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# CHAPTER FIVE

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## *FORCED SUBMISSION*

*“Then the Philistines seize him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles they set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.”*

Judges 16:21-22

**M**y face was smashed against the cement floor because the correctional officers were pinning me down and cuffing my hands behind my back. I was being taken to lockdown again, for fighting again! Three of them escorted me from the yard to the front of the facility, then threw me into a holding cell. As soon as the cell door opened, the pungent odor of urine hit me in the face. The smell was strangely mixed with a hint of citrus from the orange peels that laid with the half-eaten sandwiches on the floor, which were leftovers from the sack lunches given to new arrests.

As the door slammed behind me, the face of the captain we called the “redheaded stepchild” loomed in the door window. “So you’re down here again!” he barked, causing steam from his hot breath to fill the glass. “You know as long as you don’t fix your @x!?!@! attitude, we will keep throwing you in the hole!”

He was right, but I still didn’t plan on doing any changing. He barked something else then disappeared, leaving only the sound of his combat boots echoing down the hallway. Since I was his most regular “customer,” I knew he would be on a mission to make my stay as unpleasant as possible.

As I looked around for a place to sit without vomit on it, I knew making it unpleasant wouldn’t be hard to do. I was not in a regular lockdown situation. I would be held in booking for my entire disciplinary time. This facility didn’t have separate segregation housing for females, so when one of us got in trouble, we were taken on an all-expense-paid trip to booking.

But it wasn’t exactly what I would call a vacation. The noise was constant: 24/7 with people screaming and crying, begging for phone calls, meds or a shower. Some would bang endlessly on the metal doors, while others would yell at them to shut up. I got up and went to the cell window just in time to see a drunken woman run past, stumbling down the hall while resisting the cops. Quickly, the “redheaded stepchild” and one of his evil twins jumped her, the twin stomping on her feet until she was subdued. Now whimpering, she was dragged across the floor by one arm into a cell, the door slammed behind her.

This is how it went in booking. As I turned to walk away from the window, a guy in the cell across the hall signaled me. I stopped and he flashed me, hoping I would do the same in return. Disappointing him, I turned away. "Not interested," I thought. I had more pressing problems. Like how long was I going to stay here this time and when were they going to bring me a mattress and a blanket. It didn't matter that both would be filthy. I was cold and tired.

For me, this was the hardest part, the freezing cold air pouring in from the overhead vent. Everything my body touched was frigid: ice cold metal bench, freezing cold cement floor. I grabbed the roll of toilet paper and started throwing gobs of wet tissue at the vent in an attempt to block off some of the air, wondering all the while if there was enough paper to do this and wipe the toilet so I could use it.

I admit that I was tired of making my regular visits to lockdown. It was starting to wear me out. It would be totally different if they put me in some cushy segregation cell like the men got. They were housed in a room with a bed and blankets, reading and writing materials and, of course, a shower. Now, that I could get used to! Then it wouldn't matter how many times I got into trouble because it would be like going to my very own hotel room! But there was to be no stay in the Hilton for me. Every time I acted up, off to booking I would go!

I'd been a fighter my whole life. I was an arrogant, aggressive, loud mouthpiece of dirt that always ran the show. I never let anybody tell me what to do. I thought I was all that, and then some. Now, I was locked up and surrounded by a bunch of cops who thought they could do as they pleased. My response to them was "I don't think so," which only got me thrown in the hole. On the other hand, I wondered why God wasn't sticking up for me. After all, I was reading His Bible. In fact, I was reading it all the time! Didn't this mean He was supposed to get me out of these kinds of situations?

I walked over to the window, avoiding eye contact with my new "friend" across the hall, and peered out the glass in hopes a trustee would go by and pass me a cigarette. "When did I start that fight?" I wondered, my mind retracing the time. "Hmm, it must have been about one o'clock," I recalled with disappointment. This meant the trustees wouldn't be down in booking for hours and I needed a cigarette now!

Spinning around with a kick, I sent a now stiff bologna sandwich skidding across the floor. The last time I asked someone to sneak me smokes, I ended up in a WWF wrestling match to try to keep possession of them. The captain and the lieutenant teamed together against me, myself, and I. At the thought of that event, I giggled, but the memory gave me only brief joy. Quickly, I came back to the reality of having to go through this again. How many days or weeks would it last this time?

Thinking on it, I turned back around, leaning against the cold iron door. I looked out again into the now vacant hall. Where was a cop when you needed one? I knew it would take forever to get a stinking mattress. It always did. The more I thought about it, the more irritated I got.

Just then, I could hear the door to medical being opened. They were bringing in the “rat” I got into a fight with. She was screaming something about her rib being broken and her girlfriend, who was in the fight also, was right behind her. She kept hysterically yelling her lesbian lover’s name over and over. The rat was my co-defendant. I just found out she was going to testify against us in Federal Court. Suddenly, I felt sick, not only at the thought of this, but also because I hadn’t eaten all day and could feel my diabetes kicking in.

Plopping down on the sticky floor, I quickly resigned myself to the fact I wouldn’t be getting food any time soon. So, instead of worrying about it, I sat there dwelling on my co-defendant’s betrayal. Soon my hateful thoughts started to well up in me until they overflowed. Leaning over, I put my mouth up to the crack of the door and began chanting, “Bring me a mattress and blanket” over and over, but with no results. Finally, I stood up and turned around to mule kick the door. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The noise echoing in the hallway sounded like mortar fire. “One of you useless @#! !@x! cops bring me a @#@! x! @ blanket NOW!!”, I screamed. Then, far off at the end of the hall, I heard their laughter. They were, on purpose going to let me freeze just to teach me a lesson.

Hours passed as I listened to those two women screaming and crying. As for the cops, whenever they went by my window they would taunt me and I, of course, always said something not so neighborly back. Finally, tired of that game, I figured if I went to sleep, I could sleep my lockdown time away. So, I lay down on the 10” wide metal bench trying to balance there as the cold invaded me to the bone. When I awoke from my restless nap, I ached. My clothes and hair stunk like the foul water in the toilet.

Yeah, for sure I was tired of it. I would have given anything to be back in my bunk smoking a cigarette. How many times was I going to put myself through this before I got it right? As I continued to think on it, my stress rose. I could feel my blood sugar plummeting. Sure enough, minutes later, I went into a seizure.

I don’t know how long after, I awoke to find myself sitting upright with a cup of sugared Kool-Aid in my hand. I heard the nurse say, as she was being escorted from my cell, my blood sugar level was 69, dangerously low. That’s when I noticed a sack lunch sitting by me.

“It’s about time!” I spat in disgust at the C.O. who was with her. My outburst only prompted him to slam the door as he left.

Man, was I tired. I was totally worn out. I was fighting everyone: cops, inmates, the courts, and though I didn’t realize it, God himself. I felt weak, like I couldn’t take it anymore. Slowly, I slumped down against the cold cement wall. I finally reached the breaking point, which was exactly what God was waiting for.

At once, I was aware that He was right there, because I felt shame. His presence brought the conviction that all my actions were way out of line. As I sat there feeling His hand of chastisement, I clearly heard Him say that He wanted me to stop fighting and surrender to my captivity. The thought of it made my flesh squirm. Surrender was not in my vocabulary. My pride could never allow me to do so.

Shaken, I took another drink of the Kool-Aid, then pulled a bag of Fritos out of the sack lunch. As I munched on the chips, my blood sugar began to rise and my mind got clearer. How could God possibly expect me to do what He was saying? As I pondered on this, I also stopped to take a real good look at my surroundings. My little cell was cold and disgusting. Down the hallway, I could still hear my adversaries battling with the guards. It seemed nothing changed, but suddenly everything was very different. A light went on. I understood what was really happening. All this time I refused to yield, so God, through my circumstances, was playing “uncle” with me, twisting my arm until I would say, “I give.”

Revelation flooded in. Instantly I knew God had appointed this nasty booking cell just for me. In fact, everything I was going through was being used by Him to bring me into submission: the cops, and even the girl who would testify against me, were all acting in accordance with God’s sovereign plan. The awakening was so impressive that I was actually left with a desire to behave, and cease from my rebellion.

Right then, I heard footsteps coming down the hall. Now, feeling totally energized, I jumped up and raced to the window in time to see the back of a C.O. as he passed by. Here was my first chance to obey God. Trying to sound as sweet as possible, I called out to the officer,

“Hey, hey excuse me.”, I said. But he ignored me and kept going. Irritated, but still trying to be polite, I continued.

“Hey C.O., do you think I could get a Bible?”

This made him stop. Slowly, he turned around with a surprised looking smirk on his face and said, with a lot of emphasis,

“No, you can’t have any books in there.”

“That’s all right,” I replied, holding back the slur of obscenities rising in my throat. “God will bring me one.”

At this, he spun around laughing and swaggered away. As I watched him go, I clenched my fists in frustration, trying not to explode. I could tell this surrender thing was going to be very difficult. So, still feeling more than slightly peeved, I prayed out loud,

“Show him, Lord, get me a Bible!”

The next day they actually took me out for a shower. They even gave me clean khakis to put on. After I finished, I went to throw my stinking uniform into the clothing barrel and noticed it was empty. This was unusual because it was always overflowing with dirty uniforms. As I stepped up to dump in my clothes, I looked down and, lo and behold, at the bottom of the barrel was a Bible! A sign? A miracle? God answered my prayer! As I reached down to claim my precious prize, I firmly decided to do whatever God told me, no matter what.

I still failed and took more trips to booking after this. However, the difference was I spent my time there praying and singing to God instead of wrestling with the cops. Meanwhile, as the months went by, the problems I had with my attitudes and behaviors began to disappear. Good characteristics took their place. I also began experiencing a realization that my entire captivity was in some strange way being used by God for my benefit. Though I couldn’t see how at the moment, God would definitely show me over time. Little did I know then that I was on my way to experiencing things I would never dream could happen to me.

