

THERE'S THE RUB

(Chapter Five)

In Prison, much like any high school around the world, judging and gossip go hand-in-hand. Which leads us to our next story. Have you ever had someone play moral detective and ask you, "what are you doing talking to that piece of shit?" In prison, people are ostracized for crimes against women and children. So, many time's statements such as those are said on a daily basis, I'm surprised anyone talks to anyone. This is prison. There's no other place on earth where a closet is not big enough to hold our skeletons. Yet, the norm is to play moral detective just the same. But one thing is for sure, redemption is tailor made for the wretched and there's not too many places on earth where you can see it in action unless you're in prison.

One such person is Kenny. He lives with the guilt of his crime every minute of every day. If you could sit down and talk to him for just five minutes you would walk away amazed at how a caring, compassionate and an all around great human being could have taken the lives of his wife and two children, much less be in prison.

He sets a foundation each morning by reading his Bible. The rest of the day is all about other people. He spends hours each week making rounds in the HSU as their library clerk/law librarian and some cases each visit requires multiple hats that read Social Worker, Psychologist, Mediator, Legal Advisor, Motivator, Preacher...etc., al. The rest of his day is split between the library, being an informal tutor and the chapel.

In the library, I watch as dozens of people approach his desk to ask questions. Each time he stops what he is doing to accommodate each request. In all the years that I have known him I have never once seen him say, "no", not even to the pettiest or asinine of requests. Yet, he finds the time to somehow finish his own projects; albeit, at a much later date. That same selflessness is on display as a member of the Protestant Community as he is part of the congregation's praise and worship: despite his singing being compared to fingernails on a chalkboard and a cat's tail being stepped on.

Ken, always has time to lend a helping hand, a shoulder to lean on, a listening ear to bend, and a thoughtful word to comfort. He embodies the concept of maximizing the life of this prison environment, in spite of his surroundings he has. All the while, bending to help, comfort and teach.

The irony is, many prisoners don't like him because of his crime, but there's the rub...it's their loss.