



## Extracts from “Hard Time”

by Shaun Attwood

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### My Arrest

“Tempe Police Department! We have a warrant! Open the door!”

The stock quotes on my computer screen lost all importance as I rushed to the peephole. It was blacked out. Boots thudded up the outdoor stairs to our apartment.

*Bang, bang, bang, bang!*

Wearing only boxer shorts, I ran to the bedroom. “Claudia, wake up! It’s the cops!”

“Tempe Police Department! Open the door!”

My girlfriend scrambled from the bed. “What should we do?” she asked, anxiously fixing her pink pyjamas.

*Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!*

“Open the door!”

We searched each other’s faces.

“Better open it,” I said, but before I could make it to the door – *boom!* – it leapt off its hinges.

Big men in black fatigues and ballistic armour blitzed through the doorframe, aiming guns at us. Afraid of being shot, I froze. I gaped as they converted my living room into a scene from a war movie.

“Tempe Police Department! Get on the ground now!”

“Police! Police! On your bellies now!”

“Hands above your heads!”

“Don’t move!”

As I dropped to the floor they fell upon me. There was a beating in my chest as if I had more than one heart. Crushed by hands, elbows, knees, and boots, I could barely breathe. Cold steel snapped around my wrists. I was hoisted like a puppet onto my feet. As they yanked Claudia up by the cuffs, she pinched her eyes shut; when she opened them, tears spilled out.

“I’m Detective Reid,” said a tall burly man with thick dark hair and an intimidating presence. “English Shaun, you’re a big name from the rave scene...”

## First Blog Entries

19 Feb 04

The toilet I sleep next to is full of sewage. We've had no running water for three days. Yesterday, I knew we were in trouble when the mound in our steel throne peaked above sea level.

Inmates often display remarkable ingenuity during difficult occasions and this crisis has resulted in a number of my neighbours defecating in the plastic bags the mouldy breakfast bread is served in. For hours they kept those bags in their cells, then disposed of them downstairs when allowed out for showers. As I write, inmates brandishing plastic bags are going from cell door to door proudly displaying their accomplishments.

The whole building reeks like a giant Portaloo. Putting a towel over the toilet in our tiny cell offers little reprieve. My neighbour, Eduardo, is suffering diarrhoea. I can't imagine how bad his cell stinks.

I am hearing that the local Health Department has been contacted. Hopefully they will come to our rescue soon.

20 Feb 04

My cellmate couldn't hold his in any longer. He pinched his nose and lifted the towel from the toilet. Repulsed by the mound, he said, "There's way too much crap to crap on, dawg. I'm gonna use a bag." So as jail etiquette demands in these situations, I rolled over on my bunk and faced the wall. I heard something hit the rim of the seatless toilet, and him say, "Damn! I missed some!" When he was done, he put the finished product by the door and the stink doubled. He had no water to clean where the errant piece had fallen on the toilet, so it remained forming a crustation on the rim. We were hoping to be allowed out to dispose of the bag, until a guard announced, "There will be no one coming out for showers and phone calls, as we have to get one-hundred-and-twenty inmates water from an emergency container!"

The water came back on in stages. In our toilet, its level slowly rose.

"Oh no," I said. "It's about to overflow, and we'll be stuck in here with sewage all over the floor."

"One of us needs to stick his hand in the crap to let the water through," my cellmate said.

"And you're the closest."

The brown soup was threatening to spill from the bowl, so I put a sandwich bag on my hand.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," I said, plunging my hand into the mound. The mound took the bag from my hand. Almost up to my elbow in sewage, I dug until the water level sank.

"I owe you one, dawg," my cellmate said.

"It's your turn next time," I said.

Because the tap water hadn't come back on, I couldn't wash my arm. Not wanting to contaminate anything in the cell, I sat on the stool until a guard let us out for showers hours later.

*Shaun read 5 extracts from his book "Hard Time". Listen to the Storytails podcast for the other excerpts.*