

**The following essay was written by Tim, one of America's incarcerated juveniles. He has been incarcerated for 12 years, since he was 16 years old.*

—Christopher—

The Day-Ones

So I'm now 30, what the fu**, should I be having a mid-life crisis? I guess my generation is grouped with the millenials, so...can I have a mid-life crisis at 30 or do I have to wait another 10 years and do it at 40? I'll try to figure that out later.

Anyways, I'm "short" now (my sentence is nearly up). 11 months left, again, wtf? Am I scared, nervous, anxious? Do I care? Should I be happier, wtf should I do?

So I have ADHD, it makes life a little more fun at times. Also I may jump around from subject to subject.

Like Christopher, bro, 11 months. I still remember day-one. They hand you a mat, some sheets, walk you to a cell (if you got arrested early enough you may get a tray of food that you probably won't eat),

and then you go to sleep. Or at least, that's how it went for me; I'm a first time offender.

Everybody remembers day-one, whether it's day-one in jail, day-one in prison, day-one at a different prison.

I remember my first day at my parent institution. I arrived just after my pod had gone to chow. I was sent immediately to the chow hall (attending chow was mandatory) and another guy who had been there some time, walked with me. As soon as we got away from the pod he starts to shake me down for my boots.

I couldn't help but start laughing. He was so cute (not in a weird way, but in a "how did this little guy lose his mommy" way). He was maybe 5'2" 120 pounds, and couldn't have been 16 yet.

Oh yeah, I'm a first time juvenile offender, at this time I hadn't turned 18 yet and was in a pod for juveniles. Here's a fun fact, the prison that housed the juveniles also had 1 of the three state wide sex-offender programs. (The fun-fact thing is annoying, I won't do it anymore.) However, the sex-offender with juveniles thing just doesn't seem like the best idea.

Back to the story: and the little kid that was trying to threaten me for my boots. He was trying to maintain his toughness and assure me it wasn't a joke. I just couldn't stop laughing. I'm not big myself, I'm just not that small.

This technically wasn't my first day in prison, that was actually the day before. Juveniles were only at the intake prison for a day. They received their "number", remained under constant watch, and then rode to my parent institution.

Day-one in prison wasn't as funny. Intake for me was at the Lorain Correctional institution. After having my picture taken and ID made, the COs (correctional officers) walked me to medical. I was given a physical, and afterwards the COs began walking me to my cell. Everybody stopped when a female CO comes walking quickly in from the yard. She was crying. The COs clustered around her as she told them that an inmate had just flicked his cigarette down her shirt as she was walking by him.

This was an "oh, shit" moment. The COs consoled her, calmed her down and told her she did the right thing in getting off the yard. They weren't providing security, they were providing a support group for each other! Wtf, I thought, did I get myself into? I

don't care what the situation is, I don't smoke and I'm definitely not going to flick a lit one down anybody's shirt.

I turned 18 after that and a serious problem arose. I was still 'classed' to 'close' (one level below 'Max') security. My current parent institution was medium security (one level below 'close'). I would have to go to a higher security prison that would be much more dangerous.

However, while at my parent institution, I met Christopher. I have received many letters from Christopher since then. That friendship has defined much of my rehabilitation.

I left my parent institution after about 5 months. I transferred to Mansfield Correctional, a closed security facility. My manly bravado didn't last the drive up from the road.

We were in a black van, there were about 5 of us, all handcuffed and shackled. We had just turned off from the road and were driving toward a group of institutions. It was getting dark. The inmate next to me nudged me and pointed through the window on the right side of the van.

"That's Mansfield," he told me. I looked to where he pointed. The building was a castle; fences, towers, and barbed wire. The windows were black, it seemed like nothing was moving. That sight burned into my memory.

"I'm not going in there," I said. It was gut reaction. I didn't see any way of surviving in that place. It was not going to happen. My heart vibrated my whole body, you could see the palpitations in my shirt! I was preparing for a flight with just the view of the prison.

"No, that's the old Mansfield," the same guy told me. "We're going over there," he said, pointing to a more normal looking group of buildings.

"Oh." Yeah, I can handle that. But I was also thinking, Oh shit, I didn't even make it through the gates yet.

But all of that was over twelve years ago, and I'm now 11 months from a much more important day-one. By the way, I believe the old Mansfield penitentiary is a museum now. I will not be going.

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