

Excerpts from Mohamedou Ould Slahi's "Guantánamo Diary"

Excerpt #1:

The guards wanted to be baptized with the names of characters in the Star Wars movies.

"From now on we are the (REDACTED,) and that's what you call us. Your name is Pillow," (REDACTED) said. I eventually learned from the books that (REDACTED) are sort of Good Guys who fight against the Forces of Evil. So for the time being I was forced to represent the Forces of Evil, and the guards the Good Guys.

"My job is to make you see the light," said (REDACTED), addressing me for the first time when he was watching me eating my meal. Guards were not allowed to talk to me or to each other, and I couldn't talk to them. But (REDACTED) was not a by-the-book guy.

He thought more than any other guard, and his goal was to make his country victorious: the means didn't matter.

Excerpt #2:

(REDACTED) came, escorted by (REDACTED). He was, as always, practical and brief. "I am very happy with your cooperation. Remember when I told you that I preferred civilized conversations? I think you have provided 85% of what you know, but I am sure you're gonna provide the rest," he said, opening an ice bag with some juice.

"Oh, yeah, I'm also happy!" I said, forcing myself to drink the juice just to act as if I were normal. But I wasn't: I was like, 85% is a big step coming out of his mouth. (REDACTED) advised me to keep cooperating.

"I brought you this present," he said, handing me a pillow. Yes, a pillow. I received the present with a fake overwhelming happiness, and not because I was dying to get a pillow. No, I took the pillow as a sign of the end of the physical torture. We have a joke back home about a man who stood bare naked on the street.

When someone asked him, "How can I help you?" He replied, "Give me shoes." And that was exactly what happened to me. All I needed was a pillow! But it was something: alone in my cell, I kept reading the tag over and over.

Excerpt #3:

“Bring me to the court, and I’ll answer all your questions,” I would tell the team.

“There will be no court!” they would answer.

“Are you a Mafia? You kidnap people, lock them up, and blackmail them,” I said.

“You guys are a law enforcement problem,” said (REDACTED). “We cannot apply the conventional law to you. We need only circumstantial evidence to fry you.”

“I’ve done nothing against your country, have I?”

“You’re a part of the big conspiracy against the U.S.!” said (REDACTED).

“You can pull this charge on anybody! What have I done?”

“I don’t know, you tell me!”

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