

Hot Showers and Earthy Soaps

I walk into my home in a state of exhaustion. My parents ask me how basketball practice was. I grunt out a “fine” and continue my straight and narrow path to my room. My unprovoked agitation only grows as I make what seems like a long trek to my room. I walk into my mess of a living space to see my unhygienic dog triumphantly on my bed. I fruitlessly yell at him to get off my bed, knowing that I’ll be having the same interaction the next day. I finally grab my towel and head for the bathroom.

While walking through the first door, seeing my tired reflection, and feeling the ice-cold tile on my feet offer some sense of relief. My shockingly average bathroom had become a place of comfort for me. The average brown cabinets, the average countertop, and the average sink. The simplicity of it is beautiful to my weary brain. I know this place. The warm familiarity of it invites me to let my guard down.

I reach the next door of my bathroom that leads to the shower. The extra door offers an even greater sense of relief as an additional barrier to the world I want to leave behind.

I always seem to be performing. From the moment I wake up to the moment I go to sleep, I always feel the pressure. Pressure to do well in school, write satisfactory articles for my school's paper, meet the standards set by my religion, perform well in basketball, and what feels like so much more. When being watched, I feel immense pressure to meet the standards and criteria I feel that I must meet. I expect much from myself, and I feel like others expect much out of me. I crave for time to not feel watched.

I strip down to my most vulnerable state and step into my detoxing chamber. I grip the handle and my hand, almost on its own, sets it to the perfect temperature. The hot water hits my body and brings instant comfort. I let a solid minute or two go by before I start my cleansing routine. The hot water cascading down my body seems to bring all my cares with it down the drain. My mind no longer races with my worries, and then in a state of complete focus on the task of cleaning my body, I find relief. I first start with shampooing my hair. My all-natural ingredient product fills my nose with an earthy, natural smell. The citrusy shampoo seems to go deeper than just my scalp. Not only cleaning my sweat-soaked hair, but going deeper, further calming my thoughts.

Being an involved kid is undeniably fun. Our school's extracurricular survival really depends on about forty kids. This is truly an amazing opportunity of small-town living. People like me who are subpar at everything are able to be successful in almost any field. This obviously can really wear a person down though. The involved few always feel like we have to be “on”. Many groups and departments depend on us, so we feel pressure to always do our best. Always look your best. Always act your best. There are very few times in an average day where it feels safe enough to let one's guard down.

After rinsing, I then move on to conditioning my hair. I can feel my hair and thoughts get softer as I scrub the product deeper into my hair. I then move on to the final step, a full scrubbing. My soar, dirty body appreciates the deep scrubbing as I wash away my body's physical and mental aches and pains. My exfoliating bar of soap makes me feel like a new man as everything washes down the drain. I let the hot water soak on my skin for a moment more before I flip my shower to all the cold. The shocking bite of the cold water sets me on my path to once again preparing for the real world.

I step out of the shower and wrap a towel around my waist as I stride out my door to my sink and mirror. I further my preparation for looking presentable in the real world when I stop in front of the mirror. I grab my container of Cetaphil lotion off of my imitation marble-like counter. I get a healthy scoop and rub the moisturizer into my face. I then get my stick of deodorant from the long wooden cabinet next to my sink. I put on a generous coat under my armpits, anticipating the busy day I will have tomorrow. I then try my best to get my sad excuse for a head of hair under control.

With my look finally presentable I step out of the bathroom. I then head for my room and rummage through my blue drawers to find some clothes to throw on for the night. I walk out of my room, head down the hallway, and come out in my family's living room. My time of complete solitude is officially over. My routine of putting on a show for all of those around me is back in motion.

Life can be very complicated at times. I would never trade my opportunities and abilities, but at times you can't help but wish you had chosen a different path. When you always feel immense pressure from yourself and others around you in every facet of your life, it can at times be very exhausting. It's easy to question if you are even making these decisions for yourself. Do I really like the person I am? Do I even have a true passion? Who am I really doing this for? Sometimes, a hot shower feels like the only time you can truly let loose. There's no pressure to look smart, cool, or fit. It's these simple moments that keep a person's head on straight. It's these moments that remind us who we really are, and why we choose to do the things we do.