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Factories of Fiction

A good story cannot be devised; it has to be distilled.
Raymond Chandler (1888-1947)
O Pioneer! Pt. 2, ch. 4 (1913)

Prisons are factories of fiction. Stories are told and retold with every version getting more graphic, more violent, more brutal and more menacing. Every story carries with it some hidden message from the storyteller to the audience at immediate hand. Some mythmakers salt their own stories before the next felon mythmaker repeats it. If a guy gets into a minor fist fight on the yard he'll go to the hole telling people he "beat that dude down" or "smashed him out", then go on to talk about punches he never threw, blood that was never shed and screams never heard. Many of the epic battles retold never lasted more than 3 to 5 seconds before the cops start spraying gas and it's over, but the mythmaker turns his fight into a brutal brawl in order to protect his prison identity and build on a tough guy persona that the prison culture demands out of him.

Your manhood is defined by your willingness and ability to react to threats in the most aggressive manner possible. More often than not, one guy is attacked from behind or sucker punch and never had a real chance to fight back. Manhood isn't really displayed whether it is the victor or vanquished but is just part of the repetitive cycle of the mandates of manly behavior inside the prison environment. Sometimes the storytelling is psychological warfare, other times it is a means to boost a persons ego or stature. More often than not no matter the motives it is a form of protection in an environment where fear rules every action and reaction. Stories get repeated over and over flowing through the system until anyone who hears the tale – whether they met the participants or not – begin to actually believe the combatant can battle like a champion MMA fighter. It is status building and ego building.

The stories are part entertainment and part a form of protection. Other times the storytelling is done with the hope the guards will hear and write a "keep away" report