

“The Perfect Cellie”

By Joseph Dole

I was recently asked what makes a perfect cellie. While there are, in fact, good cellies and bad cellies, for various reasons the only perfect cellie is an imaginary cellie. That's because:

- Imaginary cellies are never shut-ins. They leave the cell whenever the opportunity presents itself. Enrolling in school, putting in for a job, and going to chow, yard, visits, and religious services, are all routine.
- An imaginary cellie will never startle you out of your sleep with a fart so loud you would swear he tore his asshole all the way to his ankle. Nor by shouting, flushing the toilet, or slamming the property boxes around.
- Imaginary cellies' shit don't stink. Nor do their farts, feet, pits, or breath.
- Imaginary cellies are never drug addicts. So they will never be dope sick, puking everywhere but in the toilet.
- In fact, they never get sick at all. They catch neither common colds, nor the flu. Which means you never have to listen to them cough, blow their noses, hack up green slime, or puke all day.
- Nor do you have to listen to every fart, splunk, and splash as they take a dump or piss just feet away from you, because they never use the toilet.
- Imaginary cellies all have chronic alopecia and are thus bald over their entire bodies, with no hair to shed around the cell.
- Nor do they have OCD. They don't spend 8-10 hours per day in your way cleaning things that are already immaculate.
- In fact, they don't have any mental health problems at all. Or, if they do, they have the gold standard in health insurance and are perfectly treated or medicated, so it is unnoticeable. You will never have to fight or physically restrain an imaginary cellie because he becomes irrationally violent due to his untreated bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.
- Imaginary cellies keep their mouths shut. They don't inform on you to the guards or internal affairs, and don't tell others your personal business. They don't try to listen in on your phone calls or read your mail.
- An imaginary cellie does no laundry, so he will never hang it all over the cell encumbering you from using the door or toilet.
- Imaginary cellies aren't prima donnas. You won't see them shaving, lining, brushing, etc., their hair for hours on end every day.
- Nor are they pack rats. They never clutter up the cell with unnecessary property, making a confined space even more suffocating.
- An imaginary cellie is always fit. He is never some delusional fat bastard who “works out” for six hours straight without breaking a sweat, thinks he is “swole,” and spends the rest of the day stuffing his face with a hundred times the calories he could have possibly burned while facilely swinging his arms during his “workout.”
- Imaginary cellies aren't leeches or thieves. Nor are they incarcerated for being perverts, rapists, or child molesters.
- An imaginary cellie stays busy. He has too much to do to be wasting time staring at you while you brush your teeth.
- Imaginary cellies fight for their freedom and their rights. They don't willingly accept a lifetime of incarceration and overly-oppressing living conditions.

- They are goal-oriented, trying to accomplish as much as possible with however many grains of sand remaining in their hourglass.

In reality, there is no perfect cellie. (That is, unless, you're going to drop Scarlett Johansson into my cell for a couple of hours after hypnotizing her to be madly in love with me, and escort her out before I have to hear her take a dump.) Human beings did not evolve a mechanism to cope with being locked in a bathroom with one stranger after another, 22-24 hours per day, for decades on end. People need privacy. Often we even need a break from people we love. Now imagine being unable to take a break from someone you hate. Incarcerated people are constantly forced to deal with strangers in an overly intimate environment, grapple with each other's differing hygiene standards, likes and dislikes, racisms and prejudices, mental health issues, and more. For those with life-without-parole sentences or their numerical equivalent, this is a decades-long torture unto death.