

Date: 20 Jan 25

Subject: Hey! Listen! I'm real sorry it's been so...

Hey! Listen! I'm real sorry it's been so long everybody.

It's just been a real mixed up year, and the subject of this chapter made it a bit difficult in deciding what to include. I didn't want to step on any toes, however, I'm sure that by now you are aware that I like to portray my events in a bit of a humorous manner.

Due to the length of this chapter, and certain limitations I have regarding the tablet I'm typing and sending it by way of, I'm going to brake it up into +/- six sections approximately one week apart from each other.

As always, I truly hope you enjoy the different subjects I choose to share with you, and feel free to leave your opinion -- positive or negative. I'm always open for new ideas, and questions.

A MUCH NEEDED IDENTITY CRISIS*

*Identity crisis: A psychological state or condition of disorientation and role confusion as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations.

My second day in prison -- I had decided the night before -- was going to be spent in what I considered to be one of the few safe havens on a prison compound -- the library. So when the morning announcement was made over the intercom for us to report to the different places of interest or requirement I headed out with the crowd, and made my way to where the library was located at the other end of the compound.

I can't remember having ever visited a public library when I was a free man, except while I was in college. However, it was definitely going to become a place I would visit quite often, now that I was in prison. I would learn to use its contents as effective tools to see beyond the fences I was caged within.

As I aimlessly strolled around, observing the thousands of books with which to choose from, my attention was drawn to another set of shelves located behind the checkout counter. As I would learn later, those were the books and magazines an individual could only look at -- not check out. While I leaned over the counter, trying to get a better look at what was available, I caught the attention of one of the library orderlies -- who was a prisoner as well.

Orderly: Looking for anything in particular.

Me: No. Not really. I'm just checking to see what you have available.

Orderly: You new at this camp?

Me: Yeah, I just got here yesterday.

As I would learn later, my new found conversationalist was one of those types of guys who somehow knew everybody, and everything about what was going on around the compound. So when our conversation shifted to the subject of my educational background he informed me that the education department next door was in need of a math teacher for the G.E.D. students.

I certainly hope you can understand the reason for my hesitation in accepting his idea of me taking on such a job. Well, . . . I mean, think about it. Here I was the new kid on the block, and I'm just going to show up and start telling these prisoners what to do? My mind raced with the not-so-desirable results that such a job could have on my well-being. Was I going to get a copy of the emergency route layout of the building, so as to know which way to run if one of the prisoners didn't agree with one of the red X's on his paper after something like a harmless quiz? And, probably one of the most important questions of all: Just what exactly happened to the LAST math teacher? I'm quite sure the vast majority of you would agree that math is not a well liked subject.

Me: (said in a very hesitant, uncertain, and unwilling tone of voice) Well, I'm not sure if I would really be any good at something like that.

Orderly: You'll be fine. Come on.

He grabbed me by the arm, told the other orderly that he would be right back, and led me out the door. The door to the education department was only about 20 feet away. So it's not like I had all that much time to come up with a logical reason for the refusing of his idea.

Moreover, I didn't wish to interrupt him as he explained his plan.

Orderly: Just let me do all the talking.

Me thinking: I didn't recall having anything to say in the first place.

Orderly: I'm going to tell him I've already known you from out on the streets for a few years, and that I'm sure you'll be great for the job.

After entering the office of the education director, me and my self-assigned spokesman went through the proceedings of the customary salutation, a little bit of small talk, and lastly the request. With the same genuinely convincing portrayal as that of a highly paid lawyer, he informed the director that I was the man for the job. (While the whole time I'm standing there thinking how I just met this guy about 15 minutes ago.) The director asked for my I.D. card, turned to his computer, and poked the proper keys necessary to find the scores of my TABE test. (Another formality at the reception center that I failed to mention earlier back in the chapter entitled: What It's Like To Be Stripped Of Your "Eye"- Dentity.)