

An aerial photograph of a dense, multi-story apartment complex in Cincinnati, Ohio. The buildings are multi-colored, with shades of green, yellow, and brown. Many windows are visible, and some balconies have laundry hanging. In the background, a riverfront area with more buildings and a bridge is visible under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the top left and bottom right of the image.

***CINCINNATI
RIVERFRONT
NEWS***

***MY WEEK AS A PROLE
BY JANE SMITH***

My week as a Prole In Cincinnati Metroplex

By Jane Smith

“Who would volunteer to become a PROLE?”

Well, let me say I went into this assignment with some reservations. The Cincinnati Riverfront News paid a Prole who will remain nameless to give up her place in the precincts for a week. She was moved to a motel in Miketown and taken care of by the paper.

The road just stops at the entrance to Precinct 1037, there continuing on is a wide sidewalk that was once nice but now it broken up and overgrown. This leads down to the center of the complex of ten nondescript ten story buildings that looks really look like a blocks of shipping containers stacked up.

As you arrive in the center of the complex you pass between two large shade trees. In the center of a large concrete circle is, what was fifty years ago was, a fine fountain that surrounded the statue of a man and woman holding a sign saying Precinct 1037, is empty and not running.

Running North is the wide concrete sidewalk leading to the entrance, to the East is a sidewalk running to buildings one through five, to the West a sidewalk running to buildings six through ten. Along the South of the circle are three small one-story buildings, each with a letter A, B, or C, about the size of large sheds.

I made my way to Building 3. On the way I saw the sidewalks were lined with overgrown shrubs and on occasional small tree. The areas between the sidewalks were once nicely grassed bit parts are overgrown and parts are bare, including the area with some kids' playground equipment. The playground equipment, once nice, has not been maintained over the years and has been well used.

I found Building 3 entering a small vestibule with once nice glass doors with PGJ&J Precinct 1037, Cheviot, Building 3 etched into it. Unfortunately, the door has a huge crack in it. Straight ahead from the entrance door, to my relief is an elevator. My heart sank then I saw the “Out of Order” sign on it dated seven months ago. I turned to my right and there was a wide metal staircase.

Slowly I trudged up the staircase. The smells I cannot even begin to describe here other than to say I was nauseated the entire way up. I stepped over two adults who were out of it on happy drug laying in the stairwell. I made my way to the third floor looking at the key in my hand with 1037-30307 etched on it.

I entered the corridor, as the glass door has long since vanished. To my right is a half wall to which was added a heavy-duty mesh that runs up to the ceiling. This prevents accidental falls and suicides. At the far end of the corridor I can see the sparks of the automated fence mender fixing a hole in the mesh. On my left are doors at regular intervals.

I proceed to the door with the 07 etched into it. This would be my home for the next week. My hand trembled slightly as I inserted the key. Amazingly, the key worked easily and the metal door opened easily. I took a deep breath and stepped in.

As I stepped in a motion light snaps on and reveals the large room that makes up most of the apartment. The door in is on the left half of the apartment as you enter. To the right is the entertainment/sleeping area. I guess you would call the area I stepped into would be a large foyer or small living room. Beyond that was a table with two chairs and then at the end of the apartment is what you would call a kitchen. On the right behind the sleeping area is the only walled off space, which is the bathroom / storage area.

In this apartment the Foyer / Living Room is approximately eight foot by eight foot and has a tile floor. On the wall next to the door are hooks for coats, boots and even an umbrella. Next to the hooks is a black wall phone with no dial. There are two cheap, padded, arm chairs in this area. The light comes from an overhead, motion sensor activated light that bathes the area in a soft light. After the door is closed I see a paper attached to the back of the door.

The "Paper on the Door" says
"Important Date and Times. Everyday Sick Call 0600-0730 Building C (one of the shed like buildings in the common area), Pharmacy 0700-0900 Building C. Sunday Food Pickup 1000-1300 Building A, Commissary Orders turn in by 1300 Building A, Open Gathering 1700-2100 Building C. Monday Clothing – Linen Pickup Building A 0900-1400, Commissary Open Building B 1100-1300, Game Night 1700-2000 Building C. Tuesday Kids Party 1500-2000 Building C. Wednesday Food Pickup 0900-1100 Building A, Commissary Orders turn in by 1100 Building A, Bingo 1700-2000 Building C. Thursday Commissary Open Building B 1500-1800, Casino Night 2000-2300 Building C. Friday Food Pickup 1200-1500 Building A, Commissary Orders turn in by 1500 Building A, Electronic Gaming 1700-2100 Building C. Saturday Commissary Open Building B 1300-1700, Cuisine Selection Sheets to be turned into Building A by 2000, Ration Book Pickup 1700-2000 Building A, Trash Pickup 0800-1600 Outside Building C, Family Dance 1900-2200 Building C."

Beyond the Foyer / Living Room is a six foot by eight-foot area that functions as a Dining Room. It is lit by a light that is on the wall that is controlled by a switch on the half wall. It continues with a tile floor and is separated from the Foyer / Living Room by a half wall that extends three feet out from the external wall. In this area is a small plastic table in a wood grain pattern and two armless, plastic, wood grain chairs.

Continuing straight back along the back wall of the apartment is the area referred to as the Kitchen. The floor is tiled just like the rest of this side of the apartment but it is separated from the dining room by a small 2 foot by 2-foot island with a well-worn plastic wood grain top. There are two light switches one that lights a bright overhead light that is over the island and the second one lights under cabinet lights.

There is a counter that runs from the outside wall to the bathroom wall. Under the counter on the extreme left (next to the outside wall) is a small refrigerator. To its right is a small sink with buttons for cold, warm, and hot water and food disposal. Under the counter to the right of the sink is the trash disposal. Finally, on the counter is a double microwave cooker. Under the counter is a drawer containing the weeks plastic ware, knives forks, and spoons (all disposable) and a folded up buggy cart.

The sink has settings for cold water that comes out about forty degrees and are used for cold drinks. The Warm setting is warm to the touch and is used primarily for cleaning. The Hot setting comes out close to boiling and is used to make hot drinks and instant soups.

Above the long kitchen counter are storage cabinets capable of holding up to a week's worth of prepackaged breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks. Also, there is a place for plates and paper towels.

In the right back corner of the apartment is the Bathroom. The Bathroom is the only room separated from the main room. It has a low-level motion light that comes on upon entry. There is also a light over the sink and one in the shower. Opening the sliding door to the bathroom will reveal shelves on the right wall separating it from the Entertainment / Sleeping area. Next to that is a sink, over which there is a small metal mirror, which has warm and cold settings and a fill and

hold setting which is used to wash faces and shave. Continuing along the outer wall is the toilet and finally filling the end of the bathroom is shower with a cheap, plastic surround.

These shelves can contain ten days' worth of Prole Jumpsuits, underwear, and socks for up to two adult and one child Prole. In addition, it holds towels for up to ten days. In the bottom corner are three "Emergency" cold weather coveralls that are supplied in case of inclement weather before the suits come in the normal clothing allotment. Usually present on the floor under the shelves are two pair of lightweight, disposable deck shoes and a pair of flip flop shoes for each person in the house. In the corner next to the sink is a shelf that contains the households supply of hygiene supplies.

Lastly is the Entertainment / Sleeping Area. It's the one area that is carpeted and has a curtain that can be drawn and separate it from the rest of the apartment. This area is lit by a floor lamp in the far corner of the room with the outside wall and the bathroom wall. It has a bright light for the entire room and a second lamp that bends down over the futon that is lower brightness. Directly in front of the floor lamp is a small plastic end table that has seen better days. Along the Bathroom wall there is a three-person futon that functions as a couch and bed. Normally, on the inside of the futon would be another end table but it is absent in this apartment.

In front of the futon is a black, plastic, coffee table that is covered with burn marks from cigarettes. It is now that I should mention that the entire apartment smells of cigarette smoke even though the brochure for the building says that the air handling system would eliminate all smoke smells. On the coffee table its two wireless game controllers and a remote control. These of course go to the large flat screen television that is built into the wall.

The flat screen comes with 20 channels but additional channels, including an electronic gaming channel. I flipped it on and discovered that it had the standard 20 Channels plus the previous tenants had left a week of channel electronic gaming.

- 1- Company News Channel
- 2- Sports Channel
- 3- Preteen Entertainment Channel
- 4- Teen Entertainment Channel
- 5- Classics Channel
- 6- Drama Channel
- 7- Sitcom Channel
- 8- Soap Opera Channel
- 9- The Official History Channel
- 10- Police Channel
- 11- Traveling Channel
- 12- Paranormal Channel
- 13- Recent Movies Channel
- 14- Classic Movie Channel
- 15- Horror Channel
- 16- Mystery Channel
- 17- People Channel
- 18- Variety / Talent Channel
- 19- Game Show Channel
- 20- Talk Show Channel
- EG2- First Person Shooters Channel

With the tour of the apartment over I walked into the bathroom, closing the door behind me for some reason. I stripped off my street clothes and put on a Prole coveralls and I must admit it did make me feel different. Don't ask me to explain it but I felt different seeing the stars and moon of PGJ&J on my left breast.

I came out of the bathroom slowly and walked over sat down on the futon. I flipped on channel 8 and began to watch one of the soap operas that I have followed over the years. The next thing that I remember it was 4 hours later and my stomach was rumbling.

I got up off of the futon which was amazingly comfortable and went into the kitchen. Opening several cabinets, I found the one containing the food packs and I pulled out "I-1 Spaghetti and Meatballs"

I placed it in the microwave and pressed D which it said to do on top of the package and while it was "cooking" I grabbed up a prepackaged accessories pack. This pack includes a plastic knife, fork, and spoon. In addition, there are packages of salt, pepper, ketchup, mustard, hot sauce, sriracha sauce, and something called spicy meat sauce. The last package tastes like something between a BBQ sauce, steak sauce, and a Worcestershire sauce. Lastly, there is a package marked Stomach Pill, I would discover the need for that later.

Ding went the microwave and out came this red and white glob that neither looked like or tasted like any spaghetti and meatballs that I had ever had. It was warm and filling but far from tasteful. I disposed of the plastic tray and utensils.

I flipped through the channels and found that the Cincinnati Blade Smashers and the Indianapolis Netters were facing off in "Capture". The winner went to the quarter finals of this seasons contest. Four men on motorcycles with nets chase a drone to catch it. This time they drew an indoor track. This took place in what was an abandoned factory. This factory is fitted with jumps and obstacles other than the columns that were holding up the roof. In four rounds the Blade Smashers won 120 to 73.

After the match I decided to jump in the shower. I quickly discovered that if you wanted hot water it was best you get your shower early as the entire building ran off of a single hot water boiler. Getting out I found the towels left a lot to be desired but I eventually got dry and put on a Prole suit.

The Prole suit is a coverall and is made of a paper derived cloth. It is very stiff when first put on and definitely do not try to put them on with wet skin. I slipped on the flip flops that were comfortable to wear around the house.

I went back into the living room and pulled out the futon and made it ready as my bed. I slipped into the sheets. I fell into a fitful sleep, the sleep of a person sleeping in unfamiliar surroundings. I heard Corporate Security come through and eject a couple of Happy drug addicts that didn't make it in their apartments.

I finally dragged myself out of bed sometime in the morning having lost track of time. I went to the bathroom to do my normal morning rituals and to wash my face. I quickly found that the hot water again was in short supply.

I proceeded to the kitchen, going through the packages meals there. I ended up debating between oatmeal, which seems to have been supplied in plentiful amounts, and a McSausage Sandwich, "Just like the ones you'll find in the famous restaurant". I grabbed both since the oatmeal supply was overflowing.

I put the McSausage Sandwich package in the microwave and hit button C as the package said. Then I tore open the corner of the oatmeal and placed it under the water faucet, hitting the hot water button.

Within five minutes breakfast was consumed and disposed of down the incinerator, However, the McSausage sandwich was very bland because the sausage was under seasoned. The oatmeal was oatmeal and very filling.

I looked out the apartment and to see that I should be doing. Just then, I heard some of my neighbors on the walkway. I opened the door and talked with them briefly. Word was that the Pharmacy had a new supply of Happy Drug patches. Looking down into the courtyard I could see a long line going into sick call to get the prescription needed for the patch.

"You better hurry before they use up all the good patches," one of my neighbors



said to me that kind of snapped me out of my head space

With that I went down to observe closer the train of people being funneled through Sick Call and over to the Pharmacy. Among the legitimately sick people were tons of those who are addicted to the Happy Patch.

Each person presents their ID and give their apartment assignment. They are then ushered to one of the ten exam rooms in the back of the sick call trailer. Most of the patients are in and out in under five minutes with a prescription for something. They are seen by physician's assistants and nurse practitioners

Anyone needing more than a patch or some prescription are then taken out and loaded into a bus to be taken to a medical center in Miketown. At precisely 0930 the sick call doors are closed and locked. Within 15 minutes the bus of the hospital leaves, a tractor pulls up and pulled out

the trailer that holds the sick call exam rooms.

Thirty minutes later the Pharmacy is locked up and the tractor pulls it out to head off to the next precinct.

I walked over to Building A. Again, here there was a line, this time I joined the line. Then I noticed that everyone had their little carts which I had left behind in the apartment. A nice middle-aged woman then turned to me and asked where my cart was. I replied in the apartment, I guess, pointing to the building.

She admonished me for not having my cart saying that I would need it. She asked what building and I told her Building 3. She shook her said and said this is Building 2's line so that I had time to go get it.

I went back up quickly to the apartment, returning down by 1100 when Building 3's time was to begin but still I was like 50 people behind. I could see the line disappearing into the front of the building

and coming out the side door. Those coming out the side had their carts full of jumpsuits, linens, underwear and flip flops.

The efficiency kept the line moving. At the door a person scanned IDs, that brought forth from inside the trailer the person's order. You then wait for your apartment number to be called, you then go up to one of the tables there. They confirm your apartment number and hand you over a number of bags of clothing.

Looking behind the tables, I could see into the semi-trailer stacked up with bags all with apartment numbers on them. It's quick and efficient because there was no shopping or substitutions. Everything was ordered in advance and packed up for delivery.

The shout "Apartment 1037-30111" brought me back to the present. I quickly threw the bags into my cart and was out the side door.

I hauled my supplies up three flights of stairs. If nothing else I don't need to worry about missing time on the Stair master at the gym.

When I got everything into the apartment I set the loose bags on the table. I went to the cart and hastily, but neatly arranged the bags of clothing and linens on the shelves in the bathroom. Amazingly the shelves were practically empty when I started.

Then I tore open the backs of the commissary goods. Apparently, whomever I replaced was a smoker as one bag had the limit of six packs of Prole Cigarettes and matchbooks. It also contained a container of grapes, one of apples, and one of oranges. The second bag contained a half a dozen snack items, a tube of non-Prole toothpaste, a bottle of hot sauce, an instant cake, and twelve containers of Yellow Mountain drink. I placed these items in the cabinets and the refrigerator.

A few moments there was a knock at my door. When I opened it there was a man I saw in the lines downstairs. He was offering up some "Home Grown" (i.e. home grown, unregulated, marijuana) cigarettes. He assured me that the woman who lived here always made the trade.

I paid him two packs of the Prole Cigarettes and the package of Oranges for five home grown cigarettes. When he turned to leave I noticed that he had a Deaths Head Patch on his neck. These patches contain an illegal and very addictive form of opiate.

With the morning excitement behind me I grabbed up a Coney Dog Package out of the pantry and threw it into the microwave hitting the button. With the ding of the microwave I grabbed out the hot package, reaching in the fridge getting a Yellow Mountain Drink. The lunch was relatively good and the taste of Yellow Mountain Drink brought me back to my normal life.

After cleaning up the table from lunch, I went over and turned on the television. I flipped through the channels. Then I settled on the Sports Channel, watching the latest round of the Midwest Regional Drone Racing Championship. I just had to watch because my favorite drone pilot Jack Harkness was racing today. He was very handy and made it to the regional finals again this year.

Being too lazy to change the channel after the round of Drone Racing was over, I ended up watching a full baseball game. This one featured the Proctor, Gamble, Johnson & Johnson Red Legs and the Boeing Bombers. The Red Legs won 12 to 11.

Then the cramps hit. After spending some time in the bathroom, I finally took the pink stomach pill. With that settling down I took a shower, this time early enough to get hot water. I broke open a

fresh clothing package and got dressed in the plain blue Prole coveralls.

I was reluctant to try dinner, but my empty stomach growling prompted me to eat. I ended up selecting the fairly safe sounding Tuna Noodle Casserole. This time I took the stomach pill that came in the meals sundry pack. I then glanced at the clock and seeing it was already 17:30 I made my way down to Building C.

Upon entering Building C, I immediately noticed that this was a totally different semi-trailer backed into it. This one was well lit and features tables and chairs all about. On one were shelves full of games and next to it was a "Librarian" who checked them out and in. Along the opposite wall were several long tables with snacks and punch dispensers.

Looking around I found four distinct groups of people. There were a group of kids playing board games, ranging from Candy Land to the ultra-complex Conglomerate off in one section. Along the back wall on long tables were teens and young adults playing the latest collectible card game Monsters & Magic. The third group is a group of adults mostly playing traditional card games like Bridge, Euchre and Canasta. The last group confused me at first but I have come to call the grazers. They come to this even to hit up the snack and punch tables.

This went on until 20:00. By 20:05 everyone was out, the trailer closed up and being pulled out. With that I went back to the apartment and settled in to watch a couple of soap operas. With their conclusion I pulled out the bed and fell asleep.

I woke the next morning hearing the grumbles of a couple of my neighbors out in the passageway. I stepped out to hear them complaining that the fact that the Pharmacy is out of the new batch of Happy Drug Patches. They said the Pharmacy won't have any new ones til

next week probably. Until then they only have a far less powerful version of the patch.

I looked down into the courtyard. There must be some truth in it because the lines for sick call and the pharmacy are pretty much non-existent

With that crisis averted, I went back into the apartment picked up a breakfast from the cabinet and threw it into the microwave without even looking to see what I had selected. I opened up another cabinet selecting a coffee cup and a coffee machine cup. So, while the microwave whirred away making my breakfast, I proceeded to make a cup of coffee. I then reached in grabbed up the cup, the microwave breakfast, its sundry pack, and the hot sauce. Seeing none of my favorite sugar substitute, I elected to have my coffee black. I sat down to have my breakfast, starting this time with my stomach pill. I splashed my scrambled eggs and cheese, which apparently was my selection for today, with hot sauce. With the addition of the hot sauce the breakfast actually had some taste, not like the Misal Pav that I have at Delhi Subah Ka Naashta that I have most mornings.

I had just finished cleaning up from breakfast when I heard a lot of people moving on the walkway outside in the passageway. I opened my door to see a pudgy, middle aged, Caucasian woman who was startled by my sudden appearance. She then motioned to me and said hurry up as it was Miketown Day.

I followed the crowd downstairs, learning on the way that Miketown day was just that a trip to Avondale Miketown. I never read anything about it in the literature so I decided to join the expedition. I followed the crowd down to the main road where there were buses lined up and waiting.

Standing there I was swept up by the crowd and into a bus. In moments we were



on the road. The buses passed out of the precincts and off to Avondale. Avondale was an area that I was very familiar with, as it was part of my normal beat.

When the bus came to a halt it was on the edge of the main shopping district, the public-address system came on. The announcement was that the bus would be back and would leave for the Precincts in exactly four hours and that tours of the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden were forming at the rear of the bus column.

An older gentleman that was shuffling out behind me warned everyone that when the driver said four hours he meant it. Apparently, this gentleman had been left behind before and had to find his own way back home.

With that everyone got off and began to disburse, except a small group of family units that were under a sign saying zoo tours start here. With everyone off the buses roared back to life and sped off.

Each of the Proles, clutching the few dollars that they each had went off in search of bargains and items that are not

available in the precincts. Me, I went over to Lou's Spaghetti House and had my first decent meals in days. Then I went out and did some window shopping but I didn't see anything I would bring back to the precinct,

In my walking around, I noticed a few families that couldn't afford the zoo trip were taking advantage of the two parks in the area. They were alone for the most part as most of Miketown's kids were in school. Prole children were given a basic (6th grade) education via the television in each home. On their 13th birthday they are given a battery of tests by PGJ&J.

If any Prole children tested as exceptionally intelligent, then Proctor, Gamble, Johnson & Johnson would offer the parents a stipend. If accepted the child would be sent away to a PGJ&J run boarding school, never to see their families again. These children were trained in various specialties that are useful to PGJ&J or other megacorps, according to their test results.

Those of use to PGJ&J will be hired and put into a long term "internship", lasting from 2-5 years. During this internship, 40% of their salary was sent back to the corporation to repay for their education. Among these children trained by this program is Peter Ravenscraft the head of PGJ&J.

If they are not hired by PGJ&J they will be offered to other corporations, for their internships. In this case PGJ&J were fully compensated for its costs by the other corporation.

If the children's testing reveals a mechanical aptitude then PGJ&J they will be put into a vocational school, owned and run by PGJ&J. PGJ&J only takes the cream of the crop for this program and only those that they need at the time. Some will take years to get into this one to two year program depending on the demand for the child's abilities. After which

they will be interned for PGJ&J for 1-2 years.

As I continued to walk around, I noticed the way that the people on the street and the shopkeepers looked at myself and the other Proles. It was like we were invisible until we entered a store. Once in a store all the store employee's eyes were on us. The eyes followed us as me and my fellow proles wandered around shopping. It was like the shopkeepers were expecting trouble until they could get every dime of the Prole's money.

I made my way back to the bus stop about ten minutes prior to departure time. As I arrived the buses began pulling up. Just like I was warned four hours and five minutes after arrival the bus driver closed the door and without so much as a glance back he pulled the bus out heading to the precinct.

I looked across the aisle at an old woman sitting there. She tightly held onto a large ceramic peacock with the tail covered with tiny colored lights. The woman next to me and tugged on my arm and whispered "hoarder" in my ear, nodding towards the woman with the peacock.

"She will buy anything she thinks she's getting a bargain on," the woman continued. I nodded and sat back to bounce around in the bus for the rest of the trip.

Upon arriving at the precincts everyone went their own way carrying whatever small bags they managed to get for their purchases. The happiest seemed to be the children, however, having gone to the zoo or even if they just got to a real playground. Me I just went to the central courtyard and sat down to go over in my mind what went on.

Here I saw the children running and playing tag, hide and go seek or a stick ball version of baseball. I went over to a

small cluster of parents and tried to figure out why they elected to give up their votes to P,G,J,&J.

The younger parents didn't even seem to understand that they had a vote. The older parents simply said it was better than being homeless and it gave their children a roof over their heads. I pondered their responses as I went back to the apartment.

The words of the parents and my observations from the trip to Miketown gave me pause. I ended up running everything over and over in my head as I lit a marijuana cigarette and sat down to relax. I could not remember any times I felt I had treated a Prole as a criminal but I am also sure I treated them as invisible when I saw them outside the precinct.

The next I remember I heard the sounds of children. Opening the door, I saw the children of the complex leaving building C at the end of the weekly children's party. From the walkway I could see the semi pulling out the trailer marked as Children's Party on the side. Tomorrow it would be bringing the children of another precinct pleasure.

This brings me back to my thoughts on the children, no not mine but those among the Prole population. Proles have nothing but time on their hands. Despite the availability of free contraception and the highest abortion rate of any social class, they are by far the fastest growing segment of the population. Some of the factors that I noticed is the sheer amount of time they have on their hands, free living, free health care and the larger the family the larger the apartment. That may sound heartless but that's the facts that I have seen so far living among them.

The growth in population in some precincts has become such a problem for some corporations that the corporations are offering bonuses for women who volunteer to be sterilized after two children.

This has proven to be a large boom to precincts with large lesbian communities.

Then there is the Golden Child Syndrome. Every once in a while, a Gnome woman wishes to have a baby but doesn't want to ruin her figure. They will send someone down from the Corporate Nursery who will then select a child. Once the child clears DNA screening and screening for defect the parents receive a large stipend.

Others send nurses down to find health women in the right age group and then offer them a large stipend to act as a surrogate. These women are usually inseminated and moved out of the precinct quickly. They will be pampered, relative to being a Prole, until the baby is born. Once the baby is born she is returned to the precinct with a stipend.

The last way is usually involving what the Gnome doing what is called "slumming". Slumming means that a Gnome meeting up with a Prole female, usually for money. Sometimes they will become pregnant and then the Gnome will end up buying off the Prole female.

Rarely these mothers are brought into the Gnomes service as maids, nannies or wet nurses.

With all this running through my mind, I went back into the apartment and yanked down a commissary slip and placed a small order of things that I liked. I ate a quick dinner of Beef Stroganoff. I settled in to watch TV and fell asleep.

In the morning I woke up, jumped into the shower to lukewarm water, and prepared and ate a quick breakfast. I looked at the clock on the TV and I picked up the cart on the way out the door. I tuned right around and grabbed up the commissary slip off the table and back out the door.

When I finally got out the door and I looked down from the walkway when I saw the line out of the food supply building that filled the small courtyard. I went down to join the sea of humanity waiting in line for food.

The line proceeded quickly, the only question being asked by the man checking IDs at the door. Do you want Mexican or Chinese heavy menu. Upon entering the building I was directed to Line A and quickly was presented with a stack of prepackaged meals. They then took my Commissary Slip and out the side door I went.

As I made my way back to the apartment, I saw a Corporate Security Patrol doing a walking patrol through the complex. I commented on their appearance to a neighbor and they responded they haven't seen a patrol in over a month.

The rest of the day was quiet until late in the afternoon when there was a knock at my door. Outside was a mother and her two small children. I was informed that it was our floors turn to feed the Precinct's dogs and could I spare a ration pack.

I went back into the apartment knowing I would have a ton to spare as this apartment was drawing rations for two even though I was the sole occupant at present. I grabbed a hot dog lunch pack and walked back giving it to the littlest girl. I asked if I could see the Precinct dogs.

The mother went on doing collections as the children led me downstairs and then behind the building. There was a small structure back there built of pallet wood scrounged from the food and commissary trucks.

Inside this structure were three dogs. One was clearly a pit bull. The second one was some kind of Shepard mix and the last was a cute little beagle mix. The kids said no one knew where they came from but

they have been living here, supported by the precinct, for the last two years.

I then took notice that there were no pets in any of the complex. The children explained that pets, other than hamsters and goldfish were simply not allowed. I pondered this, understanding the company's reason but noting the lack of pets would lead to loneliness and longing among the Proles.

Just then two PGJ&J offices walked up shouting "Stay right there." They looked over the structure and wanted to know who was responsible for misappropriating company property. I was shocked as they were ready to haul us all in and destroy the doghouse. I managed to get the senior officer aside and explained who I was. He was skeptical until I gave him one of my cards and told him to charge the Cincinnati Riverfront News for the costs of the pallets and four additional pallets that were to be left off the next truck. In addition, they would pay any fines for the dogs being on the corporate grounds. With those assurances they left, giving the kids small chocolates they keep to pacify the children along their patrol routes.

After meeting the dogs, I went to the apartment with the sight of the joy in the kids faces playing with the dogs. The rest of my day went by quietly.

I had an early dinner and went down to observe the bingo party. I walked into the trailer to the sounds of talking, laughing and overall sounds of joy. The PA then calls out B10 ... B10.

Looking around I found four groupings. The first group was a small group of power bingo players. They were all clustered at the front right below the bingo wheel. Each of them has six to nine cards each.

In the main part of the room were the casual bingo players, This group spent as much time socializing as they did following

the game. They each had one to three cards.

Again, here was a group of grazers. They spend there evening around the snack and punch table.

The last group, which was located in the back corner, was more difficult to figure out. It was a small group but when someone in the crowd called out BINGO. Then it became apparent that this group was gambling on the results. Some were betting on which row would be the one to produce a bingo, or how many balls it took to produce a bingo, or if the bingo formed a straight line or diagonal.

Each Bingo winner got a \$2 commissary card. Some of the gamblers winning from \$5 to \$20.

I grazed some and then decided enough of this excitement for me and I went back up to the apartment to watch soap operas and go to sleep.

I had fallen off into a relatively rest full sleep when suddenly I heard shouts and smashing. I ran to the door yanking it open just in time to see PGJ&J Corporate Security hauling out the man had sold me the marijuana cigarettes.

I presented an officer my journalistic credentials and asked what was going on. I was informed that the individual was being arrested for not paying sales taxes on the black market sale of marijuana cigarettes. I asked the Corporate Security officer about the buyers, remembering that I had bought some of his products. His response was they weren't concerned about the black market just the fact that he hadn't been collected or paid.

I went back into the apartment a jumble of nerves. I considered smoking one of the remaining marijuana cigarettes but thought better of it. I ended up going to the medicine cabinet and getting one of the sleep drug patches I was there days

ago. I put it on and the next thing I remembered it was the next morning,

Realizing how late it was I grabbed up the cart and headed down to get my commissary order. When I walked up to the line I was handed a paper. Fearing it was a notice that the commissary was closed I immediately examined it.

Instead it was a corporate security order requiring all persons to be in their apartment buildings between 1300 and 1400 today. In addition everyone in building 4 must be in their apartments with the doors closed between 1300 and 1800. Looking confused one of the other people in line said it was rumored that PGJ&J has sold 200 votes to Ford-Revlon. That means that 200 voters would have to move, So I resolved to be out in the walkway at 1300.

At 1300 I was far from alone out in the passageway, I would see down the road behind building 4 came a huge crane and two Land Trains. The land trains consisted of two two story tall engines that were the size of a semi tractor and trailer. Behind them, each of them hauled two large flat cars that has tires that are over a story tall.

Nothing seemed to happen for some minutes until a very loud air horn blew. Then came the command over a loudspeaker for all tenants in Building four to remain in their apartments for their own safety.

A couple of moments later I saw the crane boom over top of the building. Hanging down from the crane boom were four tentacles. You could see a man in a small cage at the base of each. Each one went for a corner of the first half of the top floor. Once there the workers made sure that the attachments were made and secured. Then a green light lit the top of each of the little cars.

Then there were two blast of the air horn and Fire in the hole came over the PA System. I could see the small puffs of the



explosive bolts that held it to the lower floor exploded. It didn't seem like anything happened then slowly half of the top floor of building floor was lifted off. It was then slowly taken off lowered and placed on the first flatcar of the lead land train.

Once it was secured there the processes was repeated three more times as the top two floors of Building 4 were lifted off and loaded onto the land trains. With that the land trains pulled out at their usual ten miles per hour speed.

In the middle of this, while I was still awestruck, a young woman came up to me and asked for apartment 1037-30309. I said that the tenant there was arrested last night, thinking the woman was looking for arrested man. Her response was that he wouldn't be returning as that was now her apartment.

I came to find out that she was the daughter of a family in Building 2. She being 16 was eligible to vote but couldn't be counted as a vote for the corporation until the corporation fulfilled its obligation, the main one being her own apartment.

About an hour after the departure of the land trains two new land trains showed up each holding a section of fifty new, empty apartments. The process now was reversed except the working in the little

case came out and slid down onto the walkways, There they made sure the explosive bolts were secured. Then back up into their little cars.

Once the 200 apartments were replaced the crane and the two, now empty, land trains slowly drove off. I went back into the apartment feeling like a small cog in a big wheel.

I spent several hours just sitting, mindlessly watching television. I must say that I watched more television this week than I did the entire month before. It was the TV, however, that ate up the hours of boredom that made up the life of a Prole.

In the early evening I went down to casino night. I was struck upon entering the building that the interior could have been the casino floor in Vegas. Looking around I could see a Craps Table, a Roulette Wheel, several Black Jack Tables, a group of Poker Tables, and a Keno Board.

The place was packed with players and waters taking advantage of the free food and drinks, The food was fancier than I had seen in these events before. Also, since the Casino Nights were adults only each person was given two tokens good for alcoholic beverages.

Each player could convert up to one-half their commissary allowance and any cash that they had to chips. The player must do so within fifteen minutes of entry and that was all that the player could use to play with. This meant that most players could usually lose only \$10. The Casino sign claimed that one winner made \$202 in one night.

Seeing a room full of happy people, even those losing, having fun lifted my spirits and I never even planned to play a game. I did take advantage of the hors d'oeuvres, which I came to understand came out of the same kitchen as those used in the Casino in PGJ&J's Downtown dreamland. With those I had two glasses of

average white wine. Feeling better, I went back up to the apartment and had a good nights sleep.

The next morning I was up with the dawn and in line for food pickup. That was the highlight of the day. It seemed like the day would ever come to an end.

That evening was the Electronic Gaming Night. I think about every child between 6 and 26 was in the trailer playing every sort of video game that were on the market. I even saw Pokemon Milky Way being played and It was just released last week. PGJ&J does seem to take care to try to keep up to date with things.

As I watched and grazed I noticed that there were leftovers from last nights appetizers for adults, and pizza from a mike town pizza place as well as soda. This must have cost money, I thought. Then it hit me that the gaming industry was getting important research for free.

After eating my fill from this palatable snack bar, I went back to the apartment. There I crashed more out of boredom than exhaustion.

It was now Saturday, amazingly my week was almost over. I went down to pick up my commissary order and was handed the apartments ration book. This book gave each apartment the ability to purchase items such as tobacco, liquors, soft drinks, and specialty goods. Tobacco and liquors were strictly limited by the use of ration books while the remaining items were supplemental to anything that was purchased with commissary funds.

As I went back up to the apartment a steady rain began to fall. I looked into the non recycled trash bin to see if it needed emptied but I determined the one can there was not worth the effort. All the other trash that I had produced this well had gone into the incinerator, This was the source of heat and hot water for the building.

By mid-afternoon the showers had ended and I went down to the courtyard because I always loved the smell of freshness that was brought by the rain. That is when I first met Shera Nadia Ashikari. She was a young Indian woman who was just moving in when I saw her. She was lost and I directed her to building 4, as she got one of the new apartments in that building.

Shera was dark skinned still wearing a Sari rather than western clothing. She spoke the proper English with a heavy Indian accent. I only note these things here because I ran into her just before this article went to press. I ran into her literally as she came out of the New You Salon in Avondale.

I didn't even recognize her at first but she did me and thanked me for my kindness that day in the precinct. The reason I did not recognize her is because her skin was as pale as any Caucasian and her long black hair was cut short and a medium brown.

I asked her what happened and she responded in perfect English with only a slight hint of an accent. Most Cincinnatians would think she was English. She asked me only to call her Nadia now as she wanted to fit into society.

She said she had used all the money from her quality sewing service for the trip to the New You Salon, There she had them do the skin lightening, hair styling, voice coaching and set her up with some western clothing.

I had to applaud her for her determination and at the same time feel a bit sad that she had to go so far for social acceptance. I ended up taking her to lunch and driving her back to the precinct. It was my impression that she would not remain their for long as some corporation would buy her out to add a hardworking person to their organization of she would raise enough money selling quilts to buy back her own vote.

That night was the family dance. I went down just to see what it was like. The trailer was really nice inside, with a large dance floor for the kids to dance. The music was very kid concentric and lost of flashing lights.

There was a small dance floor for adults and adult child dancers. In addition there were a few arcade games where you can win the typical carnival stuffed animals. Up each side were chairs and at the entrance was a table with punch and snacks.

After seeing the fun of the Family Dance Night, I went to leave only to notice Detective William Bella of PGJ&J sex crimes unit. He was there in plain clothes and when he saw my quizzical look he drew me outside. He explained that he was just on "Pervert Patrol" and he said that each one of the family dances in the precincts had a PGJ&J sex crimes unit officer observing. He also assured me that 99.99% of these events produced no persons of interest. Even with that the corporation insisted that the patrols continue as part of the corporations requirements to look after the voters in the precinct.

It was back in the apartment, with the TV off and the bed out I reflected on my time here. It was a quiet night and I quickly fell asleep.

My last day! I got up quickly and went down and collected the food pickup. On leaving the food pickup building I ran into a man and woman who were passing out fliers. At first I thought they must have been from PGJ&J but they were not they were from Precincts 1 and 5.

I was handed a flier. I stopped to take a look and it was for a late afternoon religious service that would be held in the dock of Building C. The man said he hoped to see me there rather than going to the 1st Megachurch of Avondale. I then turned over the flier and these was the call to worship for the megachurch.



Apparently, these two, and maybe others, had taken these fliers, that had been dropped off outside the food distribution building, and printed the notice for the Precinct's church service on the back so that they could distribute them. The megachurch announcement said that there would be a church bus at the main road at 10 AM for the ride to the church service.

I went down to see after putting my food away. At 10 AM two church buses pulled up and picked up the about 50 people there. The unusual thing about this group is that most were in normal street clothes rather than Prole coveralls. In fact, they seemed to be better clothes and probably only worn to go to church.

My later inquiries determined that this was not an official PGJ&J outing. Rather, it was an initiative of the 1st Megachurch of Avondale. They sent buses around to various precincts to pick up several hundred worshippers.

PGJ&J did not support any religious ceremonies. They allowed Building B to be

used for services run by the local precinct. On Friday afternoons The few Muslims were called to service. Then on Saturday the Jewish community were allowed to use the dock for their services. Finally on Sunday came the Christians.

I decided to go down and see what the Christian service was like so late that afternoon I went down to the building. Stepping in I was immediately struck that, unlike an official PGJ&J event, there was no trailer. Instead there were some chairs and a table, that acted as an altar, were down in the bay where the trailer normally sits.

The Preacher was a lay priest who was part of Precinct 4. The service included lots of singing. Lots of praying, and pretty much a wide open ceremony.

With that behind me, I went back up to the apartment in an early dusk. When I got there I found a bouquet of flowers and a small box of chocolates. I scooped them up and took them inside. I put the flowers in a cup of water. Then I noticed a small note.

Apparently I had been recognized. The note was a thank you from the people of Precinct 3 for taking a look at their lives.

Early the next morning, I got dressed into my street clothes and took a long, slow walk to my car. I had to turn and look back at the complex and all the people there busy about their daily activities. I knew then I could never look at a Prole the same way again.

I had had my eyes opened about the Precinct's and their people and I hope my words have done the same for you. They are people just like the rest of us. Yes they may have a high addiction rate but I think that it was more of sheer boredom than anything else. PGJ&J, at least, tries to alleviate the boredom through its organized events and well thought out use of trailers.

I hope this article helps you understand the Prole and their lives.

CREDITS

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Cincinnati Riverfront News reporter Jane Smith spent a week living among the proles and ballotmen at the corporate accommodation compound of Proctor Gamble Johnson & Johnson.

This special report reveals that while they treat their people better than some other megacorps it can still be a bleak and boring existence, even for those who manage to maintain a positive attitude.

New background milieu for all editions of the Dark Conspiracy RPG, by Paul Riegel-Green



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