Discussion: Share and Share Alike

At school, you and a dozen of your friends have been busted for a minor infraction hardly worth mentioning. The sentence comes down unjustly harsh: a week’s detention with the nastiest sub in the school district. That afternoon you all file into detention, heads down, feet dragging. At the door you are forced to relinquish your phones, Gameboys, iPods, and computers. Stripped of your dignity and bereft, you are escorted to a seat miles from anyone else and handed a piece of paper and a pencil. Then a menacing voice booms from the front of the room:

“Welcome to my world! I own you for the next five days, and trust me it won’t be a vacation spa! You will not speak, look at, smell, or taste anything but the misery of guilt and regret in this room! Should you choose to assert yourselves against my authority in any way, your sentence will be automatically extended . . . indefinitely! But to show you that I am not without a modicum of mercy I will release one of you after one day.”

At this, heads rise from the desks and hope shimmers in sidelong glances that the prisoners pass from desk to desk.

“Like The king who kept Scheherazade, if I like your story I will spare you. You have 750 words to tell a story that will thrill me, chill me, turn my mind inside out. I want at least one unique character with a quirk. I want an object that serves as the controlling image or symbol. I want humor, irony, or a twist ending; I want a message, and make it good! Use poetic, fresh, atmospheric language and spare me the clichés, please.”

“As an added bonus, because I am such a marshmallow, I will also release the student who offers the best critique of someone else’s story. I want you to follow the 4 P’s of peer critique to the letter. Praise what is working in the story. Probe what you don’t understand. Propose improvements with tact. And above all, be POSITIVE. Any Nasty Nellys or Neds will spend another week with me. Don’t say anything you wouldn’t want to hear. You better balance that with directness. No Wimpy Willmas or Williams! Say what needs to be said, and back it up with specific examples and suggestions. What are you still staring at me for? If you want to get out of here, you’d better get busy!”

Write a flash fiction story that will get you out of this mess. Do your very best work, then post your flash fiction story to the discussion. In addition, for at least 2 of your peers’ posts, practice the 4 P’s of peer critique. Good Luck!

Please post your response to the Discussion: Share and Share Alike link.