

**The Paradigm Shift: By Mohammad Khan**

**Month 3**

**Week 9**

“Is it true what they say” asked Reinhardt. “About the dead bodies in the lunch room?”

“Yes. It’s true.”

“Christ” Reinhardt chuckled. “I heard the Crows talking about it but I didn’t think they had the stones to do it.”

“Well, they did. My brother and roommate were one of the victims.”

“I’m sorry about that, Matt; I wish I could’ve done something.”  
I scoffed. “I doubt that. You would try to kill them.”

“I only threatened to kill them. That’s completely different than actually killing them.”

“Of course it is” I said under my breath.

I stayed in the same spot in the discipline room for what felt like months. It was the same as before. I worried about my friends. They have no idea what happened to me after I had attacked Jared. I tried sleeping but as usual, the constant lights made it quite difficult. I guess Daniel noticed me trying to force myself asleep. He pulled up a chair and sat beside me and tapped me on the shoulder

“You can fall asleep better if you don’t force it” said Daniel lively.

I woke up groggily. “Last time I was here you were barely alive.”

“Yeah, I’ve had a revelation of a sort.”

“Really, what kind? I may need one, if I survive this.”

“If I’ve survived this much, I can survive anything.”

“And that’s got you this far?”

“Yeah don’t believe me? Try it yourself.”

“I sure hope that cute mindset will help me.” added Reinhardt.

“It will work if you ever gave it a chance” said Daniel.

“Everyone dies alone. And no one is coming to save you.”

We sat in silence. Reinhard stayed in his chair emerging in and out of consciousness.

Reinhardt spoke kindly. “Thank you Daniel, for everything.” His eyes slowly shut. His bandage was coated in blood and his breathing came to a halt.

Another Crow came into the room to deliver food but it wasn't Jared. Jared never came. I feared he was killed by the big Crow.

Some time passes, Daniel is sleeping against the wall and I am still in my chair and Jared still did not return with my book. Reinhardt sat in his same old rotting wooden chair. I fell asleep for the first time but it didn't last long. I was woken up by the subtle but noticeable sound of dripping. It was a constant flow of something dripping. I looked around the room to see if there was a pipe leakage. I looked over at Reinhardt to find him keeled over in his chair. The blood trickled from his hand onto the tile floor. I couldn't hear his breathing. Reinhardt's eyes stayed shut and I feared for forever. I went to Daniel and nudged him awake. He went to Reinhardt to check for a pulse. I already knew what Daniel had found without him saying it. Reinhardt is dead. Daniel left his body as it was, dangling on the edge of his chair by the exit. I saw Daniel's eyes fill with tears. He didn't talk but I could tell he was hurt.

I spoke softly. "Are you okay?"

"Y'know he brought this upon himself" said Daniel chuckling. "Even though he threw me in here, I still respected him."

"He left you here to die. Why would you still like him?"

"He and I were best friends before all of this happened. Reinhardt would back me up in schoolyard fights. When Reinhardt was fifteen, his father was gunned down by a police man for a suspected weapon. We later found out that Reinhardt's father was holding a water gun. Reinhardt was playing tag with water guns when his father was shot. He never got over his father's death. And then two years later, he lost his mother to breast cancer, leaving him and his younger sister. When these "care facilities" began to emerge throughout the country, Reinhardt was separated from his sister. He and I were sent here. Reinhardt didn't like feeling helpless as he was with his parents. That's why he wanted control of the Crows, to control who lives and who dies. At first, I was on board with that but the Reinhardt became corrupt with the power he possessed. He threw me in here when he heard that I was telling people to fight for their freedom. In a way, Reinhardt was the gate keeper of this place. He decided who left and who entered. He kept those who tried to gain power in check but now he's gone, new management runs this place."

"I'm sorry Daniel. I had no idea he meant that much to you." Daniel walked over to the door of the discipline room.

"He was family. The last family I had left." Daniel began to pound angrily on the door.

The pounding echoed throughout the room. I saw the Crow burst through the room.

"What's going on he—" Daniel jumped on the Crow and began to beat him relentlessly. The Crow lay unconscious on the ground as Daniel stole his gas mask and baton. He turned towards me.

"Are you coming or not?"

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to end this."

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## **Week 10**

As I write this part of my life, I have to admit that my sense of time has left. I'm not entirely sure when events happen, only that they happen. My time spent here has injured me both physically and psychologically. I can feel my end approaching as I write my final chapter of my life.

Daniel led me through the hallways of the facility. He carried a baton but a hidden gun as well. He

handed me the gun.

“What do you me to do with it?”

“Use it when I get in trouble.” I had never carried a gun before, nevertheless shoot someone. We continued roaming the hallways. A guard turned the corner at the same time as we did. The guard was met with a baton to the face.

“Keep going” said Daniel hyped up on adrenaline.

“Where are we going, Daniel?”

“We’re going to take down the big Crow. If he’s dead, then it’s all over.”

“What about the other Crows? They won’t just disappear.”

“They will. They’re bought guards. They’ll run as soon as the money stops flowing.”

“You think the big Crow pays them” I asked struggling to keep up with Daniel’s stride.

“It would make sense. If he isn’t then I hope that gun is fully loaded.”

As we continued our brisk jog through the hallways of the facility, I noticed all of the cell doors were open. It must’ve been lunch time. Daniel was increasing the distance between us. My legs began to burn; I hadn’t eaten in a while. I couldn’t keep up with Daniel. He continued running without me. A Crow jumped in front of me and attacked Daniel. He threw Daniel into the wall cracking it. Daniel fought back by swinging his club erratically. I held the gun in my shaking hand. I aimed the gun at the Crow beating down upon Daniel.

“Shoot ‘em” shouted Daniel from the fray. “Shoot him, Matt!”

My mind and heart went to war within me. My heart told me to pull the trigger as an act of revenge, but my mind suggested me to be merciful. My hand shook violently at the internal war raging. “Matt” screamed Daniel. I pulled the trigger and shot the Crow in the back.

Daniel pushed the Crow off of him. “See it wasn’t so hard? Just make sure they don’t get back up next time.” Daniel took my gun and shot the crow in the head.

He took off and I followed quickly. We arrived in the lunch room to find it half empty. The inmates looked at us oddly. They looked at Daniel’s baton and at the gun I was holding. I saw many smiles and one kid who stood and shouted, “RIOT!”

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## **Week 11**

The entire room filled with chaos, bodies scrambling to join the riot or escape it. The Crows were thrown into the mix and were quickly overrun. I saw Katie and Rachel running towards us. I was about to run to them until Daniel dragged me to the side.

“Look, the big Crow is going to come. We need to kill him. Are you prepared to do that?”

I nodded instinctively.

“Good, because he’s here.” You could tell the big Crow had arrived because of the flying bodies. Inmates were being tossed left and right. The Crow was going for Daniel. Daniel slipped through the crowd and headed towards the Crow with his baton. I tried keeping up with him but there were too many people in

the way. I ran into Katie and Rachel.

“Matt, where the hell did you get the gun?!” asked Katie.

“And where were you?” Rachel said.

“I was thrown into the discipline room. Daniel Tanner was with me. We broke out. He beat up a guard and gave me a gun.”

“Wait that guy is Daniel Tanner”, said Katie surprised. “Well, at least our symbol of hope is real.”

“Yeah, I need to help him kill the big Crow.”

“Wait, you can’t go and kill him” said Rachel. “Then, you’re no better than he is.”

“Rachel, the longer I stay and argue the more likely Daniel will lose. The Crows and Ravens have done far worse than killing. They’ve tortured us, humiliated us, and separated us from our friends and family. I think it’s time he tastes his own medicine.”

I ran off without hearing the rest of Rachel’s argument. I pushed my way through the crowd towards the battle happening between the big Crow and Daniel. My hope for freedom kept me going through the thick crowd. I could hear the struggle between Daniel and the big Crow as I got closer. When I finally pushed my way through the crowd, I saw Daniel on the floor bleeding. The big Crow stood tired over Daniel with his boot on Daniel’s chest. He laughed.

“Well, this one put up quite the fight.” The big Crow looked at me. “Oh, do you plan on doing something as well.”

The big Crow kicked Daniel’s broken body towards me.

“Daniel” I whispered. I still had the gun but I was too preoccupied with my friend’s shattered body before me. This was the third time I could’ve prevented a friend’s death. I wasn’t going to let Katie and Rachel down as well. I stood suddenly and steadied the gun at the big Crow. The big Crow saw this and for the first time, I saw a look of fear upon his face. The look of fear amused me; a man so powerful yet so afraid same as me. I pulled the trigger but a Crow grabbed me from behind and made me miss. The shot went towards the ceiling. The crowd quieted and settled down. The Crows were able to suppress the belligerent crowd. The big Crow used this to his advantage. He whispered something to the other Crows. He picked up Daniel’s body and put him on his shoulder. The other Crows grabbed me by the legs and arms. The big Crow walked to middle of the lunch room and the Crows followed carrying me.

The Crows lined up the inmates on one side of the lunch room. The big Crow held up Daniel Tanner’s dead body, displaying it to the suppressed inmates.

“This is Daniel Tanner. The legend has ended. The tale that has been told for years has been a lie. Your legend is nothing more than a man.”

The big Crow ushered to the other Crows for me. The big Crow kept me by side with a strong grip on my arm.

“This boy was following Daniel Tanner. Remember what I told you what would happen if you disobeyed me again?”

The big Crow, still holding onto Daniel’s body, tossed me in front of him. I landed on my knees. The big Crow threw Daniel’s body to the suppressed inmates. His body rolled in front of them, lifeless.

“Bring this boy’s belonging’s from his cell” the big Crow ordered the other Crows. The Crows came back with 6 books. They tossed them in front of me.

“Now light them up” ordered the big Crow. All within a few seconds, the work of me and my friends turned to ash. The Writers of Libertalia is now ashes.

“Let this serve as a warning for you all; disobey again and you’ll lose your belongings. I’m letting this boy live for now but he will die just as all of you will die” said the big Crow pointing at each and every inmate. “It’s only a matter of time. Now return to your cells for further instruction.”

The Crows took each inmate back to his or her cell. Jared Holt came and took me to my vacant cell.

I arrived at my cell to meet the solitude and loneliness it now represents. Jared put my book on Patrick’s bed.

“I could only save yours. I couldn’t fit your friends’ books in my pockets. I’m sorry.”

“Jared, can I ask you to do one last favor?”

“Sure what is it?”

“Make sure you’re the one that comes and drags me to be killed.”

“Matt, I can’t do—”

“Just try. Please Jared. When you come here to take me to my death, I’ll give you my book. When you get out of here, publish it. The world must know what happened here.”

“Alright, if it means this much to you it would mean more to me if I had helped.” Jared was about to leave.

“Wait one more thing.”

Jared turned around.

“Do you have a pen?” He smiled and threw me a pen. Using Jared’s pen, I continued my story in the book.

## **Week 12**

I guess it’s true. Everyone dies alone and no one’s coming to save you. When the population of the world hit 10 billion, our resources were nearly depleted and climate change has been eroding our way of life. We were warned that humanity had only two years to get its act together before the world ended. I didn’t expect the reaction to be this cruel. It was so easy for everyone to turn on each other when knowing that doomsday was imminent and plan to save humanity demonstrated this. The plan to save humanity: get rid of the imperfect humans, those hogging the resources because of their handicaps and illnesses. Soon millions of disabled people were banned to purgatory in an instant while the rest of the world believed it was for the greater good. The label ‘disabled’ expanded to any human who uses any device that helps them function in the real world. People who require hearing aids, wear glasses, have pacemakers, were sentenced to purgatory. And I was banished with them to hell on earth.

The world is a cruel unforgiving place that doesn’t give without taking. I learned that lesson the hard way. My only escape from this hell was a dream.

