

Nineteen year old Kyle didn't mean to crash the deadliest top secret weapon on the planet. When he hacks into the Array, a top secret government project, and lands in Purgatory Prison, he becomes JT's cell mate.

JT is big, black, nearly all muscle, and oh yes, he's a prize winning Prisoner Gladiator. As JT falls in love, Kyle's secrets begin to take over the gladiator's life.

The smuggler who agreed to get JT out of Purgatory pulls the plug. Tyrone, JT's biggest rival, forces JT to humiliate him in a gladiator Dark Game over Kyle. Father Matthew, Purgatory's Warden, uses Kyle against JT to force him to sign a Consent Form for a Guardian Chip.

Escape From Purgatory follows the adventures of Kyle and his gladiator lover, JT as they run the harrowing gauntlet of Tyrone's plans for revenge, outwit Matthew's sly plot, and risk their lives in an escape so dangerous, they'll have to cheat death to survive.

Escape From Purgatory

By

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(Book Excerpt)

In the howling storm, cruel winds whipped the sea against dark rock.

White foam crashed into jagged edges that rose up into the night like black, stone teeth. In a time before smoke stacks stained the skies, men came here and carved a prison out of the mountain. This ancient rock is the realm of men whose cries of misery are swallowed up in the dark sea. This place of the unforgiven is Purgatory Prison.

Prologue

The rapid fire clicking of a keyboard echoed in the silence of the dark basement. Kyle's fingers flew across the keys of his laptop in a fury, desperate to undo the damage he'd done. What began as a game, had blossomed into an obsession. Every night for nearly two months, Kyle rushed home from his job washing dishes and fired up his laptop.

Last night, he'd found the last piece, and crashed the Array, a weapon whose existence was categorically denied by the President. Game over, and Kyle, a nineteen year old hacker, scored the winning point.

It all went wrong when Kyle realized he couldn't bring the Array back online. Not in time to evade the Hunters who were already on his trail. He'd hidden all day, typing hundreds of lines of code, but it was no good.

Last time he'd tripped one of their systems, Homeland Security injected him with a Guardian chip. No problem. Kyle knew how to blind the Eye in the Sky, but his evasion code lasted only twenty four hours. He had to get the Array back up and running before they found him. He glanced at the tiny digital hourglass on his screen. Falling grains of virtual sand ticked away his moments of freedom.

Coppery red hair fell across his face. He bit his pink lips hard enough to leave teeth marks. His dark green eyes were narrowed in concentration. Codes flowed across his laptop screen like a red river of madness.

As a new sun shed light on a tired world, frustration lined Kyle's smooth face. Nothing he did brought the Array back online. The top half of the hour glass was empty.

Time to go. He tried not to tremble when he shut his lap top. If he didn't haul ass, Homeland Security would land on him with God's vengeance.

An explosion of sound froze Kyle in the act of scooping his laptop off the floor. A brutal kick smashed the door, hurling wooden splinters through the darkness. Kyle jumped up, shielding his face. Men the size of refrigerators poured in through the dark hole that used to be a door. Kyle ran for the giant packing crates scattered around the dark corners. A soldier, who made Hercules look like a backstreet wimp, grabbed the back of Kyle's t-shirt and reeled him in.

"Where you going, kid?" the soldier said. Then he spoke into the radio on his collar. "Got him, Sir."

"Shoot him," the short command came back.

Before Kyle could beg for his life, he felt the sharp sting of a needle in the tender cheek of his backside. Blackness pulled him down into oblivion.

Part One

Chapter I.

Everyday for the last two weeks in the Patriot Act Homeland Security Detention Center, Kyle had waited for someone to come and ask him about the Array. Muscle bound soldiers brought him food in unbroken silence. When Kyle tried to talk to them, they looked through him, and walked around him with the same care they'd use to avoid upsetting furniture.

A week ago, Kyle blocked the way of a soldier, and asked him when he'd be able to leave. The man looked at Kyle with hard eyes for a long time before he said, "You're pretty. You're real lucky we ain't allowed to touch you, boy. Real lucky."

The animal lust that flared in the soldier's dark eyes made Kyle fall back a step. The soldier walked past him without a backward glance. After that, Kyle stopped trying to talk to the soldiers.

At night, Kyle tried not to hear the distant screams echoing down the metal corridors, like souls falling into Hell. Tonight, beyond the bars of his cell, two soldiers walked by, shadows among shadows in their black uniforms.

"Fucking Heretic's gonna get what's coming to him," a voice said out of the darkness.

"He's going straight to Redemption when he gets to Purgatory. I hear Matthew can't wait to make him scream."

Their hushed voices faded as they walked by. *Heretic*. For as long as Kyle could remember, that had been a forbidden thought. Hearing the word said so casually, with night's darkness crowding in all around, sent a cool shiver down his spine. Kyle's father

was a martyred leader of the Heretics. Starving people who watched their children die from drinking dirty water, called Kyle's father a hero. Homeland Security called him an Enemy of the State.

Trapped in the belly of night, with sleep a broken promise, the vision of his father's brutal death assaulted him with unmerciful cruelty. In his mind, Kyle heard the echoing sound of the soldiers' boots. The pipes of the underground sewer caves had filled with the sound of screams and running feet.

When the soldiers took his father, Trent had looked back at his son. Kyle had seen the sure knowledge of his own death in his father's eyes. As his trembling son watched, Trent faced forward, straightened his back, and fell in step with the soldiers on either side of him.

Two days later, Kyle's father was executed at a Traitor Redemption, a version of the punishment reserved for Enemies of the State. Although his father's friends tried to stop him, Kyle watched every moment of the state sponsored torture.

Shouts of '*heretic*' and '*freedom*' rose from the throat of the live audience. Gratitude was stamped on every wildly gleeful face. Again, the state had destroyed a dangerous enemy lurking among them. The utopia of freedom and justice for all was just around the corner. They would get there one dead traitor at a time.

After the death of his father, the Heretics cared for Kyle. In the underground world of the sewers, he learned to be a sewer rat, and how to use a simple lap top to bring the government to their knees.

When Kyle hacked the banking system, and brought it crashing down, Homeland Security caught him, and tagged him with a Guardian Chip. After that, the same men

who'd cared for him, kept him out of the sewers with guns aimed between his eyes. Kyle wandered the streets for weeks, hungry, dirty and scared.

He wandered into Nick's Eats, and offered to wash dishes for a meal. Nick took him in, and let Kyle stay in the spare room over the restaurant. When Nick caught Kyle sneaking into his office to use his computer, he said how a smart boy like him should have his own lap top. It wasn't long before Nick was calling Kyle into his office, or pushing him to his knees as soon as he closed up for the night.

The lap top came soon after. The horror that started with crashing the Array followed on the heels of the new lap top, like a blaring train ripping the midnight silence of tormented sleep.

Chapter II.

On the fourteenth day of detention, Kyle sat on his bunk, staring at the brick wall of his cell, wondering how much worse his life could get. When The Principal walked in, Kyle stopped wondering.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God,” Kyle said. He felt like a skydiver, who’d just remembered his parachute was still on the plane.

The Principal sat on the small wooden chair that was the only furniture in Kyle’s cell. His grey tailored suit would have cost most men a month’s salary. Everyone in the country knew the man’s face.

On holo, he was a trusted grandfather who looked straight into the cameras and told God’s own truth. His reputation was impeccable, his sincerity unquestioned. It was the dark green eyes behind his round, rimless spectacles that shattered the illusion.

“Hey, kid,” he said, staring at Kyle.

Kyle looked at him wide eyed, unable to make his frozen lips form words. He watched as the President’s closest assistant and confidante lit a cigarette. Holo called him ‘The Principal’, because nobody wanted to end up in his office, not even the President. The Principal stared at Kyle through a cloud of smoke that clung to him, as if he smoked the way other people sweat.

“They been treating you okay?”

Kyle didn’t bother to ask about his right to know the charges against him, his right to representation.

“Yes, Sir.” His voice was a bare whisper.

“You came up in the world since last time. You got the chip that time, right?”

Kyle nodded. "Yes, Sir." They were the only two words he could bring himself to say.

The Principal looked at Kyle with expressionless eyes.

"I told you then that if you fucked with me again, I was gonna make you one sorry kid, didn't I?" His monotone voice was eerily calm. He flicked ashes onto the stone floor.

Kyle spoke in the hollow tones of a condemned man. "I didn't mean to. I'm sorry."

"You know where they're sending you, boy?"

Kyle shrugged. "Work camp, I guess."

"Guess again." Dark thoughts glittered in The Principal's dead green eyes. "You're going to Purgatory."

"What?" Kyle jumped up and paced his tiny cell. "That's a hell hole. Toughest prison in the country."

He stopped in front of The Principal, looking down into his seamed face that held not an ounce of compassion.

"I'm just some kid who fucked with your Array. Christ. I'm sorry." Kyle ran shaky fingers through his coppery hair. "Jesus."

"Bring it back online," the Principal said. He took a deep drag on his cigarette and blew smoke up to the ceiling. "Or I'll make you suffer in ways you never dreamed of, kid."

Kyle's pounding heart made his words shaky, uncertain. "I don't know how," he said in a mad rush. "I tried. I can't. I'm telling the truth. God. *Please*." The last two words came out in a desperate plea.

The Principal looked up at Kyle with the cool eyes of a sniper honing in on his target.

"You fucking think I was born yesterday?"

Filled with the fear of a child trapped with a nightmare ogre, Kyle said, "I'm telling the truth." His voice teetered on the razor edge of hysteria.

The Principal pulled a black box from his jacket pocket. Like a demon summoned from the depths of Hell, a hologram sprang to life next to Kyle. He stared at the man, blacker than midnight. He was naked to the waist, his chest and arms were roped with muscle. He had the hard face of a hunter who stalked men to the death, and enjoyed the hunt.

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"Know who that is, kid?"

"Everyone knows who he is. JT. Prisoner gladiator." Kyle looked up into the gladiator's eyes, merciless and cold.

"Know where he is?"

"Purgatory," Kyle said. His mind ticked over furiously, trying to see where this was leading.

"He's the most vicious gladiator in Purgatory," The Principal said. "Won the State Wide Championship. Brought in a lot of money. They're giving him a virgin to be his wife in there."

The Principal paused, looking into Kyle's terrified eyes. "You still a virgin, kid?"

Kyle blushed, looked down at his feet.

"There's nothing JT likes better than breaking in a pretty virgin."

Looking at the dark gladiator, all at once, Kyle knew what was coming.

The Principal bared his crooked teeth in a humorless grin. "You're JT's new cellmate." He leaned an inch closer to Kyle and said, soft and low, "His new wife."

The gladiator's image towered over Kyle. JT was a lithe sculpture of strength, built with the sleek grace of a panther. Staring at his thick arms, heavy with muscle, a terrible truth hammered through the whirlwind in Kyle's mind, *I won't be a virgin for long.*

"I don't know how to fix it. I'm telling the truth," Kyle said.

The Principal smoked in silence for a long time. "No. You're trying to lie to a man who fought in two wars before you were born." He pointed at Kyle with the two fingers holding his cigarette. "Last chance, kid."

Kyle fought a brief battle with himself that could have ended with the truth slipping from his traitorous lips. At the end, flesh had hung from his father's limp body, like delicate strips of raw meat.

"I don't know how to fix it," Kyle said. His eyes slipped away to the scarred stone floor.

"You're just like your dad, you know that, boy?"

The mention of his father made Kyle cold all over.

“I’m giving you a couple of months to be JT’s punk,” The Principal said thoughtfully. “I hear he likes it real rough with his punks. Maybe he’ll help you remember things, so you can fix what you broke.”

Kyle stared at the hologram. Words flew through his mind in a fury. He had the face of a prisoner watching men hammer his gallows together.

The man who stood beside the President when he spoke of the triumph of Democracy in foreign lands, had eyes that were windows on cold, depthless darkness.

“I signed your father’s arrest warrant,” the Principal said.

“Don’t talk about my father,” Kyle said through clenched teeth.

The Principal laughed. “You wanna come get me, boy? Come on.”

Kyle flew at him in blind rage. The Principal sprang up, quick as a rattlesnake. He caught Kyle, shoved him through the hologram, and pressed him hard into the brick wall. He bent close and whispered.

“When JT fucks your ass real hard and makes you scream, remember something, kid.”

“What?” Kyle said, trying to shake free.

“Purgatory isn’t as bad as it can get. If you don’t give me what I want, you’ll end up in a room that ain’t got no fucking windows. Nobody hears you scream in those back rooms, boy.”

“I’ll fucking *die* before I help you,” Kyle said in a low whisper.

The Principal stood back, straightened his jacket, pushed his thick gray hair from his cold eyes. He gave Kyle a long look, the unfeeling gaze of a lion stalking a gazelle.

“You’re real young, boy. I got a lot to teach you.”

“Like what?” Kyle said.

“Like how there’s worse things than dying.”

The Principal dropped a card at Kyle’s feet. “Don’t make me wait too long. Or I’ll come for you.”

This book is for sale on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) – “Escape From Purgatory” by Mark James