

CHRIS CRUTCHER

Author of Deadline



ANGRY

Management

NAK

Mr. Nak removes books from cardboard boxes and places them in some order that makes sense to him, onto the bookshelves occupying three of the four walls of his small office. There are fiction books, biographies, left-leaning political tomes dating back to the Reagan years. Bronze statues of horses divide sections; framed pictures of his recent first trip to his ancestors' homeland, Japan, hang on the one newly painted eggshell wall, along with his all-around cowboy plaque won in an obscure senior rodeo circuit on the dusty plains of West Texas.

He plops into the oversized office chair and places his boots on the desk, gazing around the room, letting his eyes fall on the rodeo plaque. Fifteen years ago, he left a job much like this one to get back to his Japanese cowboy roots; now he's back. Sixty-two is too damned old to make the lightning trip from saddle to dirt one more time. Symmetry. He nods, grateful that Global Community Health was willing to hire him as a full-time counselor at an age when many counselors retire.

"We have kids in this two-state region who need help, Mr. Nakatani. Our jurisdiction covers three school districts, large in area but not so much in population. Last year was a rough one; we had two suicides—one by gun and one by overdose—and at least one major racial incident. We need to get some prevention going."

"Sounds like the job for me, ma'am," Nak said. "I ain't braggin', but I've worked with kids in tough situations all my life. Been in a few myself. I think you're right, getting a jump on 'er, by the way."

"You come highly recommended from your years in the Clark Forks school district, and you'll be working with some of those kids. But we're expanding our embrace, if you will. Some of the grant money for your salary was written for kids who aren't in the direst of straits; kids who have run into some hard luck or ones with a fragile emotional makeup. You know, kids who will make it if they get a chance to work some things through," Dr. Hairston said. "I'll make sure you have whatever you need."

"Preciate it."

That was it. Shortest interview he'd ever had.

Two suicides, a major racial incident, plus the various and sundry stuff kids go through to get to graduation. Hopefully.

World's dangerous enough without bringing your

own firearm to your head, or your mother's prescription pills to your gut.

Nak thumbs through his list of possible clients; the terminally tough crowd first, then the kids recently graduated or ready to graduate that Dr. Hairston thinks could use a little boost. He was impressed when he read Global Community Health's mission statement. It was the first preventative program he'd read about that might be worth its salt, and the first that seemed adventurous enough to work with clients' real lives. He appreciated that they worked with and through the school districts. This seems like a good place to wrap things up.

Sarah Byrnes, Angus Bethune, Montana West (some of these names sounded like they were concocted by a bad fiction writer), Matt Miller (that's a little more like it), Trey Chase. Sixteen names in all.

"We've separated these kids into two groups, one with kids we think can fly and one with kids who desperately need survival skills. Once you meet them, you may want to move them around, but that's all up to you. It's your program, Mr. Nakatani, we think we have the best man for the job."

He looks at the header on their stationery. IF YOU THINK YOUR LIFE SUCKS, IT PROBABLY DOES. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

Welcome to Angry Management

It's a place for misfits. For stories that will rip out your heart and give you back one better than what you started with. Stories about prejudice, rage, and hope. About surviving it all and showing the world that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

In three novellas, Chris Crutcher brings together some of his most unforgettable characters—among them Sarah Byrnes, Angus Bethune, and Montana West—to bare their souls. No sugarcoating here. Just the truth.



"Crutcher fanatics rejoice!
Your favorite characters are back." —*ALA Booklist*

"Well written, action packed, engrossing . . .
It is vintage Crutcher." —*VOYA*

I get mad.

*What's the worst thing that
happened to you?*

*I've said things to people
I would've taken back in a
second, were I given the
opportunity.*