellow), I made him the segregation cleaner.

Good kid. Lousy martial artist.

Pretrial is famous for buying any kind of security toy that a salesman with snakeskin underwear and alligator shoes drags through the door and waves under the noses of the Most High.

The bane of our existence was the body-alarm, which we called a beeper. A beeper is a small - slightly larger than your average pager -battery-driven deely-bob that hangs on your belt with your keys and other crap that drags the waist of your pants down to the crack of your ass. Early in my employment at Pretrial, my beeper was inadvertently the cause of a "Condition Brown," a mishap that happened to staff on many occasions thereafter.

Each unit was assigned a beeper. When you came on shift, you picked up your beeper with your keys at Control. Before entering your unit at the beginning of a shift, you did a beeper check. If you were working Five North that day and were in the gym with your cons and happened to whack your beeper against something, the sonofabitch would go off, a light would flash in Control, "Condition Yellow, Five North" would come over at ninety decibels, and every line screw and brass in the building belted for Five North, which was empty. Usually a beeper malfunction was the result of a Condition Brown, which occurs in the latrine.

Like this:

I entered the can in my staff-station, dropped my pants (carefully, so as not to acquire trouser wrinkles and get written up), and struck Rodin's *The Thinker* pose. Suddenly, sitting there on the throne, I felt a tremor like an adolescent earthquake. Then I heard the unmistakable sound of many joint shoes pounding around the elevator lobby. And voices - but I couldn't make out a word.

I completed my mission, composed myself sartorially in the manner befitting a Vancouver Pretrial Services Centre officer (I verified this in the ample mirror) and emerged from the staff washroom. I was going to sit down and make entries in my files, but there seemed to be the sound of a political rally going on in my unit. I looked out the door. The door to my unit was open. Better check it out. There were more line staff and brass on the unit than cons. The cons were looking bewildered. The staff were maintaining paramilitary bearing while dashing in and out of every cell. I joined them to

help in the search. I turned to Larry Chambers and asked what was going on.

"Condition Yellow."

If I didn't call a Condition Yellow, who did? There was no closed-circuit TV on the unit. Or so I thought. You learn something every day. Larry asked me whose unit it was.

"Mine." By this time, I had an S.C.O. in my face.

"What's the problem here, Officer Yates?"

"Beats me. The tier's been mellow all shift." Everything had been turned topsy-turvy and the cons were cowering in corners of their rooms. The S.C.O. grabbed his radio. "Control, this is Two."

"I read you, Two."

"Can you confirm that the Condition Yellow came from Five North?"

"The light is on right in front of me."

"Roger, Two out."

"Control out." The radio protocol was very stiff at Pretrial.

With obvious disgust and impatience, the S.C.O. asked whether I had hit the body-alarm button by accident. The button is countersunk in the top of the contraption so that if you have large fingers, you have a hell of a time even finding it.

"Not a chance. Haven't had my hand near it since I put it on my belt at the top of the shift."

"If you heard the Condition Yellow and there wasn't a problem on your unit, why didn't you call Control and cancel?"

"Didn't hear it."

"Where were you?"

"As we marines say, I was in the head having a hot Charlie."

"What?"

"In the fucking shiner."

"I see. Is there any chance that the alarm got jarred against the toilet or the floor?"

"Can't rule out the possibility, sir. I'm pretty careful of it even though we were told in training that the only way it could be activated was by hitting the button itself."

"I think we just discovered otherwise," said he with a look that

said: Yates, you did it on purpose, you sonofabitch. He then ordered everyone back to his unit and scolded me for using Oakie language in the holy vertical jail.

Sometimes the damned nicad batteries of the body-alarms didn't charge properly. Sometimes they malfunctioned for reasons known to none, as happened to Officer Andy Tyabji. Poor Tyabji was doing his best to shed his image as an Oakie fuck-up. He knew there was fire *this* yo-yo tattooed on his ass. Until this incident, however, everyone at Pretrial was very impressed with his performance. Tyabji had Found It - a religious experience visited upon several Oakies. Pretrial had told Charlie Bessasson: we're going to take your best. Charlie agreed so long as they took his best *and his very worst*. Charlie may have fallen off the brew-truck and broken his leg as a line screw, but he had been around the bureaucratic block so many times as a warden that the *Neues Reich* at Pretrial knew better than to mess with him.

When the room doors to a unit are computered open, the locks turn quietly- unlike the unit entrance doors which ruin your hearing when they're unlocked - and all the doors swing open a few inches. The inhabitant comes out and pushes the door back. This is good news and bad news. This gives the officer a quick view of the contents of each room simply by walking around the unit. Also, if the unit tries to take him hostage, the guard can jump into a room and slam the locking door behind him, and hit his body-alarm. The bad news is that while the officer is off the unit, the cons can slam the door of a con they don't like with the con outside so that he has to ask the screw to crack his drum for him (he, of course, has no idea how it got slammed). Or the cons can slam the door with the target inside his room (he, of course, better not have any idea who slammed the door). An unauthorized slamming of the door can get you several days on lock-up or Warden's Court with time in segregation a distinct possibility.

A con Tyabji had known and liked from Oakie had just come on his unit. The con was baffled by the four-channel radio unit set into the wall. Tyabji went in to show him how it worked.

Bam! Some joker slammed the door of the drum with Tyabji and

the con inside. Tyabji had a key for manual locks on his belt, but they don't work from the inside. The con was terrified that he would be blamed. Tyabji was terrified of the brass. The body-alarm is to be used only in "life-threatening" situations. Tyabji and the con go way back and the situation was about as life-threatening as a summer breeze. Tyabji and the con sat on the bunk trying to figure out what to do. The other cons looked through the wire-reinforced glass and pointed and giggled. It was a good-natured prank.

What the hell, the body-alarm was the only way. The screw in the opposing unit was a rookie Tyabji had never seen before and wouldn't have the savvy to glance into Tyabji's unit. Tyabji had the con listen at the base of the door while he listened up higher, then hit the button.

Nothing. He hit it again. Nothing.

McCoy, another ex-Oakie con, showed up at the door and asked at the top of his voice what they were going to do. Tyabji told him what he was trying to do and asked McCoy to see if he could catch the attention of the rookie across the way.

The kid was nowhere to be seen.

They were stuck. If he asked one of the cons to get on the staff-phone or the intercom, it was automatic digger-time for them. They only had their con-phone - which, of course, would not access joint numbers, other units, or staff numbers.

McCoy came back. He knelt at the door. "Boss, will that key fit under the door? I'll get your ass out and nobody will know." McCoy knew the routine and exactly what was going through Tyabji's mind. His contract was good with McCoy and the con in the room. No worries there.

Tyabji and the con struggled to get the big key off the ring. The ring was heavy-duty and wouldn't pry open easily. Finally, they got it off and the key just cleared when Tyabji slid it under the door. McCoy unlocked the door and handed the key back to Tyabji. Tyabji was mad as hell and wanted to know who the joker was. McCoy gave him a knowing look. "We'll handle it." Tyabji had been around the system for more than ten years and McCoy and some of the others on the tier owed him big-time.

Then Tyabji did a very un-C.Y.A. (cover yer ass) thing. He called

Control and asked to do a beeper-check. He could hear the whine of the response unit in Control.

Control: "Works like a damn."

Tyabji: "Bullshit."

Control: "Punch it again."

He did. They said it worked fine.

Tyabji was in the staff station, which is more central in the building.

"Bullshit. The fucking thing doesn't work when you need it on the unit." He hung up without realizing he had been talking to the fink squad (those who reported faithfully and copiously to the Most High).

Within minutes the tower P .O. was in his face interrogating him. Tyabji, still not seeing the far-reaching disaster he was about to meet, told the R O. to radio Control for another beeper-check. Then Tyabji took him on the unit and into the cell and handed the P .O. the body-alarm. The P .O. tried with the same result as Tyabji. Then the P .O. tried it from the open common area nearer the centre of the building. There it worked every time. The P .O. went away saying he would report it to maintenance.

Within a half an hour, the P .O. reappeared with a replacement and told Tyabji he was to see the S.C.O. and might want a shop steward present at the audience.

There he was asked whether there had been a life-threatening incident on his unit. No. Did he understand that he would be disciplined for setting off an alarm in the absence of such an incident? (Despite that the High and Almost High could activate an alarm with impunity whenever they felt a "drill" appropriate.)

Yes.

Then why was he setting it off?

Door slammed by a con.

And how did he finally get out to call Control and ask for a beepercheck?

Little did the joker (who meant no real harm and got roundly thumped by McCoy and company for jacking a good staff around) realize he had set in motion a concatenation of events as ineluctable

as those of a Greek tragedy. They hung Tyabji's ass out to dry. Attempting to set off alarm. Total breach of key control. And on. And on. He was smart enough to take the shop steward with him, and while he managed to fend off being fired, he took a long, long suspension (corrections suspensions are always without pay, until and unless you appeal and win).

The rest of us were grateful to learn the beepers were defective. We distrusted and despised the damned things. They made it uncomfortable to sit down and we constantly feared we would set the thing off with the fold of a shirt or the side of a chair or a roll of fat. The matter was supposedly taken up in the safety committee, but it went nowhere. Over time, it was discovered that there were several places in the institution where the frequency didn't work. Some of the auxiliary rookies rented pagers and wore them to work. (The switchboard was known to report to the powers when an officer had too many private calls coming in. Now the wife or the girlfriend could page and the guard could call back.) But there were places in the building where neither pager nor beeper worked. And there were all sorts of metal things on the unit that could be dismantled to pry the door open in case the unit really wanted the guard or inmate locked inside a drum. While there were numberless false Condition Yellows (one beeper malfunctioned three times in the same day without anyone touching it), I never knew anyone to activate a beeper intentionally without reason to do so.

The whole Condition Yellow process had tremendous ramifications for staff safety. Bored prison guards will tamper with anything, as will cons, but not with the body-alarms. No one wanted the heat of having to face the wrath of the entire shift in the parking lot after work for having sent them on a very dangerous wild goose-chase. And the words "life-threatening" have very serious implications for a prison guard. The idea of a Condition Yellow, of running through an office-furniture obstacle course to respond to an emergency, is madness. If they were going to use the body-alarm system, then the jail should have been designed much differently.

Anything that modifies the sense of mental well-being of a

maximum-security inmate should be looked at closely, whether it's ventilation, food, sense of security from other inmates, whatever.

The one thing that the experienced maximum staff and the university nerds had in common was terror of these tons and tons of electronic trash. Pretrial was the Tower of Glitches. The elevators glitched. One cell-lock would glitch while the rest worked. Then the doors to the units glitched while the cell-locks worked. The temperature was always haywire because the sick software that controlled the venting seemed impervious to cure. And added to this mess was the way the security requirements had collided with architectural design. It was specified that any possible avenue of escape for prisoners be impeded with thirty-hour bar at spaces of six inches (it would take thirty hours to get through one side with a jeweler's diamond wire saw and then the saw would hit the core, which rotated and stopped saw-efficiency altogether). It was a nightmare for the architect to design around, and when it came to the venting the consequences were disastrous. In winter we had to leave the patio doors open. On certain shifts, this was a violation of security procedure, despite the fact that the patios were securely barred and later the bars were screened over to prevent anyone from below hook-shooting a weapon up to drop through the bars.

As Oakalla was an emblem of the Industrial Age, Pretrial is surely one of the Age of Infotech.

Corrections will become higher- and higher-tech. As will crime.

Jail-breakers

The thinner the ice, the more anxious is everyone to see whether it will bear.

- Josh Billings

JAIL-BREAKERS are troublemakers, not escapees. Not necessarily violent themselves, they delight in driving line staff crazy for the sheer fun of it. They like to disrupt the orderly prison routine, then sit back and watch what happens. Sometimes they are bugs (mentally-ill cons), sometimes not. Generally the jail-breakers do not do what they do with malicious intent. They can't get away with their antics in the general prison population, so they haunt the segregation units.

The greatest jail-breaker of them all was Harold Jones. Harold was a manic-depressive. To Harold, a jail was his habitat and staff and cons were his family; the outside world was completely baffling to him.

Harold was one of the few jail-breakers who, when on his medication, could re-enter the general prison population. He liked to be busy both on and off medication. Give him unlimited supplies of sugary coffee and tobacco and he would keep the living unit or segregation spotless. Every con who had done time in the province knew Harold, and if he was driving everyone crazy on a unit, the cons let the staff know before taking things into their own hands. Harold was a mascot to both staff and inmates. We had all seen him in all of his phases. Now, by the time he was in his late forties, he had spent most

of his adult life in jail and had read virtually everything he could lay his hands on. And he had as close to a photographic memory as I have ever seen.

Having spoken of his pleasanter qualities, I now offer the killer of jails in all his glory. When Harold had had enough of the street and longed for Mother Jail, he hurled a brick through a window; or went into an expensive restaurant and gorged himself, defying the waiter to make him pay for the meal; or created a public disturbance after first ascertaining that the police were near. In one case he decided that an Eastern country had offended him and did a dancing weenie-wag for the staff of the consulate when they exited the front door to go home. He knew the Criminal Code of Canada very well, and was always lucid enough to commit crimes that would get him no more than two years less a day.

Once inside and booked in, the nurse and psychiatrist checked his phase. If he was rocketing off the walls, he came straight to segregation for his own safety. As long as I or one of the other Oakies was on shift, Harold could be managed. Standard procedure was to let him bring us up to date on the horrors of the street, give him coffee, give him tobacco, give him plenty of books. Pretrial had the best library in the system and a fulltime librarian. When Harold came in, I made sure that she brought up plenty of academic stuff:

But woe unto the rookie who went by the book with Harold and refused him the extra rations of coffee, tobacco, or books. He would begin his "payback" by banging on the door and saying he needed extra toilet paper because he had diarrhoea. He would promptly plug the toilet and flush it and flush it until the water came out under the door and threatened to flood the entire unit. The rookie would get the water-chase key and turn off the water to his room.

This was only the beginning. Next came the heat/smoke alarm. Tobacco and matches can only be denied when the inmate abuses them. Before setting off the alarm, Harold would hide matches in places you could spend hours searching for and never find. You could strip-search him, change his clothes, and move him to another cell and, sure as hell, he would have matches somewhere you hadn't looked and set off the alarm again.

Remember that cracking a segregation cell always requires tight security procedures and several staff. Harold knew exactly when the jail was busy and it would be the greatest disruption to draw staff away from sending bodies off to court, the movement of meals, doctor's parade, or afternoon visits.

There were no smoke alarms at Oakie. Pretrial was a far safer institution (at least in the beginning) for the segregation inmate. But for Harold in one of his moods, it offered a veritable prankocopoeia of possibilities.

He soon discovered that the alarms could not only be set off but the alarms themselves were made of plastic and were inflammable. If you didn't get in fast enough, the alarm would be no more than a blob of black burnt plastic.

But the property damage was nothing compared to what Harold could do to the mind of the guard who dared frustrate his simple demands. Harold would lie on the floor and begin soliloquies that would include long verbatim passages of Freud, Jung, the Bible (always the King James Version), instructions from the back of Campbell's soup cans (not just the English, but *mode d'emploi* as well) and whole episodes from "The Lone Ranger" and "The Green Hornet." These would come under the door at such a volume that you could scarcely hear when an inmate in another room was yelling some request.

Vancouver has several phone-in radio stations. Often I have heard Harold reproduce an entire show. He was a great impressionist. He would do the voice of the host and all the voices of the callers - under the door. So loud that nothing could be heard. His imagination was limitless. The guard who crossed him was in for flood, fire, and mind-searing babble.

Harold had an outrageous sense of honour. After a day shift of reducing a screw who didn't know him to a mental greasespot, an experienced screw could come to work and make a contract with Harold. If a bargain was struck, Harold would cease the nonsense instantly, take great pride in cleaning up all the mess he had created, and the shift couldn't be smoother. If there was no renewal of the contract with the next shift, it all began again.

A few years back, a guard put a reporter on to Harold and he calculated that over the years, with staff costs (including those police and guards he sent over the brink with stress), Harold had cost the taxpayers more than any other inmate in B.C. history.

Usually you can come to terms with jail-breakers, or zero in on what they most want and beat them at their own game. Sometimes a whole jail full of experience is useless.

This was the case with Jerry Murphy. He was a very athletic and handsome black kid. I first met him at Oakalla where he told me he had boxed Golden Gloves, had a job in North Vancouver, and on and on - and he was in on a bum rap. But, then, almost everyone awaiting trial is innocent. After Jerry had been inside about a week people kept coming off the tier whipped to hell. Jerry would get a guard alone and snitch that this or that jerk was beating hell out of the inmates. He had us all on. We spent all our time moving out the inmates Jerry had "centred out" (tattled on) to heavy tiers, most of them protesting that they hadn't done a damned thing. This guy could have looked God straight in the eye and lied his ass off. Murphy kept this bullshit up until he was king of the tier.

Eventually, he was found out, labelled a "rat." and took a thorough thumping at yard. He promptly signed himself into protective custody. He caused trouble on the P.C. tier as well and eventually wound up in South Wing Obs where Olson and others were kept. It amounts to triple protective custody.

When he came to Pretrial we put him straight on the P.C. unit but he lasted only a couple of hours. Then it was Segregation City. The segregation unit at Pretrial was not at all to his liking. He was a grand stander and there was no audience. He was not a smoker, but he demanded tobacco and matches and received them. He promptly set his cell on fire.

Then he got into some of Harold's tricks. He stuffed his towel in the toilet and flooded the cell and half the unit. He screamed and beat on the door until finally it was necessary to put him in restraints.

Because segregation is potentially so explosive, each evening the

S.C.O. makes rounds with the nurse, interviewing each inmate. Each evening Jerry would tell horrendous tales of being beaten, and denied meals and every other version of "cruel and unusual punishment." When the S.C.O. asked to see marks where he had been beaten, Jerry could never come up with any or he would protest that his skin was dark and they simply couldn't see them. He was examined again and again by medical staff. Each evening he was advised that he could write to Inspection and Standards, the Ombudsman, and others, if he felt unjustly treated.

Jerry ate like a horse and was as healthy as one. Those of us who worked segregation got tired very early on of being accused of not feeding him. People who don't get food lose weight. Jerry was putting on weight. We demanded that the tower P .O. be present when he was handed his meal and the P .O. stood there and watched him eat. And that was the end of that nonsense.

He wrote letter after letter to Inspection and Standards, his member of Parliament, his member of the legislative assembly, and the Ombudsman. There was a blizzard of paper. And the I. and S. guys (who remembered the same stunts from Oakalla) tromped down to hear his complaints, hating the empty nonsense of it all, and interviewed every guard he pointed the finger at. He knew he was tying up a battalion of people and driving them all nuts, but that was the object of the exercise.

When the investigating authorities (who are obliged to investigate any and all complaints) made it clear that they were becoming very impatient with his unsubstantiated accusations, he shifted into another gear.

His next big play was in visits. And it was big. Segregation inmates have the same rights with regard to visits, access to telephones, mail, and other U.N.-guideline privileges, as other inmates. About fifteen minutes after Jerry had been escorted down to the visits area, we had a "Condition Yellow, Visits" on our hands. Jerry was supposedly being visited by his common-law wife and an infant. The visits area was open and packed with families and friends of inmates talking to friends and relatives across tables. Jerry had jumped up, grabbed two glass baby-bottles and smashed them against one another, showering

glass and milk all over the child, the woman, and the surrounding area. Civilians and inmates were flattened against the wall not knowing what to expect next. He shouted that if, anyone came near he would kill the baby, then he was going to kill the wife, then he was going to kill himself. Visitors and visitees were stunned. But he didn't move toward the child or the wife. The wife grabbed her baby and headed for the wall. He moved away from the table and pointed the glass toward himself. As soon as staff entered the room, he turned the broken bottles toward us. Now he was going to kill us.

Jerry was well over six feet. Bill Corelli, arguably the deadliest guard - and the least flappable I ever met in corrections - is only about five-six or five-eight. Per standard procedure, staff began to fan out so that Jerry would have to keep turning to determine who was going to make a move on him. In my peripheral vision I saw a blur. Like a lightning bolt, Corelli was airborne and nailed him with a karate kick along the left of his jaw. The bottle fell from his left hand. A ton of line screws were instantly on top of him and disarmed the other hand. He was cuffed, back in segregation, and on secure-visits-only status before he knew what had hit him. Some of the guards got glass cuts on knees and elbows, but I don't think Jerry got a scratch.

But his pointing the sharp glass at his own throat had drawn such a gasp from the crowd that it gave Jerry a whole new plan: numberless bogus suicide attempts. He ripped up sheets and sat on his bed waiting for a guard to lift the slide of his window and look in. There he would be with a hangman's noose of braided sheet around his neck, pretending to draw it tight. He would pretend to do himself in with just about anything in the cell: utensils (which were plastic), smashed cups (which were plastic).

Like Harold, Jerry was a nickel-and-dime criminal who loved jail. He may have been a psychopath, but he wasn't a manic-depressive. Jerry simply did what he did because he did it. I had become used to his being in and out of Oakalla and Pretrial like they had revolving doors. And then, Jerry wasn't gracing us with his presence any more. You get used to the periodicity with which certain inmates return. When they have been gone too long, the guards notice and begin asking whether anyone has heard anything about Harold or Jerry.

Heavier criminals get themselves croaked a good deal, but the jail- breakers seem to persist.

One day I was watching a news item about some sort of controversy regarding prisoners' rights in Quebec. Suddenly the screen was full of Jerry's face. Ah, the sincerity of the expression. Ah, the with-God-as-my-witness tone of voice. Ah, how familiar.

Mmmmmmm, poor corrections *de la belle province*. With Jerry on their hands, they wouldn't have time to check on the wars with the Aboriginals and Anglos.

AIDS

*The diseases of the present have little in common
with the diseases of the past save that we die of them.*

- Agnes Repplier

In 1985, a new prisoner at Pretrial was classified immediately to the hospital unit on Six South. He was emaciated and homosexual (and told anyone who would listen that he was). He had sores on the exposed parts of his skin. His eyes were sunken and the skin around them very dark. This description in itself gives no absolute clue. One who mainlines speed (methadone, dexadrine) has the same appearance, as do drunks who don't eat because it takes the edge off the buzz.

Still, this guy really looked sick. One day he would have an appetite and make passes at the younger, weaker hospital inmates. Then the next day he would stay in bed for most of the day and eat little or nothing.

One graveyard shift, he hit the emergency button in his room. When the nurse went in, he wasn't breathing. She administered CPR and brought him around. He was put in an ambulance and fired off to the hospital. He was diagnosed as having pneumonia with certain complications, put on intravenous antibiotics and was back in a couple of weeks.

Sheena Cornwall, the nurse who gave him mouth-to-mouth, was under thirty and had a couple of kids. On graveyard the seg officer

(me, in this case) covers both segregation and the hospital on his rounds. She expressed to me fear that she might have caught something from this guy through giving him CPR. I assumed she meant hepatitis B, but they had done blood work on him at the hospital and, while he had once had it, it was not active now. I pointed out that pneumonia is not communicable. And she was up to date on her TB inoculations.

She mentioned AIDS, but neither she nor any of the other medical people seemed to know much about it. The doctors weren't talking about it. The nurses weren't talking about it. I said there must be some kind of test for it. She said she didn't think it was available in British Columbia.

I had to see my own doctor about some routine thing and asked him about it. He brushed it off and said there was virtually no incidence of AIDS in B.C., and they would doubtless come up with a vaccination against it.

Time passed and I didn't think about it much. Then I talked to an infectious-diseases specialist with knowledge of AIDS-monitoring in B.C. He said that there was a conspiracy of silence going on in the medical community about a clear and present danger. A deadly danger. He had fought to get the test for B.C. and lost. I began to interrogate him about exposure in maximum remand. He told me that, given the exposure to addicts and homosexuals in a setting like Pretrial, we were far more at risk than people in health-care settings. In fact, there was probably no higher risk place to be in society than where I worked.

He asked whether we had one-way airways for CPR. No. Were guards at Vancouver Pretrial required to use rubber gloves, masks, or gowns when dealing with emergencies where bodily fluids were present? No.

In short, he scared the hell out of me.

I began to talk about what the specialist had said with the medical and security staff at Vancouver Pretrial. It had been all around us, but no one had put it together. The prison moccasin telegraph is international. First, we found out that guards were dying of AIDS down in the States - and not just in the San Francisco area. So? There are gay

guards, there are bisexual guards, there are guards who mainline substances. People are people.

Then another wave of information came that guards who were hard-core, holy-rollin' Christians who had never copulated with anyone except their wives were dying of AIDS. By this time, news of contaminated transfusions was rising to the surface. Maybe guards were dying because of transfusions. No, there was case after case where the guard had had no transfusion. And they had not performed CPR (at this point, no one knew whether AIDS could be transmitted by mouth or not). These cases temporarily comprised a medical mystery.

Meanwhile, the best information was coming out of Europe - especially France and Germany. One well-documented article on AIDS world-wide was calling for the establishment of AIDS *Leperkolonien* (sealed-off colonies for victims of AIDS).

Next came the information from the States that inmates who knew they had AIDS were making little darts, using a matchstick, a pin, and a piece of paper for a feather to make it fly straight - I made them as a kid. The AIDS-infected would jab themselves with the dart and then when a guard passed they would toss it at his pants-leg. Often he wouldn't feel the prick of the point until he turned a certain way and it nicked him. But a nick was enough. The mystery of the deaths of the Christian, monogamous heterosexuals was solved for the most part.

One inmate in the States was caught tossing a dart. The inmate was charged with attempted murder, and they made it stick.

The situation was getting hairy as hell. Line staff were looking all the time for anything resembling a dart or any other implement that could be used to transmit infection.

The United States instituted mandatory AIDS-testing for federal prisoners and it was left up to the individual states to do as they wish with their own institutions.

After all this, there was still no formal acknowledgement in the federal and provincial corrections systems of Canada that there was any risk of contracting AIDS - although there was plenty of ignorance and plenty of argument in the scientific community about the

nomenclature of AIDS. We began to pray that there wouldn't be so much as a con spitting in our faces - prison guards wipe a lot of spit off their faces during a career in corrections, including the brass because they preside over Director's Court and the end-users are not always happy with the service.

At first, it was fairly simple. People had AIDS or didn't. Then came the added nuance of human immunodeficiency virus and a new acronym, HIV positive or negative. As these terms came into parlance, a few of us looked them up. But you couldn't assume that the person on the same landing with you had the least idea what you were talking about.

Finally, with one incident, the lid blew on the terror contained just beneath the surface.

It was on a graveyard shift. I was making my rounds in segregation. I stopped at each room, lifted the metal slide, and shone the flashlight through the wire-reinforced glass. I needed to see flesh and breathing rhythms. Because the glass was laminated with the wire, it was very difficult to get the beam of the light to tell you very much. Also the colours of surfaces, such as skin, were distorted, partly because of the glass and partly because of the city-light pollution coming in the window of the cell.

All was more or less well on both the seg side and the hospital side, but I kept going back and raising the slide on the room of one kid. I could see flesh and I could get rhythms of breathing, but there was something wrong. The breathing was too shallow. Given the light, I couldn't make out the tone of his skin and swinging the light back and forth I could make out - intermittently- something shiny on the side of his pillow. It didn't add up. From my Oakalla days, shiny meant wet, and wet meant trouble. But I couldn't pick it up every time I swung the beam. Then I would check again for breathing. He was breathing.

If I set in motion all the procedures for cracking the cell, I was going to catch hell for a bogus call if there was nothing wrong. But "tilt" was flashing on the screen of my intuition.

Lark was the night-shift S.C.O. I called down and said I wanted to crack the cell. He asked whether I had breathing. Yes. He asked

whether I saw flesh. Yes. Then why didn't I do my rounds and shut up? Because, for one thing, I thought I was picking up flashes with the light. (Lark was ex-Oakie and the mention of the possibility of something wet in the cell on a graveyard had meaning for him.) Was I sure? No, I wasn't sure but there was only one way to find out. Okay, I was to get the nurse and he would grab back-up and come up. Any graveyard opening of a room required the night-jailer (a real S.C.O. or an "acting"), unit officer, back-up, and nurse.

The nurse had been pulling a lot of graveyards and there had been a rash of incidents. She was fried. Lark came up with radio, stick, and clipboard. With him was O'Bailey, who had a look of deep dread in his eyes. Lark ordered Control to crack the door. I stepped in and turned on the light. The kid was blue. He was breathing, but just barely. Lark stepped in, flattened himself against a wall and stared, fearing what he knew and didn't know about AIDS. There was a very unpleasant and wide stream of mucus streaming from the kid's nose and mouth. His skin was blue and he was getting more cyanotic by the minute.

I walked over to the bed and looked on the far side of the inmate's body. A large and almost full hypodermic was hanging from his left arm. Toward the needle part, blood had backed up into the cylinder, red cloudlets which wouldn't quite mix with the clear stuff. With my right hand I pulled it out of his arm. (Because of the rule for continuity of evidence, once an officer has evidence in his hand, he must hold on to it until it is placed in an evidence bag before a witness, sealed, and he signs over the seal). The inmate had obviously gotten the crank full of dope from a visit and suitcased it (stuck it up his keester); the thought of where the syringe had been did not give me joy. I was holding the evidence up and away from my body. My right hand would be tied up holding the damned thing until we went down to the S.C.O.'s office and sealed it.

The nurse hadn't moved. I asked whether she was going to take vital signs. Then I realized she couldn't move. She was simply making muted screaming sounds. Lark got on the radio to Control telling them to get paramedics, rescue, and the trauma team from the fire department.

The inmate had a towel in the room. I told Lark to grab the towel and dab the mucus away from his nose and mouth. Maybe he could breathe better.

"Take a flying fuck, Yates. I wouldn't go near that cocksucker at gunpoint."

I grabbed the towel with my left hand and tried to clear away his nose and mouth, but the discharge was thick and I didn't make much headway. I must have looked like the Statue of Liberty trying to tie her shoe with one hand.

O'Bailey didn't know what to do. O.B. (as we called him) used to work the West Wing at Oakalla with me. I've seen him flip and fly around the room like a balloon expelling air. Not now, please, not now. The nurse had forgotten to bring her medical bag. O.B. asked if she wanted the medical bag. Continuing her whimpering with her arms crossing her chest, she nodded. "Oxygen?" I asked. She nodded. O.B. was gone like a shot to the hospital unit without a clue where to look for the oxygen equipment or the doctor bag. He was back like a shot asking where they were. Lark took the nurse out in the common area, sat her in a chair, took her keys off her waist, and told O.B. to check the supply closet.

"Lark, we're gonna lose this kid." I was still dabbing ineffectively with one hand and holding the hypo with the other.

"Then he's gone." I had known Lark for years. I had seen him wade into the middle of a rescue situation and perform like a champion. A lot of cons owed their lives to the cool thinking and quick action of Lark. He was lazy, but when there was a problem, he was on top of it.

Tonight he was nuts.

I said, "Fuck the evidence." And moved to lay the syringe on the basin. Lark frowned.

"You know the drill. You let go of it and I'll write you myself."

Suddenly the room was full of the trauma team from the fire department across the street. Christ, they were bigger than guards. The honcho took one look at the syringe I was holding, then reached over and grabbed the con's hair and started slapping him. Another of the team had grabbed a couple of towels and summarily wiped away much of the mess on the con's face. I couldn't believe it when the kid

began to groan and grunt and then put his arm up to keep from getting whacked again. The trauma guy sat him on the edge of the bed and told him to take a deep breath. The kid was very groggy but did so. About that time the paramedics arrived with a gurney, put an oxygen-mask on his face, and wheeled him out.

Lark told O.B. to cover for me while I transported the evidence, then radioed for the Three Landing guard to accompany the con to the hospital and stay there for the rest of the shift.

Lark sealed the evidence in the bag and I signed it. He suggested I wash the guy's south end off my hand. I did so. When I returned we checked the visits list. He had had only a lawyer visit. Both of us spent much of the rest of the shift filling out forms and piling up paper.

The hospital called to say that the kid had pneumonia. They also mentioned that the kid said that the heroin in the syringe was supposedly pure. He hadn't been trying to get high. He had been attempting to kill himself.

After a couple of weeks the kid was back in segregation. As I was doing rounds he said: "Somebody told me that a Yates who pulled the needle out of my arm . . . was gonna be on this shift."

"Yeah."

"You Yates?"

"Yup."

"Goddamn it, that fucking horse cost me three thousand bucks. I should have been outa here."

"How about a coffee with double cream and double sugar and we'll call it even?"

"Even."

Lark and I didn't torpedo the nurse for freezing. Lark promised to speak to the head of the hospital and suggest some time off for her or a few visits with the shrink before she returned to work. And we never discussed his refusal to give me a hand. After all, he was supervisory and shouldn't have been in the room at all.

Betty Gerrard and I were sitting in the staff station talking about AIDS. She had more than ten years in service and was worried. She

suggested we have a meeting at the Police Athletic Club. The group which met were all top-grade correctional officers with spotless records. It was useless to invite even principal officers. They went along with polity or else. Privately, they had their worries too, but we line screws were in a better position to set up a squawk. A couple of the P.O.s had indicated they would help grease the way. In our group were gay males, lesbians, straights, marrieds, singles, and all levels of education from grade 12 on up. We scratched out a proposal over Pepsi (several of us were non-drinkers) and beer. I was elected to put it in literate shape and head up the chain of command to the top.

Instantly John McIntyre, recently promoted P .O., gave me permis-sion to take it to Jim Browning, one of the S.C.O.s. Jim was pleasant and said he would get back to me as soon as he had made an appointment for me with one of the High and Mighty. Within a week I had the appointment.

I entered and was invited to sit down. I handed the Great One a copy of the proposal and produced a pile of materials on the disease in German, French, and English.

Our proposal was quite simply that we be given the use of the copier to reproduce materials for what could loosely be called "A V P S.C. AIDS newsletter" - to keep staff who wished to peruse it up to date on research. I really thought I would find a sympathetic audience in this man. He had an M.A. with a science background.

Shuffling through the materials I handed him, he began, "Mr. Yates, we all realize that you are better educated than some of us here. And I can appreciate the quality of the staff who have signed this proposal. The cost is really not a problem. But you see, I feel that we must avoid alarming the staff unduly." I listened to this cock in the ear for a few more minutes, then asked, "Would you take the matter forward to the operations meeting and possibly the safety committee?"

"We've already discussed the matter in ops meeting. What I'm telling you now is our position at the moment. You're welcome to express your concerns to the safety committee through your steward." With that I was dismissed.

That meeting and the stonewall I encountered produced various reactions. I think the gays were the most offended. They had read

everything they could and were sensitive about the education programs in San Francisco, which were proving extremely effective. Some of them transferred out. One quit and went back to Ontario. Betty Gerrard transferred to Nanaimo. Another woman applied to the Vancouver city police and was successful, as was one of the single men. For the duration of the time that I was at Pretrial - about three years - there was never any information disseminated about AIDS.

Keeping Records

*The "realistic" view of the world compatible with
bureaucracy redefines knowledge - as techniques
and information.*

- Susan Sontag

ONLY AN hour into the shift in records, the holding tank was bursting at the seams. Standing room only. Roscoe Schulz, my partner - we were the Ferrante and Teicher of the book-in-keyboards - kept humming the first four notes of Beethoven's BumBumBum-Bum. He had been humming it for weeks. I had been threatening him for weeks. I began whistling dissonant to his Bumming, but he didn't notice.

Not the least of the security at Pretrial is that it is tunneled to the provincial court in one direction and the Vancouver City Police Station in the other. The cons come from the police holding tank to ours via the tunnel. Some are in for classification out to camps, New Haven, and other jails. Some are brought in on immigration holds straight from the docks or the airport. Some are coming back from court convicted but not yet sentenced.

Thus some go upstairs to await their sentence dates. Some go up to our classification officers, thence to transport. Some from the cop-shop are charged and remanded in custody until docket schedules are arranged. Accused are remanded on two grounds:

Primary grounds: Reasonable and probable cause to suspect that they won't show up for trial. F.T.A. (failure to appear) is our most

serious crime; it flouts the entire symbolic value of our criminal justice system. Sometimes, this is a person from out of province who has breached the Criminal Code of Canada in British Columbia and is considered legally a "foreigner" (his home is more than one hundred miles outside the jurisdiction where he was apprehended). Much more often, the accused has a history of heavy crimes *and* the unsavoury habit of failing to show up for court.

Secondary grounds: The criminal justice system has reasonable and probable cause to fear that the accused will continue doing what he was allegedly doing or will repeat what he allegedly did.

The result is that there are more bad bad-asses per square inch in maximum remand at Pretrial than in any other federal or provincial institution. I remember once working a unit which held nothing but Murder Ones and four kidnap-torturers.

Back in records, the more the holding tank filled, the louder grew the growling over seats, cigarettes, and anything else they could think of to potshot at one another about. Schulzie and I were calling them out one by one and flying over the keyboard to book them in. But we couldn't keep up. Soon the holding tank was full and we were putting the overflow in other, smaller tanks and attempting to book and watch all the tanks at once.

BumBumBumBum.

A hell of a commotion began in the main holding tank. We could see that the room was filling up with smoke. Schulz and I were over the counter and yelling for back-up from the other end of records and the change-room where some sheriffs were loitering.

We went through the door and began yanking bodies out to be looked after by other staff and found in the middle of the room one con who had chosen this magic moment to set himself afire. The man on fire was wearing provincial-issue greens. More plastic than cotton in them. Each time we attempted to grab his pants and tear them off, the damned burning plastic splattered on us and burned. I found a jacket on the bench. I put it over his legs and choked off the flames. Someone behind me began to dance and scream that the province was going to have to buy him a new jacket. Finally we cuffed the firebug, put him in a tank by himself, and called for the nurse.

The previous day, Schulz and I had heard "Staff up!" from the other end of the records area and had rocketed over in time to see an inmate keeping several officers and sheriffs at bay with a chair. He was just back from court, where he had been handed a sentence he did not receive gladly. He had told the judge and all present to fuck off. He had been a great pain in the ass while he was being escorted back from court; now, with the cuffs off, he was about to prove that actions speak louder than words. While the rest were staying out of range, Schulz and I found a couple of chairs of our own and began walking toward him. No Condition Yellow had been called yet. We walked toward him and began widening the distance between us. This worried him, which was the idea. The unarmed officers waited for their chance. Finally, he took a hell of a swing in Schulz's direction, which offered the opening the young jock types had been waiting for. They tackled him. We got rid of all the chairs and the usual prison dog-pile ensued. The problem was to get the cuffs to the bottom of the pile where the con was presumed to be and get them on him.

It happened that Dave Kennedy, the S.C.O. in charge of records, was off that day. In his stead we had one of the classification officers substituting as boss. Just as the guys toward the bottom were about to cuff the dude, the boss, Matthew Aligizakis, emerged from his office. Guys like him are known in the system as "social workers" - they are the Pollyanna types.

"Just a moment. Just a moment." says Aligizakis, "I want to speak to this man." We located the con's head among the arms and legs. It spoke, telling Aligizakis to fuck off.

"That'll be enough of that," Matthew replied. "Now, let us reason together. If these officers let you up without restraining you, will you settle down so we can discuss your complaint rationally?" Matthew is an educated and genteel human being.

"Sure." wheezed the con, who could barely breathe under several hundred pounds of us.

"Allow him to stand up."

We looked at one another and began extricating ourselves like linemen at an NFL game with a flag down on the play. We stood. The con stood. Matthew was standing there with a triumphant look on his

face. At which point the con pasted Matthew in the mush, breaking his glasses and nose and splitting his lip. Matthew went down like a sack of potatoes. We leapt upon the con again, dog-piled him again. And cuffed him again. Control was notified, Condition Yellow was sounded, the con was escorted off to segregation, and we returned to business as usual. Matthew went to Emergency at the nearest hospital and took a few days off to heal his body and his officerly bearing.

Kennedy was easy enough to work for. We knew him from Oakalla records. He had been around for more than twenty years. He did, however, have a war going with the Most High, and they were looking for any excuse to fire him as head of records. This made Kennedy somewhat spooky.

From my keyboard, I called out, "Bob, initial A." I could see a hand waving from one of the small tanks. I approached the tank with the flat. I opened the door and instantly felt I was in full hallucination. The creature inside was a head taller than me, had on black jeans, a blouse so busy it looked like a couple of puppies under a blanket, and fluorescent lipstick. She was seemingly Native in origin - and mad as hell about I know not what. A drag queen.

"Please take a seat over there." I indicated the chair on the opposite side of the monitor.

She muttered something, glowered back at the tank, then sat.

As records work goes, booking-in is not as boring as the change-room (handing out provincial-issue clothing and supplies to new book-ins and street clothing to those going to court), but it's close. First, we make up three files on each inductee: warrant, medical, and progress. Then we question the accused field by field and screen by screen until we have the prescribed information to generate a face-sheet, which includes a graphic representation - photo or digitized video image - of the face.

There are many opportunities to be bored to a stupor in corrections, but those who succumb to the swamp of boredom do not last. Two middle-aged eccentrics, I of mid-forties, Schulz of mid-fifties, who are not bored, must be a little off the wall. Durable corrections

people like us are masters of gallows humour, geniuses of foulmouthed invective, monarchs of the incredible prank. This is the stuff survival is made of.

"BumBumBumBum," Schulz hummed.

I continued politely, professionally filling in fields on the screen. She talked. I tapped the keys. The more I typed the snarkier she became, the louder and more impatient she got. Her voice was beyond description. I wanted her to quieten down. In my peripheral vision to my right, I could see that Schulzie was ignoring his book-in, had turned my way to give the scene his full attention, and had a looks-good-on-ya-Yatesie look on his face. I knew that if I made eye contact with him, I'd be gone, and the nine-foot draggerina would erupt like Mount St. Helen's.

Just what I feared, the S.C.O., Kennedy, had heard the hoopla. Here he came, Mohammed's mountain with epaulettes, pussyfooting up behind me to look over my shoulder. Maintaining my deadpan face, keeping my interrogative voice even, I continued coaxing information from her. Staring, staring at the computer monitor.

"Occupation?"

"Cock... sucker!"

I heard laughter being choked off behind me and to my right. It was decision time. Could I or could I not resist? Nope.

With a mind of their own, my fingers keyed in COCKSUCKER.

I heard a groan of horror behind me. If I hit enter, "cocksucker" would go rocketing into the database.

Next field. Without missing a stroke, I inquired, "Are you a Catholic or Protestant cocksucker?"

"Oh, Christ," Kennedy moaned.

Our Lady of the cyanotic lipstick replied, "Atheist cocksucker."

I typed in ATHEIST COCKSUCKER.

Schulz was bent double, immobilized with wheezing giggles. Kennedy was whimpering. He knew this was the last field on the screen and it was time to hit Alt and F4 to plant this info and bring up the final screen. If I sent this to the printer and the top brass got the face-sheet, Kennedy would be dead meat. The dragger was into the put-on by now and was enjoying watching Kennedy and Schulz. I

gave her a wink and she cracked up. Schulz cracked up. I cracked up. Kennedy didn't crack up until he saw me surreptitiously move the cursor back up the last two fields and change "cocksucker" to "unemployed" and "atheist cocksucker" to "Protestant." (In our inane system there are only Catholics and Protestants on earth.)

There are some very dangerous people in maximum remand. Some of the inmates are a little suspect as well.

Graveyard Shift in Segregation

*One man's word is no man's word; we should quietly
hear both sides.*

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

WHEN I reported for duty, S.C.O. Kennedy was already steamed. A con named Joe MacTavish had turned afternoon shift into yo-yo-ville. He'd snapped out of his skull and Kennedy couldn't send a rookie up to segregation. So Officer Yates got to go.

"He's snapped on what?" I inquired.

"Horse and coke."

"Which, of course, were sent to him by God as a going-away present."

"Lawyer. Lawyer visit," I was told.

The keystone screws had noticed that MacTavish was bouncing off all the walls of the cell and had gone in to skin-frisk the room. Mostly rookies. They had found a balloon of heroin. I couldn't believe the rest: the idiot who had the balloon in his hand was so excited he had put the balloon down on a chair while he was rousting the room. The con had stepped over, grabbed the balloon and swallowed it. They just stood there while he swallowed it instead of stuffing cuffs in his mouth or simply ripping out his larynx.

"Lawyer?" I asked.

"Shoulda seen 'er."

"I've seen this flick before. Why didn't they have the bastard in

secure visits?" In secure visits, there's glass between cons and visitors, who talk via telephone.

"No reasonable and probable grounds until now. If he lives, he'll be classified high-risk and have only secure visits."

"Yup. Cow's gone. Might as well close the barn door."

In order to get drugs into the highest-security institution in North America, first you need money. This guy had plenty - enough to retain three of Vancouver's top firms. When you're up for drug conspiracy and hoping to get it pled down to importation or trafficking, you need all the talent you can get, if the evidence is sour. Good sense tells you that a top lawyer is not going to stroll into visits with a balloon, a crank (syringe), and the makings for several lines of nose blow. Nay, nay. Instead, an articling student - preferably a pulchritudinous female - mules the dope. This is a good strategy, because chances are that the visits are being manned by a bashful young guard with the ink not dry on his criminology degree. This young feller is fairly handy at frisking when it comes to dealing with men. But the sight of a curvaceous young thing about his own age toting a briefcase throws a kink into his operations. Chances are very good he'll simply let her through without touching her. In other words, she could be toting a sten-gun in her lingerie. Actually, however, she's probably packing what was ordered in her briefcase: drugs.

There are certain contacts and papers with which prison personnel are not ever to fiddle: letters to and from lawyers, M.L.A.s, the Ombudsman, M.P.s, and so forth. And, because they may contain papers, consensus is that briefcases cannot be frisked. Wrong. The frisker may not read said papers, but he could still frisk the bejesus out of the contents, check for false bottom, whatever. If the student mule were ever caught, the law firm would, of course, know nothing about the transaction. The student would be dismissed with due ceremony. However, briefcases are not frisked. And as long as there are contact visits, the prisons will be full of drugs. This particular evening, MacTavish had had a lawyer visit from something who looked like centrefold material.

I arrived on Six Landing, and Bill Corelli popped the door.

"Hi, Mikey. Wait'll you see this asshole. You'll be on your feet all

night.” An ex-logger with a glass eye began to tell me at length how it went down. That he personally had the balloon and put it on the chair, then the con picked up the balloon, then the con swallowed the balloon. And now the balloon is in the con's stomach and somehow it isn't his fault that I am going to check the bastard every five minutes all night long, and if the guy dies, it's my problem, not his problem, as he's about to go off shift. Somehow he will make it up to me later just to show that he's a good sport.

I looked over the log to see when the addict was last checked. Ten minutes before. I dialed Control and asked for a beeper-check.

My beeper working okay, I walked out of Segregation Control into the common area of the living unit and strolled from cell to cell, lifting the steel slides that cover the windows and shining the light in to check on each individual. The addict's light was on and through the wire-mesh glass I could see that he was unconscious or semiconscious, but I stood there long enough to determine that his breathing rhythms were more or less normal. I checked the rest of the unit, a count of only about five. I then headed over to Six South, the hospital unit, which is also my responsibility on graveyard.

Not much interesting there. One slash (unsuccessful, full of stitches and asleep). One the shrink thought might slash. One suspected to have AIDS (emaciated and sallow enough). One wet-brain (brain damage through alcoholism). One pacing his drum in a ritual pattern and on his way to Forensic for a psychiatric profile. And, sitting at the desk, Gordon the nurse. By way of avoiding another boo at his manuscript on healing by the laying on of hands, I mentioned to Gordon that I had to hurry back to seg for my five-minute checks. Gordon is a good soul, but now and then he did work himself up into a fervour about healing. It made me shudder a little, intellectually.

At approx 0035, I noted some stirring of MacTavish in cell 12. He seemed to be mumbling, but he'd have to mumble in decibels exceeding sotto voce if he wished to be overheard through a 12-gauge steel door. He didn't appear to notice me looking in. I was of two minds about his evident consciousness. On one hand, it meant he hadn't overdosed on the heroin. On the other, I wondered whether movement might cause his stomach acid to be more active and

possibly chew through the rubber of the balloon before shift-change at approx 0700.

The phone rang. It was Kennedy the Wise.

"Let's go by the book on this one, Mikey. He has a very unpleasant priors sheet. The uglies he hasn't done personally he's paid to have done. Watch yourself."

I was again counting sleeping bodies (except for the nut-burger who was still pacing) on Six South and talking briefly with Gordon when the noise began on Six North. I ran for the door and hit the button.

"Control."

"Pop Six North, now!"

Wham! And I was through it. The noise was coming from cell 12. I banged up the slide. The sonofabitch had one shoe off and was whacking the plexiglass cover of the light with it, making a hell of a booming sound. He had awakened the other segregation inmates and they were screaming pleasantries. I yelled over the noise for him to cool it, or I'd cuff him to his bunk. He looked at me dreamily and shouted back, "Fuck you, you pig fucking dog."

I liked that. I've been called almost everything by almost everyone, but never "you pig fucking dog." Nice. Original. Has a certain melodic quality. Like saying Edna St. Vincent Millay.

I dropped the slide and ran to Segregation Control to call Kennedy. I thought the balloon had burst. Then I called Gordon and asked him to get over on the double. This is standard operating procedure for cracking a cell on graveyard. You can have more bodies than this, but no fewer. Nurse and boss must attend.

I checked the time and went back to the cell and lifted the slide. I could hear the elevator moving up the tower. The door between Six North and Six South fired and Gordon entered with the medical bag.

MacTavish's eyes were dilated like craters as he pounded on the housing. The bad news about people who are high on heroin is that it sometimes gives them delusions of adequacy. Occasionally, they think they can whip an army of guards. The good news is that their reflexes are screwed. The wild card here was the cocaine.

Enter Dave Kennedy and the back-up.

I must describe the back-up in some detail here because it is pertinent. The back-up was a thing of male beauty. The back-up was the paradigm of what an experienced line screw *doesn't* want to see appear as back-up. Very pretty guards, male or female, who spend much of their lives arranging their looks, are not eager to get into a scrap and damage their work before the mirror. This one was tall. It was French Canadian. It was a body-builder. Key here is that the face was beautiful. Dark hair, deep brown eyes, a perfect pencil-line moustache. Its uniform was flawless, with the correctional-officer star sewn exactly five inches above the cuff on the left sleeve and the near-blinding shine on its shoes. There was not a mark on its meticulously shaven face. It was about twenty-five years old. It was to be married in two weeks. Its name was Jean McSween. It had been hired straight off the street without experience of crime on either side of the word. It was innocence personified. It marched dutifully in the waddling shadow of Kennedy. I made eye contact with Kennedy. He looked heavenward. I made eye contact with Jean McSween and knew in my soul that an Andean condor could fly between his ears without the slightest possibility of touching anything like grey matter.

Control unlocked MacTavish's cell door, which swung toward us, and I entered the cell, moving to my right to allow my back-up entry. The con looked at me dazedly with the expressions on his face changing like masks from anger to amusement to fear. Then the angry look returned. Standing near this guy, I noted how much bigger he was than I. Then I noticed that my peripheral vision wasn't delivering the image of my back-up near and ready. Mr. Perfect had gone.

Then came a surprising change in MacTavish's mood: "Yeah, sure, you want the shoes, you got the shoes. Here. I was just trying to figure out how to turn the light out."

The other cons on the unit stopped bellowing to listen at the cracks of their doors, while Dave explained very formally and diplomatically that he was the boss and, should the disturbance continue, it would be his unhappy duty to instruct his line staff to restrain him, MacTavish. He then asked whether MacTavish felt he could now settle down for the night.

Yes, MacTavish slurred, he was quite certain that he could and was very sorry for any untoward behaviour.

I turned to my left, despite what my peripheral vision had told me, expecting to see my back-up exiting the cell. No McSween. Dave had been speaking from the door, because it is a strict security regulation that the boss not enter a troubled cell. Nurse Gordon had stayed out of sight because he knew he was there as much as a witness as a purveyor of first aid (he is quite good at settling down troubled prisoners when the show of force in the form of uniforms has failed).

We closed the cell and took the shoes to Seg Control. McSween left his post outside of all the action and returned to his landing down on one of the wimp units on Three Landing.

"That's back-up?" I asked Kennedy.

"Well, we have to give these twits on-the-job training, if they're not going to have them spend their first six months in service at Oakie." Dave shrugs. "Them's orders. Send them in on scuffles, cell-extractions, and Condition Yellows."

I had to do my rounds at the hospital, so I headed off. Kennedy was on his way down the tower to his office. It was getting on toward 0500, when you doubt if you can make it through the rest of the shift. You wash your face in cold water, comb your hair, and look forward to the runner who delivers the morning reports to exchange a few words with another half-dead human.

When I got back, MacTavish was still pissing around in his cell, muttering, and conscious enough to make eye contact when I raised the slide. But he said nothing. I presumed that the cocaine was keeping the heroin from allowing him to sleep. I didn't know how long the effects of either drug would last. And he may have had other drugs, already ingested, that we knew nothing about.

Later, as I walked across the unit, I heard noise coming from cell 12. I pushed up the slide. MacTavish was sitting on the bunk with a shattered Melmac cup in his hand, middle finger through the handle, waving the jagged remainder of the cup before him. Having established I was watching, he smiled and began raking the jagged edge across his left forearm between wrist and elbow. He was scratching

himself but not drawing blood. I dropped the slide, sprinted into Seg Control, and phoned Kennedy.

"S.C.O."

"Dave, you better haul ass up here. That housedog asshole has stomped a cup and he's trying to slash with it."

"Jesus Christ, Mikey, gimme a break, it's time to go home. Half of morning shift is . . . Aw, fuck, be right up."

I hit the intercom button.

"Control."

"Troubles, Billy, pop Kennedy and the back-up through, and get the nurse over here on the double." I headed back to 12, pulled a notebook out of my ass pocket, made some notes, and lifted the slide. Upon hearing the slide, MacTavish began scraping at his left arm with the cup again.

The door between hospital and segregation fired and Gordon and his medical bag were standing by. Distantly I could hear the doors firing on lower floors and the elevator moving in its tube. Then Kennedy came in with radio and clipboard and Prettyboy McSween dancing behind.

Kennedy lifted the slide.

"The big pig, himself," MacTavish bellowed.

Kennedy dropped the slide. "He's bluffin'. He hasn't given himself any pain, but he can tear himself up with that toy if he gets serious. Pieces of it are all over his bunk. Get in there and take it away from him and the broken pieces and we'll restrain him and dump the problem on morning shift."

"Okay." I said on behalf of me and my back-up.

The lock whirred and the door swung open. As it did, MacTavish turned the sharp cup toward me and started to stand up. I covered the three feet in a single stride before he could reach full height, drove my right shoulder into his chest to knock him back off-balance, took his right wrist with my left hand, and cranked with everything I had, grabbing one ear of his collar as I did so. His ass plunked down on the bunk again and I heard the cup hit the floor. He was screaming obscenities at the top of his voice. I kicked the cup toward the door

and looked over my shoulder. I was alone in the cell. My so-called back-up was standing outside the door looking in. What was this, a spectator sport? I began digging pieces of the cup out from under his ass and pitched them with my free hand one by one toward the door.

Good old ex-Oakie Kennedy had reflexively moved to the doorway. In my peripheral vision, I could see him inching into the cell. He was violating procedure, but his radar was telling him something. I'd got as much of the cup out of the bed as I could with the guy rolled to my right, so I shifted my hand to the other ear of his collar and began to roll him the other way. He was resisting. Kennedy tried to ditch his clipboard and radio and give me a hand, but there wasn't enough room. I got MacTavish crosswise on the bunk, face to face, trying to keep all the variables in mind through the bleary end-of-graveyard funk. I couldn't get enough leverage standing sideways to him, so I squared up and inadvertently presented him with a prize target. He went for it. His right foot connected with my left testicle with enough impact that I could see celestial bodies beyond Pluto. My knees, I knew it, were going to go.

All I wanted to do was to hit the floor, assume the foetal position, and scream primally. But I still had his collar in my left grip. I pulled his head toward me and swung. No peace officer with any sense, even in dire circumstances, punches where it will leave marks. My right connected above his ear and back from the face. I held on to the collar. Then I connected with a backswing in the same area on the other side of his head. I had to get his mind off my crotch and get out of the cell. Finally, I felt the right body language and heard the right noises. MacTavish was out of fight. Somewhere in the melee I heard Kennedy's voice at the radio: "Condition Yellow, Six North, Condition Yellow, Six North." My right hand was throbbing in concert with my scrotum, and I felt like I was going down again. Kennedy's strong arm was threaded through mine and I was out the door, and in a chair in the common area, where I opened my mouth and screamed in agony. The cell door was slammed.

Nurse Gordon, God bless him, had thrown a gel ice-pack into his

medi bag. He handed it to me from a discreet distance. "Here, Mr. Yates, you should go in Segregation Control and apply this right now." Kennedy and Prettyboy McSween helped me there. Gordon stuck his head around the door and observed that my right hand was very swollen and blue and said I should try to give the hand some benefit of the ice-pack as well.

Right.

Things were none too clear nor steady. I made it to my feet and dropped my trousers to my ankles, and eased myself down onto the ice-pack.

Bear in mind that in a Condition Yellow, every line officer in the building responds to the area. All of the night shift and most of morning shift responded to this one. I don't remember hearing their approach. But there I was as around fifty people flooded through Seg Control - half of them female guards - pants around my ankles. Some of the comments as they passed in one door, around me, and out the other door to the common area, I'm told, were hilarious. I was too stunned and sleepy to retain memory of them.

The morning S.C.O. took over from Kennedy to move MacTavish to another cell. Dave asked whether I needed a stretcher. I didn't know. I stood. I seemed to be coming around, except that there was a lot of pressure in my scrotum. British Bob Falkland offered to drive me to St. Paul's Emergency where he explained that he had a wounded officer on his hands who needed attention right away.

Amazingly, the nurse took me immediately into one of the cubicles separated by sheets, told me to get my britches off and get up on the gurney. In my shape, what with the pain and dizziness flicking in and out, this was no small task. I was standing by the gurney trying to figure out whether it would be more difficult to climb Everest when the nurse reappeared with a little two-step device which she placed beside the gurney.

Finally, stretched out on the gurney, I closed my eyes. I could hear Falkland attempting to give the nurse the medical insurance number that we use for prisoners. The sheet was pulled aside and the nurse approached me asking for my insurance number.

"It's in my wallet. There in my pants. Just get it out of my wallet."

"We're not allowed to do that, sir."

"Are you telling me that you want me to get down from here, go over there, get the wallet, and hand you the card?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Why didn't you tell me that before I got up here?" This she didn't answer.

I groaned and whimpered my way off the gurney, down the steps, over to my pants and handed her the card. "Now, if I climb back up there, do you promise to leave me the fuck alone and send me a doctor so I can get out of here?"

"You don't have to be rude, sir," she huffed.

"Lady, would that you had my balls and I your enviable dispassion.

I scaled the heights again and lay with my eyes closed. Suddenly I heard Falkland burst into roaring laughter. No one had said anything. He was still laughing when I heard the rollers on the sheet-track and I opened my eyes to see the curtain closing. Perhaps someone simply peeked in. I started to close my eyes again when I heard papers rustling to my right and low. I turned my head.

The voice was beyond description, a cross between Minnie Mouse and Miss Piggie. So high, I thought she was faking it.

"Hello. I'm Doctor Rumbahl." she squeaked. I'd be amazed if she was an inch over four-feet-six. "So you've experienced a blow to the groin." At this, Falkland lost it again.

Rumball?

"I take it this happened in the line of duty."

"Yes."

"I'll have to examine you."

She asked me to get my gaunchies off and climbed the two steps. Even then, she had to stand on tiptoe and scrunch her chest against my right leg to get at my balls. No worry about an embarrassing erection. This was a sure-fire hard-off.

Then it felt as though she inserted her arm to the elbow up the testicle tube. "Does that hurt?"

"Yaaaaahhhhhh!" I thought I would be the first human brick-piercing projectile to breach a hospital wall.

"Well, you have internal bleeding," the midget intoned. If I didn't, I certainly did after her probe.

"You'll need to go home and put those on ice. Do you have an ice-bag?"

"No," I gasped.

"Actually, a bag of frozen peas would do just as well." She unhandled my scrotum and climbed down. At that point, my dick had retreated in terror so far, I felt like I had indoor plumbing.

On the way home, I stopped by the store and picked up a couple of bags of frozen peas, one for my nuts and one for the hand, as recommended. I was in the doorway of my apartment when the phone rang. It was Fran Ouellette from the prison.

"Mr. Yates, I just wanted to warn you that the inmate is rattling bombs: Inspection and Standards, ombudsman, lawyers, the whole nine yards. You might get your notes up to date before you go to sleep. The unit officer called and said he had called Rankin, and Rankin is on his way down to counsel his client."

"Thanks."

"Mr. Kennedy has done a detailed incident report. I don't think there's anything to worry about, really."

I was thinking about putting on the answering machine and getting into bed with the peas, but the thought of waking up in a pool of cold water unnerved me. So I sat on the chesterfield for a while with the bags of peas, smoking a cigarette, and jotting a few notes in my government-issue notebook. The phone rang again. The number was unlisted. Everyone who had it knew I was on graveyard and should be asleep. I grabbed it.

"What, for chrissake?"

"Yates?" Sounded long distance.

"What?"

"It's Crampton." A "Morningside" producer.

"Toronto?"

"Today's the day."

"For what?"

"Day after the election. Remember? You promised."

I had known Crampton for years. He was executive producer of

the old "Vancouver Show" on CKVU, and before that I had been a morning-radio editorialist for him on CBC. I could hear Gzowski in the background yakking to someone about the provincial election. Crampton's idea had been that it would be a great idea to get all these "high-energy" weirdo non-political-scientist types to give their off-the-wall responses to the campaign and the election results. Crampton had put the arm on me months ago about this, and I had agreed in a weak moment and forgotten about it.

"Come on, it'll only take a few minutes. It's live."

What choice did I have?

Gzowski announced, "And now we're going to talk to the poet J. Michael Yates, who wears a belt-buckle with M-I-K-E on it. I didn't believe it until he walked into the studio with it on." Little did he know I was perched on a packet of frozen peas. After we had finished, and I'd hung up, I wanted to laugh hard, but it would have hurt too much.

Bedtime. Piss on the peas. At this point, I had frostbite as well as internal bleeding.

Brrring! I could not believe it was the telephone again. "What, for fuck's sake!" I shouted.

"Mikey. Thought I'd get your machine and have you call back when you woke up." It was Greg Mooney from the joint. "Listen. Rankin [MacTavish's lawyer] just left. You gonna charge MacTavish in outside court? You can make assault peace officer stick. Maybe aggravated assault."

"Haven't thought about it."

Greg proceeded to tell me about Rankin's visit to MacTavish. Harry Rankin is one of the most venerable of West Coast criminal lawyers and a folk-hero to those who love left-leaning millionaires. Dutifully, Harry had trotted down to Pretrial and listened to MacTavish's tale of woe. Afterward, he rushed down to Fran Ouellette, the senior correctional officer who was handling the paper on the incident. Greg, who was in the room during the episode, told it as follows:

Harry: "In all my years as a defence lawyer, never have I seen an inmate take such a beating from a guard."

Fran: "Is that so? Funny, our medical staff didn't find any marks on the man. Did you see any?"

Harry: "Well, he had marks all up and down his left arm where the officers had put the handcuffs on too tight."

Fran: "Funny thing about cuffs, Harry. When you put 'em on too tight, they leave a single mark on the wrist. Goes away in about ten minutes."

Harry: "Well, he had marks and scratches..."

Fran: "Harry, the man broke a cup and was raking his arm with it. The only reason staff were in there was to keep him from further self-inflicted scratches."

Harry: "And what is this nonsense that he kicked one of your officers in the groin. The man didn't even have shoes on."

Fran: stands up and comes around the desk in front of Rankin. Bends over and begins untying one shoe: "Harry"

Harry: "Yes?"

Fran: "Tell me if this hurts."

The exchange imploded in laughter. Rankin asked if the officer was going to lay a charge for outside court. Ouellette suggested MacTavish write me a note of apology and ask me not to. Harry said his client was looking at ten, and the judge would probably look at the assault as *de minimis non curat lex* ("the court will not stoop to waste time with trivia.") A cop or a guard getting smacked around a little comes with the turf.

I had no intention of wasting days off sitting in a foetid courtroom, so I didn't charge him in outside court.

MacTavish got forty-five days more segregation time in Director's Court for booting me. Then, when he was sentenced, and went off to federal before the forty-five days were up, laughing at Pretrial, a wag in records called records at Kent penitentiary (the federal institution in the Fraser Valley where he was sent).

"Hi, listen, we've got one sentenced to ten heading your way and he owes us some digger-time."

"No problem. How much?"

"'Bout ninety days."

"He'll do 'em."