

Chapter 1

“Your son Is not able to do physically activity. It is already hard on him to sit upright in some situations and his throat is still heavy damaged. The treatment is going to cost about five hundred million. The good news however is that we are willing to keep him here and monitor him for free for as long as it takes for you to pay off this treatment. The government, as well as your insurance, should be able to cover about 1.2 million which is a lot more than we first expected but after some negotiation, we were able to relief you of that much. I am not asking you to make up your minds, but this could mean that you son...” The doctor went on as if Ryo couldn’t hear him from the other room.

Ryo Thorne was a 17-year-old boy who has been hospitalized for his whole life. He was a slender child and his jet-black hair was so long it went past his chest. He was around 5’7 and he had green eyes that seemed to glow compared to his pale skin that has never seen sunlight other than from the other side of a window. His parents told him how, at birth, he had a defect with his lungs. There was no treatment, and it did not allow for him to do as much as walk. Until the age of 14 he wasn’t even able to feed himself because the action of raising his arms almost exhausted him completely. At the age of 16, Ryo was transferred to the United North from Japan by Helicopter. A research company, York Labs, works withing the capitol and has reasons to believe they may have a way to fix his lungs and allow him to live the rest of his life walking amongst the rest of the world. York Labs creditability was concrete. The teams within the organization have solved so many problems the world had been facing up until this point it was almost laughable. The only thing more impressive than their track record, is the fact it was all completed in the year and a half they have been together. These impressive feats where reason

enough that Ryo and his family could trust in the effectiveness of this treatment they have developed. The only obstacle now was the five hundred-million-dollar price tag this treatment put upon his family's shoulders. Once the doctor had finished his report, Ryo could hear the smooth and delicate tone of his mother's voice from outside the room.

"Dr. Penn, I am so thankful for you bringing us out here as well as showing us the effectiveness of this treatment you so humbly suggested for us. However, I do not see a world in which me and my husband could ever get enough funds to complete such a treatment."

"I understand your concern Mrs. Thorne, which is why I have some good news. I suggest that you watch the news tonight with your son. He will need to see it to seeing that he will be on his feet within a couple months if all goes well."

What does the news have to do with my treatment? As Ryo thinks to himself about how it possibly could be linked, it seems his father had the same idea as Ryo and His voice could be heard coming from outside the room as well. "I do not understand. What does the news have to do with our son or the possibility of us getting enough money for his treatment?"

"For confidentiality I cannot tell you at the current moment." The doctor replied almost instantly, "However, I can promise that it will help you and your wife with the process of obtaining money and quicker than you may expect. Anyways I must ask to be excused I have a meeting to attend to and I cannot be late to it. I will make sure to follow up with you and your son tomorrow. Have a goodnight."

Ryo could hear the footsteps of the doctor walking away. The further he got the fainter the noise of his shoes became. Finally, the footsteps went silent, and the door to the room opened. Ryo's mother and Father had come in. Ryo's mother, Aiko Thorne, was a beautiful lady in her early

thirties. Ryo's parents had him at a very young age so both her and Ryo's father were young. She had Jet black hair just like Ryo and blue eyes. She wore a blue cardigan, black blouse, and leggings. She also wore a necklace that held what looked like a pendant. Ryo had never seen what was inside of the pendant. He believes it must have been a picture of her Family or His Father. Ryo's father, George Thorne was a taller man in his early thirties as well. He was originally from the United North before the two countries unified. He used to live in Canada and move to Japan because of his father's work. That's when he met Aiko. He was wearing a Black suit with a Navy-blue tie. He was taller than Ryo's mother and had Brown short hair. His eyes were the same glowing like green eyes that Ryo had however, his skin was not as pale. Ryo's father Approached the bed and took a seat on a stool situated next to Ryo.

"How are you son?" He looked serious.

"I'm ok, I heard about the money. I'm so sorry I put you both as well as Penny through so much. It feels unfair"

His mother smiled at him, "Oh don't you worry about a thing. I was almost hoping you didn't hear that conversation. I knew that you would just take the fault upon yourself."

Ryo's father also pitched in his face easing up, "And in any case you must have also heard about the situation with the news. It may not be as bad as we all think."

Ryo smiled looking at both of his parents, "Thank you. Both. I really do hope that you are right."

There was a moment of silence. It was finally broken with the door to the room once again opening. This time the person entering the room was Ryo's sister Penny. Penny was a year younger than Ryo. *She looks a lot like mother these days*, Ryo thought to himself, *but she still has Father's eyes as well*. It was very true that Penny looks almost identical to Ryo's mother

However she did possess the same green eyes as Ryo and their father as well as her hair was brown like her fathers. She cut her hair short leaving it down to her chin. She had the back tied into a small ponytail. She was wearing her new school uniform. She must have headed over after her club let out.

“Sorry I am late. I tried to get her as soon as possible.”

Penny looked like she ran all the way here from school. She was still trying to catch her breath as she spoke.

“No matter darling.” Aiko replied, “We are going to stay for dinner and watch the news with Ryo. The doctor insisted that we watch it with him there must be something big happening.”

Penny finally caught her breath and took a seat. She smiled and looked at Ryo, “That’s good with me it’s been a while since I fed this one.” She said this while keeping eye contact with her brother the whole time.

“Hey! I can feed myself now thank you very much!” Ryo replied with a bit of anger in his voice.

Penny just laughed. Ryo could even hear his mother chuckle under her breath. The family talked for the rest of the afternoon, passing the time until dinner. There were just like any ordinary family. There was nothing different just because one of them was in a bad situation. It seemed like the ideal situation for someone in Ryo’s position. He was happy and he believed that his family was happy as well with the circumstances that they had been put in. It was the ideal position at the time. Nothing could ruin this, and Ryo loved it.

After some time had passed, Ryo and his family had finally been able to eat and they gathered around the TV, waiting for the news. The sun was setting, and everyone was quiet.

Finally, with a humming noise, the television in Ryo's room came to life and displayed what looked like a conference room. In the middle was a table and 12 people sitting on the one end. There were microphones set up for each of the people sitting at the table. 7 of the people at the table wore lab coats while the other five were in suits. Ryo could make out a symbol on one of the lab coats. It was a Dragon eating its own tail. It was the symbol of York labs. He was able to make the symbol out because it matched the same on Dr. Penn had set on his lab coat.

"Look there, in the middle," Penny pointed at the man in the middle of the screen. "That is the prime minister!"

Ryo and his family looked at the man Penny was point at and sure enough it was the current prime minister of the United North, Roy Bole.

"Good morning all citizens of the United North. I am your current, and final prime minister Roy Bole."

That makes no sense. How could he be the last prime minister? There will be another election within three years. Ryo's mind tried to find an answer. He found it concerning. Through all his time living at the hospital, he would read a lot of books on school subjects. He especially took a liking to History books and every time a democratic leader such as Roy Bole said something about the final leader, it usually ended with the placement of a dictator. Before Ryo could speak up, Roy continued his announcement.

"Through the time I have been serving this country I have loved it through and through. We have been able to make so many changes to our still new nation and all for the better. This does bring up on large issues that now plagues our country because of this. Because of all the recent success of our country, with the help of York labs, We have been taking in a lot more refugees and

returning citizen from before the United states and Canada merged into our now great country. This has brought upon us a large problem of overpopulation which has been not just affecting us, but the rest of the world as well. Fortunately, once again our great scientists at York Labs have giving us an opportunity to fix this overpopulation problem hurting so many of us here in the United North. Before we tell you about the new plans for all of us going forward, I would like to ask that you hear them out. The idea may seem frightening to some of you, and we promise that there are other options for you that are not capable or unwilling to take on this new way of living. Now, without further ado, I present Peter Mandel, Head researcher from York Labs.”

After the prime minister stopped talking, the man sitting next to him stood up. He was one of the people in lab coats. He was tall and wore a tropical button-down shirt under his lab coat. His pants were black adidas sweatpants and he had his hands in his pockets. As for his facial features, he looks as if he was in his early 20s and had messy blonde hair. If it wasn’t for his lab coat, he could be mistaken for someone who worked part time at a fast-food restaurant. The man in the lab coat looks to the person sitting to the far right of the table and nods. The man nods back and pulls out a laptop.

“Thank you, Prime Minister Roy, and thank you all for tuning in to such a monument event for us all here in the United North. My name is Peter Mandel, and I am the lead researcher at York Labs. We have worked long and hard to find a solution to the slowly increasing population. However, we believe we have found a new way of running our country.”

Peter once again looks at the man with the laptop and nods again. This time, the room goes dark, and a screen is lowered. The light of a projector hits the lowered screen and displayed a lot of graphs and numbers. Once again, Peter looked at the camera and continued on.

“Within ancient history there was a civilization once lost to all records has been rediscovered from one of our research teams. They were called the Champions of the 359’s back when the forgotten civilizations were first being developed. The way they ran society was very much like a societal scale as most government systems however it was all-in on the idea of a social hierarchy so to speak.”

The slide change on the screen and showed a triangle. However, it was broken up into a huge number of segments horizontally to the point that it was hard to tell how many segments were there.

“The basic idea was everyone in the colony were ranked based on their strength. From there they were given perks depending on their rank. However, anyone of a lower rank was able to challenge someone higher up to move up in the colony. They believed the stronger you were the more useful you were to the colony. If you were strong enough to beat someone higher up than you, then you deserved to be regarded as more essential. However, if you challenged someone and lost...”

The slide switch again. This time, the slide showed a morbid image of a man penetrated by a spear. Ryo could hear his mother and sister gasp. His father, just looked away from the screen.

“You were killed. It was believed that if someone had the guts to challenge someone higher than them, they had the confidence and strength to win the fight. And if they didn’t win, it was showing just how weak they really were. They became obsolete. Worthless.”

Peter took a second and lowered his head. Ryo looked at his family. They all had the same face. Slightly afraid. There was no point in him asking them how they felt at this point. He already

knew, they were all already thinking the same thing as him. After a moment of silence, Peter raised his head.

“I would like to announce, that a month from now, we will be using this same ranked system. Everyone in the United North will have three options withing the month leading up to this system being put into place. One, you may join the ranked system. If you, do you will be taking to tests. One to measure your physical capability and one to measure your mental capability. You will then be ranked. Your rank will decide your salary as well as any perks you may obtain. You will be able to challenge almost anyone above you and the person is not allowed to turn down any challenge. You can use weapons to fight, you can even kill your opponent if they refuse to surrender. The rest of the terms and conditions will be present to you via email. We will also be holding Q&A conferences all this week and next week. Your second option is to become a referee, doctor, or engineer. All basic jobs will now be taken over by computer systems. However, we will still need engineers to fix faulty equipment, referees to overlook challenges, and doctors to heal the injured. We can only take so many people so make sure to apply while you can. Finally, you also have the option to leave the country. If you do, the new government will compensate you with five hundred thousand dollars per person and a plane ticket to any country that may take you.”

With that sentence the lights in the room turned on and the screen was retracted. Peter sat down and once again the prime minister took the stage.

“Thank you all for tuning in. I am aware of how scary this may be for you all, but I promise it is for the best. Make sure to check your email within the next hour. If anything changes you will be the first to hear of it. I bid you all good day and God bless this nation.”

And with that, the screen went black. The room in which Ryo's family was silent. It would stay this silent for a while, as the Thorne's all tried to process what was next for their family.