

Greetings,

So, you may have been wondering what all this business about "Helping my novel save the world" is and why I have decided to let the public read my work for free.

I wrote this novel with the intention of encouraging readers to help the people who suffer in Uganda, Africa. It is my goal to make readers feel a desire to donate to the World Vision Organization while being entertained by my work along the way even though the plot has nothing to do with the country itself. If you would please, donations can be made via the World Vision Website, www.worldvision.org/

Whether or not you choose to donate will never change the fact that my novel will always be free for the public to enjoy. Though the novel is 100% copyrighted to me, I give permission for anyone to link to my blog, download and store my PDF files for as long as they wish, and to cite my work for educational purposes under the condition that they do not modify any of my files in any way.

Nevertheless, I hope that you enjoy my work and will return to my website to read more chapters. If you really like my book, then why not pass it on to a couple of your friends? On the contrary, if you don't like my style, pass my website on to some people who you don't like so that they will waste their time. Either way, several years of my life have gone into this novel and I hope that people in Africa will ultimately benefit from it.

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DID YOU KNOW THIS ABOUT UGANDA?

According to *Scenes From the Sidewalk* at <http://ukrainestreetchildren.blogspot.com>, two generations of children are being deprived of an education.

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Chapter 9

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We robbed stores. Lots of them. More than I can even remember gracing with my presence. The seven Hydes and my monster self obtained thousands of dollars worth of items during our several carefully planned attacks on the monopoly corporations. Computers, televisions, videogame systems, clothes, watches, iPods, CDs, and furniture were only some of the items that we stole. We also took food from grocery stores, building supplies from hardware stores, and just about anything else that we wanted. We exploited every source that we found of interest regardless of what items they had, and whenever we extorted a place, we took as much as we possibly could. We were never caught.

My adrenaline rushes lasted for days at a time. Once I began the glorious act of thievery, the special chemicals would just keep pumping and pumping, even long after I was done playing the game of secret illusions. At the end of the day when we were back at our hideout, I would sit in a giant, fuzzy purple couch and just let the extra chemicals put me into a trance. My body would shut itself off, but my mind would still be completely aware of what was going on in the world around me. Even if I had wanted to, I wouldn't have been able to fall asleep. I'd could only sweat uncontrollably and sense the involuntary twitching of my inhumane muscles. Chikara was the only person who seemed to notice that my body was

something special.

“Why are you still sweating? The raid has been over since last night.” It was almost noon the next day.

“It's just the way that I am, Hyde seven,” I said. “I'm always ready to go get more stuff.”

“Stuff?” Chikara asked. “Stuff is what you put into toy animals. What we take is something more than stuff. Our reap is life. Life is what we steal. Good life.”

“True,” I answered. I brushed my arm along my forehead and then rubbed the sweat onto my shirt. “That's what you're looking for then? The good life?”

“Yeah,” Chikara replied. “That is why we Hydes steal things. There are lots of items out there in the world that we cannot obtain on our own. We must work in groups against the corporations that try to make us dependent on them. Instead of playing ‘fair’ and buying ‘the good life’ from the companies, we just obtain it by our own means. Any item in the world, anything at all, can be held with our own hands and treasured.”

“That's quite deep. But are items really the key to this ‘good life’? Is it the only way?”

“Yeah,” Chikara said. “Obtaining the right kinds and amounts of possessions is the only way to truly be happy. If a person says that they are happy and yet they have no items, then they are deceiving themselves. Materialistic objects are certain. Emotion is uncertain and constantly changing. Why place your values in what you aren't sure if will be there tomorrow?”

“There's trust,” I said. “You can trust in people to be there for you and to love you.”

“Trust is one of those blindfolds that people put over their eyes. It is a fake feeling of security. In reality, lovers cheat on each other, lie to one another, and are not anything that they are trusted to be.”

“True, but aren't you generalizing?” I asked.

“No,” Chikara replied. “I'm not making it up. Everyone cheats. Everyone at a couple of points in time wishes that they were with somebody else. They catch another man's eye or brush against another woman's arm and temporarily change their wants. The only way in which people differ is to the extent in which they cheat, but everyone still cheats and breaks the false support called trust. Unlike people, materialistic possessions do not betray.”

Suddenly, despite all of Chikara's false assumptions and misguided philosophy, I was tempted to ask him the question about the wishing well. So, I did.

“Hey Chikara, what do you think happens to a man when he falls into the wishing well?” I asked. “Do you think that every desire of his will be fulfilled or that the kind waters will drown him as he does his wishing? Both cannot occur, so what do you think happens?”

“What?” Chikara asked.

I asked him the question again. After thinking about it for a few moments, the Hyde was able to come up with an answer. “Every desire of his will be fulfilled of course. He can wish for anything and everything that he wants and if the waters try to drown him, then he can just wish for a big boat to keep him on the surface. Why did you ask me such a dumb question?”

His answer was so obvious. But was he right? Surely, the old man wouldn't have meant

for the answer to be so simple... Chikara had to be wrong... Somehow...

"No reason," I answered. "I was just curious."

"Okay," Chikara said. "But since I answered your question, you have to answer mine now. Why do you always take so long to calm down after stealing something?"

"I don't know," I said. I balked for a good fifteen seconds. "It's just... I don't calm down. The moment that I start to steal something, I get that nervous feeling... the kind of emotion where I'm feeling both scared and immensely powerful at the same time. It just comes into me and doesn't go away. It's like a light switch that has been stuck on; the light doesn't turn off until the light bulb dies. And when you need light again, you have to put a brand-new bulb into the socket. Then you have to wait all over again for that bulb to die if you want to turn the light off. And the cycle repeats over and over again, every time that you need light. My adrenaline works a lot like that."

"But if you stop stealing," Chikara suggested, "then wouldn't the adrenaline problem stop too?"

"Probably," I said. But that wasn't the right answer, at least not the one that I wanted to choose. "Here's the catch to the whole situation though; I've learned that I like the adrenaline. I don't want for it to stop."

"What you saying?" Chikara exclaimed.

"The adrenaline is not a problem," I told him. "I've learned to love it. That's why I steal things."

Chikara gave me an odd look. "So, the reason why you steal is not for the items or 'the

good life'? You steal only for the thrill that you get as you commit the crime?"

"Yes. That's right."

Hyde one stepped into the room. Apparently, he had been listening in on our conversation from the nearby hallway. He had a grave look on his face as if he were disappointed in what had been said between Chikara and me.

"I'm not sure how to react to what you just told Hyde seven," he said, looking directly at me. "However, it seems as though you do not have the potential that I thought that you did."

My eyes perked up to meet his. "What?"

"You aren't the kind of person who I thought that you were. You aren't like the rest of us for some reason. A black sheep is what you are."

I didn't know how to react, so I stayed silent.

"It's really not that big of a deal though, that you can't become a Hyde," the leader of the thieves continued. "You are a great thief and all, but you aren't of the right make and personality to become one of us."

Chikara butted in. "Are you sure? He can't become a member?"

Hyde one nodded his head. "Yes. He is far too different."

The whole situation was strange. I didn't feel hurt at all by his attacks. I felt indifferent to everything that was happening and I really didn't care that my personality wasn't good enough for him.

"All right," I said. "I guess that I'll leave then."

“Not yet,” Hyde one said. “It's pretty late. You can stay with us for tonight if you'd like. Just leave tomorrow morning.”

I thought about what he was saying and knew that I was trapped. You see, Hyde one wasn't offering me a night's rest just to be a nice guy; he was offering me the “privilege of staying” so that he could keep an eye on me and make sure that I would not do anything such as call the police. Now that I was exiled from the Hyde clan, I was nothing more than an enemy to them and a threat to their secrecy. Without a doubt, the seven Hydes would attempt to kill me in my sleep in order to ensure my silence. The point was, they were dangerous folk and I was no longer in their brotherhood.

“Sure, I'll stay for the night,” I said. “But really though, can't I stay with all of you for longer even though I can't become a Hyde?”

I had no choice but to accept Hyde one's offer. For if I had refused, then Hyde one would have known that I knew his plan. I used the second sentence of my response in order to throw him off in uncovering the true amount of my awareness. By staying the night, I would buy myself a couple of hours to plan and execute an escape.

I need sleeping pills... I thought. Lots of them.

“Well, you can stay only tonight,” Hyde one said. “Then you have to leave tomorrow morning. You aren't a Hyde and you don't belong here.”

“All right,” I said. “Agreed.” Sleeping pills... Where do they keep them?

I excused myself from them and then walked into the bathroom in order to find some. I took a long time going number two and then flushed the toilet. As I washed my hands, I let

the water rush loudly in order to cover up the noise of me opening up their cupboard above the sink. I looked through all of their bottles of pills. Ibuprofen, magnesium tablets, vitamin supplements, but no sleeping pills. Nothing that I could use to my advantage except for some Beano. I grabbed the container and poured a handful of them into my pocket. Perhaps they would come in handy if I failed to find sleeping pills anywhere else. I turned the running water off and then dried my hands, hoping that the Hydes wouldn't notice that I had relieved them of their digestion enhancing pills. But I would still have to find sleeping pills. They were the only things at that moment that I could think of that would help me screw the Hydes over and escape.

You see, my plan was to feed each Hyde enough sleeping pills in order to put them into a deep slumber, a slumber so deep that I could rob each and every one of them of some important possession of theirs. Then, I would abandon them and prove that I was something greater than a Hyde. However, my plan soon became futile. I could not find sleeping pills anywhere inside of the bathroom and the time for my death was drawing nearer by the second. I knew that if I did not escape the doorless, windowless building, then the Hydes would murder me.

“What can I do?” I muttered under my breath. The door handle to the bathroom felt cold and my hands were still wet from washing them. Nothing was right in my life.

Suddenly, I caught an interesting point about the building that I was in. If it was truly abandoned, then why was there still running water and electricity? How had the Hydes acquired such resources? Had they lied to me when they had told me it about state of the

building or were the Hydes greater thieves than I had ever anticipated?

“Interesting...” I whispered to myself. “If they have water and electricity, then perhaps they have a land line phone too. I know that Chikara and some of the other Hydes have cell phones, but if they have a land line phone as well, then it will be much easier for me to call the police on them.”

I knew that it would be difficult to try and call the police. Without a doubt, the Hydes would be expecting for me to try and locate their phone. In order to even have a shot at dialing the three important numbers, I would need to create a distraction. I would need to cause mayhem for all of them.

“What can I do?”

I found myself walking aimlessly into the kitchen. A box of cold pizza sat alone on the table, so I helped myself to a slice. As I chewed the smelly cheese in silence, I noticed that the Hydes owned an oven as well. I walked over to it, turned the dial to the highest amount of heat and then turned the oven on. Within a few hours, a fire would start.

“Hmm... What else can I do?”

I looked around for some other means of creating chaos, but there was nothing else that I could think of that I could use to my advantage. So I left the kitchen and then wandered over to the living room where Chikara was sitting.

“I'm really bored right now,” I said. “Want to play some video games?”

“Sure,” Chikara let out. I'd woken him from a nap.

We played for about two hours. The whole time, I felt my body getting hotter and

hotter, but I thought that it was because of my immersion with the intense video game. In the back of my mind however, I knew what was happening. Eventually, we heard a huge crash from behind us. Chikara and I got up from the couch and sprinted over into the kitchen.

When we reached the entranceway, we saw a living hell. Where the oven had been was a giant hole in the floor and fire surrounding everything around it. The wooden cupboards above the oven had also caught and were happily contributing to the blaze.

“What happened?” Chikara exclaimed.

In the midst of his confusion, I took the opportunity to eliminate him. I sent the palm of my hand into the back of his skull and knocked him into a state of unconsciousness. I discarded my plan of searching for a landline phone as I stuck my hands into his pockets and stole his cell phone. Once I had the bright LCD screen in front of my eyes, I dialed 911. After somebody picked up and said “Hello?”, I hung up on them without saying a word. The first part of my mission was accomplished. The police would arrive at the hideout in a matter of minutes.

The second part of my plan however, would be far more difficult to bring about than the first part had been. As I expected, the rest of the Hydes entered the kitchen.

“What the-” Hyde one yelled. Before he could finish his sentence, I had already punched him in his Adam's apple. He choked, lost his balance, and then fell to the floor next to Chikara.

The rest of the Hydes instantly tried to swarm around me, but I was too fast for them. I ran to the opposite side of the kitchen and then jumped down the fiery hole that the oven had

created. Luckily, I landed on the burning oven below with my feet because the bottoms of my shoes melted the instant that I made contact; it was better than burning my entire body. The hot rubber burned through my soles and destroyed the skin on the undersides of my feet, but I did not care. None of the Hydes would be crazy enough to follow me.

I screamed in pain as I jumped off of the burning oven. When I reached the colder ground a meter away, I grabbed my burned feet. The rubber of my shoes and the skin of my feet were fused into one! Man, that hurt...

After recovering from the initial shock, I looked through the ring of fire up to the floor above me. All of the thieves, including the furious Hyde one and Chikara, stared at me in disbelief.

"He's crazy!" Chikara shouted.

I laughed at them for the cowardice. The jump down to me wasn't that far and the burning oven was only five or six hundred degrees hot. "What's the matter? Aren't you going to come down here and get me?"

The Hydes exchanged confused looks with each other and did not buy into my taunt. Instead, Hyde one looked me in the eyes and then uttered the most important words that I'd ever heard.

"I think that I've found you a name," Hyde one said. "The way that you so creepily smile as you do the strange and dangerous things that you do... Your name should be Asylum."

My world went silent. Asylum? That is what I was? Insane? Crazy? Unfit to live in

standard society, so I deserved to be exiled from it? My fingers trembled at the thought of the name.

“Asylum?” I yelled up at them. Somehow, I managed to rise up and stand on my scorched feet. “That's what you think I am? Psycho?”

“Yes!” Hyde one screamed at me with a volume equal to my own. “Your mind is broken!”

“No, it's not! I'm really smart!” I countered. “I defeated you all! You were going to kill me tonight, weren't you? But I saved myself and outwitted the entire Hyde clan!”

Apparently, they didn't like what I said because the next thing that happened was that I got shot. That's right, Hyde one whipped out a pistol and nailed me right in the gut! Talk about a cheap shot. Talk even more about what a swell guy Hyde one was to me.

“Dispose of him,” the leader of the clan ordered.

The rest of the Hydes finally got the nerve to jump down to the floor below to where I was. Unfortunately, none of them burned their feet on the oven like I had. The six Hydes surrounded me. I could not run away from them on account of my feet otherwise I would have.

“You guys are all a bunch of paradoxes,” I muttered through my teeth. I loved that I still had my high intelligence working for me.

Suddenly, the long-awaited sirens showed up. Thankfully, we were all on the first floor of the Hyde clubhouse. That freaked the Hydes out because there was no means of escape for them besides the roof. If the police knew to come in through the roof, then all of the Hydes

would be cornered. Unfortunately, the Hydes had thought ahead and made an emergency exit for themselves. A wooden board that covered up a side garage door was easily smashed up by Chikara and turned into mere splinters, creating an escape route. To my own dissatisfaction, the windowless, door less building now had an easy way out. All of the Hydes escaped into the sewer entrance, but Hyde one stayed to mess with me a little bit more.

“You crazy son of a-” I won't finish his sentence because, quite honestly, I am opposed to using swear words.

“Yeah?” I retorted to the angry, beefy, buff man.

He pulled out his gun. “I should end your life, here and now. People like you... lunatics. They don't thrive so well in the world. I should stop you where you stand and do everyone else a favor... But I'm not going to. You're going to screw yourself over and over again and you'll be the one who kills yourself once you've opened your eyes and realized who you really are. Just don't forget that your name is Asylum, okay?”

And from there, he left me. And from there, I let my body slip away into darkness.