

Rod

an autobiography



Rod ...

written by Eddie Corona

originally released with Vegas and Blunder in 2023

this is the stand alone version

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“Tell me about your mother...”

— *Sigmund Freud (attributed)*

“Finally those capitalist pigs will pay for their crimes, eh? Eh comrades?”

— *Austin Powers*

*“You run into an asshole in the morning, you ran into an asshole. You run into
assholes all day, you’re the asshole...”*

— *Raylan Givens*

*“To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you're not allowed to
criticize...”*

— *Voltaire*

*“I’m finally out in the clear and I’m free,
I’ve got dreams I’m living for,
I’m moving on where they’ll never find me,
Rolling on to anywhere...”*

— *Escape*

*“Today seems like a good day
To burn a bridge or two
The one with old wood creaking
That would burn away right on cue
I try to be not like that
But some people really suck
Some people need to get the axing
Chalk it up to bad luck ...”*

— *311*

*“Precious and few
Are the moments we two can share
Quiet and blue
Like the sky I'm hung over you
And if I can't find my way back home
It just wouldn't be fair
'Cause precious and few
Are the moments we two can share...”*
— *Precious and Few*

*“Sitting around the house,
Watching the Sun trace shadows on the floor;
Searching for signs of life but there's nobody home,
Well maybe I'll call or write you a letter;
Now, maybe we'll see you on the Fourth of July,
But, I'm not too sure, and I'm not too proud,
Well, I'm not too sure, and I'm not too proud ...”*
— *Better Than Ezra*

*“What shall we use
To fill the empty spaces
Where we used to talk?
How shall I fill
The final places?
How should I complete the wall?”*
— *Empty Spaces by Pink Floyd*

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i remember...

I remember standing knee-high in shallow ocean waters.

I remember being four years old or so and seeing a man bleed to death in front of me.

I remember traveling to Tijuana with my family.

I remember taking calculus midterms in Claremont.

I remember playing Little League baseball.

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The following section comes from a text message I wrote to a niece this past Fourth of July weekend. As I write, it is 2023. It is Saturday during Labor Day weekend. Regular season football kicks off next week. I am excited. I am wrapping up this autobiography. I hope to have it finished before I go back to work on Tuesday. You'll notice as you read along there will be many inserts. These might be lyrics, text messages, posts to social forums, anecdotes, or other things. This will not be linear. I will jump around in space and time. It might feel jumbled, but I hope to create a mosaic of a story. I remember walking through an office products store about twenty years ago and seeing books on a shelf. Some dealt with how to make money. I remember thinking there was something missing. How about a book where, instead of telling people what they ought to do, let them know what *not* to do. Tell them about pitfalls. As you'll see, I've involved myself with learning about various conspiracy theories. Some of these are easier to understand than others. Many of them aren't conspiracies at all because they're so far out in the open, but they're still taboo to talk about in most public forums. Some used to be conspiracy theories but, over time, have become conspiracy facts. The Freedom of Information Act has helped uncover many mysteries. These are my interests.

This is not a book about how to make money. I read *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* in 2005 for a business law class project. Robert Kiyosaki gives advice about how to

become wealthy. One thing he says is not to work for money. Make money work for you! This is a simple summary, but if I were to write a book about money management, I would go in the opposite direction.

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*“All I need is what you’ve got
All I’ll tell is what you’re not...”*
— *Touch and Go*

*“The reflex is a lonely child
Who’s waiting in the park
The reflex is in charge of finding
Treasure in the dark
And watching over lucky clover
Isn’t that bizarre?
And every little thing the reflex does
Leaves you answered with a question mark...”*
— *The Reflex*

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So what do we have here? *All I’ll tell is what you’re not.* That’s the best way to do things! You love someone so you don’t want to limit them. Labels limit people. *All I’ll tell is what you’re not.* Someone asks if you’re best friend is a genius. Instead of saying yes, you respond by saying the friend isn’t dumb. That way, it’s a low bar to jump over. And? *Leaves you answered with a question mark.* You hear a fan compliment a super model about her exotic attire. *Your gown is so fabulous!* The debonair model doesn’t respond with, *Yes it is!* No, because that would place a label. Instead, her response is more suave and sophisticated, *Isn’t it?*

I would never write a book about how to make money even if I was an expert and I could give you perfect details. I would, though, write a book about how to avoid being broke for your whole life. President Dwight Eisenhower, right before leaving office, addressed the nation through television. He warned about the power of the Military Industrial Complex. Today, if you discuss this subject, you’re deemed as a tin-foil-hat wearing conspiracy theorist. But it’s out in the open. A former president warned us against its powers.

The Military Industrial Complex is not alone, though. There is the Education

Industrial Complex. The USA is capitalist. Its institutions are out to make a buck. I would say I got sucked into the Education Industrial Complex. I don't regret getting an education, but I wished there was a better way. The government is required to provide unsecured student loans to nearly anyone attending college. This paves the way for "diploma mill" schools. There are many useless degrees. If I had a warning to youngsters preparing for university life, I would say to make sure you go into a field which has a legit demand. That way, you avoid going broke after you graduate.

I will keep this light-hearted, though. I am not writing a book about how to make money, nor am I writing a book about how to avoid going broke. I am writing a book about life, particularly my life. I am trying not to be preachy. That's why I bring up these examples. I hope I don't come across as telling you what you ought be doing. I hope I provide insights, though. I hope I can give you examples of things that didn't work for me. It's not such a bad idea to learn from other people's mistakes. Robert Kiyosaki gave solid advice about money. There's a lot to be said about financial pitfalls. One of them isn't only about establishing a good credit rating. One of them is about knowing who to trust. This autobiography will touch on personal issues. I live my life with little regret. With that said, of course there are countless situations that if I knew then what I know now, I would've made different decisions. I often imagine myself going into time machines and having other cracks at certain moments.

I am fifty-two years old. I am a white male born and raised in California. My last name is Spanish and my grandparents were born in Mexico. I was not raised around many white people. It wasn't until my teenage years that I experienced white culture first hand. My situation is unique so my life experiences have been unique as well. My family and friends know these things. This book isn't only available to them, though. I wanted to set the tone here. This account of my life will not be linear. I will talk in the present tense, then insert a passage from something written long ago. I will include things I've written from Seattle, Las Vegas, and California. You will see standard text as you're reading right now, then you will see italicized text. These will be cutaways. Often, the best way to tell a story is to allow you to overhear something said to another person. I will do that right now. I have a niece who's involved herself in the arts. She's a good painter, and she's written fiction. Right before Fourth of July, she asked how my projects were going. What you're about to read is my response to her. It serves as an adequate introduction.

Amazing you just asked! I just turned on my computer a couple of minutes before you texted. I have a four-day weekend because of Fourth of July so I was getting ready for my next session.

Last weekend, I prepared a first draft. I ordered a proof copy through Lulu. It should be getting here in a few days. I designed my cover with the AI alien kid from Her. Remember we watched it a few years ago during a party? It stars Joaquin Phoenix as a guy who has a romance with his computer? Anyhow, AI has been in the news a lot lately, so I thought it would be funny to put in.

Right now, I have 143 pages written. Most the time, this would be good enough to publish and distribute. I still have a lot of topics I haven't touched on, though, so I still have more to write. These projects are best when it feels like a "labor of love" and I think I reached that point last week. At the beginning it can be daunting, like moving a mountain.

Let me refresh on the project. I'm pretty sure I told you about Blunder a few years ago. It was fiction started in 2019 and done in the form of an autobiography. It's main character was a guy named Braden Callypso. Well in real life, two laptops, an iPad, and an iPhone were stolen on Memorial Day of that year. It set the project back, then around Thanksgiving, I moved to Seattle.

When I was in Seattle, I decided to write a real autobiography. I started it, then the Covid lockdowns happened. The project stalled. I came back to California for a few months in 2021, then moved to Las Vegas. By the way, my 50th birthday there was a blast! It was one of my favorite birthdays of all time! Thank you guys for coming. So I continued with my autobiography in Las Vegas, then my van broke down and I had to buy a car. Then the car broke down and I came back to California. I wrote a little more last summer, but the project was put on hold again until recently.

The project is in three parts:

- Rod, the real-life autobiography*
- Vegas, having to do with conspiracy issues*
- Blunder, a fictional autobiography*

Most of the fiction I've done is self-therapeutic, but there came a point when beating around the bush through stories wasn't enough. There's a lot we need to say directly. If I remember right, I think I told you a few years ago that Blunder started largely as an info dump of material that was left over from my previous

project, Cretins. The part I'm working on right now has to do with a lot of experiences and lessons from growing up. Also, for example, I had always heard that we have family photos of my mom's grandfather together with Pancho Villa (your great-great-grandfather). Well, I found out a couple of weeks ago, he was actually one of Pancho Villa's generals! His name is Jose De La Luz Blanco. He was in command of 17,000 troops during the Mexican Revolution in 1917. There's even a wikipedia article on him! I'm calling the non-fiction part Rod because that's the nickname your aunt gave me when I was young.

The middle "Vegas part" has to do with my conspiracy issues ranging from Nine Eleven, to the JFK assassination, to Covid, and other stuff. I remember we were talking about vaccines when you were passing through Vegas on the way to Texas. RFK Jr is running for president. I watched him on YouTube give a speech on the link between vaccines and autism. If I remember right, he said it's the preservative in vaccines which causes autism. Since there are way more vaccines now, there are more risks to children. Also, I watched him talk to Joe Rogan and Bill Maher recently. He said a Lockheed security guard named Eugene Thane Cesar killed his father. It wasn't Sirhan Sirhan. I had heard something like this years ago in the book, 70 Greatest Conspiracies.

Well, I'm going to get to my project. I need to print my work because it's easier to do my edits this way. My writing is going well, though! Thank you for asking. How is your writing going? I'd still love to read your work! Happy Fourth of July! I hope the boys are doing well...

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This book will be full of inserts. It's okay that we're different. I wanted to have a pop quiz right now, though.

Which names do you recognize?

- 1) Stanley Meyer*
- 2) Giorgio Tsoukalos*
- 3) Rachel Corrie*
- 4) Judy Wood*
- 5) Greg Palast*
- 6) Athan Gibbs*
- 7) Barry Jennings*
- 8) Edna Cintron*

9) *Seth MacFarlane*

10) *John Hanson*

I lobbed in a couple of softballs, by the way. This quiz has a purpose. There used to be a thing called a “swear jar” and it worked on an honor system. Not sure if people do this anymore, but back in the day, families would commit to stop using curse words. If you slipped, you had to put money in the swear jar... even if no one busted you. At the end of a few weeks, the family would spend the money together at a pizza joint. It was an honor system. You had to self-report. I had an idea about this pop quiz. To the first person who could honestly tell me they recognized all ten names, I would give you a hundred dollars! That’s right! But I expect the average person to only recognize one or two names, if even that. I’ve spent years on conspiracy forums. I expect the tin-foil-hat-wearing guys to do a little better, but even then, I don’t expect perfect tens.

I remember long ago having a discussion about poker. What is higher? A full house or four of a kind? A full house has three of a kind plus a pair. It uses all five cards. Logic might say it is higher. A four of a kind only needs four of the five cards. But, guess what? It’s statistically harder to get. Four of a kind beats a full house! If you don’t believe it, you can run to a local book store and buy a book on the rules of poker. You can look it up online.

In the course of this book, I will discuss conclusions to topics I’ve considered. Here’s what’s funny about life. Experts can agree to the same facts, yet draw opposite conclusions about what they mean. This happens in psychology, philosophy, politics, and other academic realms. The points of stress come when we don’t agree on what the actual facts are. If you’re going to pull a gun on me because I’m trying to take the money pot when I have a four of a kind and you have a full house, we have problems. That’s our world today, though. We don’t agree on facts. How can we agree on conclusions?

I’ve been a fan of a YouTube vlogger, Kim Iversen. She’s been thorough about her reporting on Covid. Recently, she interviewed a guy who discussed World Trade Center issues. I applaud anyone who ventures down the proverbial Rabbit Hole. She was doing it! It was clear, though, she had no clue of “basic facts” heading into the discussion. We’re talking about the Solomon Building, also known as World Trade Center 7. We’re talking about the layout of the complex including smaller buildings. She didn’t know about Larry Silverstein, owner of the complex. How could she possibly know about the large insurance payment he

collected? How could she know about Judy Wood and Directed Energy Weapons? How could she know about Steven Jones and the studies of thermite? There was molten steel which burned for weeks after the collapse. There were steel beams with perfect forty-five-degree incisions, consistent with a controlled demolition. I've debated these issues with friends on conspiracy forums for years. Twenty-two years after the event, she was aware of the Dancing Israelis, but she has barely poked her head into the Rabbit Hole regarding Nine Eleven conspiracy. It takes years for it to sink in.

There are two main categories of people who remain in my life lately. One, people who remind me of the bliss of childhood. Things don't have to be serious. We don't need to get to the bottom of every issue. Two, people that remind me of my college years. These people aren't afraid of "know it alls" and they thirst for knowledge. These people aren't bothered by cognitive dissonance. No pain no gain. This doesn't only apply to our muscles in gyms. It goes for our minds. We *want* pain. We *want* to know when we're wrong. I met a lovely lady a few years ago online who opened my mind to quantum physics and the multiverse. I cherish her. I think about her on a regular basis. When we say something we know, we don't have to qualify it with "or something like that" to coddle to another person's psyche.

This autobiography, *Rod*, is almost done. In a couple of hours, I will be drafting my fantasy football team with a few family members. I'm an ordinary guy, but I took a trip down the Rabbit Hole. I will share my experiences with you. You don't have to do anything but grab yourself a cold beer and relax. Or grab yourself a soda or a coffee. Whatever floats your boat. Keep in mind we will jump around in place and time. The next segment was written this past Memorial Day.

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*"Feel the motors winding on
There ain't no news
If you see those old friends out there
Tell them that I send me love ..."*
— Izzy Stradlin

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Memorial Day of 2023 has come and gone. Fourth of July is ahead of us one month from today. I have my work cut out for me. I'm working on an

autobiography here in Southern California which I hope will be available to friends, family, and the public by Christmas of this year. I have a lot on my mind. I'm not sure where to start, but I at least have a clue. I've been working on this for a few years, now. It hasn't been straight. I haven't been working on it every day. The seed to do this was planted in my mind a few years ago. The road in my life has been bumpy. I've gone through periods of focus and inspiration followed by periods of aloofness and distraction. I began writing this autobiography when I was living in Seattle in 2020. Of course, that was the Covid year. I hardly made any progress there. I came back to Southern California then promptly moved to Las Vegas for a few months. I continued with the autobiography there but didn't complete it. Like a tractor beam, Southern California sucked me back again and I continued with the autobiography a year ago.

Writing lengthy pieces requires certain things. It requires will. You have to want to do it. It requires time. You must have blocks of hours set aside. It requires energy. You can't be dead tired when you set down to type. It requires focus. You have to know the points you want to get across. It requires confidence. You can't be afraid you'll be laughed at by your audience, peers, and critics. Trust me, you'll be laughed at. You just can't be afraid of it. And it requires love. That's right! Just like the Beatles sang...

*"Nothing you can make that can't be made,
No one you can save that can't be saved,
Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be you in time,
It's easy,
All you need is love..."*

So we need our ducks in a row. I didn't mention one of the obvious needs. The physical tools. We need our laptop with its word processor. Or we need our old fashioned clunky seventies typewriter. That could get the job done. Or we need our traditional number two pencil with its lead scraping away on a yellow pad. We need tools. Some writers require different amounts of comfort. *I'm not going to write anything unless I have Microsoft Works on my Dell computer!* But what was Walt Whitman writing on? Was it a Remington typewriter? And what did William Shakespeare write on? What was his technology?

Stephen King wrote *The Dark Half* about an author who had a pseudonym. The fictional character, Thad Beaumont, wrote mainstream books on a traditional typewriter. Thad had a darker persona, though, and he wrote horror novels as George Stark with a traditional pencil and yellow pad. If I remember right, he wrote these pieces of fiction in his basement.

The moral of the story is you can't make up excuses. That's what they'll tell you. I'm here to tell you that you can make up excuses. Sometimes there's something greater at work than you. Sometimes a worldwide pandemic is going on. Could I have finished my autobiography in Seattle? Yes, but it would've been something different than I intended it to be. My focus changed. There was a significant distraction. And in Vegas, I wrote. But why didn't I finish? If I had to make up an excuse, it's because I was tired. I worked a lot. I felt drained of energy. I made progress. I just didn't complete the project.

And why do I bring up the obvious thing about needing tools? Why do I bring up Memorial Day in the very first line of this introduction? Well, in 2019 I was working on a piece of fiction called *Blunder*. I had already written about ten books since 2003. All of them were third-person in style. *Blunder* was done in first-person. It was epistolary in form meaning it was done like a journal. If you read Stephen King's "Jerusalem's Lot" in *Night Shift* or "Survivor Type" in *Skeleton Crew*, you'll understand. I was making good progress in *Blunder* in May of 2019. On Memorial Day, my place was broken in to. Two of my laptops were stolen along with an iPad and an iPhone. I had significant amounts of my notes on these devices. It took a couple of months to be able to replace them. The notes were gone, though. The wind was out of my sails.

The planets have lined up again. I have the will, time, energy, focus, confidence, love, and tools to get this project completed. Knock on wood, I don't have anything to complain about. There is one final thing, though. Resistance. Even when you have everything lined up, you have to make sure no one is trying to stop you. You have to make sure your will is greater than theirs. And why would anyone want to stop you? Who knows? That's the sixty-four thousand dollar question! After all, we live in a country where free speech is revered and protected, right? Look around! It's not true anymore! When I was a kid, someone would call you a derogatory name. You would respond by saying, "Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me!" One person might call another a queer. The offended person might tell the other, "You can't say that!" Then the one hurling the insult would say, "It's a free country!" And they would move on. But we have cancel culture today. Somehow or another, voices are being silenced. Here's a lyric from "Don't Damn Me" by Guns N' Roses...

*"So I send this song to the offended,
I said what I meant and I never pretended,
As so many others do intending just to please,*

If I damned your point of view could you turn the other cheek?"

With this spirit, you can read my autobiography. As of this moment, I have ninety-one pages written. Typical books I've written over the years go for about one hundred and twenty, minimum. Let me explain. When I was younger, cousins called me Hot Rod. Others shortened my nickname to simply Rod. Tentatively speaking, I have many ideas on how this can go. Rod will be the name of the "real" part of the autobiography. There are thirty-six pages complete, much of it written in Seattle and Las Vegas.

I told you I was working on fiction called *Blunder*. Right now, it's fifty-five pages. It is autobiographical in tone. The main character is Braden Callypso. He is younger than me, but his life experience is similar. My intent with *Blunder* was to tackle life issues without revealing too many personal and sensitive topics. Let me tell you about myself, though. I'm not a person who likes to lie. I explain this later in detail. The few times I've blatantly lied as an adult is when I'm protecting another person. I'll give you an example. The first good rock concert I went to was Bad Company and Damn Yankees at the Orange Pavilion in San Bernardino in 1990. Who did I go with?

Let's back up. In 1988, I took Angie to the Homecoming dance. We double dated with Wendy and John. I adored Angie, but we couldn't continue along as a couple. Her father was adamant that she date someone from her church. Angie had a friend in drill team named Laurie. I took Laurie to Prom in 1989. We double dated with Wendy and John. I worked at a pizza store in Fontana. I got jobs for Angie, Laurie, John, Wendy, and a few other friends. One of the friends was my roommante, Jeff. Another was Angie's new boyfriend, Kyle. Let's consider lyrics from The Cars...

*"Cause she's my best friend's girl,
Well, she's my best friend's girl,
And she used to be mine,
She's so fine..."*

Back then, it seemed to be a regular thing. We used to "girlfriend swap" back in junior high and high school. There weren't any hard feelings. So who did I go to the concert with? Jeff and Kyle. I remember being in the parking lot in my 1985 Ford Tempo. Concert goers were all around. Up until then, I hadn't smoked a whole lot of dope, but Kyle was a regular. Even Jeff had plans on how he would sell it. I was freakin' nineteen years old! The innocence was still strong and alive in me. I grew up with many right-winged family members. I had a certain way I

expected to live. Maintaining virginity until marriage was one of them, but Laurie destroyed that plan. Should I complain? The temptation of alcohol was around. I drank a beer with my oldest sister and her friends when I was six. I drank Jack Daniels with my youngest sister when I was in sixth grade. Now? We were at a concert. Weed was all around us. Kyle brought a joint. I learned the term “hot box” from Jeff and Kyle. We sparked up. Kept the windows rolled up. Then we were ready to stand in line for Bad Company and Damn Yankees.

Like I said, this was an age of innocence in my life. Some friends, especially at work, never drank alcohol. Steve Fawcett was one of them. Some were still virgins. Huey was one. Some wouldn't listen to “Satanic” music such as Ozzy Osbourne and Led Zeppelin. My girlfriend, Laurie, was in this camp. She listened to glam rock, like Poison, but didn't graduate to Metallica and other forbidden music until later on.

The concert was great! We all worked together, keep in mind. I worked alone with Laurie in the day shift. Her best friend, Angie, worked with Kyle. Angie was attending a conservative church. That's why I couldn't continue dating her after Homecoming. Because I wasn't a regular there on Sundays. Kyle was a regular, but Angie heard rumors that he smoked dope at the concert. Trust me, the rumor didn't come from me. Me and Laurie were working the day shift. She asked, “Did you smoke weed at the Bad Company concert?” I was caught off guard. In a reaction, I told her no. We left it at that. I was protecting Kyle.

There's something called being “in the know” and I've been part of it most of my life. I have the “low down” and I know the “goods” on certain people and certain situations. So it got back to Angie through Laurie that Kyle was clean. We didn't smoke dope. It protected him, but guilt ate at me. I told Laurie eventually. And she kept it from Angie. The issue of betrayal starts to crop up here. Who do you tell and when? Eventually, Angie found out Kyle smoked dope. She also found out he was banging a girl from Fontana High School. She felt disappointed and betrayed.

The point of this autobiography isn't to be the National Enquirer. Far from it. *Hey, I knew this dude snorting cocaine! He participated in armed robberies while in high school. He's a closet Nazi!* No, nothing like that! The purpose of this autobiography is for you to learn. If possible, let's do that.

I have notes.

I have plans.

Up until now, I've used real first names. This won't continue, though. It might happen here and there, but not as a rule. I even mentioned Steve Fawcett. Well, the first name is correct, but the last name is only something he (and friends) would know. There are thirty-six pages of *Rod* written, and fifty-five pages of *Blunder*. This totals ninety-one pages to follow this introduction. But I have more plans. As you'll see, I have a scheduled piece in between *Rod* and *Blunder*. This is the core of who I am. Penciled in, this book will be called *Rod, Vegas, Blunder*. We have me, Eddie Corona with the nickname of Rod, in the first segment. We have Braden Callypso who reflects me. We have a joint segment written in Vegas which conjoins them. In between the falling of the Twin Towers in 2001 and this very moment, I have thought of many things. I have felt emotions. I have traveled down the Rabbit Hole. I have acquired multiple smart phones and I have spent countless hours trying to figure out what was really going on. I have joined conspiracy sites. I have written books. I have tried to put my mind at rest. I have tried to alert loved ones of wrong-doings in our world. I have tried to make this world a better place. Let's consider the lyrics of REM...

*"Oh no I've said too much,
I haven't said enough,
I thought that I heard you laughing,
I thought that I heard you sing,
I think I thought I saw you try..."*

So every whisper I'm choosing my confessions, along these lines. And you have it. If you want it, you have it. It feels like an anti-climax sometimes, but I meant to do it! I meant to give you the goods when it mattered most. I meant to tell you "I love you" when I actually felt I loved you. I never meant to be in jail. I never meant to be in mental health facilities. I meant to find a woman who would compliment me in regards to age, thinking, philosophy, religion, and aesthetics. I meant to raise children who would provide Planet Earth with something better than what we were all born with. This autobiography is for you. Like a hammer, it is a tool. You can use this tool to pound nails. You can build a house!

Or you can use it to pound your enemies. I don't want that, but it's out of my control. As you read, there will be moments of redundancy. I have thought these ideas for many years. I will reiterate them. I will muddy waters. Traditionally, I am a fiction writer. There are truths everywhere. We speak about them in fiction, but in an autobiography, we're more specific.

This is my testimony.

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*"They laugh at me aloud,
They say I'm just a clown,
That I ain't got no pride,
I'm on the outside..."*
— Oingo Boingo

*"You don't understand
Who they thought I was supposed to be,
Look at me now,
I'm a man who won't let himself be..."*
— Alice In Chains

*"Nowhere to run to,
Nowhere to hide,
Sing the song
Or keep it inside,
Bought the farm
But the farmer done died,
Sing that song!
Sing that sing inside..."*
— Stone Temple Pilots

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I remember watching the original Terminator movie. I was impressed. My niece had a grandma who would rent the latest movies then record them onto VHS tapes. She would loan these copies out to family members as if she were operating a video store. I watched one of these early works featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger having no idea he would one day become governor of California.

The idea of incredible technology coming into our world wasn't new. I was born in 1971, a year before Atari invented and produced the first arcade video game, Pong. I was born in a small window of time between the first and last manned Moon missions from 1967 to 1972. I watched the Jetsons growing up. I learned to program computers on a Commodore VIC-20 when I was around eleven. My mother then bought me a VZ200 when I was in seventh grade, and I programmed my own original video games. I also programmed a Fortune Teller game for my sister Cindy and her friends. All these years later, she still talks about it! I'm quite

flattered, I'll admit! It's the earliest form of artificial intelligence I can remember experiencing first hand.

There were movies in the early eighties which dealt with robots, technology, and computers. I liked Cloak & Dagger which entangled a kid into a spy war because he accidentally got a special, clandestine Atari cartridge. I liked War Games where a nuclear war was nearly set in motion because of a government AI computer called the WOPR. Disney's Tron featured characters in the cyber world. The TV series, Max Headroom, was about a guy who died in a motorcycle accident but was able to remain alive through computers. Short Circuit was about a clunky robot with a funky personality.

When I watched the Terminator, I saw where people thought technology was heading. Eventually, computers would be so smart and robots would become so functional that they would take over the human race! I remember when IBM created Deep Thought and Deep Blue. It was the first time a computer was able to beat a chess master. I was living in Las Vegas two years ago. It had been a long, long time since I had HBO wherever I lived. I started watching Last Week Tonight hosted by a British comedian, John Oliver. It took a while for me to take a liking to him, but eventually it happened to some degree. A few months ago, here in the High Desert of California, I listened to him through YouTube on my drive home from work. He was talking about how far artificial intelligence has come. I don't remember hearing about Chat GPT before this. It didn't effect me right away. The weeks passed. Then I listened to Elon Musk on YouTube telling Tucker Carlson that AI can be dangerous. I thought of the Terminator movie. It seemed to be prophetic. We're entering something called the Singularity. In astronomy, this has something to do with limits of a black hole. In AI, it's when machines become smarter than humans.

History books will say the Singularity happened in 2023.

Joe Rogan talked about this with a guest. All of a sudden, I had to have it. There are many iPhone apps which run Chat GPT. This is big! I toyed with a few of these apps. I remember back in 2009 when I discovered Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. The AI of today impressed me as much as those social media platforms did back then! I asked the AI to create random pictures. I asked it to write songs. I asked it to write poetry. In seconds, the most startling things came out! I still do manual labor to pay the bills. I drive a forklift. While at work, I thought of a story. I was thinking of this very autobiography. It had gone dormant. I was thinking of the issues. I was thinking about how I grew up. I must admit, I was thinking of politics. I was thinking about how shameful some parents are to their

children. We are all unique individuals. We have our strengths and our weaknesses. We have our circumstances.

At work, I thought of a story where short parents gave birth to a child who wound up being very tall. The parents were horse jockeys and they wanted their kid to grow up in the family tradition. The kid knew he couldn't make it as a horse jockey, though. He wanted to grow up to be an NBA center.

Time went by and this story knawed at me. Eventually, I revised the idea. Instead of short versus tall, I went more abstract. Sphere versus Cube. I have yet to insert the thirty-six pages of Rod I have written. I wanted to preface them properly. The AI is a key element. To a huge degree, it got me writing again! It created lightning in a bottle. I also have text messages which will help. I'm going to include a message to my sister about why I became a Libertarian. I have other things I might touch on, but I believed it was vital to share this story which the AI wrote. I simply explained to it that a Cube was born from Spheres. It battled for social acceptance. It wanted to be a Brick, against its parents wishes. They wanted it to become a Ball, like they became.

I love this story! I haven't changed it at all. Without further adieu...

(created by AI from WriteMyStory)

"The Misfit Cube"

Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a Cube. Cube was born into a family of Spheres, and as the only Cube, he often felt like an outsider. Cube's parents wanted him to grow up to be a Ball like them, round and bouncy, always rolling along with the other Spheres. But Cube had different aspirations. He wanted to grow up to be a Brick.

Cube loved the idea of being a Brick. He wanted to be strong and stable, standing tall and firm. But Cube's parents couldn't understand why their son didn't want to be a Ball like them. They wanted him to fit in and be accepted by the other Spheres.

So, Cube set out on a journey to find acceptance. He wandered through the forest, over hills and valleys, and eventually came upon a group of other Cubes. They were just like him, square and sturdy, and they welcomed him with open arms.

Cube felt like he had finally found his tribe.

But as Cube spent more time with the other Cubes, he realized that they were all the same. They looked alike, acted alike, thought alike. Cube started to feel like he didn't quite fit in with them either. He wanted to be his own person, unique and different.

So, Cube went back to his parents and told them that he didn't want to be a Ball or a Brick. He wanted to be himself, a Cube. His parents were shocked at first, but they soon realized that their son was happy being different. They embraced him and accepted him for who he was.

From that day on, Cube didn't worry so much about social acceptance. He knew that he was loved and appreciated for who he was, and that was all that mattered. He continued to explore his uniqueness, and even inspired some of the other Spheres and Cubes to embrace their own differences.

And so, Cube lived happily ever after, knowing that being true to himself was the most important thing of all.

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Not so bad for an AI, right? Let us continue on...

*“Away he'll schlep,
On his elephant Shep,
While Fella and Ursula,
Stay in step ...”*
— *George of the Jungle Theme Song*

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Later, I will go into more detail about my methodology. There will be inserts. I will explain how this came about. Right now, I want to jump into some of the cast of characters for this book. This will be basic at first. I have changed the names of people who have been important. The names are meant to be humorous and/ or mnemonic.

3 older sisters:
Marcia, oldest
Jan, middle
Cindy, youngest

Parents:
mom ... Liza
father (aka "Sperm Donor") ... Peter

Nieces and Nephews:
Marcia has no biological children
Jan has 3 children ... Bonobo, Guillermo, and Mina
Cindy has 3 daughters ... Fella, Ursula, Ann

Great Nieces and Nephews:
Bonobo has ... Ariel, Dino, and Cooper
Guillermo has ... Greg, Peter, and Bobby, aka G, P, and B
Mina has ... Dane and Amy
Fella has ... four boys, each named after a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle
Ursula has no children
Ann has ... a son named Shazam

Step-Brother and Step-Mother:
Luis, aka Rábano ... the son of Imelda
Imelda ... from Central America, married my father, Peter, in 1981 literally after knowing him for one day

Rich Godparents:
Pauline and Bubby Lillybaugh
their only child, Jane, is my third cousin

Childhood and High School Friends:
Mario and Luigi Torrito
Derek Tomlin
Derek Romano
Jake Flapjack
Dale Bakula
Jeb Chadwick
Will Black
Tom Lynn
Rufus Kornicki
Booboo Johnstone
Dana Garland
Stacy Tiger
Mack Tyler
Mick McGrady
Dan Kroger

Partners:
my HS prom date ... Lola Johnson
Jake's 1st wife ... Winny James
Jake's 2nd wife ... Vera Flapjack
Luis's wife ... Gale
Ann's guy ... Andy

This should do it for now.

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“How long must we endure this fool?”
— *Kodan Officer in The Last Starfighter*

“But I’m near the end
And I just ain’t got the time, no
Lord, I’m wasted
And I can’t find my way home ...”
— *House of Lords*

“I’m a joker
I’m a smoker
I’m a midnight toker...”
— *the Steve Miller Band*

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As this is written, I am fifty-two years of age. You know what that means? One year for every card in the deck! That's right! And I'm working on my fifty-third! You know what the fifty-third card is? The JOKER! That means this year is wild! Anything goes! Anything can happen!

And what is this? Candy Land? No! There are problems! There are conflicts! We must address these things! We must resolve as many issues as possible. There are heroes! There are villains!

Let's cut to the chase.

My dad is a POS loser! No respect for the guy! Lay out nine Lego pieces and one Erector Set piece. A three-year-old can't tell any difference, but a six-year-old? A kid that age can make proper distinctions! There will be distinctions this simple to make. But if you can't tell a Tinker Toy from a Lincoln Log, you're really at the wrong place! Sorry, but you're a Tard! Stop reading! Go buy yourself some Thrifty ice cream! Enjoy it! You think two plus two is nine? Okay, lame brain! This is not your book! No Tards recommended!

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*"Breathe in, breathe out,
Breathe in, breathe out,
Breathe in..."*
— *Bush*

*"I been to the edge
And there I stood and looked down
You know I lost a lot of friends there baby
I got no time to mess around
So if you want it, got to bleed for it baby
Yeah, got to, got to bleed, baby
Mmm you got to, got to bleed, baby
Hey, got to, got to bleed baby ..."*
— *Ain't Talkin' ' Bout Love*

*"In the words of a broken heart
It's just emotion
That's taken me over
Tied up in sorrow
Lost in my soul
But if you don't come back
Come home to me, darling
You know that there'll be
Nobody left in this world to hold me tight
Nobody left in this world to kiss good night
Good night ..."*
— *Bee Gees & Samantha Sang*

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I didn't want this to be life. Like everyone, else, I didn't ask to be born. I wanted love, just like you. We aren't spiders. Spiders are special creatures. They lay eggs in their webs and then take off. These eggs hatch. Many, many baby spiders crawl out and away into a very competitive world, but their parents aren't around to teach them anything or nourish them. They rely on instincts. From the very moment they are hatched, their innate understanding of their environment is enough.

Humans are not like this. We require adults to bring us up. They provide food, love, and shelter when we are babies. We can't make it on our own. In the United States, we are deemed legally prepared for full independence when we reach our

eighteenth birthday.

The traditional role of a mother is to nurture. The traditional role of a father is to be a provider. Though roles have shifted over the decades, this has been the way society has been basically structured for thousands of years. There are good mothers and bad mothers. I was lucky enough to have a good one. God rest her soul as she passed away in 2002. There are good fathers and bad fathers. Was Donald Trump's father good? I read *Art of the Deal* in 2005 while taking a business law class. Fred Trump was successful in Brooklyn real estate, if I remember correctly, and he provided a loan of a few million dollars to young Donald who studied business at Wharton. Young Donald took the money loaned by his father and became a billionaire real estate developer in Manhattan, New Jersey, and other places.

Fred nailed it as a provider.

In my family, my second cousin Pauline married a man who successfully launched a business making glass refrigerator doors for liquor and grocery stores. I spent significant time with them when I was younger. I felt blessed to be in their environment. When I was a toddler, they had a modest house in Glendale, California. By the time I was ten, they had a mansion in Encino. They were also developing beach houses in Ventura, Oxnard, and Newport. I got to spend a good chunk of my summer before fifth grade with them.

Pauline's husband, Bubby, took me to a company picnic back then. They only had one child, Jane, who was off running around with other kids. She was a couple of years younger than me. Bubby talked to me. He explained he made an agreement with his business partner not to hire any family members. Also, it was clear they wouldn't be doling out money for any reason. He had a prenuptial agreement with Pauline. I was fine with these things. Bubby was a self-made millionaire, but it wasn't so simple. Like the loan Donald Trump received from his father, Bubby received a loan of ten thousand dollars. I believe it was from his aunt. Forgive me if any of the details are off, but I think the crux of it is accurate. Bubby told me at that company picnic that it was a struggle in the early days. He lived off peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

We can look at people deemed to be successful. Sometimes people make it out of tough settings. Sometimes people endure bad parenting. We are not spiders, keep in mind. Good parents in good situations provide more than nourishment for their kids. Many of them will start college funds. There are different ways parents earn respect and admiration from their children. My mother is held in high esteem by

me and my sisters even though she has been gone for more than twenty years.

My father has received a failing grade from me.

I mentioned earlier I don't want this autobiography to be in the tone of the National Enquirer. With that said, it's impossible to explain my life without talking about my circumstances. There were moments over the years when I believed my father, Peter, was a good guy. I believed he had my best interest at heart. There were too many other moments and periods when I couldn't understand life. He was mean. He was only around in the house until I was four years old. He played this "game" where he grabbed my forearm. "You're my prisoner," he would say. I giggled. There was a scene in *Mr Wrong* where Whitman Crawford (*Bill Pullman*) breaks his own pinky finger to show how much he cared for Martha Alston (*Ellen Degeneres*). It turned from a fluffy comedy to a stoic one at that moment. I remember my dad holding onto my forearm and not letting go. It wasn't funny anymore.

My dad took off to Alaska to work on the oil pipeline before I began kindergarten. He wasn't around a lot for much of my elementary school years. It's easy to call him an absentee father because of this, but I believed I understood. He was an electrician and traveled to where they had high labor demands.

Something is still missing, though. I've skipped over details because I want to preface something larger at work. Before I do, I want to say I'm not sure how to feel about people I've cut out of my life. It's been three and a half years since I've spoken to my dad. He was yelling at me that I was going to be in a "world of hurt" for something out of my control. I see my dad as a sociopath. In real life, I genuinely put him in the ballpark of Ariel Castro. I put him in the neighborhood of Louise and David Turpin. That whole crap about "you're my prisoner" was real. The attitude permeated from childhood and continued throughout adulthood. In fiction, I saw him as Twilight Zone's Howling Man.

There are different reasons I believe the relationship never maintained a satisfactory level. One of the reasons has to do with family politics. I've been a consistent member of a conspiracy site known as the *Maniac Nebula*. We talk about Sasquatch, aliens, and government corruption. Oh. We talk about the VRWC, too. That's Vast Right Wing Conspiracy for any noob out there.

I thought my relationship with my dad was worthwhile until 1998. Something happened that year. And remember I told you he yelled at me that I was going to be in a "world of hurt"? That was November of 2019 in Southern California. The

next day, I took off to live in Seattle. While I was living up there, I texted my sister Cindy about why I moved. I will share that message with you right now.

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1989 — I was 18 and registered to vote as Republican. In general, they are anti-union. Pauline & Bubby were staunch Republicans, by the way.

1990 — dad invested in Double Deal Pizza & it never made money so we rented out rooms at the Oleander house.

1994 — dad took off to work in Elko, Nevada. I forwarded him mail so he would pay the utilities. You were living at the Oleander house at this time. Grandpa lived in the backyard in his van. Do you remember the garbage got cut off & the lights got turned off? in dad's last letter to me, he asked for an encyclopedia article on cyanide. Cyanide is poisonous & I was concerned he was suicidal. When the lights got turned off, I considered the worst so me & Luis decided to fly up to Reno, Nevada. We rented a Jeep and drove to Elko, Nevada to find him. He was doing okay. He worked on a new kind of gold mine. Turns out they use cyanide to extract gold from dirt after it's sandblasted with strong streams of water. After we left Elko, me & Luis visited Pauline & Bubby in North Lake Tahoe. Beautiful custom-made mansion on the lake. We ate dinner there. It felt warm & I felt welcome. They were going to use that house for a Pete Wilson fundraiser. He was our Republican governor at the time. When Bubby passed away in 2018, I went to his service at a yacht club in Newport. They had a slide show. One of the pictures was Bubby, Pauline, senior president George Bush (Republican) and Barbara Bush (former first lady). But in late 1994, Grandpa was in bad health & passed away.

1995 — In March, the Oleander house was foreclosed on & I went to live at Luis's house. May, I graduated from Chaffey College. June, I was confirmed at St Francis de Sales. Remember? Father Cosimo came. I sent invitations to Pauline & Bubby for my graduation & confirmation but neither came to either one. In August of 1995, I started classes at Pitzer College. I should note a few things. (1) Pitzer's acceptance rate today is 12% and it actually turns away 4.0 high school students. (2) Pitzer is one of 5 Claremont undergraduate schools, and it is very, very liberal. Danny Elfman went there. Claremont McKenna is the school directly south and is very, very conservative. Robin Williams went there. (3) They are private schools and very expensive costing almost as much as Harvard. Our school president was from Harvard. Thankfully, I got grants and scholarships.

1996 — By the end of my 1st school year, I had to move to the Property. At the

time, dad lived there alone. I didn't mind a whole lot at but ... IT WAS MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY... and I have to emphasize this.

Here's why I want to write an autobio. There are layers and twists. 1996 was an election year & dad had a bunch of Clinton/ Gore pins and stickers in the Barn. I was still registered Republican. My ex-boss at Maxwell Street was staunch Republican. He was okay, but he was very mean and openly called the crew "fucking idiots" aloud. My ex-bosses at Quilt, LLC were open, staunch Republicans. Pauline & Bubby, the same. When I registered Republican in 1989, I believed in the concept of merit. In other words, when you work hard, you get rewarded. That was the idealism. But as time went on, my personal observations were that Republicans were too often ruthless, thick-skinned, and hypocrites. I took a Clinton/ Gore bumper sticker with the IBEW logo from dad's Barn and I put it on my truck. At Pitzer, I was surrounded by a bunch of hippies & I was studying ecology. At work, Booboo Johnstone was about to lose his job because of bad attendance. One of our friends was a Teamster union organizer, Rufus Kornacki. I had perfect attendance at the end of 1996 then called in sick right after Christmas because I had to drive to Salinas & I happened to be sick. After years of great reviews, my boss started giving me shade. So we let Rufus come in and we started an organizing drive.

1997 — Still studying ecology at school. There was a photographic exhibit which showed airplanes dropping pesticides on crops even as workers were in the fields. This got me stirred up. For spring break, I was invited to the headquarters of the United Farm Workers. There were about 20 Claremont students. The teacher who organized it was Jose Camargo, and he had been a personal friend of Cesar Chavez. It was a warm time. We leafletted, protested, sang, acted in "teatros" and had a good time. I was the photographer and got my pictures into the Claremont Courier and Fontana Herald.

Here's the answer to the Seattle question:

I became friends with Jose Camargo at school. I became involved with UFW meetings. There was a program called Union Summer which he advised me to be part of. I got a written recommendation from him & from Rufus Kornacki, the Teamster trying to organize Quilt. I lived in Seattle in the summer of 1997 with nineteen interns. I HAD A GREAT TIME IN SEATTLE!!!! We worked from Sun up until Sun down for nearly a month. We worked with Longshoremen, Teamsters, farm workers, SEIU, and UFCW through an AFL-CIO program. I felt invigorated. I felt I had hope, purpose, and focus in life.

Things got weird. President Ronald Reagan's son, Ron Jr, was an open liberal and spoke at the Democratic National Convention. Nancy & president Reagan accepted it. In some families, you can have opposite political opinions and still get along. Why do I bring this up? I had my reasons for heading to the political left. Every Republican boss I had wound up treating me badly even though I was a good employee. Our Republican godparents didn't come to my Chaffey graduation or my confirmation.

Remember when Kevin Costner's character in Dances With Wolves "goes Indian" after being sent into isolation to man a post? I wrote about this analogy in Cretins. I felt like that. Many Republicans are too negligent. They left us in a ghetto and they're mad our friends are from the working class.

But Democrats have their problems. They are too often spineless and fickle. Rufus promised me he'd get me a union warehouse job if I got fired from Quilt for my union activity. He didn't come through. I got fired DURING A LEAVE OF ABSENCE and I took my case to the National Labor Relations Board. I thought the Teamsters would back my case but Rufus said they didn't want to spend money on lawyers. So I was registered Republican from 1989- 1996, seven years. I was registered Democrat from 1996- 2003, seven years. I voted for one Republican and one Democrat for president. The rest have been third party. I voted for Ralph Nader twice. Our ecology center at Pitzer brought him in to speak. He's the only major candidate I've seen face-to-face. In 2003, I registered Libertarian. I'll probably die Libertarian. I found too much corruption in the two-party system. I honest-to-God don't believe Democrats exist anymore.

Once Big Money came into politics, there's a concept of "controlled opposition". This is a story for another time, but it's one of the reasons I stay active at a conspiracy-based website. Too much of modern politics is theatre.

I wanted to mention something I've never told anyone about. In 1998, the weirdness was just beginning. In May, me & dad were invited to a 25-year "renewal of vows" between between aunt Carole and uncle Rudy. It was at a Lutheran church in Riverside. The preacher was uncle Bruno Del Cerro's younger brother. Remember Jimbo? The guy who played Jesus at the Easter plays? Before the service, we all mingled out front. Dad had wrecked his gray & black Ford Truck the year before so we arrived in Grandma Theresa's old, white 70s Chevy Nova. It's the first time I can remember snobbiness from anyone in the family. Dad was going through hard times but I figured we'd all pull out of it. Keep in mind, he still had his electrician buddies coming around and he had those Clinton/ Gore pins in the Barn. Well, the service went on. It didn't feel like a religious sermon,

though. It felt like a political one. Then we went to a country club which Bubby belonged to. The Lillybaughs paid for everything and I admit it was a nice setting. The year before, they paid for cousin Chloe's wedding and reception on a house boat. Well? After the country club, we went to uncle Rudy Sr's new house in Riverside. That's where it felt weird. You remember telling me about gaslighting? It felt like that was going on. A lot of hints, innuendoes and indirect references about lifestyle. Bubby was there. Cousin Rudy Russo Jr walked around with a shotgun in the house. The theme of the day seemed to be "liberals are bad, conservatives are good". That was in May of 1998. By July, I went on a roadtrip to Chicago to visit Booboo Johnstone's family. By August, I was in Venezuela for a Pitzer study abroad program where Hugo Chavez was running for president. When I got back, nothing felt normal. No matter how hard I tried, nothing would feel normal. While I was in Venezuela, the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke out. I wondered why dad flipped a one-eighty in politics. Was it really the Lewinsky thing? Or was he trying to reconnect with the right-wing part of the family... meaning the Lillybaughs and to a lesser degree, the Russos?

Either way, I made up my mind. They never really accepted me. I think we had this conversation when we were talking about the Boingo song "Mary" when they sing, "There's still time to repent for all your sins." But we're okay the way we are. We grew up in a ghetto. We have different friends and values than them. I grew up in Fontana, too, which was white working class. I felt treated like a step-child too often. I knew I had to get away a long time ago. I tried to make it work. Finally, I got to Seattle. I like it here. I haven't met any uppity people. Anyhow, we can talk more of this later ...

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I saw this funny quote on Pinterest. It went something along the lines of, "Never play chess with a pigeon. No matter how good you do, it's just going to shit on the board, knock over the pieces, then strut around like it won." Since the family intervention in 1998, my dad disavowed Bill Clinton. I thought he was somewhat cool before this. He used to bring his electrician buddies around. There was a positive working class vibe about it. But in the years after the intervention, his outward politics flipped a one-eighty. It was as if he was sitting home and watching Fox News all day and he became part of its echo chamber. I wasn't talking to *him* anymore. I was talking to a degenerative form of Bill O'Reilly through him. If we would go out for a bite to eat, he'd rant about how Nancy Pelosi was screwing up the country. He emulated Dick Cheney in the early two thousands. He began varying degrees of gaslighting and psychological torture. The last time I was on speaking terms with him, he had already drunk the Trump

Kool Aid. Though I haven't talked to him since the 2020 election, his personality was like the pigeon, and like Trump. He gambled our house away, but we weren't ever allowed to talk about this. It messed with his pride too much. Just like Trump lost by seven million votes, he strutted around like he won. My dad adversely effected the lives of me, my sister Cindy, and anyone else who relied on us. It was a horrible ripple effect.

He shit on the board, knocked over the pieces, then strutted around as if he won.

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“If it wasn't for your misfortune, I'd be a heavenly person today...”
— New Order

*“His eyes seem so glazed
 As he flies on the wings of a dream
 Now he knows his father betrayed
 Now his wings turn to ashes to ashes his grave*

*Fly on your way, like an eagle
 Fly as high as the Sun
 On your way, like an eagle
 Fly, touch the Sun ...”*
— Flight of Icarus

*“Hey little girl, won't you come this way?
 Won't you let me buy you candy?
 Or perhaps a chocolate shake?
 Or perhaps some nice cocaine?
 Or perhaps a little kiss?
 Or perhaps a ride in my big car?
 Perhaps a ride in my big car?”*
— Oingo Boingo

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Me and Jake used to like Oingo Boingo. We've been listening to the band since we were teenagers. Many in our group liked Boingo, as a matter of fact. A few guys got the “smoking skull” tattooed on their bodies. One guy had an awesome Boingo graphic airbrushed onto the hood of his El Camino. Jake used to mock the sentiment of the Boingo song “Nothing To Fear” when they sing about luring a young girl into treachery. “Hey little girl, you want some candy?” he would say. We'd be driving through our high school parking lot surrounded by students our same age. He was joking, but the reality is out there in the world. As this is being written, Jim Caviezel is promoting a movie called “Sound of Freedom” which is about child sex trafficking. There have always been creeps going the extra mile to lure vulnerable people into heinous situations. I brought up Ariel Castro earlier because it's one of the extremities. In the early two thousands, he kidnapped three girls. Michelle Knight, Amanda Berry, and Gina DeJesus were held captive at his Cleveland house until 2013. Amanda Berry managed to escape with her six-year-old daughter, whom she had given birth while captured. Cops arrested Castro and the other girls were saved.

In this book, we will talk about the realites of life. In 2018, Louise and David Turpin were arrested for chaining their children to furniture. They had been contained and tortured for years in Perris, California. One of the children managed to escape and contact authorities. In this book, we will also talk about art and entertainment as it reflects life. In 1997, Morgan Freeman starred in “Kiss The Girls” which was about a psychotic who kidnapped young women and kept them in his lair. In the eighties, the soap opera *All My Children* featured a hidden twin brother of a wealthy tycoon. Adam Chandler, a ruthless businessman, kept his brother tucked away in a wing of his mansion. Family Guy spoofed this plot when it was discovered Peter had a hairless albino twin brother hidden in his backyard shed.

People experience trauma. Sometimes it takes years for their stories to come out. Sometimes, people are forced to hold it in their whole lives without viable outlets. In 2014, Michael Egan claimed he was sexually assaulted by X-Men director, Bryan Singer. The assault happened at an Encino pool party in 1998. Why did it take so many years for the accusation to come out? This is the nature of abuse! In a Rolling Stone article, Axl Rose claimed he had gained “recovered memories” through therapy. He had been sexually abused as a child and suppressed it for years. Abusers often are powerful people, though, and they use fear tactics to keep their victims silent. In 2020, Corey Feldman intended to blow the lid off Hollywood perverts in a documentary. He claimed his friend, Corey Haim, was raped by Charlie Sheen.

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"I'm betting that the redhead you followed is the same person who told Tyler to throw the fight. She's one. Shooter's two. Tyler's three. The drunk who shouted the signal is four and whoever was on the other end of that radio is five. Five people make a conspiracy, right?"

— Nicolas Cage as detective Rick Santoro in *Snake Eyes*

"And to say that the squares are to be compared to retarded children or something like that, it's very difficult. To say the squares are retarded children, you can't do that because we're all in the same family. We just have to extend our hand, you know? If we don't try to extend our hands to them in terms that they understand, like the word 'peace', then they're not going to extend hands to us certainly ..."

— Yoko Ono during the Bed-in at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, May 26, 1969

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So here we have it. In my life, I've become somewhat of a conspiracy theorist. I need to mention something important, though. I differentiate between collusion and conspiracy. Collusion is subconscious and not organized. Conspiracy is conscious and organized. Collusion entails mere attitudes as its driving force. Conspiracy entails a specific, detailed plan. In the animal kingdom, a scarlet king snake looks similar to a coral snake. The scarlet king snake is not poisonous, though, whereas the coral snake has venom within its fangs. Collusion looks like conspiracy, often. We need to take closer looks. The destruction of the Twin Towers in 2001 did not happen by accident. It wasn't a whim. It wasn't a spontaneous reaction. It was planned. William Cooper and Alex Jones both knew the attacks would happen and are on record saying bin Laden would be framed. This was a conspiracy. William Cooper was shot to death less than two months after the attacks by Arizona sheriff deputies. Alex Jones became one of the bigger YouTube influencers but was eventually deleted and sent packing. I became part of one of the world's larger conspiracy sites and spent countless hours trying to figure out what happened to our world. Yoko Ono had a kinder evaluation of the Elite. She presented them as equivalent to retarded children. They wreck things, but they really don't know what they're doing. She offered "peace" as a mantra, but her husband, John Lennon, was shot to death in 1980.

Webster Tarpley studied the assassination of John F Kennedy. Like most believe today, he did not think Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin who killed JFK in Dealey Plaza in November of 1963. Webster lectured and wrote books about

what it takes to pull off such a large operation. It takes moles, killers, and patsies. I watched *Dark Legacy* on Netflix and I watched many other videos pertaining to the JFK assassination, and the wild events of Nine Eleven. It was the same people. From the onset of the CIA in 1946, and the formation of Israel as a formal nation in 1948, there has been a perpetual and steady “grab of power” from our publicly-elected officials. Today, we call this the Deep State. In Israel, their secret agency is called the Mossad. The original motto of the Mossad was taken from Proverbs 24:6, “By way of deception, thou shalt do war.” Together with the Mossad and the CIA, the MI6 of Great Britain has embarked on actions and events ordinary people are oblivious to. My autobiography is impossible to tell without explaining my mental state. My mental state has been about menial things.

I need to emphasize this for anyone reading who has known me in real life.

My mental state has been about menial things, yes. But I went to college. I studied things I didn’t expect to study. I became fascinated by a deeper understanding of our world. I am the first person in my immediate family to get a bachelor’s degree. So my life is not *only* about menial things.

I had a good friend when I worked at XPO Logistics as a forklift driver a few years ago. Let’s call him Arturo Velasquez. He was my age. The Hispanic culture is different than the Anglo one. Elders are respected more. At the same time, there is resistance. During these past few years, I have had consistent resistance. There’s a pattern, and it’s predictable. Arturo (aka Arthur) had dark hair and brown eyes. I have lighter hair and green eyes. We both have Spanish last names, though, and most of the youngsters respected us. As elders, the youngsters called us OGs, meaning Old Gangsters. On Arthur’s Facebook page, he bragged about doing cocaine and banging hookers, but the youngsters knew it was a joke. We went out after work, we drank a lot of beer, we played pool. Then we’d go back to work and do it all again.

There’s a predictable pattern in the Spanish community. White people are okay in social groups, but up until a certain extent. I’m white. If anyone saw me on the streets, they’d say, “Ooooh! A white guy! How rare in California today!” The kind Spanish term for us is “wedo” and the derogatory term is “gavacho” which technically derives from what they called Frenchmen coming from Basque country going into Spain. I remember watching *Colors* starring Sean Penn and Robert Duvall. When I was a kid, the bad ass Chicanos were called *chucos* or *cholos*. They wore baggy pants, clean white T-shirts, flannels buttoned only at the top, and they wore backwards bandanas covering their foreheads. I remember when Danny McGavin (*Sean Penn*) and Bob Hodges (*Robert Duvall*) drove up to a Mexican-

American gang hanging out in a Los Angeles wash underneath a bridge. Bunch of brown guys, and one white cholo. I remember thinking, *Ooh! That's me! That single white guy in that Mexican-American gang! Ooh! They put me in a movie!*

During the Covid year, *Tiger King* became popular on Netflix. It was about about a guy who raised tigers in Oklahoma and sold them. He had a zoo. Tigers are cute animals when they are young. When they get older, they are lazy, not much different than smaller house cats. They lay around. They demand a lot of food. People love tiger kitties, but they're not as keen on tiger adults.

Wolves are beautiful creatures, but we don't allow them in our neighborhoods. They are too wild. Dogs are man's best friend, but we don't dump them in the forest when we no longer want them. The hybrid of a wolf and domestic dog (aka *wolfdog*) is a tragic canine. It's too wild for the house, and not wild enough for the forest. I am that thing. This is my story. Fortunately, I have the gift of writing. I can tell my story, and I hope it resonates here and there. Unfortunatley, I have been shut out. I believe this in the bowels of my soul. They don't want me in *Barnes & Noble*. They don't want me in universities. I attended a private college, but I knew they didn't want it to last. *Not all of them.*

I have written text messages, and I have posted to social media boards. I have been a member of a prominent conspiracy site. I will tell my story now, as it happens, but I will also share what I have expressed to others over the years. Like I said, I belonged to a conspiracy site, *Maniac Nebula*. I will share a post from that site, then I will share a post to my sister, Cindy. I was talking about sexual perverts trying to lure girls into bad situations. I will expand by sharing this sardonic, dreadful trope:

"This will be our little secret..."

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posted to Maniac Nebula many years ago...

My grandfather on my mom's side died when I was very young and anything of value he had was taken by one of my uncles. I grew up in dire poverty for most of the first fourteen years of my life. I had great friends, though, and a lot of good times. Me and my sister were the only white kids in the neighborhood. One of my best friends was a little older and he was black guy from a family of Democrats. He told me I should be a Republican because, as a white guy, I had a chance to make it out of the neighborhood if I did well in school and stayed clean. There were a lot of drug dealers in the neighborhood but they never pushed anything on me. I saw a man die of a stab wound across the street from where I lived when I was a small kid. As a teenager, me, my sister, and a friend were shot at from a car before "drive bys" were all over the news.

My dad and mom had split before I was in kindergarten. In the summer before ninth grade, my dad fought for custody of me and won. I moved to a predominantly white working class town. His cousin is a millionaire and had multiple custom-built homes at California beaches and one at Lake Tahoe. I used to stay parts of my summer with her and I felt blessed that I had this duality in my life. I knew what it was like to live in a suburban ghetto and I got to stay right on a beach with a family that had a housekeeper. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons my dad was able to win the custody fight was that he had recently married his cousin's housekeeper who came from Central America. I still hang out with her son who's roughly the same age as me and I call him my brother even though we're not blood related.

I know what you're talking about with the "rich person curse", or at least I think I do. After my dad won custody, I wound up going to a high school where the gap between the richest and poorest wasn't as pronounced as other places. The jocks were humble and the cheerleaders were friendly—nothing like Mean Girls or any stereotypical movie. Also, most drove brand new cars by their senior year. My wealthy cousin has one daughter a couple of years younger than me. They contemplated buying her a million-dollar equestrian horse so she could possibly compete in the 1996 Olympics but they wouldn't buy her a car. Mansions become prisons. I'm pretty sure there's a Netflix series about this. Money is a powerful thing if you're in control of it... but if you have a domineering family member who doesn't have a "share the wealth" attitude, it can make you feel like a slave, prisoner, or hostage. It can make you feel like a warehoused cancelled product collecting dust on some distant rack.

I spent my first years after high school at a community college. Me and one of my

best friends double dated girls from our class. One of them lived in an awesome home in the foothills overlooking the valley. When we went inside, something felt dead and lonely there. We went to pick up her friend down in the valley and, even though the house itself wasn't much to brag about, there was a happiness and vibrance inside.

I felt baited eventually. I lived the Republican type of method until my mid twenties and stayed clean cut and hard working. I was always put in management positions, given keys to the pizza store I worked at, and given responsibility of making bank deposits. I was accepted into a liberal school, Pitzer in Claremont, and my dad was a union electrician. In 1996, he had Clinton/ Gore pins and bumper stickers hung everywhere. The "grunge thing" was going around and I loosened up. I grew my hair out, grew facial hair for the first time, and put one of them Clinton/ Gore stickers on my truck!!!! I veered SOOOOO far to the left that I didn't even vote for Bill Clinton in 1996!!! I voted for Ralph Nader... and I voted for him again in 2000. I was gone from the pizza store I had worked at and was now driving a forklift at a warehouse. My work reviews were excellent and, socially, I had gotten involved with union organization.

I want to tell people that it's real. Their judgement is real. I'm talking about "rich people". My behavior wasn't a whole lot different. I would go in to visit my old boss at the pizza joint and the first thing he would ask is how much pot I've been smoking. The answer? Not any more than I had smoked when my hair was short... which, for me was a few times a year, mostly at concerts. I still have copies of my excellent work reviews from Quilt, LLC but they fired me during a signed leave of absence when I took off to Seattle in the summer of 1997 to do a month-long internship for the AFL-CIO working with Longshoremen, UFCW, Teamsters, UFW and SEIU.

It's all a learning experience. I mentioned the thing about "feeling baited" for this reason: In 1998, my millionaire cousins started shaming anyone for going or turning liberal. Keep in mind, Orange County voted for Bill Clinton in 1996 and that was one of the most conservative places in California, let alone the whole country. Without going too much into the politics, there seemed to be a sense that Republicans were ramming corporations at everyone and taking their business overseas whereas the Democrats seemed to have tax incentives to keep small business strong and they began a "welfare to work" program. Monica Lewinsky aside—talks of her overshadowed most things at the end of the Clinton era—our country had its first budget surplus in a full generation. A trillion dollars!! Why do more people not talk about this?

Continuing with the "bait", though. After the shaming from my dad's cousin (she became my godmother when I was eleven), my dad's outward appearance and certain behaviors became more conservative. Here's where "Dances With Wolves" plays in. Lieutenant John Dunbar (Kevin Costner) was sent to a remote Civil War-era outpost, he befriends a wolf in his isolated life, then he befriends the local Lakota Native Americans. Time passes and the United States Cavalry eventually gets there and they find Dunbar's scrap book full of imagery about the life he's lead and they find him with long hair and dressed in Lakota clothing. They arrest him as a traitor.

Somehow, I got treated like dog crap for veering to the social left. Part of the reason I got involved with the union stuff was to try to please my dad who worked with the IBEW. Another reason? One of my buddies was about to get fired from Quilt (where I got him a job) so we got one of our Teamster buddies to start an organizing drive. My attendance was perfect that year, though, and like I've said, my work was solid. My dad distanced himself from Clinton, now talks crap non-stop about Obama, and is an open Trump supporter. The guy from Quilt had been dating a Romanian Loma Linda nursing student, he was lovestruck and always tardy because of her, but otherwise was a good worker. There was a switch-a-roo that seemed to happen when Clinton's reputation was smashed. My buddy Booboo (the guy from the Chicago post) wasn't grateful people stuck up for him during the Teamster organizing drive. Part of me even says he sold some of us out. Me and my dad went a few years without talking and, even now, our relationship is not quite what it used to be in the early nineties. At school, it was hard to help myself. I was grateful to be there and I got along fine with the "tuition students"—the ones rich enough to pay for school outright without grants or loans. The times I had a blast, though? It was with the working class kids who were there because they had great grades, solid social work, and pretty decent recommendations. It was a blast.

I came to Maniac Nebula for the conspiracy talk. I've wondered about my life for many years. I believe there's a difference between conspiracy and collusion. Conspiracy to me is conscious, concerted, deliberate, almost always diabolical, and secret. Collusion to me is a phenomenon. It happens quite naturally and is borderline subconscious. There's a thread that reports that 94,000,000 Americans are out of work. It doesn't take a conspiracy to keep people out of the job market. Economies go in cycles. But is there a conspiracy at work as well? A type of "black list" where conservative business owners refuse to hire anyone they see as Democrat- or left-leaning? Is there pressure in their country clubs to keep the masses struggling and pitted against one another?

The last time I saw my second cousin's husband was at a wake at their Laguna beach house in 1998, he wouldn't even look toward me and my dad's direction when other family was there and we were out front. When we left, same thing. Wouldn't look at us or shake our hands. Very intentional thing. He was a self-made millionaire, by the way, had been poor when he was young, and was open and humble when I was a kid. Time passed and they moved from an open-access beach house to a gated community (on the beach, of course). It felt like family members were getting lopped off one by one. First, me and my dad in '98, then a few more here and there until no one was talking to them by around 2003. The final straw came when my cousin, Jane (the one who rode equestrian) was about to marry an "ordinary guy" who worked in construction... and was set up by other cousins!

One of the problems I have with rich people is this: They're more than happy to take you're time and effort when they're on the way up but they can be dire jerks when/ if a favor needs to be returned. Andrew Jackson had an excellent quote about bankers:

"When you won, you divided the profits amongst you, and when you lost, you charged it to the bank... You are a den of vipers and thieves.... ."

Michele "Crazy Eyes" Bachmann in 2012 talked about today's bankers privatizing profits and socializing losses. Basically the same concept as Andrew Jackson. There's a culture in rich circles, though, that almost invites fear of anything different. Xenophobia and that type of thing. I want to say that I was on the "inside track" at a time. I thought I would be rich, like my second cousin, living at a beach house, possibly in Santa Barbara. Something happened to me. I disdained snobbery and fell in love with fools. I hear ya', OP. I've thought of myself as Tarzan a few times. What's he gonna do when a hunter comes to snag an animal buddy? Maybe I'm fooling myself, though. Maybe there was no choice and it was destined to happen that I got cut out and felt marginalized. I feel used, and for years I felt extremely bitter. Vengeance. I'll admit that's part of the reason I looked into conspiracy sites. I wanted to expose the 9/11 players, the Bilderbergs and the so-called Illuminati. Obviously, I wanted to tell my own side of things so perhaps we can have justice on the lower rungs.

I'm at more peace now than I've been in a long time. This site has helped but so has time. They say, after all, that "time heals all wounds". I have a few vlogs where I talk about these issues. By itself, these individual posts can seem trite and fluff-oriented. Taken together, they create a mosaic. There is a picture here. We all contribute pieces to the puzzle ...

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So here we have it. Some of the material shared is redundant, but it's given from different perspectives. We have the issues of oppressors versus oppressed. We also have people out there who aren't directly involved in inflicting harm, but they are complicit in bad situations.

Twenty years ago this month, I released my first novel, *Zoton*. I wrote it with a pseudonym. A few years ago, I re-released it with my birth name. When I did, I wrote an introduction to explain how everything came about. I'm going to include this introduction right now:

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Introduction From 2018 For Zoton and Other Books...

There are layers. There are many, many layers. It's Memorial Day in 2018 and I'm not sure how many of the layers I'll get to. I'm writing this introduction as a generic "one size fits all" explanation of how my first six books came about. There are actually seven books intended from 2003 until 2009 but my third one, Chagrin, became lost on a crashed hard drive. The six that saw the light of day were...

- *Zoton*, 2003
- *Title*, 2004
- *Anguish*, 2006
- *Trampled*, 2007
- *Exacerbation*, 2008
- *Annihilation*, 2009

These six can be reviewed, read and downloaded for free at [scribd.com/homercocktail](https://www.scribd.com/homercocktail). I'll explain a little of my history here. I first became interested in writing books when I was around five years old. There used to be this popular commercial where a scrawny man is walking around on a beach with his chicken. A huge monster comes out of nowhere and the scrawny man runs to the Yellow Pages. Aames Home Loan to the rescue. I'm not sure I quite understood books back then but I knew they had some kind of power. I remember asking my mother what the Yellow Pages were. A book. I knew I wanted to be part of it. I took a few 8 1/2 x 11 pieces of paper, bound them with Scotch tape in the middle, and folded them. I started on my first book. It featured a dog named

Spot. Wasn't the greatest thing, but it was a start.

By the age of eight, I wrote my first short story. A Trip to Sram. Basically, it was a planet named after Mars, but with backwards spelling. I sent it to my sister in San Jose. She was seeing a guy named Fred so I created my protagonist as a guy named Derf. Yes, backwards spelling again. Time went on and I was a sophomore in a high school English class. In my life, I have gone through cycles of academic achievement coupled with spurts of serious truancy. I won a couple of citywide math marathons during my grade school years. I lose interest. I begin to believe I don't have anything to prove. I can't concentrate on menial things. During high school, I rebelled and ditched a lot. When I wasn't ditching, I'd sit in certain classes and scribble doodles onto notebook paper while everyone else was involved with their assigned reading. I remember in sophomore English that everyone else was reading Old Yeller. I couldn't get into it. My teacher approached me and, instead of getting angry, she offered me an alternative. She happened to be reading Stephen King's Pet Sematary. She said that I had the choice of reading it as well and all I'd have to do is give her periodic oral feedback. I liked Pet Sematary a lot. I started to read other Stephen King books and so did a couple of my friends. Tommyknockers, It, Misery, The Dead Zone, Firestarter, Night Shift, Skeleton Crew, The Bachman Books and more. We'd keep in touch about what was going on in the stories. It reenforced my desire to write. I remember having fantasies about going to Maine with my best friend and we'd sit around a campfire at night roasting marshmallows with other Stephen King fans. The Master of Horror would be there telling us ghost stories. By the end of my sophomore year in high school, I was poised to write my first adult-oriented ten-page short story. It was Bloody Mary and followed the legend of a mythical phantom who would come out from a mirror and scratch your face if you said her name ten times. My teacher gave me an A for the project and it helped with my writing confidence.

Years of life went by and the road of life became bumpy. There were high highs and low lows. I was able to continue success in math. I tested in the top one percent for ASVAB. I passed the Navy nuclear field test, and when all was said and done, I passed calculus in college. On a personal level, there were challenges. My father invested in a pizza restaurant the year after I graduated from high school. It never got off the ground. We were forced to rent rooms in my house to help make ends meet. This was in the early nineties. By the time Titanic came out in 1997, there was a scene which summarized my experience up until that point. As the ocean liner is sinking into glacial waters, everyone is running around in a frantic panic—everyone except for a string quartet. There are two violinists and two cellists playing a smooth melody on the deck. They know

they're not going to make it out alive, but they remain quite calm. When they're done with the music, the head of the quartet says to the rest, "Gentlemen, it has been a privilege playing with you tonight." That's very much how I felt during the nineties as I made my way through community college. We were losing our house. We partied a lot during those years. It was fun, but it was scary. Somehow, I managed to be accepted into an exclusive, distinguished private college in 1995. This was right as my house was foreclosed on.

Life has been bumpy, like I have said. It has been filled with moments of joy, tidbits of pain, and periods of bizarre riddles. One of my best friends committed suicide the year after we graduated high school. That's had a profound effect on me. And the house? I have a millionaire second cousin who happened to be my godparent. I got to spend time at custom-built beach houses when I younger. We didn't have to lose the house. My grandfather happened to be living in the backyard in a van. It turned out that he had ten thousand dollars cash in there when he passed away in 1994 given to him by my rich cousin. During this period, our lights were shut off and our garbage service was ended because bills weren't paid. My dad was working in Elko, Nevada as an electrician and I was forwarding him the mail. He had been paying the bills but stopped. The last thing I heard from him was that he wanted me to send him an encyclopedia article on cyanide. This is strange stuff to remember but it's true. I thought my dad was suicidal so I flew to Nevada with my step-brother and we looked for him in a rented Jeep. Turns out he was working on a literal gold mine. The modern way of extracting gold is to blast the side of a mountain with water and, somehow, it's extracted out using cyanide. My dad turned out to be okay. After visiting him, we visited my rich cousin in Lake Tahoe. That's the last time I can remember being on chummy terms with her. The ten thousand dollars that was in my grandfather's van was taken by a family member. We were about to lose the house, and no payments were made to save it. I can't understand why things turned out the way they did.

I got through a few years at one of the Claremont colleges and that was one of my highs. We lost our house, though, so it was tough. My first year at the school, I lived in a garage-converted-to-bedroom. My second and third year, I lived in a twenty-five-foot trailer on property that wasn't seized during the foreclosure process. I was living as a survivalist but I was fine. I expected it to be a temporary situation. With every blessing I felt graced with, there was a curse to go along with it. It seemed that no matter how hard I worked, I couldn't get ahead. There was always someone that needed to borrow money, needed my time, or needed special favors. I felt trapped. The treadmill of life sped up every time I ran faster. As 2000 approached, I was in utter shock. The shit had truly hit the

fan. Nothing turned out the way I hoped or expected. I felt betrayed by friends and family members. I felt kicked to the curb. I felt left for dead. The worst part about it is that it was difficult to make a case for myself. I felt blackballed. It was hard to maintain work. My truck's transmission failed twice in three years. Every now and then, you hear people say, "The world has turned against me." I felt this way as the new millennium came to be. I felt individually out of my mind. Then the Nine Eleven thing happened. I was actually relieved, grotesque as that might sound. Why? Because the world was becoming crazy with me. As the years rolled along, I became something called a Truther. I don't buy the "official" Nine Eleven story whatsoever. I studied fringe and shadow governments and came across something called the Illuminati. It's the only thing that made sense as to why the American government became corrupt beyond comfort.

In 2003 former president Jimmy Carter released a novel called The Hornet's Nest. Many presidents have released non-fiction books but this was said to be first work of fiction. It was earlier in 2003 that I released my first fiction novel, Zoton. I have a theory of what was going on. Our government was becoming suppressive. It used to be that you could protest because it's been part of the great American tradition. The Bush administration was clamping down, though. They were making life difficult for dissidents. There was this bumper sticker: SEE DICK DRINK, SEE DICK DRIVE, DON'T BE A DICK. Authors write for illustration. There are truths in fabricated fiction. I suspect possibly that Jimmy Carter was going through the same thing as me. I went to a college which emphasized prolific and exemplary writing. I was trained in logic and critical thinking. I expected to write non-fiction essay critiques of modern life. I didn't know I had it in me to write entire novels. Yes, this was a goal of mine but it wasn't something I believed I would achieve. In 2003, I chose the pseudonym Gaud Rockefeller as a satire of the oligarchic megalomania of the times we lived in. I pumped out a book every year until 2009. The content was juvenile, erratic, and id-based. I wasn't writing for money. I was writing to explain the world I lived in. There's a difference between entertainment and art. Entertainment gives the public something they want to hear. Art gives the public something they need to hear. Our government went to crap and I was trying to talk about it.

It took me years to become remotely comfortable with post-industrial life. They were calling this the "information age" for a while. I see light at the end of the tunnel for the first time since the nineties. I don't like what our world has become politically but there's no reason to throw in the towel. In 2013, I threw away the Gaud Rockefeller pseudonym and took up Brick Jayne. I wasn't as reactionary and I paced myself a little better. I've written two books with the new pseudonym and a third is in the works...

- *Thermite*, 2013
- *Kiribati*, 2017
- *Cretins*, 2018

*These can be read at [scribd.com/brickjayne](https://www.scribd.com/brickjayne) and there's a caveat. When I published *Kiribati* last year at Lulu, I used my birth name, Eddie Corona. As of now, I'm thirty-five pages into *Cretins*, and my tentative plan is to release *Thermite*, *Kiribati*, and *Cretins* as *The Brick Jayne Trilogy*. From this point forward, I am fine with using my real name.*

— *Eddie Corona*

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We are almost up to full speed. I will now share what I have written since 2020 while in Seattle, Las Vegas, and California's High Desert. This will be jumbled, but I believe it'll start coming together:

Quick reference:

	— <i>TinyUrl.com/TiffanyTwisted1001</i>
equals	— <i>TiffanyTwisted1001</i>
equals	— <i>tt1001</i>
equals	— <i>1001</i>

So I have a selfie of me you can see online (*TinyUrl.com/TiffanyTwisted1001*). This is the same annotation in parentheses as simply (*TiffanyTwisted1001*), (*tt1001*), or (*1001*). You can watch "Together Forever" by Rick Astley (*0374*).

TinyUrl.com offers a service to shorten url links. In this book, I will refer to pictures, texts and videos. I have shortened links. To watch "Together Forever" for example, you would type into your web browser: *TinyUrl.com/TiffanyTwisted* followed by the four numbers *0374*. This will take you straight to a YouTube music video by Rick Astley!

Without further adieu...

High Desert, June 2022

The worst part of a lot of this is they didn't want me to tell my side of the story. Let's think about this. It's no secret for example that the Catholic Church has had problems with priests sexually abusing its members, specifically young children. This problem has been so widespread that the Church has had to settle in courts about its wrongdoings. They've had to pay money to people they've abused.

How widespread is this? Does anyone really know?

But I'm not here to disparage the Catholic Church. Nor am I here to say everyone should join. I'm here, in this opening, to illustrate a point about personal experience.

I've had a good experience with the Catholic Church. When I was a few months

old, I was baptized. Can't say I remember that day. When I was ten years old, I received my First Communion. At the time, my family was personal friends with the priest who performed the ceremony. My godmother was a rich lady. She liked alcohol, and on the day of my Communion, she brought enough cough syrup and was drinking healthily from the bottle so she was tipsy. I was an alter boy, and I sang Christmas songs in front of the congregation around the holidays.

I was never sexually abused by any member of the clergy.

This is my point.

So in good conscious, I can tell someone I think the Catholic Church is a decent place. I know, from television, they had their problems with sexual misconduct here and there. How widespread is it? One in a hundred priests? One in ten thousand? One in a million? I really wouldn't know that answer. I admit I've never researched it too thoroughly, though. It's not part of their doctrine to sexually violate anyone. It happens, though. I'm sure the common person is aware of the allegations. I don't know anyone who has been sexually abused.

We go through this with other social institutions. We have attitudes toward our police. We have attitudes toward our political parties. We have attitudes toward used car salesmen, lawyers, doctors, teachers, professional athletes, movie stars, scientists, and philosophers. Have you ever bought a lemon at a car lot? It might re-enforce public negative feelings toward car dealers. Did a doctor catch cancer at an early stage in your life? Saving you from months or years of grief, maybe even death? Maybe you'd like doctors even more, now.

Have you come across a cop who treated you unfairly?

In pop culture on television, our shows represent a wide variety of types of people. For the most part, police are portrayed in a positive light but every now and then, there is an exception to the rule. We're aware of the "good cop/ bad cop" idea. And what happens in real life when you experience a bad one? Or a series of bad ones? Of course your attitudes won't remain so positive.

There's a saying in politics which I believe I first heard from Jesse Ventura: *Vote your conscious*. In 1998, Jesse Ventura ran for governor of Minnesota as a third-party candidate. He won.

We have real life experiences with Republicans, Democrats, and independents.

We have ways to judge them based on what we see on TV. Nowadays, we have the internet as well. But often, it's the face-to-face real life interactions which carry the most weight. A staunch Republican boss treats you a certain way and it ticks your belief of the party higher or lower depending on what it is. A staunch Democrat school teacher treats you a certain way and the same thing happens.

I'm writing an autobiography at this moment. This introduction is being written from the High Desert in California. I have about twenty-five pages already written. I'm satisfied with the content. All twenty-five pages have either been written when I was staying in the Seattle area, or else in Las Vegas. I've wanted to do this for a while. I'd like to be understood. I'd like to get along with people I care about.

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"I'd rather be hated for who I am, than loved for who I am not."

— Kurt Cobain

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I've become really big on this over the years. I want to mention I have three college degrees:

— AA in Communication Studies

— AA in Liberal Arts

— BA in Intercultural Environmental Studies

During the course of studying Communications, our class was given an exercise. We were tasked to identify ourselves in different ways: Religion, politics, gender, nationality and so on. Then we were tasked to prioritize our responses based on what we identify with the most. Are you "man's man" and perhaps a member of the He-Man Woman Haters Club? Or does your gender identification hardly matter to you? Do you believe in *Murica* and hate libtards who trample on our flag? Or are we all God's children on planet Earth? Nationality doesn't matter because we all belong to the same human race.

I want to flesh out thoughts and feelings during the course of this writing process. I want to explain myself. I want to tell people why I believe certain things about certain people and institutions. I want to explain why I prioritize one thing, and hardly think much about another. In the course of life we gain friends and allies, and we also lose them. I want to explain my attitudes. I hope this brings me closer to some people. And I hope it ends the "beating of a dead horse" in other places. We are not all compatible. We are not meant to share our lives with

everyone, at least not all the time. It's vinegar and oil. You can shake it up, but it's going to settle into its own place.

I look forward to spending time with you. I look forward to having better mental health at the end of this autobiography. Sometimes the answers we need in life are inside of us, and we just need to look for them. As I write, there are Congressional hearings in regards to the radical incidents from January 6, 2021 in Washington, DC. I'll admit there's a degree of closure going on in my mind as I follow the testimonies of different people. I'll explain why as we continue. This introduction is being written from the High Desert in California, and it will resume here after I insert pages I've written elsewhere over the past couple of years. I'll try to make it worth it. This is not only a simple autobiography. I hope it's a history lesson. I will try to peg my place within a "grander scheme of things" within our world. These writings are my testimony. I hope you enjoy what's here.

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methodology (noun) — a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline; a particular procedure or set of procedures; the analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field

predication (noun) — a declaration of something self-evident; something that can be assumed as the basis for argument; the logical affirmation of something about another

anecdote (noun) — a short account of a particular incident or event, especially of an interesting or amusing nature

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As I write this segment, it is Fourth of July weekend in California. A few days have passed since I wrote the prior pages. It is a Saturday evening and our so-called Independence Day is in a couple of days. I have a list of items I want to cover. Let's start with Ronald Reagan. Before we do, let's talk briefly about methodology.

Words have a limiting capacity on our ability to communicate with each other, yet they're still some of the best tools we have. In this age of the internet, we have other methods to get across our ideas. I can refer you to a YouTube link, for example. We can watch the same video then discuss it. I can refer you to other pages. For the people who know me, I don't have to explain my physical appearance. They've seen me before and they can conjure an image of my face in their minds if prompted to do so. But what about strangers? The intent of this

autobiography is to send it to a few loved ones after it's complete. In addition, I will most likely make it available to the public. In the past, I've posted my books for free at *Scribd.com/BrickJayne* and I've made physical copies available for purchase at a self-publishing place, *TinyUrl.com/BrickJayneLuLu*. If I wanted a stranger to conjure an image of my face in their mind, I could tell them I have green eyes and brown hair. I can disclose my age, weight and height for further details. Could strangers then recognize me in public if they needed to? I doubt it. Without a unique identifying mark like Mikhail Gorbachev's infamous forehead smudge, it could be difficult no matter how many words are used.

But this is the age of the internet.

So I have a methodology to supplement my writing. I use a site called *TinyUrl.com*. Here's how it works. As I've said, I have green eyes and brown hair. So do millions of other people. Want to see a picture of me? I've written a few books and I've uploaded one of my author pics to the internet. I posted it at *Imgur.com*. Here's the link: <https://i.imgur.com/x9eLkZ0.jpeg>. It's only thirty-two characters long! Not too difficult to type into your browser! But, wait a second. I can read your mind:

"This is stupid! I'm not doing that!"

Of course. I know it's dumb. That's why I mentioned *TinyUrl.com*.

In 2019, I was writing a book called *Blunder*. I had written ten or so legit third-person books before this, and this was my first true crack at a first-person story. It was centered around a character named Braden Callypso. It was epistolary, meaning the character was communicating in journal form. It was autobiographical in tone. There were elements of my life in the story, but I took liberties with true fiction and subtle exaggeration. The tone centered around a young adult who had a rocky relationship with his father. In real life, I had issues with my dad but they seemed to be getting better. In the autobiography I'm writing at this moment, I will not beat around the bush. I will not allude to circumstances in indirect ways. I will defend my life. I will explain where I believe I was wronged. I will tell you what happened.

In *Blunder*, Braden dealt with emotional issues. It was therapeutic for me to write. I have a belief in life. *What doesn't kill you makes you stronger*. I was writing *Blunder* to deal with real life issues I had with my dad. I was giving him sneak peak copies of the story as it was being written. *Lulu.com* is a fantastic self-publishing site, as far as I'm concerned. You can't ask for better. I used to print

my own books by copying and binding traditional 8 1/2 x 11 pages at FedEx/Kinkos, but *Lulu.com* offers a service which makes the final product look more professional. My dad was reading *Blunder*. I know this because he gave me feedback. I was dealing with issues indirectly through fiction, but I hadn't tackled the biggest ones, yet.

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unilateral (adjective) — performed by or affecting only one person, group, or country involved in a particular situation, without the agreement of another or the others

subsistence (noun) — the action or fact of maintaining or supporting oneself at a minimum level

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My dad, over the course of time, has made huge unilateral decisions which significantly effected my life. When we're kids, we're expected to fully accept this for better or worse. I'm reminded of the final episode of the original Twilight Zone called *The Bewitchin' Pool*. Two kids, brother and sister, are swimming in their backyard when their parents approach them and they tell them they're getting a divorce. What's that mean? Well, the kids had to choose between living with mom or dad. Since it was the Twilight Zone, there was actually another option. There was a portal at the bottom of their swimming pool they could swim through and resurface at a lake where many happy children played and mingled. This alternative world was overseen by a kind, benevolent elderly lady named *Aunt T*.

Our parents make decisions. They get divorced. They move to other cities. Some parents abuse their children in mental and physical ways. Kids run away. The unlucky ones can't escape. They endure years of pain. Some parents are categorized as evil. They fully understand the pain they're inflicting, yet they do it anyway. And it's pain without a purpose. It's not like spanking your kid for running into a busy street. It's done for the sole sake of exercising power in a horrible way. Other parents inflict pain, but people make excuses for them. *Neglegence, stupidity and ignorance*. People cause pain, and when it's done with no end in sight, something has to change. When there's no light at the end of the tunnel, something must be done. My dad made huge unilateral decisions, and they destroyed my dreams. I had common sense dreams like owning my own home, having a beautiful wife to care about, and having good children to raise. My dad made these huge unilateral decisions in my adultood. It wasn't once or twice. It happened over and over. Every five-to-ten years, there would be something new.

I am writing this autobiography to explain these things. I am writing this autobiography to tell some of my loved ones I meant to be there for them. I am writing this to explain circumstances. Naysayers aren't going to peel the onion. They won't take time to listen. It's an exercise in futility. But this isn't for the naysayers so much as it's for the ones who don't have all the pieces to the puzzle. People need closure. I hope to help with that.

I'm reminded of another Twilight Zone episode. What you'll notice is I have a few favorite sources of art and entertainment when using anecdotes. The Twilight Zone. Far Side comics are another. Stephen King's work is up there. For now, we'll talk about *The Howling Man*. In this Twilight Zone episode, there's a feeble, old man trapped in a castle jail. He talks to a guy about letting him out, but the bars to the door keeping him in are quite wide. He could easily reach through them and remove the plank which secures the door shut. Still, he persists to convince the guy to do it. Eventually, the guy gives in and lets the elderly man out.

As he slowly walks out of his prison cell, the elderly man slowly transforms into the Devil.

I use these anecdotes in my books. At the end of *Cretins*, I refer to *The Howling Man* and I talk about the antagonist using unilateral decisions to kidnap his foes. I wrote these things thinking about my dad and the way I was treated over the years. There were enjoyable moments when I thought my dad was good and competent, but there were also terrible times when I couldn't accomplish goals because of radical things he's done which couldn't be ignored.

Every now and then, I'll go off track. I'll get off subject. But I'll return. I was talking about *TinyUrl.com* and I provided you a with a link to see a selfie of me through *Imgur.com*. Did you check it out? I hope not. Part of me hopes not. Why? There's an easier method. I brought up *Bluder* and the issues with my dad because, in fiction, I use the *TinyUrl* method for Braden to get across his ideas.

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*"Her mind is Tiffany twisted,
She got the Mercedes Benz,
She got a lot of pretty, pretty boys,
She calls friends..."*
— *Hotel California* by the Eagles

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In *Blunder*, Braden Callypso provides a way to elaborate on what he talks about. He uses *TinyUrl* as a fictional character the same way I'll use it here and now. His "less sensitive" material goes to *TinyUrl.com/bcallypso0001* and his "more sensitive" stuff goes to *TinyUrl.com/tiffanytwisted0001*. Of course, the numbers increase:

- *TinyUrl.com/bcallypso0002*
- *TinyUrl.com/bcallypso0003*
- *TinyUrl.com/bcallypso0004*

So *Blunder* is a work of fiction, but at the same time, it's not. Why? Those links are real. Braden Callypso is telling an epistolary story, but you can interact with him. That's what's great about our modern age. A story, in the past, couldn't have a dialogue between reader and writer, at least not in the same way. In Stephen King's *Misery*, a reader forced a writer (Paul Sheldon) to write a story. In an arcane way, that was a dialogue between reader and writer. But here, you have your chance to post your own links to the *TinyUrl.com/bcallypso* system. There's nothing I can do to stop you! You can *Rick Roll* me and take up the gaps I haven't gotten to yet. *Bcallypso0374* can be a YouTube link to "Never Gonna Give You Up", for example. You can do it!

So I gave you a link to a selfie of me: <https://i.imgur.com/x9eLkZ0.jpeg>.

I'm also using the Braden Callypso system. In the course of this autobiography, I will be using *TiffanyTwisted* just like Braden. The *Blunder* fictionalized numbers will be from 0001 to 0999, but they are still relevant. The numbers I use for this autobiography will begin at 1001. The *Imgur* selfie link has been shortened: *TinyUrl.com/TiffanyTwisted1001*.

As I continue to write later, I won't include the *TinyUrl.com* portion because it will be understood. It might become simply: *TiffanyTwisted1001*, or *tt1001*, or *1001*. I will move on.

I might tell you in 2014 I went to visit a family member during a summer road trip. I took a selfie at a park (*tt1001*). I will assume you know this means *TinyUrl.com/TiffanyTwisted1001*.

Let's get back to Ronald Reagan. Remember I mentioned him before going into methodology about providing supplemental information through a *TiffanyTwisted* online system? I want to mention Ronald Reagan to foreshadow a theme I plan to get to. Reagan was president of the Screen Actors Guild and was a registered

Democrat until 1962. Of course, he later became governor of California and later president of the United States of America. He was Republican at this point. I watched a good movie in which James Brolin depicted him. I had already known that his son, Ronald Reagan Jr, was quite liberal. Reagan Jr spoke at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. The Brolin movie showed how Reagan's children had liberal tendencies. It also showed how they managed to function as a family.

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conditional regard (noun) — in psychology, regard that is dependent upon the receiver's compliance with another's expectations or demands

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In this autobiography, I will discuss *conditional regard* within my family system. I bring up Ronald Reagan because I admired him. Family should come before politics. That's been my opinion for a long time. Something changed in our world. It's obvious. Though Ronald Reagan cracked jokes about Democrats and their policies, it is widely rumored he had a good working relationship with Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill. They didn't let their political differences interfere with progress of passing legislation. The idea of complete gridlock was absurd in comparison to today's world. The age of the nineteen eighties can be reflected by conservative journalist, George Will. You might not agree with him, but you can assess that he was logical and even-keeled. After Ronald Reagan left office, the tone of the Republican party shifted. As George HW Bush ran for office in 1992, Rush Limbaugh was more and more popular on the airwaves. He wasn't even-keeled like George Will. He was loud-mouthed and full of hot air. Times had changed.

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*"Follow the Moskva,
Down to Gorky Park,
Listening to the wind of change ..."*
— *Wind of Change* by the Scorpions

*"Well I fought for you,
I fought too hard,
To do it all again babe,
It's gone too far..."*
— *Change of Heart* by Tom Petty

"No, his mind is not for rent,

*To any god or government,
Always hopeful yet discontent,
He knows changes aren't permanent,
But change is..."*

— *Tom Sawyer* by Rush

*"Taught by the powers that preach over me,
I can hear their empty reason,
I wouldn't listen I learned how to fight,
I opened up my mind to treason ..."*

— *Shot in the Dark* by Ozzy Osborne

*"I changed by not changing at all,
Small town predicts my fate,
Perhaps that's what no one wants to see..."*

— *Elderly Woman Behind the Counter In a Small Town*
by Pearl Jam

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So here's a few lyrics about change. I was born in 1971. I graduated high school in 1989. I registered Republican that year. It was a very "in" thing to do. Ronald Reagan was quite a popular president. During the eighties, "Family Ties" was a top-rated sitcom. Michael J Fox played Alex Keaton, an ardent Reagan supporter. In 1984 when Reagan ran for re-election, he won forty-nine of the fifty states. Walter Mondale only won his home state, Minnesota, plus Washington, DC. Geraldine Ferraro, Mondale's VP running mate, later said it was impossible to beat Reagan because too many people liked him. She wasn't bitter. Naysayers can call me delusional, naïve, or insulated, but racism was at a societal minimum during the Reagan eighties. I think back to the Los Angeles Olympics and how we as a nation cheered Carl Lewis to win four gold medals. I think about how the public revered Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, and Prince as recording artists. I think about the Cold War and how it was more about Capitalism versus Communism instead of one race against another. We were all Americans regardless of skin color. It was the USA and our allies versus the so-called Evil Empire of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain.

Somehow, as I write this, the Cold War has resurrected. Some have called it the Cold War 2.0. And this time around, it's not completely USA versus Russia because our nation is divided along racial and political lines. This has effected me. I will discuss my own life in this autobiography, as I'm supposed to do. But I will talk about the dreaded Illuminati. I will talk about things that the common person

hardly discusses. And if they do, it's not with incredible depth.

I have twenty-five pages of material I have written over the past couple of years while living in Seattle and Las Vegas. They will come in the next segment. Let me be petty for a second, though. I am writing this right now from the High Desert in California. I live with a family member and her fiancé. They have a young son.

Let me digress. There's a controversial tell-all book biography about the members of Fleetwood Mac called *Gold Dust Woman*. Author Stephen Davis discusses Stevie Nicks and Lindsay Buckingham and it explains how Stevie was abused in her life. Let's suppose I'm writing an autobiography as Lindsay Buckingham, though. It would be silly to disguise certain people in my life. "I had a sexual relationship with the singer—*let's call her Samantha*—and it became complicated." This would be absurd! Everyone would know I'm talking about Stevie Nicks.

In today's world, any of us are exposed to social media through Facebook, Instagram, and other sources. But we don't want our laundry exposed to the public. Some people don't mind, but most would rather have their skeletons remain in the closet. In our lives, we come across extreme events. Tina Turner was beaten by her ex-lover, Ike Turner. This has become common knowledge and has become the subject of a bio-pic movie. We can talk about Tina Turner all we want. "What's Love Got To Do With It?" was a hit song in the eighties. But if we're going to talk about her for an hour or so, it would be impossible to avoid talking about how Ike treated her in the early days. Some people are married to events, both good and bad.

I'm married to certain events. The people in my realm aren't necessarily celebrities. But it would be impossible to explain my life without explaining the players. This includes family members, friends, enemies, and acquaintances. My general policy is to disguise people who are closer in space and time.

Let's get back to who I live with.

One of my sisters, when she was younger, had a couple of dolls called Raggedy Ann and Andy. I will refer to one family member as Ann and I will refer to her partner as Andy. Do they have anything to do with the dolls? No. It's just good for reference. And they're son? If I have anything to say I will call him Bam Bam, a reference to the son of Betty and Barney Rubble. Or maybe I'll call him Shazam instead.

Let's now insert the twenty-five pages I wrote while in Seattle in Las Vegas. Shall we? Before we do, I have a final note. I'm typing this on a laptop with a number ten font size of Times New Roman at a space and a half. Twenty-five pages here might wind up being thirty or forty pages when I format this text to a different sized font meant to be read as a hard cover or paperback physical book. Not trying to be overly detailed. Just saying. Now on to the Pacific Northwest from a couple of years ago.

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Seattle, February 2020

I've thought about writing an autobiography for a long, long time. Why? There are many reasons. There are people out there who I love. My life has been a chaotic mess in certain stretches. I want to explain "what was really going on" from my perspective. And even if certain loved ones have an inkling of what was going on, maybe they haven't been able to explain it to others in the circles outside of ours. And this isn't just for people I care about. I have had adversaries and antagonists in the course of life. I write this for them.

When I was younger, I watched a lot of reruns of television shows. I watched *I Love Lucy*, *Bewitched*, *I Dream of Jeanie*, *Gilligan's Island*, *Three's Company*, *Good Times*, *What's Happening*, *Facts of Life* and more. One of my favorite was *The Brady Bunch*. These shows are good to discuss for nostalgic reasons. But there's more. During the course of this autobiography, I will refer to popular culture for the sake of anecdotes and illustrations. I will draw from scenes in movies, dramas and sitcoms. I will draw from lyrics. I will discuss word-of-mouth culture.

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Question: Why did NASA take Pepsi and Coke into outer space?

Answer: They couldn't get 7 Up!

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Question: What does NASA stand for?

Answer: Need Another Seven Astronauts!

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What? Was this too soon? Was it done in poor taste? What you just experienced here is a cutaway. You see this happen all the time in *Family Guy*. Sometimes they refer to an obscure, distant plot line. Sometimes they show Conway Twitty

singing and playing guitar. Cutaways are meant to illustrate points. I like the *Dummies* and *Idiots* series of books. Here are a few examples.

- *Running a Marathon For Dummies*
- *Russian For Dummies*
- *Philosophy For Dummies*
- *Complete Idiot's Guide to Playing Piano*
- *Complete Idiot's Guide to Asian Cooking*

I've bought many of these books in my life. They utilize cutaways and sidebars. I like their method. This autobiography isn't meant to be too serious. I promised myself I'd write it when the "dust settled" and this is as close as it gets. I moved from California to the Northwest three months ago. I stayed in cheap hotels and slept overnight at rest stops for a while. I sold my car, bought a van, then found a room for rent. I got a job. It's been turbulent here and there. But I'm finally ready.

Even though this isn't meant to be overly serious, I want it to be comprehensive. I figured the *Dummies/ Idiots* form would be good enough. I'm not patterning my layout exactly the same, but I am inspired. The NASA joke? It was meant as an illustration. I was talking about word-of-mouth culture and it was the best example I could think of. I'm too young to have any memory of the JFK assassination. But, for the older crowd, it is said that most people remember where they were when they heard the news. They could tell you what they were doing. It sent a shockwave throughout the nation and world. With me? My generation? The Space Shuttle Challenger explosion on January 28, 1986? That was my first experience of a public event which shocked the world. I could tell you where I was. I had recently moved from San Bernardino to Fontana. I was pretty new at Sequoia Junior High but, on that day, I stayed home. I had a black-and-white small boob-tube television in my bedroom. That's where I watched the footage as it played out on various TV channels as major breaking news. Then? When I got back to school, I still remember the jokes. We were just teenage kids. We didn't mean any harm. In 1986, the world hadn't gone to the total extreme in terms of political correctness.

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Question: Did you know Christa McAuliffe had blue eyes?

Answer: No.

Punch line: Yeah! One blew this way, and one blew that way.

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So we talked. And I have memories. You have to keep in mind there are different elements to the same story. On one hand, you have the “official narrative” brought to you by television. For the most part, these are “just the facts” and not much else. Late at night in 1986, Johnny Carson was still the host of the *Tonight Show*. He joked around about the news of the day, but there was no way he would make a wisecrack about this illustration. Only kids on the playgrounds were saying these things. Even though political correctness was comfortably non-existent, there were still some norms. There was couth. Only foul-mouth teens went around joking in these ways which would obviously turn the graves of the astronauts we lost. I was one of these teens.

I eventually got accepted to a decent private college. One of my academic advisors was a sociologist and taught me a new word.

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ethnography (noun) — the study and systematic recording of human cultures

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I will use these cutaways for emphasis. I do not plan to break my train of thought. With that said, we need examples. Sometimes I will cutaway to break the ice. Stories get tense. We need comic relief. Other times, I will cutaway for a greater understanding of a concept. Eddie Van Halen does not know how to read music. I watched an interview of him a year or two ago. He talked about piano lessons and how he mimicked his instructor’s moves. He didn’t know what was going on with sheet music. He went to recitals and performed well. It’s just one of those things. I’ve learned to read music. I understand fundamental music theory. I know about power chords, four/ four time, and the one-four-five rock ‘n’ roll progression. I am not one percent of the musician that Eddie Van Halen is. Nonetheless, I’m an author and I utilize music theory in the opening pages of my recent book, *Cretins*, to illustrate a point.

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Las Vegas, July 2021

I’ve wanted to do an autobiography for quite some time. A year and a half ago, I found myself living in Seattle, Washington. I started my autobiography there. I had a lot of motivations. I’ll get to these things in time. I’m living in Las Vegas, now. Life has taken turns I didn’t expect. In other ways, I accomplished a few things I meant to do. I’d be lying if I said I did some of the more important things on my bucket list. I wanted to have my own family, for example. I wanted to be a

good husband to a good wife. I meant to be a good father as well. I wanted to coach Little League baseball. I was hoping to have no less than one son, and I hoped I could coach him catching fly balls and hitting. That's just a fraction of everything I wanted to talk about.

For the past year and a half, this document has not been read by me. I wrote five pages, then I let it be. In February of 2020, we were just hearing about a crazy virus going around in China. Though I said I was in Seattle, I actually stayed in a nearby suburb called Kent. I remember going into a Rite Aid for whatever reason. I remember talking to the cashier about the crazy virus. Then about a month later, everything shut down. I was working at a job I enjoyed. I remember talking to a co-worker about Rudy Gobert contracting Covid-19 and I remember the co-worker laughing. Rudy Gobert was this huge guy on the NBA's Utah Jazz and he had been mocking the virus. Back then, I think they mainly called it the Coronavirus until Covid-19 eventually caught on. Rudy Gobert even went so far as to lick his microphone during an after-game press conference to show he wasn't afraid. My co-worker, Lee, laughed in hysterics when he found out Rudy got infected. We talked at work. Three of Lee's brothers worked with us, and that was half of the eight-man crew. I remember he asked if I thought it was any big deal. "No!" I said. "Remember when Ebola was in Africa a few years ago and was supposed to kill everyone in the United States?" I remembered nurse Nina Pham got Ebola in Texas. Then there was some guy in New York. And I was afraid. That was in 2014, and I thought this new Coronavirus was going to be the same. A lot of hype.

Nothing more.

But the dominoes fell quick. I remember going to Subway during my lunch break. The inside wasn't open and they didn't have a drive-through, so I went across the street to McDonald's. Inside not open, but drive-through was running.

What's going on?

It was weird. I still didn't know what to make of it. The NBA postponed their season. I had bought tickets to see an XFL football game at CenturyLink Field. I invited Lee to go, and my bro was supposed to fly up from California. This was supposed to be the first "great thing" I did in Seattle. This was supposed to set the tone for years to come. *Seattle Dragons versus New York Guardians*. March 21, 2020. But, like the NBA, the XFL cancelled their season. No game. And my job assignment ended because my graveyard shift was eliminated. Lots of changes going on.

I interjected this piece from Las Vegas because I finally got around to read the five pages I wrote while in Seattle. For the sake of simplicity, I'm going to keep calling my experiences living in the Northwest as Seattle, in all likelihood, even though I was in a suburb. It's just the best way to do things. I was reading the first page and I liked it. Having written many books, I'm never certain if I'll like what I put to the page after time has elapsed. In this case, I'm satisfied. I read:

Eddie Van Halen DOES not know how to read music...

And I was compelled to edit the line to:

Eddie Van Halen DID not know how to read music ...

See what's going on? I wrote the first few pages in February of 2020 but Eddie Van Halen passed away in October of 2020. Sad day. But I'm going to keep the content as is. As a rule of thumb, I don't edit my fiction besides fixing typos and awkward sentence structures. I'm writing an autobiography. I plan to stick with this attitude. I might get around to why I do this. Not sure I will. There's a good reason, though. You can trust me.

So I'll continue along. You can expect a toggle:

- *Seattle, February 2020*
- *Las Vegas, July 2021*
- *Seattle, February 2020*
- *Las Vegas, July 2021*

Et cetera ...

This will go on for a few pages until all the content is up to date and I'm only writing from here in Las Vegas, 2021.

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Seattle, February 2020

Why bring up ethnography? Because "history is written by the winners" and we have a distorted idea of what really went on before we were born. What do I mean by this? During World War II, there were many law-abiding Japanese citizens living in California and other places. They were rounded up and put into camps.

In American high school history books, we learn that Adolf Hitler did this with Jews. We don't learn the hard truth about our own government, though. Not until way, way later. I didn't learn about the Japanese internment camps until after I graduated from Fontana High School in 1989. By then, survivors had collectively won a significant settlement. They had done nothing criminal. It was simple paranoia on behalf of Uncle Sam. These guys lost their livelihoods. They were given compensation. Ethnographies helped.

You, as a reader, have memories. I talked about the JFK assassination and the Challenger disaster. Now? Nine Eleven. Another one of these days where we remembered where we were and what we were doing when we got the news. Me? I was mad. I looked at the clock and it was nine thirty in the morning. What happened? I slept in. That was for sure. I had been scheduled to go to the Department of Motor Vehicles to renew my driver's license. The appointment was at eight o'clock. Did I forget to set my alarm? I was living at my sister's at the time. I got up and out of bed. Headed to the living room. I met my sister in the hall.

My birth name is Edward but most of my friends call me Eddie. My sister? She's an exception. Cousins nicknamed me Hot Rod. So I have friends calling me Eddie, and cousins calling me Hot Rod. My sister? Between her and her friends, they call me Rod. They shortened Hot Rod, I suppose. She says to me in the hall, "You need to watch the TV." So I head to our living room. The Twin Towers were on fire. My jaw dropped. She says, "This is why I didn't wake you for your DMV appointment."

This is a testimony. That's all an autobiography is. We have motivations to write them. Vanity? I'm sure people write autobiographies because they are vane. Am I vane? I hope not. But I'm human. Maybe I want to be in the history books, right? But it's not that. This is a challenge. I have to explain what my life is. At the same time I have to convince you, the reader, that it's not a waste of your time. You're not just flipping through pages and absorbing the rantings of a psychotic narcissist.

I have to give you a testimony which is worth something. I have to give you my small place in the world as it relates to a grander scheme. I have to illustrate key "time markers" which you can relate to. JFK, Challenger and Nine Eleven are a few.

I digress.

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From the movie, *Better Off Dead*...

Johnny: Four weeks. Twenty papers. That's two dollars.

Lane: Gee, Johnny, I don't have a dime.

Johnny: Didn't ask for a dime.

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My favorite movie of all time is *Better Off Dead*... Those close to me know this. I've watched the movie many, many times and have the script pretty much committed to memory. This autobiography, like I said, is not meant to be overly serious. So? Many of the cutaways will be humorous. I said I am writing this for loved ones. I am writing this for my adversaries, too, and I'll explain soon enough. I am also writing for the casual observer. I've lived life, I've experienced highs and lows, and I can impart some wisdom on you, or so I believe. I can entertain you. I can make you feel it's worth it. This might feel jumbled, for those of you who don't know me. But it's not. I don't believe it is. It's a mosaic. It's meant to be a mental collage. I want to illustrate points, I want to deviate, and I want it to feel like a conversation from a bar and grill. What place do you frequent? Applebee's? Red Robin? Some local pub? I want this to feel like verbal fodder you'd get from "that guy" who just got off work and ordered his first beer at the stool next to you.

But before I try to schmooze the casual observer, I need to get back to my adversaries. First of all, I never meant to fight with a single person on Planet Earth. It happened. But I'm not the kind of guy who goes out looking for fights no matter what anybody says. There are three kinds of people in life.

- *Those who do*
- *Those who watch*
- *And those who never knew the difference*

For most of my youth, I was one of "those who watch" and there's nothing wrong with this. We don't know what life is about. We don't know who the players are. We don't know the true motivations. And we guess and we learn.

Then we take a crack at it.

We formulate an opinion. We take a stand. We try to fight for what's worth fighting for. We hope to be heroes. We want to wind up in the record books. We want Universal Love but we never achieve it. Something is always in the way. There are adversaries. There are always people in the way. No matter what noble

cause you pursue, there is always someone in the way.

So I take this attitude as much as I can: High ground. Chivalry. Nobility.

May the best man win.

When you lose? Lose with grace. “You beat me! Congratulations! I’ll go back to the drawing board and create a better version of myself! I know you’ll do the same! Good luck when you challenge me next time around!” This should be our attitude.

So I mentioned early on that I watched the *Brady Bunch* in reruns as a kid. One of my favorite episodes? Greg Brady plays for his high school football team. His sister, Marcia, attends his school and starts to date a key player from the rival team. Greg gets suspicious. Marcia’s boyfriend starts coming around the house. Greg thinks he’s after the playbook so he creates a fake one. Sure enough, the fake playbook is missing and Greg confronts Marcia’s boyfriend about stealing it. The guy denies it. Marcia gets mad and can’t see past the motivation. Mike is their dad. He’s always going to give a moral lesson. He tells Greg he has to tell Marcia’s shady BF that he has a fake playbook so Greg does so. Doesn’t do any good. The guy thinks he has the real thing and his team loses in a huge blowout.

Chivalry.

That’s the point. I’m fine with losing. But what were the circumstances? Sometimes, we’re beholden to *Blunders*.

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*As of now, my follow-up to Cretins is Blunder. It’s my first book in first-person and was meant to have an autobiographical tone. As it turns out, the tentative plan is to make *Blunder* half true-autobiography and half fictional, but autobiographical in vibe. You can buy *Blunder* at Lulu.com, keyword search “Brick Jayne” and you can read other works at scribd.com/brickjayne.*

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Las Vegas, July 2021

Okay. So now I’m caught up. Whatever I wrote in Seattle is here. All five pages of it. I talked about motivation. This might be a theme throughout my writing. It’s strange, and it’s been going on for a few years. I have incredible motivation when I’m at work. I have extensive warehouse experience and I’ve been driving

different forms of a powered industrial trucks. In 2018, I was driving a clamp in Ontario, California while I was writing *Cretins*. During the day, I'd jot down notes and ideas while at work, then I'd come home and integrate them into the story. When I moved to Seattle a year and a half ago, it got in my head to start an autobiography. I'd think about it for most of my shift at work. Covid-19 put it on hold. I'm settled in Las Vegas, now. The idea of writing has never ended. Motivation is a thing that can be fleeting. All the planets must align. There are periods of life when motivation is there, but a social circumstance might not allow it. When things go right, it's "lightning in a bottle" and the process feels like a dream. Now? I have a few of the factors needed to get this done.

Time. For a year I was in Kent, it seemed I had time. I had my own room. There were three other people living in the house. Covid changed things. I worked five different jobs in the twelve months while I lived there. One of my roommates lost his job when mask mandates started. He was a kind person when I first moved in, but I think he started going stir crazy. He was excessively loud and I was working long graveyard hours. I wasn't getting proper sleep because he had a penchant for slamming doors and waking me up. So even though I seemed to have time to write, motivation was lost. There were tensions in the house and I felt relieved when I moved out. I hoped it worked out in Seattle. I told my bro that moving there felt like going to Wally World. In *National Lampoon's Vacation*, the Griswold family drove across the country so they could spend time at the theme park, Wally World, but it was closed down for renovations. Clark Griswold wouldn't have it. He held up the park's owner at gun point and forced him to let his family ride the roller coasters. Seattle felt like that. I had been there in 1997 and I wanted to come back to live. When I finally got there, Covid shut down all the businesses.

So I'm here in Las Vegas now. I live in a studio apartment. I love it, but something happened here as well. No, it's not Covid. A couple of weeks ago, my van broke down. There's been a heat wave going around. Canada had record temperatures. One hundred and fifteen near Vancouver. The day after my van broke down, I bought a used car. On that day, Vegas had a record high. One hundred and eighteen degrees. But now I have time. I'm on a strict budget and sometimes I think it's a miracle the downward spiral didn't land me on the streets. I had those fears for a while. At the north end of Las Vegas Boulevard, there's many homeless people who hang out at an old cemetery. I've looked at them as I've driven by and thought that could be me if things slide quickly.

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*“If you should go skating
 on the thin ice of modern life
 Dragging behind you the silent reproach
 of a million tear-stained eyes
 Don’t be surprised when a crack in the ice
 appears under your feet
 You slip out of your depth and out of your mind
 with your fear flowing out behind you
 As you claw the thin ice ...”
 — The Thin Ice by Pink Floyd*

*“Crying won’t help you
 Praying won’t do you no good
 No, crying won’t help you
 Praying won’t do you no good
 When the levee breaks, mama you got to move ...”
 — When the Levee Breaks by Led Zeppelin*

So this is something we all go through. Life isn’t fair, and it’s okay. I turned fifty a couple of months ago and I thought it was a great time to get this autobiography done. Let’s talk about motivations, though.

I was about eleven years old when I learned to program a Commodore VIC 20. I loved video games and computers. One of my early ambitions was to grow up to be a video game designer. My mom bought me a VZ200 when I was in seventh grade. I spent countless hours creating my own video games. A few years later, I owned a Commodore 64 and I bought a role-playing game, *Pool of Radianance*.

I mentioned that I want this to have qualities of Idiots and Dummies books. There will be cutaways to evoke or entice moods or emotions. Right here, I want to explain some methodology. I’ve given this a lot of thought. When I was almost finished writing Cretins, I sent incomplete versions to friends and family members around Christmas of 2018. I sent them other works, too, which were previously unavailable from my print-on-demand publisher. Though most of my work has

only been distributed to people I know, it's still accessible to anyone around the world. You can buy my books at Lulu, and you can read digital versions for free at Scribd. I contemplated how I would refer to people in my real life. I thought about only using first names, which I might do in certain cases. There are people, though, who I don't mean to disparage yet I feel compelled to write about. I've had bitter/sweet relationships. Life is a roller coaster with highs and lows. There are people I feel disappointed in. I feel let down. I feel betrayed, in some cases. I don't intend to use their real names if it's done in negative light. Even if it's positive, I still might use codes. For example, I have three older sisters. I've thought about calling them Marcia, Jan and Cindy after the daughters of the Brady Bunch. My oldest sis would be Marcia, the middle would be Jan, and the youngest would be Cindy.

There's a friend I've known since I was ten. At the age of fifty, we still talk. In this roller coaster of life, we've had ups and downs. We competed for playing time for the wide receiver position when we played junior high football. We've worked at a few jobs together including selling flowers, operating a carnival food trailer, and making pizza. We double dated in our senior year for homecoming and prom. I will call this guy "Jake" here and there. And I mentioned my bro? I think I'll call him "Luis" for now.

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In the summer after my high school graduation, me and Jake played *Pool of Radiance* over the course of a few weeks. It would be in the middle of the night at my house. We'd drink wine coolers. My favorite was Bartles & Jaymes Berry. His favorite was Seagram's Wild Berry. *Pool of Radiance* was the first in a series of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons quest-oriented turn-based role-playing games. The game was loaded onto my floppy drive with 5 1/4 inch disks. It was slow to fire up, but we had time to kill.

There were other computer games for the Commodore 64, though, and I want to return to the idea of motivation. *Pool of Radiance* is something I played when Jake was around. We worked at a pizza store that summer. A coworker recommended a different role-playing game, *Ultima V*. Me and Jake never played this game together. *Pool of Radiance* was great for group play because six characters were allowed in each party. Jake controlled two, I controlled two, and the other two were jointly controlled. *Ultima V*, on the other hand, centered around a single character so it wasn't as conducive to play with more than one person.

I learned a lot from *Ultima V*, though. It provided unexpected lessons and insights. It was similar to *Pool of Radiance* because it involved fighting beasts inside of castles and dungeons, but the philosophy was different. Your character had to become an Avatar. This was 1989, years before Avatar, the movie. And it was before the internet was a regular household thing, and before people created picture avatars for their Facebook accounts. According to *Ultima V*, an Avatar possessed the utmost qualities of eight different virtues:

- Compassion
- Honesty
- Valor
- Justice
- Sacrifice
- Spirituality
- Honor
- Humility

Before beginning your epic quest, a series of questions were asked. It was a round robin, of sorts.

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During battle thou art ordered to guard thy commander's empty tent. The battle goes poorly and thou dost yearn to aid thy fellows. Dost thou (A) Valiantly enter the battle to aid thy companions; or (B) Honor thy post as a guard?

Thou art sworn to protect thy Lord at any cost, yet thou knowest he hath committed a crime. Authorities ask thee of the affair. Dost thou (A) Break thine oath by Honestly speaking; or (B) uphold Honor by silently keeping thine oath?

Thou dost believe that virtue resides in all people. Thou dost see a rogue steal from thy Lord. Dost thou (A) call him to Justice; or (B) personally try to sway him back to the Spiritual path of good?

A merchant owes thy friend money, now long past due. Thou dost see the same merchant drop a purse of gold. Dost thou (A) Honestly return the purse intact; or (B) Justly give thy friend a portion of the gold first?

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So, in *Ultima V*, your quest is to attain the best of eight virtues. Yet, from the

onset, there is a single virtue which takes precedent over all others. Based on the opening questions, you find out which one serves your essence the most. Your destiny is based on the utmost virtue:

- Honesty will be a Mage
- Compassion will be a Bard
- Valor will be a Fighter
- Justice will be a Druid
- Sacrifice will be a Tinker
- Honor will be a Paladin
- Spirituality will be a Ranger
- Humility will be a Shepherd

This game was eye-opening. Atari's *Asteroids* was fun, but it was mindless. What's the point? You're destroying large rocks in outer space. But what does it teach you about life? Pac-Man was fun. But you're eating dots and ghosts. How does this teach you to have a better SAT score? Missile Command actually had a rudimentary lesson, but it wasn't overt. The designers of the game said the six cities you defended were actually six California big cities. You were defending against nuclear warfare from the Soviet Union. You had to know this from word of mouth, though. If you popped a quarter into the Missile Command arcade game, it didn't tell you about the six California cities.

Ultima V provided a life lesson. It was overt. Try to be the best you can be. The underlying message was that, in life, you have to pick your poison. There are many catch twenty-two situations. You have to pick the path of least resistance. You have to make the most of what you have.

This will be a theme in this book. One of my favorite movies of all time is *Defending Your Life* with Meryl Streep, a romantic comedy. According to this movie, when you die, it's not Heaven or Hell. Instead, you're sent to a place called Judgment City. Once you're there, you're provided a lawyer. During the course of a few days, you are put on trial. A prosecutor makes a case against you. Your lawyer defends you. If you lose, you don't go to Hell. You only go back to Earth to do it all over again. If you win, you're allowed to exist on a higher, better plane. You move on.

My attitude about this autobiography has to do with *Defending Your Life*. There are things I've experienced that I held in. Water under the bridge. I'll get past it, and forget it. Shit's going to happen. We're human. Mistakes are made and we get past it. We make the most of everything.

But something changed. The patterns continued.

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My plan at this moment is to attach this to my most recent incomplete work-in-progress, Blunder. Blunder was started after Cretins in 2019. It was my first first-person book. I liked how it was going, but my life had notable circumstances. The place where I was living was broken into. Someone stole an iPhone, iPad, and a couple of laptops. These computers had a lot of my notes and personal files. I had back ups on external hard drives, but they weren't complete. It took a few months to replace my equipment. When it was replaced a few months later, I had a medical condition with my skin. At first, I thought it was a staph infection because that's what I was told after going to urgent care. Then, after a second visit, I was told it was bed bugs. I had skin ulcers on my arms, legs and back. I considered it might be cancer, psoriasis, or eczema because I didn't trust the medical evaluation. Eventually, I figured it was diabetes. It's been nearly two full years since the initial outbreak, and I still have a few skin ulcers on my body. It's not as bad as it was at the peak, but it's still there.

There was a point as I was writing Blunder that I saw the figurative light at the end of the tunnel for the first time in a long, long time. There's a scene in the movie, Friday, when Smokey tells Craig, "You ain't never got two things that go together! Cereal, no milk! Kool-Aid, no sugar! Ham, no burger! Damn!" That's been the story of my life. As soon as I think I have things together one way, something else screws up. It might be a car breaking down. It might be a trusted person I feel betrayed by. But as I was writing Blunder, I thought I was about to have a regular life again. Blunder was fiction, but autobiographical in tone. I was fleshing out emotions. "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" was my attitude. I was getting a lot off my chest. But something went horribly wrong. As I wrote Blunder, I alluded to real-life bad experiences. I skirted around issues. I beat around the bush. Now? I'm adding an over-the-top element. Yes, I want this to be chivalry as I've said before. I have issues and it's time to spell a few of them out.

Let's hit this over the head.

Typical stories from DC Comics and Marvel have clear-cut heroes and villains. This autobiography is no different. This autobiography is a story with a protagonist and a main antagonist.

“You’ve got to believe in yourself or no one will believe in you...”
— *Believer by Ozzy Osborne*

“July 2, 1805

Well, the cur did it again today. While walking behind me, he stepped on the heel of my shoe, causing my foot to come out. The frequency of this occurrence has made me begin to doubt it’s accidental nature...”

— *Journal entry around a campfire from*

Tensions mount on the Lewis and Clark expedition, Far Side cartoon

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Yes, shit happens in life. There are accidents. There are misunderstandings. We have fights with people we care about. Everything bad that happens isn’t because the Devil is behind it.

But sometimes it feels that way.

At the age of fifty, I’ve seen some of the patterns over and over. It’s even predictable.

When I start to succeed at such and such, this or that person is going to throw a fit.

Then it happens.

I’m not sure where everyone learns their life lessons. Experience? Yes. We have the same public institutions. Though attitudes vary around the country, it’s the same grade school curriculum from California to New York to Alabama to Idaho. We’re taught arithmetic, language, history, geography, science and so on. The churches are the same, though there might be a different emphasis in different regions. There might be more Catholic churches in California, Latter Day Saint temples in Utah, and Baptist churches in the South. Our television experience is similar at the core. CBS, NBC, ABC and Fox broadcast nationwide. Somewhere along the line, we end up with different values.

I brought up the idea of motivation for a reason. I brought up *Ultima V* as an anecdote. I remember being a young child and it came naturally to lie every now and then. Two of my best friends were twins and they were a couple of years younger than me. As the name codes go, we can call them the *Mario Brothers* after the Nintendo game. We had imagination and we used to create our own

sports. When ESPN first launched, there was a show called Vic's Vacant Lot where kids would explain games they played in public streets. Back then in the early eighties, it was common to play baseball and football on the street. When a car came by, you simply moved to the side, let it pass, then continue along with your Wiffle ball and plastic bat. Or your Nerf football. Me and the Mario Brothers had a game called *Gat Lab* we played with neighborhood kids. We had a system of rules which we wrote down on paper. In my wild dreams, we could take it to Vic's Vacant Lot and be on TV.

I digress, though. These twins were a couple of years younger than me. As the older person, I had a head start in education and life experience. If I said something was so, they trusted me. I had fun with it. I must've been eight years old when I found a tuna can in front of their house one night. I showed them it, then I pretended to throw it into the sky. They were six years old and they both looked up trying to locate it. They looked and looked, and they waited for it to fall back down and hit the ground. "Where is it?" one of them asked.

I had the tuna can tucked behind me but I pointed up. "Right there! You can't see it?" I kept pointing up.

For a while, they couldn't see it. Moments passed. Then, one of them finally saw it. "Oh! I see it now!" There were many stars in the sky.

The twins marveled at how high I threw the tuna can. We stared up into the sky for a couple of minutes waiting for it to come back down, but it never did. Not that night, at least. I hid the can between a couple of dwarf palm trees before taking off, then came back the next morning. I knocked on their door and showed it to them. "It almost hit me when I was walking over here!" They loved it.

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"Santa Claus: How about a nice football?"

Ralphie: No! No! I want an Official Red Ryder Carbine-Action Two-Hundred-Shot Range Model Air Rifle!

Santa Claus: You'll shoot your eye out, kid."

— A Christmas Story

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So, we don't always get what we want. I'm glad I got to live my youth before internet came along. Our neighborhood was active and we kept busy playing

sports, riding bikes, and yes, the twins had BB guns. The issue about fibbing? Everyone did it. It was fun. I remember spending part of a summer at an uncle's house in Azusa, California. He was married to a lady with four children. Three sons were a little older than me, and the daughter was about my age. They had a pool table. I was playing by myself and I accidentally broke the plastic triangle rack. I didn't tell anyone and my uncle confronted me when he found it. I was about nine or ten. His stepsons were with him. I felt their eyes on me. "Do you know what happened to this?" He showed me the broken triangle.

"No." I denied it. Back then, it was common to get spanked by elders. I was afraid.

"Maybe you can speculate what happened. Tell me how you think it got broken."

I dished out a few stories and they listened. I can't remember the details but it might've been like, "Maybe someone broke into the house and did it."

"No. That's not it. Try again." My uncle shot down every explanation one by one.

Finally, I told the truth. I told them I did it on accident.

"Yep. That's the one." He said one of the sons was in the backyard and saw it happen through the window.

I didn't get in trouble, and I was surprised. I didn't get spanked. I didn't get yelled at. I think it was intentional. I think they were trying to teach me a lesson that it's okay to tell the truth even when it seems to self-incriminate. In the years since then, it's become part of my life. I look at it as taking a step back in order to take steps forward. Emotionally, it doesn't feel great at the moment but it seems to be worth it. I've become intrigued by integrity over the years. I'm fascinated by people who have it.

Where is this going?

We're still talking about motivation and values. I explained the premise behind *Ultima V*. An Avatar is to attain the highest of eight virtues, yet every now and then, these virtues come in conflict with one another.

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Thy Lord mistakenly believes he slew a dragon. Thou hast proof that thy

lance felled the beast. When asked, dost thou (A) Honestly claim the kill and the prize; or (B) Humbly permit thy Lord his belief?

Thou dost manage to disarm thy mortal enemy in a duel. He is at thy mercy. Dost thou (A) show Compassion by permitting him to yield; or (B) slay him as expected of a Valiant duelist?

Thou hast been sent to secure a needed treaty with a distant Lord. Thy host is agreeable to the proposal but insults thy country at dinner. Dost thou (A) Valiantly bear the slurs; or (B) Justly rise and demand an apology?

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 Let's recall the eight virtues of *Ultima*: Valor, Justice, Spirituality, Humility, Sacrifice, Honesty, Honor and Compassion. We come to forks in the road. We must decide between one path or another. Sometimes, we lose people based on these decisions. We drift apart. Social schisms happen. Let me now present my own *Ultima*-style hypothetical situations:

Thy church pastor believes the Bible is the literal word of God and demonstrates the Earth is less than ten thousand years old through Scientific Creationism. During a college research project, thou come to believe thy pastor's teachings to be wildly erroneous. Dost thou (A) Honestly report that thou find Scientific Creationism to be horribly fallacious; or (B) Humbly pretend thy research didn't lead to a stance directly contradicting thy pastor's teachings?

Thy president hast lost an election but wisheth to remain in office. Thy are the vice-president and are set to certify the official results in front of Congress to ensure a smooth transition of power to the next administration. Thy president hast enticed thou to break with tradition and refuse to certify. Dost thou (A) Honestly report the numbers presented by the Electoral College; or (B) Sacrifice thy reputation and career in order to appease the outgoing president?

Thy young cousin hast heard a rumor at school that Santa Claus isn't real. Thou knowest sooner or later, he'll find out the truth, but thou believeth he might be devastated if he finds out at the very moment. Dost thou (A) Honestly tell thy cousin that Santa Claus is merely a myth and no one lives at the North Pole; or (B) show Compassion and tell thy cousin the kids at school don't know what they're talking about?

=====

We're presented these types of situations in real life. The adult world is full of countless "gray area" dilemmas. It's not as black-and-white as a Batman or Superman movie where it's easy to root for the hero and difficult to root for the villain. We make choices and sometimes we look back with regret. *I should've said this. Or, I shouldn't have told him that.*

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*"Don't let the days go by
I could've been easier on you
I couldn't change though I wanted to..."*
— Glycerine by Bush

*"Trying to keep up with you
And I don't know if I can do it
Oh no, I've said too much
I haven't said enough..."*
— Losing My Religion by REM

*"Is everything okay?
I just thought I'd write a song to tell the world
how I miss you
'Cause each and every day I think of all the words
I never said and all the chances that I had to..."*
— Hearts by Marty Balin

=====

So we're caught in this struggle. We care about people. We want to talk to them. We try to find the line between being too intimate and being too superficial. Saying too much, and not saying enough.

I told you I played *Pool of Radiance* with Jake a long time ago. We had a lot of wild times. One of my favorite things to do as a young adult was to go to Hollywood and watch live rock 'n' roll at the Whisky a Go Go. We'd usually go with Will Black and Jeb Chadwick. Fun times! We'd party anywhere we could in those days. One night, we got some beer and headed to the neighborhood drive-in. It was late at night so no movies were playing. It was just us youngsters. Will was the craziest of the group. He decided to climb the ladder behind one of the theatre

screens. That's about fifty feet to the top. We had already been drinking. Miller Genuine Draft in a bottle was our beer of choice back then. *It had to be in a bottle.* I wasn't going to be chicken, though! I climbed up the ladder right behind Will. We got to the top and sat there with our beers. One of the best moments of my life! The ledge must've been a foot wide at the top of the screen. No fear, though. Then Jake started screaming from the bottom. "Hey, Will! Get down from there! You know what happened to me!" You see? Jake had taken a nasty fall from a billboard sign months before. Compressed three vertebrae. Fell forty feet, but survived.

And that's life. We have these wild times, then we find ourselves in dire boredom. We have the good times, then we have a glutton of misery.

Me and Jake have kept in touch over the years, but it's not always a rose garden. Far from it. I told you we played on the same junior high football team. We played the same positions, wide receiver and cornerback. We weren't big guys back then and the coach nicknamed us the Termites along with a few other friends. We were late bloomers so we were undersized at the age of fourteen. Since we competed for the same positions, Jake resented me. He was open about it. When the coach would substitute me in for him, Jake would yell at me in protest. We'd eventually become decent friends, but the competition would surface now and then in different ways.

We worked together selling flowers on street corners back then. Most people have heard of Pig Latin. A guy would drive from Glendora and pick us up in Fontana. We'd get in his van. It wasn't just me and Jake. Jake's brother worked with us. My bro, Luis, worked selling flowers. One of the football Termites, Vinny, worked with us, as well as his brother. There were others. We'd get in this large, brown Econoline Ford van and our boss would drive us to different locations. Gina didn't speak Pig Latin, but she spoke something similar. Maybe you've heard of Carnie or Ciazarn language? It was more like that. If you've never heard it before, you wouldn't be able to follow a conversation. But in the flower van, we learned Gina's secret language and how to talk it. Essentially, it goes like this:

Between every syllable, you insert "theg" so "you are fun" becomes and sounds like "yoo-the-goo ah-the-gar fuh-the-gun". Sounds simple, but it took time to practice and learn. You wind up speaking fast and you realize you're part of a special click. In the same way you were clueless about what was being spoken right in front of you, now you're doing it to other people and you can tell they have no clue what you're saying.

So Jake thought he was sly. A few years later, we were at a party drinking in the front yard. Kenley was interested in dating Bethany and we were all talking together in a circle. Jake happened to know Bethany had a sexually transmitted disease and decided to let Kenley know about it. “*Shethegee hahthegaz huthegurpehthegeez.*” Bethany’s jaw dropped. Her facial expression said, *Why are you telling him this?* Jake didn’t know she’d understand, but she clearly did.

In the summer before our senior year, me and Jake worked in a candy wagon at the California State Fair in Sacramento. It was actually Bethany’s mom who ran the thing. The Carnie language was useful and prevalent there. I learned more than just Ceazarnie, though. I learned something which I called Innuendo language. When I got mad, I called it Wigger language because of the quality of person who chose to speak it.

=====

*“And well, he’s on the table
And he’s gone to code
And I do not think anyone knows
What they are doing here...”
— Jumper by Third Eye Blind*

*“I can’t feel this way much longer
Expecting to survive
With all these hidden innuendos
Just waiting to arrive...”
— Bye Bye Love by the Cars*

double entendre (noun) - derived from French to mean “double meaning”, a double entendre is a word, phrase or expression that has two interpretations, i.e. one meaning is obvious while the other one is hidden and employs innuendo as well as requires more thought. The innuendo-coded meaning is usually sexually suggestive, socially offensive, or indelicate in nature, although it is not necessarily rude.

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So a man walks into a pastry shop where it is rumored that there’s a secret brothel being run upstairs. He tells the lady behind the counter, “I’d like to order some pie.” But what is he asking for? Is he trying to leave with lemon meringue? Is he trying to have sexual relations with a hooker?

I have multiple college degrees. I graduated from high school in 1989. Six years later, I received two associate's degrees from a community college. One was for Liberal Arts and the other was for Communication Studies. I moved on to a private college and eventually received a bachelor's degree. While studying in communication classes, I learned about different methods how people get points across. In dominant cultures, talk is quite straightforward. There's no reason for it not to be. You say what you mean and mean what you say. As a white man coming into adulthood in the late eighties, this was my method. I was oblivious anyone communicated any other way. I learned though that in oppressed, minority and/ or fringe cultures, communication is not so direct. The Carnie language comes to mind. People talk in circles. They talk in code.

So what is Innuendo language? I lived in Hollywood for a few months back in 2005. My roommates had a house cat called Nasty Bitch. They were hard-working guys who liked to smoke a little weed every now and then. What is a typical quality of cats? Paranoia. So I saw this Innuendo language first hand. I witnessed a classic double entendre. One of my landlords brought a coworker home. She seemed to have a paranoid reaction after smoking a little pot. "What's going on with Nasty Bitch?" one roommate asked the other.

"Oh. She's just paranoid," the other guy said. "She'll be fine."

But I could tell they were talking about the girl from work. If we were being recorded from a hidden wire, no one would know any different. They'd think the guys were talking about the cat.

So I mentioned that Jake thought he was sly. He thought he could speak the Carnie language in front of Bethany without her understanding what he was saying. But he was wrong. And Jake didn't value Honesty. We double dated for our senior prom. He stayed with his girlfriend for many years. Let's call her Winny. They married and had a kid together. I was in his wedding. But early on, he was still out sowing his wild oats. He'd do things on the weekends he wouldn't tell her about. He'd want me to lie for him. This wasn't a big deal most the time because I wasn't put in situations where I had to cover for him. His attitude was, "If she asks about such and such, tell her this or that, because blah, blah, blah." It never came to that, but I was usually honest to my girlfriend at the time, the same girl I took to prom. Let's call her Lola. The four of us wound up working at a pizza store together, but to allude to how annoying it could be, I'll mention when I first watched Jurassic Park in 1993. By then me and Lola were broken up. Jake had already watched Jurassic Park but didn't tell Winny about it, so she was watching it for the first time. I think Luis was there that day, too. The movie was

really great. The special effects were incredible. It was the year after Terminator 2 startled everyone with its CGI and Jurassic Park was even better.

Except I knew Jake had already seen the movie but he had to pretend to Winny that he was watching it for the first time. So there were all these fake reactions from him and it kind of ruined my experience that day.

I see the world through a lot of academic filters which I've picked up during my college experience. Let's bring one up right now:

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religious action

ethical action

aesthetic action

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Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish existential philosopher, believed our behaviors are governed on these three levels. The lowest, and first, deals with aesthetics. Any of us are out to seek pleasure. But there are higher levels which compel us. In an ethical state, you might be moved to run for public office to enact policy change based on personal core beliefs. In a religious state, you might be compelled to abstain from food, like Mahatma Gandhi, knowing your behavior will transform a worldwide consciousness.

Me and Jake knew each other since fifth grade. We played football together, we double dated, we played *Pool of Radiance* on my Commodore 64, we worked at a few jobs together, and we had a few classes together at Chaffey Community College in Rancho Cucamonga, California. One of these was a history class. We had nearly identical grades going into the final exam. Both of us had C grades. Our lives were busy. We were smart, but we weren't necessarily bookworms. I had a penchant for absorbing math. I had won first place two different times in citywide math marathons. I made it through trigonometry without doing any homework. As for history, I thought I absorbed enough. Maybe not enough for an A, but enough to get me by. Neither of us studied for the final.

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Thou art taking a history final exam in written essay form. A squire whom thou knowest since childhood is also taking the exam. Thou passeth the exam yet thy

squire pal faileth, and he must now repeat the course. Dost thou (A) act with Humility and say thou bullshitted your way through the answers; or (B) behave with Honesty and tell thy chum he didn't grasp the material well enough?

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Yes, Jake failed the class because he blew the final. I did good enough to get a C. For years I let Jake tell the story that I bullshitted my way through, but I actually knew what I was talking about. I never really mentioned that. I value Honesty, but I've been known to have Humility at times.

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*"I know the reason
That you talk behind my back
I used to be among the crowd
You're in with*

*Do you take me for such a fool
To think I'd make contact
With the one who tries to hide
What he don't know to begin with?"*
— *Positively 4th Street* by Bob Dylan

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So I transferred to a small, private college after graduating from Chaffey. Jake went on to a Cal State. The school I went to had a twelve percent acceptance rate last time I checked. I was always proud I made it in. They played a *lot* of Bob Dylan at the school, by the way. I would've likely gone to the same Cal State as Jake if I hadn't been accepted.

I want to talk about attitudes toward education and knowledge in general. This is important. This is vital, even. If you're going to have a good relationship with me, you must understand a few things. First, I don't care if you're smart. I have a lot of great relationships with people that didn't go far in school. That doesn't matter a lot to me.

A couple of years ago, I worked with a guy—*let's call him Arthur*—and we got along fine at our job and we hung out and drank beers after work. We used to go bar hopping. We'd play pool with coworkers. I think he was surprised we got

along. I told him there are two main categories of people I have in my life. The first category reminds me of my childhood. I was the first in my immediately family to get a bachelor's degree. My oldest sister got an associate's degree, but besides us, most people only had high school diplomas. A few others had GEDs. I told him the other category reminded me of my college days. I need my mind stimulated. I need to think of "higher things" and I need to travel down the mental/ educational Rabbit Hole. Arthur reminded me of my young, wilder days. He was fun to hang out with.

The other important thing in regards to attitudes about education? Don't spite me for having gone down the path I went. I can explain this in many ways.

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false dichotomy (noun) - also known as "either-or fallacy" or "false dilemma", a logical fallacy which occurs when a limited number of options are incorrectly presented as being mutually exclusive to one another, or as being the only options that exist

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I grew up in a rough neighborhood. Some might even call it a ghetto. When I was about four years old, a man was stabbed in a house next door to where the *Mario Brothers* lived. He made it out of the house then bled to death in front of me and a group of others. There was always graffiti on the walls around us. In seventh grade, I was in my front yard at night with a sister and a friend. A car pulled up in front of us, a man pointed a gun in our direction, then he fired and left. No one was hit, but that's how I lived for a while. There's a sentiment on the streets to disdain education. Don't trust it. There's a false belief that you can either have "book smarts" or "street smarts", but you can't have both. I had a group of friends who encouraged education. If you can get out of the ghetto, do it. Don't forget your roots when you're gone, but get an education and try to make your way into the middle class or higher. Of my three sisters, only the youngest has blond hair and blue eyes. I have brown hair and green eyes. We were the only kids in our neighborhood who didn't appear Hispanic or black.

By the time I was in my junior year of college, I was invited to spend time with the Chicano Studies group. Even though I grew up with Hispanics in my family, I learned a lot. In some cases, I learned more than I'll ever want to know. Let's recap a little. You can be Hispanic but not Latino because Hispanics ultimately derive from Spain. It's a culture and language. I'm a white person, but my last name is Corona. It's Hispanic, so I can identify for that reason. As a kid, the terms meant pretty much the same thing in my head. Chicano, Hispanic and Latino. It turns out they overlap many places, but you can be Latino without being

Hispanic. Latinos come from Latin America. Basically, this runs from Mexico down to the southern tip of Chile, as well as Spanish-speaking countries around the Caribbean. Brazilians are Latino because they are in Latin America, but they are not Hispanic. They speak Portuguese. Not Spanish. And Chicanos are Americanized decedents whose ancestors originally come from Mexico. California jails separate the Latino populations into three main groups: Paisas predominantly speak Spanish and were born in Mexico; Southsiders are Southern California Chicanos and don't necessarily speak Spanish; and Northsiders are from Northern California. So you can split hairs many ways.

So I had it rough for a while in college, but it didn't feel that way. I mentioned I lived in a rough neighborhood as a kid. That was the west side of San Bernardino where I lived with my mother. After eighth grade, I moved to Fontana which was predominantly white, working class. I didn't have an identity conflict no matter how it might seem to anyone else. I knew I had Hispanic family and we cared about each other when we got together. We ate menudo on weekends. We ate homemade tamales around the New Year. We went to each other's birthday parties. We listened to mariachi music now and then. The younger crowd seemed to like hip hop a little more. But I had white friends in Fontana. We worked at a pizza store, and later some of us worked together at a local warehouse. We went to heavy metal concerts at the Forum, Irvine Meadows, Pacific Amphitheatre, the Coliseum, and the Rose Bowl. We watched the Scorpions, Mötley Crüe, Anthrax, Megadeth, Alice In Chains, Guns N' Roses, Rush, Van Halen, and Metallica. The conflict isn't with my skin. It's out there in society. Apparently, I was becoming "too white" for the liking of people back home in San Bernardino. It wasn't everyone, but I'd occasionally hear disparaging remarks about my college experience as if I was forgetting my roots, for whatever that means, and leaving people in the dust. That was far from true, but I have to say that it wasn't only a racial/ cultural issue. It was a class issue as well because a couple of my white Fontana buddies started remarking that I was leaving them behind as well. Once again, not true.

I thought I found the solution. Like I said, I involved myself with the Chicano Studies group in my junior year of college. My academic advisor had worked directly with Cesar Chavez. He organized students to spend their spring break at the headquarters of the United Farm Workers. It felt great. I was studying ecology. Methyl bromide was used as a pesticide and was dropped directly on workers from crop dusters as they were still in strawberry fields. That's horrible! I thought I could make a difference. And I thought I could appease folks back home.

For those in my Hispanic family, I thought they'd be happy I volunteered my time to help out farm workers. Some were happy actually, I must say, but I was startled by a few of the reactions. I'll be blunt. Too many people think they arrived at the perfect amount of anything. There are Chicanos I grew up around who hate "stupid white boys" for whatever reasons they have. Often, it's a boss at work they speak candidly about, or someone along those lines. When I was a kid, there was a heavy metal station on AM radio in the LA area called KMET. They advertised on billboard signs with large, upside down letters. One night while driving by one, my blue-eyed youngest sister commented, "A stupid white person probably put that up." So these negative feelings permeated. I knew they existed. I didn't realize the Hispanic culture had its own divisions, though. Not when I worked with the Chicano Studies group in college. You can drive down the streets of Los Angeles and see a lot of brown people. But there's no way to know if you're looking at someone born in Mexico or born in the United States. I was startled back then when someone close to my family made a comment about "wetbacks". You see? At that point, it's impossible for me to win. On one end, I'm becoming "too white" for their liking by continuing along in college. On the other end, they don't like that I'm helping "wetback" farm workers as a volunteer.

Years later, my biological father had this same syndrome. As a quick note, I'm referring to him in this way because we had a massive falling out a couple of years ago. As motivations go, one of the big reasons I'm putting this autobiography together is to explain that relationship. Let's call him Peter for now so I can think of Family Guy's Peter Griffin and it'll help keep things as light as possible. Peter was a white Hispanic, though. Born with blue eyes and blond hair, but his first language was Spanish. His father (my grandfather) was born in Mexico, but he was white as well. Peter became wrought with machismo and decided he was the perfect amount of Spanish. He once aligned himself with union Democrats in the nineties because he was part of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, but something happened in 1998. There was a family intervention of sorts. I might go into more detail later, but let's say his attitudes about politics flipped. He used to have Clinton/ Gore buttons in his work place during the 1996 campaign, but after the 1998 intervention, Bill Clinton became persona non grata to speak about, especially around certain family members. I must admit the sentiment was going around the country after the Monica Lewinsky scandal, but the changes I saw in people were psychotic. I'm here to talk about the syndrome, though. Peter once had left-leaning attitudes when he was a blue collar worker, but as the millennium began, he shifted to the right. In a weird way, it almost reminded me of the Dennis Miller transformation from his days at HBO to MSNBC. It seemed awkward. Out of nowhere, there were American flags everywhere. It felt chauvinistic. George W Bush, Dick Cheney and Condoleeza

Rice were his heroes. “Slick Willy”, as he called Bill Clinton, was now the bad guy. Peter emphasized his image as an Air Force veteran. The union imagery faded. He later became an ardent supporter of Donald Trump. Like Donald Trump, he was the son of an immigrant who had a disdain for immigrants. Since he spoke fluent Spanish, we’d often go to authentic Mexican restaurants where Spanish was the main language spoken. One day, my sister got fed up. I think we’re calling her Cindy right now because of the Brady Bunch reference. She called him a “wetback” because of how he behaved.

My issue with him wasn’t that he was evil. I make excuses for people a lot. Maybe I don’t make them as much as I used to, but I still make them. Me and sister Cindy liked the Twilight Zone. One of the better episodes was “The Howling Man” in which a haggard elderly person is kept in a jail cell inside of a castle. There’s a bad storm outside so a guy came to the castle for refuge. A monk allowed him in but he instructed the newcomer not to let the old man out of his jail cell. Eventually, the monk is away and the newcomer feels sorry for the haggardly man. But the jail cell wasn’t all that secure. The haggardly man could have easily reached through the bars at any time to pull up the plank which kept the door shut. But he didn’t. He needed the newcomer to do it for him. The haggardly man is let out of the cell. He starts to walk around the room. Slowly, he’s transformed into the Devil.

Peter is not an evil person, but I wondered about it. Anyone that spends extensive time around him winds up feeling crazy. It happened with my mom, my step-mom, me, and my sister Cindy. I thought of him as defective, in many ways. He lost his ability to empathize with many close in the family, if he ever truly had this ability at all. Like the Howling Man, he needed people around to do simple tasks which could’ve been taken care of in any number of ways. He was unilateral in decision making. We’re talking about huge decisions which effected adult lives in massive ways. Being that he was in the military, he came to believe that “subsistence” was how to make it through hard times. In a unilateral decision, he put our house up for collateral to invest in a pizza business in 1990. It never got off the ground. We lost our house in 1995. We had to “subsist” for a few years, but I thought it would be temporary. It never ended, though. This huge unilateral decision was followed by us needing to scrape by. I’ll go into detail later as need be.

I got off the subject of talking about my time with the Chicano Studies group at college. Professor Camargo, my academic advisor, brought in special guests to speak to our group. One of them played guitar for Madonna when she wrote La Isla Bonita. He talked about the typical Chicano mindset. He called it “crab

mentality” and it was a new concept to me. Crabs, when they’re in a pot ready to be boiled, will climb over one another trying to escape. Now and then, one of them almost makes it out, but it’s the crab nature for another one below to pull him back in. He warned us of this at school. George Lopez joked about it during a comedy routine. When Chicanos go to college, usually they have someone at home saying, “You think you’re all that? I can still kick your ass!”

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High Desert, June 2023

I'm ready to continue along. Besides the introduction, I haven't written steadily in a long time. I was in the High Desert last year around Fourth of July when I spliced together writing segments from Seattle, Las Vegas, and whatever had been current. If I remember right, I was working on the theme of metaphysics and existentialism. I intended to make a point about how we all perceive the world differently. Let me make up an exaggerated example.

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Three hundred years ago, Keebler elves flourished on planet Earth. Everyone was happy. In 1776, Lizard People invaded from outer space. The elves fought them valiantly, but they took great losses. Humans were not around back then. The Keebler elves realized they could use larger allies so they created humankind using their elf magic. In the Garden of Eden, a few miles away from present-day Washington, DC, the elves created Adam and Eve Trump. They formed the Republican Party and created the United States of America in 1789. Generations passed and ordinary people, known as Normies, were beholden to the Trump family.

The thing humankind didn't know was that the Lizard People were not entirely defeated. A few took human form and created the Democrat Party. They mingled amongst the Normies and Trumps. They struggled for power. They ran for office. They were lead at their peak by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But they degenerated as the years passed as evidence of president Jimmy Carter in the bicentennial of when the Keebler elves originally defeated most of the Lizard People. Today, the Lizard People are led by Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden. They have secret societies where they eat babies and plot to destroy Donald Trump, the Chosen One since Adam and Eve Trump founded Washington, DC.

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Okay? Here you have it! An alternate story of what most of you have been taught since growing up! Is it funny? Are you sickened? Are you cheerful? Are you thinking it's absurd? Or do the pieces come together now? It all makes sense, right? When you look at today's world, everything makes sense! Right?

The issue with bringing up metaphysics and existentialism is we can't agree on what the Ultimate Reality is. Is the Universe around thirteen billion years old? Or is it maybe six-to-ten thousand years old? Was there a Creator? What role did he/she/ it play? Was Jesus the son of this Creator? If Christians are correct in their theology, was the Holy Spirit present on the boats which landed at Plymouth Rock? There was a black television minister, Frederick Price, during the seventies who believed so. There are implications here from the founding of Jamestown, to the Manifest Destiny, to so-called American Exceptionalism espoused by former president, Obama. But I remember the comedian, Sinbad, talking about the issue during a routine. He said Columbus is given credit for discovering America, but how can you discover a place where people are already living?

Two notable things happened today. One, the Vegas Golden Knights won the championship in hockey. Congratulations to them! I was in Las Vegas in 2014 when they announced they would be getting an expansion team, and I lived in Las Vegas a couple of years ago so I've rooted for them. The other thing that happened today was that Donald Trump was arraigned in Florida. He had already been indicted in New York a few weeks ago for something separate.

The hypothetical Origin Story I gave about the Keebler elves was facetious, but there is enough truth in it for me to explain further. The truth I'm talking about? It's not actual in the historical sense. It's actual in people's minds. I'm talking about the spirit of the story. This is what religion does. It takes parts of our agreed upon reality and combines it with myth and hocus pocus. Do elite Democrats eat babies? There are Q-Anon stories which say they do. People believe these stories. These same people believe Trump is special beyond all other people, and he should be reinstated as president.

This autobiography is enjoyable to write. These issues with our society and with Trump have a bearing on our day-to-day lives. Our relationships can be strengthened by common beliefs. They can also be broken when I believe your hero is a piece-of-shit loser and I try to point it out to you why that is, all the while you think I'm evil for supporting people you deem to be atrocious.

I'll be working on this as the days come. I will disclose more. I hope for World

Peace. Our world is in chaos. It's difficult to find true rays of hope. I'm sure they're out there. I'll keep looking.

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*“Little sister hits the stage
She can't help it, she's coming of age
Little junior, he's all in a rage
Did you notice she was coming of age?”
— Damn Yankees*

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High Desert, Fourth of July in 2023

Sun went down not too long ago. I started hearing the popping of fireworks outside. I love this time of year. I'm in the house by myself, right now. Well, the cats are inside as well. There's three of them, and they're inside so they don't run away from home if they get scared of the noise outside. It's relatively quiet, though. There's popping now and then, but for a Fourth of July, not as much action as I'm used to.

I got my hardback copy of my first draft of this book a couple of days ago. Lulu does a really good job. With that said, I wasn't able to format the picture correctly so the bottom part is cut off. I'm looking at the book right now and I like it. I really, really like it. And I printed a copy which I bound with black spiral wire at an office products place yesterday. That one's to write on the pages. I need to make a lot of notes.

There were a few lyrics in my head as I fired up this laptop. Let me tell you about the process. When I was young, I'd watch cartoons. Cartoons were different back then than they are now. They were more risqué. Less political correctness. They actually offered more religious allusions. This was usually done in a comical way, but you'd see, for example, Bugs Bunny in a talent show with Daffy Duck. Bugs kept beating Daffy in different categories. Daffy would try to sabotage Bugs, but Bugs would step around it. For example, Daffy rigged a xylophone so that when Bugs played a song, he'd blow up from TNT when he hit a certain note. But Bugs kept missing the note! So Daffy, being an idiot, got mad and yelled, “No! No! No! Not like that, you stupid rabbit! It goes like this!” So Daffy played the song and hit the note which triggered the explosion. Bugs always had a way of stepping around booby traps. At the end of the episode, Daffy pulled out all the stops. I'm

doing this from memory, by the way, but the crux of it goes like this. Daffy is dressed in a devil costume.

I digress.

I couldn't resist looking up the details on the internet. I wanted to know the exact things Daffy swallowed in his final move to upstage Bugs. He swallowed gasoline, nitroglycerin, gunpowder, uranium 238, and a match. Why digress? Well, I am reminded of these things, and I remember he swallowed them, but I didn't have them committed to memory. Without an internet article, I wouldn't have the specifics to write here. I digress because of censorship, though. This episode called "Show Biz Bugs" was created in 1957. It was censored here and there because they were afraid kids would be copying these cartoon characters. A few days ago, I saw a Pinterest meme which illustrated how bad things have become: "If you think you are smarter than the previous generation... 50 years ago the owner's manual of a car showed you how to adjust the valves. Today it warns you not to drink the contents of the battery."

Let's continue with the Daffy anecdote.

Daffy drinks all these dangerous things. He jumps up and down to shake them together inside. Then he swallows a match.

Explosion! Daffy starts to rise as a spirit and is still dressed in his devil costume. The crowd roars with applause. Even Bugs is impressed. He says, "That's terrific, Daffy! They love it! They want more!"

Daffy responds, "I know. I know. But I can only do it once."

The point here is they used to teach us that angels and devils existed. It wasn't only through church. It was through media. They've seemed to lay off this as the years have passed. Cartoons would regularly use a trope of a small angel standing on one shoulder, and a small devil standing on the other. The angel would be whispering righteous advice. The devil would be prodding you to fall into hedonistic temptation. It wasn't just cartoons. One of the classic teen movies of all time was 1978's *Animal House*. It centers around a bunch of rowdy youngsters coming of age.

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Pinto looks down and sees Clorette passed out on Hoover's bed nude. He then

sees his good and evil conscience perched on either shoulder.

Pinto's Conscience (Devil):

Fuck her! Fuck her brains out! Suck her tits! Squeeze her buns! You know she wants it.

Pinto's Conscience (Angel):

For Shame! Lawrence I'm surprised at you.

Pinto's Conscience (Devil):

Ah! Don't listen to that jackoff. Look at those gazongas. You'll never get a better chance!

Pinto's Conscience (Angel):

If you lay one finger on that poor sweet, helpless girl, you'll despise yourself forever!

Pinto then covers Clorette up.

Pinto's Conscience (Angel):

I'm proud of you, Lawrence.

Pinto's Conscience (Devil):

You homo!

tinyurl.com/tiffanytwisted666

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So we have a fork in the road here. This autobiography isn't meant for children, but they can learn from it. I remember watching *Saturday Night Fever* at the drive in with my mom and my sister, Cindy. It was R-rated. There was nudity and adult themes. In 1977 when it came out, I was six. But there was a more sexually suggestive movie which played before it, *Lipstick*, starring Margaux Hemingway, granddaughter of renowned author, Ernest Hemingway. The themes of *Lipstick* centered around rape and revenge. Like I said, I was six and my sister was nine. My mom thought the movie was too graphic. We came to the theatre in a Chevy Corvair. We had been running the radio and air without running the engine, so the battery died. We wound up staying to watch *Lipstick* and *Saturday Night Fever*. I loved *Saturday Night Fever*, by the way. I watched it with Cindy a couple of months ago. It's one of those nostalgic things. For the record, they wound up

making a PG version of *Saturday Night Fever*. I liked it, but I think the original R-rated version taught better life lessons.

We have forks in the road. There have been instances of people walking out on a movie because it's too graphic, or it doesn't suit their political views. This is wrong, though. In my experience, this is way, way wrong.

Guns N' Roses is one of my favorite bands of all time. Their first record, *Appetite For Destruction*, featured a controversial album cover. It was a cartoon version of a young lady presumably recently raped by a machine. Her boob was hanging out, her panties were down past her knees, she sat listless on a sidewalk against a fence, and a man-like machine stood over her in a trench coat. But, another crazy machine-thing was jumping over the fence ready to take him down (tiffianytwisted667)!

I opened this autobiography with a few quotes, lyrics, and memories. One of the memories was of being a four-year-old child and seeing a man bleed to death in front of me. I wanted to put a few memories which would set the tone for what was to come. There are things in life which shape us. When you see a man bleed to death, it has a major effect on you. So what do I think of the graphic nature of the Guns N' Roses original cover? I think it was a warning. Axl Rose moved from Indiana to Hollywood. He admitted in a Rolling Stone article that he got butt fucked when he was young. He suppressed these memories, then he was okay to share them with the world after going through psychotherapy. Axl Rose lived in Hollywood along with his band mates. I loved going to see up-and-coming bands at the Roxy and Whisky. I love live music. It's not Candy Land, there. But girls from horrible environments in the Midwest used to run away to California hoping to make it as actresses. Axl Rose was living there. I walked the streets of Hollywood, and I lived there for a few months.

Men are trying to rape you.

It's not a paradise. There is no guarantee of success. Someone told me Hilary Swank ran away from a trailer park in Nebraska. She made it against the odds as a prime actress. Jim Carrey was homeless before anyone knew of him. Morgan Freeman, the same. Sylvester Stallone, Drew Carey, Jennifer Lopez, Carmen Electra, Dwayne Johnson, and Beck are a few more examples. But for all of these supposed success stories, there are massive failures. The streets of Hollywood are lined with tents of homeless people who come to Los Angeles with dreams, and end their journeys with genuine nightmares.

The angel and devil are on my shoulder. I've been religious all of my life, but I'm not here to preach. It is unecumenical to proselytize as of the second Vatican council from the sixties. My theology no longer resides in the Catholic realm, but I still hold many of the teachings as relevant. I believe in angels and devils. I believe they influence me. I can even hear them. And it's not always the devil I'm mad at. Sometimes, there's an angel telling me he's doing something for my own good. I'm a writer, keep in mind. I have dreams. *Literal dreams*. I want to remember them. I have an angel on my shoulder who says, "It's best people don't know about this!" I'm like, *Fuck! No way! What are you doing? We can sort it out!* But the angel has a sandblasting mechanism of sorts. I try to remember my dream, and the angel blasts my brain. I can't remember anything worth talking about.

From the High Desert, it always takes more than an hour to drive to and from work. Many times I'll have creative ideas. I'm pretty sure my short-term memory is better than thirty seconds. It's like waking from the dream, though. Even if I chant an idea aloud as I pull to the side of a road, the angel is there sandblasting my idea. You would think it would be a devil, but it's not. A so-called angel is out there thinking he knows what's best for the world. I have a lyric in mind, or a simple memory.

But the idea fades.

Why do I tell you this now? As I sat here to write this piece on this Fourth of July of 2023, it happened again. I had a couple of lyrics in mind. My laptop takes less than a minute to fire up, but the so-called angel zapped my memory. It dissolved my intent for this session. This is what I deal with. Take it for what it is.

But I can't be stopped.

There's a battle going on. There are notes I have written down. The devil? He's out there laughing! You know why? He doesn't have to work! All he has to do is step back! The so-called angel will do his work for him! I'm here trying to write about R-rated scenes from movies I watched in the seventies! It's supposed to illustrate a point which builds on a different concept for later! But the so-called angel is saying, "Kids can't hear about this! What if this gets in the wrong hands?" I'm like, *Fuck you angel-on-my-shoulder! Get off me! I've been trying to complete this autobiography for four years! Get off me!*

So, obviously I don't care by now. I had a persistent belief I should talk about my beautiful friend, Dana Garland. I was on a religious journey in the nineties. She

was there with me. I need to tell her story. Because, though we went our own ways, she was there step-in-step with me. She was there in the mind, and she traveled places physically. She went to a museum near San Diego, she went to a religious festival in Moreno Valley, and she tucked me in at night. She literally tucked me in when I spent the night at her house. We were Christians in 1993. We looked for deeper truths, and we experienced the good and the bad together.

I salute Dana Garland. She was a lady who helped me grow.

Without further adieu...

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The Story of Dana Garland

A couple of takeaways I want people to have after reading *Rod* is (1) I was good at math, and (2) my home life was rarely stable. I won two citywide math marathons. I tested top one percent in ASVAB. I eventually passed calculus. These things will be repeated.

In my senior year at Fontana High, I sat in front of a girl named Debbie Torrito in my trigonometry class. I liked her a lot. We used to pass letters to each other. I was able to absorb the trig lessons without taking notes. Because my home life wasn't as stable as I wanted, I rarely did homework. Nonetheless, I managed to hover between A minus to B plus grades because I tested well.

Let's talk about Debbie, though. I liked her. We'd discuss who our prom dates might be when passing notes. Looking back at my younger life, I believe I was oblivious to many race issues others might've seen around me. Debbie was a white Hispanic, like me. She had blue eyes and a Spanish last name. She was pretty. I got along with her. I think she wanted me to ask her to prom.

My best friend was Jake Flapjack. His girlfriend was Winny James, and a member of the drill team. We had double dated for Homecoming the prior semester. You might remember I wrote about taking Angie to the dance but we split up soon after with no hard feelings. Jake remained with Winny, though, and she was on the drill team with Lola Johnson and Dana Garland. These girls got along with Winny. I wanted to ask Debbie Torrito to prom, but Winny didn't get along with her. Me and Jake agreed to rent a limo for prom. It was imperative that the group

chemistry was strong. I opted to ask Lola to the prom instead of Debbie. I didn't think the relationship would last. I thought it would be like what I had with Angie where we split a week later. The relationship I had with Lola lasted a few years, though. After prom, we figured we'd keep dating until grad night which was at Disneyland. After grad night, we figured we'd enroll in community college classes together. Our group got along pretty well. Me and Lola had class with Angie, Jake, and Winny. This was 1989.

In 1990, my dad invested in a pizza store. He put our house up for collateral. It was a horrible, horrible decision for multiple reasons. I wrote earlier that I got many of my friends jobs at Maxwell Street Pizza in Fontana. Lola, Angie, Jake, and Winny were just a small part of it. We kicked ass as a crew. We even put our across-the-street competition out of business, Pizza Chalet. The owner of Maxwell Street was a guy named Ron Ryebread. For the first year and a half the restaurant was open, Ron only took two days off: Thanksgiving and Christmas, when the store was closed. I was assistant manager and I was responsible for making money deposits, and delegating work load.

My whole life, my dad emphasized college education. He even said I couldn't live in the house after high school unless I was enrolled. Did he pay for my college? No! Not one dime! Did he pay for my step-brother's college which was way more expensive because he was in America on a visa? You bet your ass! But we don't need to go on a tangent right now and talk about the fairness of life. The point is that I was enrolled in classes at Chaffey in Cucamonga with my girlfriend. One night, we were snuggling in my room with the lights off. My dad knocked so I answered. He stood at the doorway. I can still see the silhouette of him. My room was dark, and the hallway light was on. He had just invested in Double Deal Pizza in Moreno Valley which was a significant drive away. I had quit my job at Maxwell Street and got a job making double the pay as a part time worker at a local warehouse. My new job would be starting soon. Since I paid for my own college, the job was important. My dad stood there at my bedroom doorway, and said that pizza school would be starting soon. I told him my new job at Quilt would starting.

"You better get your priorities straight!" That's what he said before shutting the door, and walking away.

I remember feeling confused. I remember holding Lola in the dark, and discussing the situation. Like I said, college was emphasized my whole life. I took college prep classes during high school. This was the summer of 1989 before my first classes at Chaffey.

Let's back up a little.

I told you about my rich godparents, Pauline and Bubby Lillybaugh. I told you how I had the privilege of spending parts of my summers at their custom built beach houses. Well? Earlier in "Cast of Characters" I mentioned Imelda and her son, Luis (aka Rábano). Imelda was the housekeeper for the Lillybaughs. She had previously worked for the Bionic Man, Lee Majors, and Wonder Woman, Lynda Carter. In 1981, someone thought it was a good idea to fix Imelda up with my dad. She was from Central America, about twenty-four years old, and still learning English. My dad was forty-three. She came to our house one night in Fontana. The next morning, there was big news. They were getting married! They had known each other for less than twenty-four hours! Imelda's son was still living in Central America but he would eventually come over to live. My relationship with Rábano was rocky at the beginning, but we developed something worthwhile as we became adults.

In order for my dad's new marriage to work, there had to be concessions and promises. It wasn't a done deal that Rábano would come. They had to entice him. In his home country, he could drink beer at the age of twelve. So? When he came to America, it would be a regular thing to go to liquor stores to get a drink called Near Beer, an equivalent of today's O' Douls. Were they buying me Near Beer? No! Were they buying my sister Cindy Near Beer? No!

This part is important. My sister Cindy spent a summer with Imelda at the Lillybaughs in Encino before all of this. They got along and Cindy is one of the reasons Imelda met my dad to begin with. To say the least, they did not get along whatsoever once Imelda moved into our house in Fontana. I have to mention, as well, that I'm skipping a few details in order to get to a point. Me and Cindy went back and forth between my mom's in San Bernardino and my dad's in Fontana, for example. For the sake of simplicity, let's sum it up.

Imelda didn't like Cindy. She was a fiesty Latina, to say the least. It culminated with Imelda going to K-Mart where Cindy worked and Imelda punching her in the jaw. This was in the eighties. If this happened today, I'm a hundred percent positive she would've gone to jail. But it was the eighties, so they somehow let it go.

I spent most of my elementary school years in San Bernardino with my mom. My dad fought for custody of me and I moved with him and Imelda in Fontana in 1985. By then, Rábano was living in the house and so was Imelda's brother,

Renaldo. When I said Imelda was fiesty? One night, she got into an argument with my dad. He had a habit of cutting off the phone line when things went south. I remember him threatening to cut the phone line when I was a young kid and he was arguing with my mom and she was going to call his father, my grandpa Hank. But getting back to the argument between Imelda and my dad in 1985, it got so bad that she stabbed him in the gut. I can still see him sitting in a pool of his own blood on the kitchen floor. Me and Rábano didn't know what to do. My dad cut the phone line so we weren't able to call for help. We lived in a rural part of town. Luckily, Rábano's uncle Renaldo was just getting home. He took my dad to the hospital. He got stitches and wound up okay. Like I said, it was the eighties and no one did any jail time.

Living in this Latin household was bumpy. It wasn't all bad, but there were moments I wondered about the situation. My dad was an electrician. He built our house from scratch. Next door lived one of his pals, a cement mason. Across the street lived a carper installer. Down the street lived a guy who dealt with drywall. They all built their own houses, and they traded labor with each other. When our house was first started (before my dad met Imelda), he lived on the land in a small trailer. He had the house blueprints pinned on the wall. I was about eight at the time. He didn't live with my mom, but they were on decent terms. I remember seeing the blueprints and seeing my name scribbled on one of the rooms. I remember seeing Cindy's on another.

Obviously, shit hit the fan. Time went on, the house was built, Cindy didn't get along with Imelda, and concessions were made for Rábano. And you might be wondering why Imelda punched Cindy in K-Mart? She was missing jewelry at home. Cindy had a friend, Sylvie, who had been around the house. As the story went, Sylvie was the main suspect. But a choice had to be made. My dad had to pick between Imelda and my sister.

My dad picked Imelda, the lady he forgave for stabbing him.

Cindy was forced to go into foster care. I had been living in my room on the top of a bunk bed. Rábano was living on the lower bunk. It was decorated in a "man's color", dark blue. With Cindy gone, Rábano wanted my room for himself. He was a couple of years older, so Imelda and my dad told me to pack up and move to Cindy's old room which was decorated in light green and yellow flowery pastels.

We can now get back to the summer of 1989. Here we are in the dark in a room which was originally built for my sister, Cindy. Me and Lola are wondering

what's going on. My dad had already done crazy things. One time, he stole my Ford Tempo when it was parked in front of Lola's. Why? He flip-flopped on the issue of car insurance. At first, he said not to pay insurance because it's a racket. Then he changed his mind because the new law was that cars could be impounded without proof of insurance. But to steal the car without telling me? In front of my girlfriend's? Wow! Psychotic! Then there was the time when I came home and there was a padlock on my bedroom door! Imelda didn't think my room was clean enough! So I went down the street to stay at Jake Flapjack's for a few days. His parents offered to let me live there, as did Lola's parents, but it wasn't necessary because things eventually cooled off.

There was no way I would quit my new job. There was no way I would drop my college classes. I said that my dad's decision to invest in the Double Deal Pizza store was horrible for multiple reasons. First of all, he was two years away from eligible retirement from his electrician job. I had worked with the owner of Maxwell Street Pizza, Ron Ryebread. Not only did he not take days off, he worked from open until close. For nearly two years! That's how to launch a business! You have to be there! If you want something done right, you have to do it yourself! My dad invested knowing he still had to work his day job.

Here's a disturbing theme. My dad's done reckless things. He chose Imelda over my sister, Cindy. It's like the song by the Rolling Stones "Sympathy For the Devil" though. Cindy forgave him. When he took out the loan for Double Deal, he filed for divorce from Imelda. He gave her a lump sum of ten thousand dollars, thereabout, and she bought Rábano a brand new Jeep with some of the cash. Cindy, meanwhile, got married to Morty who was managing a Little Ceasars. They had two babies, Fella and Ursala. My dad picked Morty to run the new Double Deal Pizza store.

This was the second mistake. Morty had two babies to take care of. He lived in San Bernardino and had to commute to Moreno Valley. He was the manager of the new store but assigned himself nine-to-five hours. When I told my old boss at Maxwell Street, Ron Ryebread, he said the business was destined for failure. Morty delegated night management duties to other people. They didn't know people in my family and some abused their powers. How do I know? Jake and Winny started working there! Winny was held up at gun point one time, and Jake traded pizzas so me and him could go bungy jumping!

Third of all, my dad invested near March Air Force Base which was going through a shut down. The economy of Moreno Valley was collapsing. Newspapers called it the "Foreclosure Capital of the Country" and Double Deal never got off the

ground. If my dad was prudent, he would've waited a couple of years to invest anyway. First of all, he'd be retired from his day job as an electrician. Second of all, I could've completed a two year associates degree at Chaffey. I had the organization in place to run a pizza store. I helped Ron Ryebread build Maxwell Street into a thriving place. I was a driven person, and I could've got the job done. Unlike my brother-in-law, Morty, I didn't have family obligations. I could've done what Ron Ryebread did and been there from open to close. But my dad didn't have the vision and/ or trust.

I have to mention how bad of a businessman he was at the time. Before he invested in Double Deal, he almost bought a frozen yogurt store in Grand Terrace which was a closer drive. He made an enticing offer to me and Morty. Morty would manage the place and get paid a salary plus thirty percent of the profits. I would work part time as an assistant manager and get paid hourly plus fifteen percent of the profits.

This is incentive! This makes things run!

As things turned out, he retracted his offer to me and Morty about any profit sharing cut. The frozen yogurt idea was scrapped. Apparently, some mysterious business advisor told my dad it wasn't the way to go. Morty was only given a flat salary when Double Deal was opened. Where's the incentive in that? Because of the stress of the failing business, Morty split from my sister, and took their two babies out of state. We didn't see them again until Facebook and MySpace allowed us to reconnect.

So my sister took over the pizza store as manager. There was no way it was going to be saved, but the effort was made. My dad blamed her when all was lost. He created a living trust and specifically wrote her out of it. While Cindy worked there, she became romantically involved with an employee's brother. They had a child together. I live with her right now in the High Desert of Southern California.

I loved my high school sweetheart, Lola. I first met her in an algebra class in 1985. She sat behind me. We were friends. I played on the junior high football team and, on game days, we'd wear our game jerseys to class. It was good for my self-esteem. I asked her to the high school prom in 1989. We wound up dating for a few years. We talked about marriage along the way. Our personality types weren't compatible. In the Keirsey Bates temperament model, I was an NT bordering on NF. She was a straight SJ. Without going on a sideroad, I was an intuitive thinker/ feeler, and she was sensing judging. Intuitive people read between the lines whereas sensing people take rhetoric at face value. We

conflicted a lot. On the course to getting my communications degree, I learned that it's typical for opposites to attract. We come together thinking our way of life is great and superior to those around us. We see the picture of the mates we're with and we rip them apart in our minds. We try to change our mates into a better version of what they are. Each person in the relationship is doing this at the same time. My head was in the clouds, and I wanted Lola's to be there as well. Her feet were on the ground, and she wanted me to be more practical. For years, we struggled to change each other, and there were a lot of arguments along the way. In gender communications, I was taught it's typical for our first serious relationship to be spent staring into one another's eyes. The next serious relationship is spent holding each other's hands and staring out into the distance together looking in the same direction.

I believe the relationship I had with Lola could've worked. In an alternate universe where my father didn't gamble our house away, we'd be married right now and our children would've grown up to be amazing people. Instead, me and Lola broke up on Pearl Harbor Day in 1992. The irony was that she was set to travel to Hawaii the next day on a vacation to visit her future husband who was in the coast guard. I supported her going. Our relationship hit a wall. I saw her as a friend as much as anything else. I truly wanted what was best for her. Life is complicated, though. She came back from Hawaii and she had the chicken pox. At the end of December, we went to a Def Leppard concert at the Forum in Inglewood. We tried to work things out.

I'll go on a sideroad, now. My favorite football team since I was six years old has been the Dallas Cowboys. They were doing good that year. As a matter of fact, they went on to win the Super Bowl. Things with Lola were bumpy. In January of 1993, she started dating a guy from a rival high school. I had gotten Lola a job at Maxwell Street Pizza and she became manager. My former boss was suspicious of her new boyfriend, as I was. To be blunt, we thought he was using her for sex. There was a crazy rumor he hid her shoes from her at his apartment so she wouldn't leave while he went to work. I saw Lola as a friend, as I said, and I was okay that she moved on. When me and my former boss told her we thought she was being used, she got defensive and said we were just jealous. It wasn't the case.

The day of Super Bowl XXVII came along on January 31, 1993. I was having a party at my house. The Dallas Cowboys hadn't been to a Super Bowl since the seventies. I had been waiting for years. The Cowboys were kicking the Bills asses when I got a phone call from Lola. She had to come over to pick up her birth control pills which were kept in my bedroom dresser drawer. It couldn't wait

until the next day. It couldn't wait until after the game. It was weird! So she came over and wanted to talk. I had a 1966 Ford Mustang which was given to me by my mother. I remember it being halftime and leaning back against the car. My roommate, Jeb Chadwick, and my buddy, Will Black, had recently rebuilt the motor. Lola leaned against me and I could tell she was confused. All my friends were inside drinking beer, partying, and waiting for the game to resume. As I said, Lola supposedly moved on. She was getting the birth control pills so she wouldn't get pregnant by her new boyfriend. I was okay she moved on, but there was something bigger at work. She was competing with the Super Bowl. All these years later, I can't shake it. I was a Dallas Cowboys fan since I was six. It was my childhood dream that they would return to prominence and glory. It was happening! In the moment, they were putting together one of the best Super Bowls ever!

Lola wanted my attention, but let's back up.

I mentioned me, Jake Flapjack, Jeb Chadwick, and Will Black had a brotherhood. We'd party often, and our best times were at Hollywood nightclubs. In 1992, I turned twenty-one. We had been drinking beer together for years. It was illegal and taboo. That's one of the reasons it appealed to us. There's a certain thrill of using a fake ID and getting away with it. When liquor was no longer illegal, we had to move on to the next thing for the new thrill. It was lysergic acid diethylamide number twenty-five. At some point, we got a hold of a few tabs and we planned to drop it, then trip out on Pink Floyd. That was the big rumor! You had to drop, then watch *The Wall*. But we only had CDs. We dropped, then played Dark Side of the Moon.

We waited. We waited. An hour is typical to start feeling the effects.

We waited.

We waited.

Bunk shit. That's right! We were on our ways to having this amazing communal experience! It didn't happen! We went our different ways that day.

Weeks went by and we had another shot. By this time, Will and Jeb had tripped many times together. Me and Jake were on the outs. It was Halloween of 1992. A friend was throwing a costume party across town. By this time, Jeb had soured on Jake. He didn't want him involved in the experience. I had known Jake since elementary school. What should I do?

I dropped. We went to the party and it was amazing. I saw things then I'll never see again. I felt like I was betraying Jake, though. I should've fought harder to have him involved in our experience. Fast forward back to the Super Bowl in 1993. In my opinion, Jeb went too far. There was an urban myth that if you dropped acid more than seven times, you were legally considered insane by the United States government. Will and Jeb dropped many, many times up until that point. Jeb had certain moments where I realized he wasn't going to return to what had been normal for us. He took our couches out into the front yard. We had been fans of Led Zeppelin. "In through the out door," is what he said as an explanation to me. This was late ninety-two and it was my second time on LSD. The original plan was to go to the Griffith Observatory and watch a Pink Floyd laser show, but they dropped too soon. We had to stay home. It was our rule not to smoke pot at home. Now, Jeb was doing LSD. I had an uncle who was a deputy. What if he drops in right now? This is not going to look good!

Life felt like it was getting out of control.

So it's late ninety-two, Jeb is chilling on a couch which he put in our front yard, neighbors could see us, and I'm thinking we're starting to look like white trash. That's the easiest way I can explain it. Jeb thinks he's in control of our group now. It used to be laissez-faire, but now someone's trying to take over who used to be on the rails. I don't want any part of this! We used to put our initials on our food, both in the cabinets and in the fridge. Jeb breaks open my English muffins and pops them in the toaster. For months, this is a no-no, so I confront Jeb, "Hey! What are you doing?"

"What? Are you going to kick my ass?"

So I lost Jeb, but I tried to make it work. It's late ninety-two, Lola still hasn't gone to Hawaii, and I call her house. I'm on the phone with her mom for five minutes? Twenty-minutes? I lost track of time. I don't know. Lola comes over, and she knows something's wrong. We go to my room. I needed to hold her to feel everything's right with life. But she stayed away from me. I was always the strong one. She had claimed to be raped by a former boyfriend. I listened to her. We talked for hours. But now? I needed her. It was the first time. I needed her to be there for me like I was there for her in the past. But she sat on the edge of the bed and she wouldn't come near me. My world was coming apart.

We were like brothers, and I mentioned that. I didn't tell you that earlier in the day, we invited Jake over but we didn't offer him a chance to share in the

experience. It was still daytime, and we were all wearing sunglasses. Will discovered a new game. He'd upturn a hat then start flicking playing cards into it. Somehow, it's something to do when you want to watch trails. I thought, *This is stupid!* And I never thought of Will that way before because he always knew what to do for an adventure. So Jake figured it out. *They dropped acid without me!* He took off, and my second experience on LSD was a nightmare.

If there's a moral to this part of the story, it's that losing control of life starts to suck.

We need to get back to the stories of Dana Garland and the Super Bowl in 1993.

It's halftime of the game between the Cowboys and Bills. Dallas is up twenty-eight to ten. Not so bad! Lola came over to pick up her birth control pills and we start talking in my backyard. Jeb comes home. By now, since our first LSD experience together, he now has psychedelic tattoos on his arms, clean shaved his scalp, and has grown his facial hair to look like a blond Fu Manchu. He did not care about the game.

Lola sticks around and I'm missing the third quarter. I'm a little antsy. Lola eventually leaves, and I go inside. Holy shit! The Cowboys are kicking ass! But Jeb is in my chair! And he won't get out! "You left! You gave it up!" He said something along those lines. All my friends are there cheering along the Cowboys with me, but I'm upset. What the fuck is this wigger doing? I have to sit on the floor? He used to be like a brother! Now he's weirdo! And I'm conservative! Trust me, at that point in my life, that's how I identified.

Lola faded away. Jeb moved out a month or two later. Up until then, my theology was incomplete. It was massively incomplete. I used to think Catholics were another denomination of Christians like Baptists and Methodists. I used to go to each church without any regard to any difference. People go to Wendy's one day, McDonald's the next, Burger King the following, then Jack in the Box, Arby's, then In N Out. What's the big deal? I'm sure I heard about the Reformation when I was in high school, but it didn't hold any weight on my day in and day out life. I learned, though, that theology is important to people. It is vital, as a matter of fact.

Lola was the first one to talk about marriage between the two of us. We'd talk on the phone on a regular basis. There would always be "I love you" at the end. This happened from 1989 until 1993. For the first six months of us dating, we could literally count how many times we didn't talk on the phone at the end of the night. There were a handful of times when my step-mother had an issue or something

else was going on. We cared about each other. In 1993, the “I love you” stopped happening. I would say it, then she would respond, “I know.” Then we’d hang up.

I will state this for the record. I hung on as long as I could. In athletics, they say to leave it all on the field. That way, you live with no regrets. I will segue into a Biblical verse...

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“Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully, it does not seek its own benefit; it is not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered, it does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; it keeps confidence, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...”

-- 1 Corinthians 4 - 8 (NASB)

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In 1993, there were signs me and Lola would get back together and make it work. She was torn between me and a new boyfriend. I realized it was gone. She didn’t say “I love you” back to me on the phone. When asked about it, she said, “We were kids! We didn’t know what we were talking about!” But I knew what I was talking about! I had a crush on a girl when I was in fourth grade. Her name was Elizabeth. REO Speedwagon released “Keep On Loving You” in the eighties...

*“And I meant every word I said
When I said that I love you
I meant that I love you forever ...”*

I still think about Elizabeth. I bought Lola an REO Speedwagon *High Infidelity* cassette for our one month anniversary. But Lola thought love was a temporal thing. I had to get back into religion. The Corinthians verses came from my “rebound girlfriend”. I had been going to a nightclub in Riverside, California called the Roxx Club. I liked to dance with a girl named Darlene Chambers. We dated. Our first date was at a Denny’s. My best friend committed suicide when I was nineteen. She had a friend who committed suicide, also. We hit it off right away! She was a Methodist and she taught me about the Bible. She’s the one who enlightened me to the Corinthians verses. She told me if you’re in love, you can always substitute the word “love” for the person that you’re with. So it becomes, *“Darlene is patient, Darlene is kind, Darlene is not jealous; Darlene does not brag, Darlene is not arrogant. Darlene does not act disgracefully, Darlene does not seek her own benefit...”* And so on.

But Darlene had her flaws. I won't say what that are, but I will say she was a rebound girlfriend.

Along comes Dana Garland. This is still 1993. She was on the drill team at Fontana High School in 1989 with Lola, Winny, and Angie. A friend. Jake is dating Winny at this point, so we're still in the same circles. I was involved with the Harvest ministries at this point. The pastor, Greg Laurie, went on to co-produce *The Passion* with Mel Gibson. He had an annual revival called the Harvest Crusades at Anaheim Stadium. Me and Dana were religious and we started hanging out. Dana had a mother who was part of a rare, rare, rare sect of Christianity. Most Christians are trinitarian. Dana's mother believed in Oneness. This is less than one percent of Christians. It derives from John 1:1 and says the Father and Son are not separate. When Jesus cries on the Cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?", it is not a literal demand. It is rhetorical. Like, "Why did I say such stupid thing?" There is no God in Heaven at this point. Jesus is basically talking to himself.

So I will continue with this caveat. What I'm about to say is a combination of memory and Wikipedia research. I remember talking to Dana about Oneness. It's called Oneness Pentecostalism in the technical sense. Dana loved me. As a human, she loved me. We never touched sexually, but she tucked me into bed when I spent nights at her house. We were close, and we searched. I was going to community college, and I searched. Her dad was a Fontana police officer. He accepted me. Dana made me fresh baked cookies. When I needed to do a project for college, she would be at my side. Greg Laurie, and the Harvest Crusades, purported that evolution was a lie. It was scientifically wrong. Dana travelled with me to the Institute of Creation Research near San Diego, California. I was set to prove that Greg Laurie was correct. I did a research project for class. Dana helped. I even looked up the sources in a book I cited. I contacted the people. Me and Dana visited them on the way home from the ICR. They were an elderly couple. The woman was a Methodist. The man was a Presbyterian. He had doctorates degrees in engineering and theology. I loved our meeting. One of the founders of the Institute for Creation Research was Henry Morris. This is where my world broke apart. The Presbyterian had previously contacted Morris. The ICR was teaching that evolution was incorrect because of fossil records. The Presbyterian explained in letters that geological platonic subduction was the reason their fallacy existed. But to deaf ears. This was one of many examples. Creation Scientists used to offer bus field trips to places where they claimed the fossil record was radically inconsistent. The real reason for this was that one geological plate had slid over another. Subduction.

I will say this is vital.

Dana loved me, and I loved her. It was more important for her to stick with her prior belief system. It was more important for her to appease her mother. She rejected what the engineer/ theologian had to say. Me and Dana went our own ways. I was still on my quest to find whatever “ultimate truth” was out there.

I don’t think of Dana in bitterness, but I have seen this phenomenon many times since then. I call it the Ostrich Syndrome. It’s the point in life when you’re confronted with a reality. This reality is in direct conflict with a current belief. Instead of accepting the new belief system, you stick your head in a hole in the ground, no matter what proof is out there. Ostriches are infamous for drowning while looking up into the sky as rain starts to pour down into their open mouths. Similarly, they stick their heads into holes in the ground when predators stalk them. They believe it is the safest thing to do. Since they can no longer see the predator, he doesn’t exist. They are safe. Until they are eaten.

Dana and I had a good time together. For another class, she went to a Christian concert with me. The class was “History of Rock ‘n’ Roll” and it proved to be quite insightful. I learned my first concepts of existentialism. One of our text books was *You Say You Want a Revolution: Rock Music In American Culture* written by Robert Pielke. He used concepts from Thomas Kuhn, Paul Tillich, Rudolph Otto, Herbert Marcuse and others. He showed that rock ‘n’ roll was way more than mere musical entertainment. It was a budding religion.

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*“Leave me alone, don’t want your promises no more
 ‘Cause rock ‘n’ roll is my religion and my love
 Won’t ever change, may think it’s strange
 You can’t kill rock ‘n’ roll, it’s here to stay ...”
 — Ozzy Osborne*

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It’s Labor Day weekend in 2023. I’ve been working on this autobiography and I think I have a good shot to finish a first draft soon. I have a few three by five index cards next to me. There’s a few things I want to make sure to include. Some of these are already written. They just have to be plugged in through cut and paste. There’s a few other things I still need to write. Let’s tackle one of them right now.

I've had a few strong relationships which have lasted since childhood. I've written about my experiences with Jake. He went to the same elementary school as me. Well, let's go into a little more detail. Let's talk about my mother. Remember at the beginning of this book? I quoted Sigmund Freud. *Tell me about your mother.* This is what he's attributed to asking his patients as they relaxed on couches. My mother was a wonderful person. I had an idea to include at least one good memory with everyone I'd write about. There were many with my mom. Believe it or not, I can remember her singing "Rock a Bye Baby" to me as she carried me around the house. I was still an infant. Even crazier, I have a memory of being in the womb. I have a few memories which seem too crazy to be true, but that's one of them.

When I was around five years old, my family was staying at my grandmother's in Norwalk. It was me, my mom, and her two brothers. I can't remember where my sisters were. Asleep? Did they make the trip? I can't remember, but they started talking about the Bible. They started talking about Revelation in particular. It was late at night. My two uncles were both employed in aerospace. My mom had been a nurse for a short time, but mostly she was a stay-at-home mom. In Revelation 21:17, there are precise measurements of how large the New Temple of the New Jerusalem would be. Specifically, the walls would be 144 cubits thick, or roughly 216 feet. I didn't know the verse at the time I listened to my uncle Rico question the literalness of these passages. Afterall, the New Jerusalem was supposed to come down from the sky. I'm still fuzzy about some of the details, but Revelation has been known to drive people crazy. My mom claimed she could move chandeliers with her mind. She claimed she could cause earthquakes. The night went on and they were talking about the miracles of Jesus.

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Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?"

And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned ...

— Luke 8:26 - 33

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So my mother and her two brothers were discussing the Bible all night. My grandmother was a dedicated Catholic. She had a large statue of the Virgin Mary in the guest room where I slept. My uncle Rico was veering into evangelical territory, as others were. My mom decided to take a leap of faith. She made a few hand gestures over my body and motioned them away. She was casting demons out of me, but it had a consequence. In the seventies, when I was raised, there were a couple of popular movies dealing with dark religious themes, *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*. *The Exorcist* dealt with a demon-possessed young girl and *The Omen* dealt with a young boy who had the Mark of the Beast and was destined to become president of the United States.

Somehow, shit went sideways really bad. My mom and her brothers discussed religion all night. As the Sun was coming up, a paddywagon showed up to my grandmother's house. Someone had reported my mom. I still don't know how things went down, but men took her away. She was institutionalized.

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*"And we're afraid you're gonna hurt somebody
And we're afraid you're gonna hurt yourself
So we decided it would be in your best interest
If we put you somewhere you could get the help you need
And I go, Wait! What are you talking about?
We decided? My best interest?
How do you know what my best interest is?
How can you say what my best interest is?
What are you trying to say? I'm crazy?
When I went to your schools!
I went to your churches!
I went to your institutional learning facilities!*

So how can you say I'm crazy?!"
— Suicidal Tendencies

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My mom was in and out of mental facilities for much of my youth. She was a single mother raising me and my three sisters in San Bernardino, California. My father was building a house about fifteen miles away in Fontana. My oldest sister, Marcia, moved to the San Francisco area. At the beginning, my mom was somewhat stable. When I was in third grade, she had a mental breakdown. I stayed with my dad in Fontana for a week. I was enrolled at Jurupa Hills Elementary. This school was predominantly white as opposed to the elementary school I attended in San Bernardino. I returned to my mom's and continued along at Roosevelt.

Let's go down a quick sideroad. The schools I've gone to have had notable celebrities. Roosevelt had Philip Michael Thomas from Miami Vice; former LA Clipper, Etdrick Bohannon, who I played basketball with; and Derek Parra, gold medalist speed skater. Fontana High had Sammy Hagar, Sean Rooks, and Travis Barker. Pitzer College had Oingo Boingo's Danny Elfman.

Now back to elementary school. Fourth grade went smooth, then my mom had another mental breakdown. This time, instead of staying in Fontana for a week, I stayed for the full year. That's when I met Jake Flapjack. I became good at math. I won a citywide marathon that year. I was undefeated at math relays. I was supposed to return to San Bernardino. My two older sisters, Marcia and Jan, had a different father than me and the youngest of my sisters, Cindy. My dad married my second cousin's housekeeper in the early eighties then fought for custody of me and Cindy. Cindy didn't get along with my step-mom, so she testified against her. My mom wound up maintaining custody. I was in San Bernardino for sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

In seventh grade, I started attending Golden Valley Middle School which was on the north end of the city. This is where the rich people lived. Along Valencia Avenue, homes were large and typically had marble pillars in the front with ample horseshoe driveways. A good deal of them had built in pools. I was bussed from the southwest part of town where poverty was obvious. The emotions I felt at the time were radical in all directions. I didn't grow up with white people, by and large. I had spent fifth grade in Fontana which was rural, working class white. Golden Valley was full of rich, preppy kids. I actually liked it, but it was tough. Mack Tyler was my best friend and he lived across the street from the school. For

lunch, we'd jump the fence and head to his house. His favorite band was *The Police* and he styled his hair after Sting. I had a lot of good times around Mack. The first party I went to without chaperones had been on the last day of sixth grade where I had my first French kiss during truth or dare with a gal named Sabrina. In seventh grade, Mack Tyler had parties and it was good to celebrate with the Golden Valley students. I remember crushes I had on Lyna, Jan, and Andrea. Mick McGrady and Dan Kroger were part of the social group. Mick ran for school president and won. Mack became school historian. On the last day of school in seventh grade, we had a party at a nice home in the foothills of the San Bernardino National Forest. The year before, I had my first taste of Jack Daniels. At this party, there was a large swimming pool and an open liquor cabinet. We swam, had fun, drank Jack, then it was time to go home. I got along great with Mack the whole year, but Mick and Dan didn't take to me as much. On this night, it all seemed to come together. Billy Joel had been popular on MTV and we were drunk thirteen-year-olds wobbling down the street crooning the doo-wop song "The Longest Time" at the top of our lungs.

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*"Once I thought my innocence was gone
Now I know that happiness goes on
That's where you found me
When you put your arms around me
I haven't been there for the longest time ..."*
— Billy Joel

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My dad had lost the custody fight after my fifth grade year, then fought again during eighth grade. This time, he didn't include Cindy because she didn't get along with Imelda. Eighth grade was one of the worst years of my life. I lost my friends at Golden Valley. It begs the question, *Are they really freinds to begin with?* I was a lame duck. Everyone knew I wasn't going to stick around San Bernardino much longer. Mack had a new best friend, Jimmy. Instead of me going to his house for lunch, it was him. And Mick? He was now school president and I started feeling snobbiness from him and others on the student council. I still remember clearly in my mind him chit-chatting with a group before class and, when he saw me, he ducked around the corner. A lot of people I had fun with in seventh grade were no-shows in eighth. In a lot of ways, I don't blame them. I developed a disdain for snobby people that year, though. It's one of the reasons I jetted out of the Republican party years later in the mid nineties. I can't

stand snide people! There's an irony in all of this. I got accepted to a private college around this time. In my last semester, I took a *History of Laughter* class. It talked about reverse snobbiness, like at carnivals and other low brow venues. There's a bar in Colton where they'll cut off your neck tie with scissors if you show up in fancy attire. These ties are pinned all around the restaurant. Let's take a moment for Garth Books...

*"Blame it all on my roots
I showed up in boots
And ruined your black tie affair
The last one to know
The last one to show
I was the last one you thought you'd see there ..."*

This is from "Friends in Low Places" and this period of my life is when I started to believe it was okay to be who I was. Nothing wrong with striving for better, but many people aren't going to make the final grade. I wanted to be a Major League Baseball player when I was a kid. I fell short, like millions of us do, and it's okay.

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*"You said that you love me
And that you always will
Oh, you begged me to keep you
In that house on the hill ..."*
— *Big Love*

*"And it seems such a waste of time
If that's what it's all about
Mama, if that's moving up
Then I'm moving out ..."*
— *Billy Joel*

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So my dad won the custody suit. My mom had been drinking heavily. In eighth grade, I was truant a lot, and my grades suffered. A lot of C's and D's, and even a few F's. I can hardly believe I got promoted to ninth grade, but I did. So I started attending Sequoia Junior High in Fontana near the steel mill. I joined the football team. I had a fresh start on life. I'd like to talk deeper about family history at this point. My grandparents came from Mexico. I am white, phenotypically. When I

got my driver's license at sixteen, I had a Fontana address. Sammy Hagar had attended Fontana High and had a bar in Cabo San Lucas. Rumor was that if you went to his bar and showed them a Fontana ID, you could drink for free all day. When I turned eighteen, Tijuana was a popular place for me and friends to go to. The nightclubs served people our age. It was a blast. But let's get to my deeper family history. I wrote this a few weeks ago...

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Inland Empire, California
August 2023

I reached a pretty good milestone. Yesterday, I finished reading this Rod script as it's been written and compiled up until this point. I like it. I'd even say it's finished. Do I really mean this? Yes, but it's not a perfect answer. What I'm saying is I've met my personal minimum threshold. I remember writing term papers while in college. There were deadlines. There was procrastination at times. It always felt good to write a decent first draft. There was a lot of relief. It meant that, at the very least, there was something to turn in. Would it get an A? No! But a D or C was better than an F. This Rod project has been going on since 2020 when I lived in Seattle. I knew what I wanted to write, and I knew who I wanted to send it to. I've spent many hours putting this together. I've had a lot I wanted to get off my chest. I had a lot I wanted to explain. Worst case scenario, this is it! I didn't fail in my goal! I'm sure I'd get a C, at the least, if I were to hand this to a teacher.

But I want an A! I want to earn an A!

I still want to write a more comprehensive family history on both sides. I want to wrap up a few stories and anecdotes. I want this to feel good. Right now, it feels decent, but it's still a few notches short of very good.

Let's talk about my mother's side of the family. Pancho Villa was a well regarded Mexican revolutionary in the 1920s. When I was a kid, we had a group photo of him. One of his generals was my great-grandfather, Jose De La Luz Blanco. He had command of 17,000 troops. He fathered my grandfather, Elias Blanco. Elias is my middle name, by the way. I got it from him. The Blanco family came from Chihuahua, Mexico. Family legend is that Elias was a great inventor, and he knew Albert Einstein! That's right! I don't have many memories of my grandfather. He passed away when I was around four years old. I remember going to his house in Hollywood with my mom and my sisters. I remember

standing on his feet as he held my hands and let me walk with him step by step. I remember huge stairs at his house. I was scared of them. Then I remember his funeral. I was held up to see him in his casket. I remember his thick black mustache. I remember kissing his cheek.

Like my great-grandfather on my mom's side who was in Mexico fighting a revolution, my great-grandfather on my dad's side was also in Mexico. He was a white man riding with the US Cavalry. His name was James Kelso. When he reached the later stages of his life, he settled around Tepic, Nayarit. Family legend is that's where he met my great-grandmother, Concha Corona. He was old, maybe in his fifties or sixties. She was young, perhaps fifteen or so. She had three children with him: Mary, Henry, and Charlie. Great-grandpa James Kelso disappeared, though. It was never clear how or why. Great-grandma Concha was Yaqui Indian, but her children had blue eyes like their father.

Every now and then in Mexico, the locals get fed up with white citizens. "Gringos get out!" An edict of sorts. Great-grandma Concha took her children north. On the way, she instructed them to cover their eyes as she held their hands in a chain as they walked along a certain road. My grandfather Henry peeked, though. There were dead people hanging in trees, so the legend goes. Grandpa Henry passed the story along to us.

One of my earliest memories is driving to TJ with my family to visit my grandparents. My father had an old Chevy van. It was supposed to be mine when I turned sixteen, but that didn't pan out. Either way, this van didn't have a normal hood which opened in the front. No, the engine was in a metal compartment between the driver and passenger. It got quite hot in there, especially if you were sitting on it. My three sisters were there, as was my mom. It's one of the few memories I have of all of us together.

I remember the dirt roads of Tijuana. I remember how one led into the hills. It was scary because the cliffs looked steep, but that's where my grandpa Henry and great-grandmother Concha lived in a small shack-like house. There was no toilet inside. Instead, there was an outhouse in the back. Grandpa Henry liked to give us kids balloons. I thought it was great! He had rubberbands and I remember he let my sisters make small braids in his hair. It was a jolly time.

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I started going to Fontana High School my tenth grade year in 1986. I was lucky enough to have a job already. I sold flowers on street corners. I got many people

jobs. During junior high, me and Jake were competitive with each other because we played the same position on the football team. I would go so far as to say he didn't like me, but I got him a job selling flowers and our relationship became better. We played football with Vinny and were known as the Termites along with a few other guys. I mentioned Vinny briefly in passing when I wrote about Ciazarn language. I got Vinny a job selling flowers. Jake and Vinny both had brothers a couple of years younger than us. They got jobs. We lived in the same neighborhood in south Fontana. Rural area where people raised their own livestock and people riding horses were commonly seen along the roads. Huey lived in our neighborhood, and I got him a job. We were able to buy our own skateboards and our own clothing. I wore skate shirts from Powell Peralta and surf shirts from Quiksilver, Maui and Sons, and Hawaiian Island Creations. It was great to have a good degree of financial independence.

In our junior year, Fontana High's football team went undefeated, won the CIF championship at Anaheim Stadium, and was voted the number one team in the country by ESPN. It was great to watch those games. In the beginning of high school, I'd spend my lunches at Miguel's with Huey and Vinny where you could buy a bean and cheese burrito for a buck. This was before any of us had cars to drive. We had an open campus and we were relegated to places we could only walk. In our junior year, we all started to drive. Huey had a Volkswagen Rabbit, Vinny had a four-by-four, Jake had a Ford Fiesta, and I had a Chevy Nova.

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*"My car's a big piece of shit
 'Cause the shocks are fucking shot
 And my seatbelt's fucking broken
 I got to tie it in a knot
 It's a piece of shit
 I can't see through the windshield
 'Cause it's got a big fucking crack
 And the interior smells real bad
 'Cause my friend puked in the back
 It's a piece of shit ..."*
 — Ode To My Car by Adam Sandler

=====

I wouldn't be surprised if Adam Sandler heard about the cars me and my friends drove and was inspired to write this song. I mentioned before that our group of

friends felt like a brotherhood and it was laissez-faire in feel. Every now and then, though, Huey would try to take lead of the group. He would get on a high horse. He was quite obese. He didn't play on the football team with me, Vinny, and Jake because he said he had flat feet. His dad had an air conditioning business, though, and all of us worked there in the summer of 1987. Huey was able to get his car before anyone else. He lived around the corner from me at the time and he gave me rides to school. I had a Chevy Nova, but it didn't run. *It was a piece of shit car.* Bald tires. Leaked water and oil. Bad carburetor. I had to learn to drive with my left foot on the brake because it needed gas when I was stopped. I got along with Huey here and there, but like I said, he got on a high horse when he got his car. He thought this made him the leader of the group. I didn't get along with Jake too well during junior high football, but I pretty much begged him to give me rides to school in our junior year. I couldn't stand Huey. Jake was cool with it. We had to push start his Ford Fiesta every morning. His brakes were shot. It was an adventure, and it wound up being fun.

Let's return to family history a bit. Spanish was the main language spoken at my house during high school, but I didn't pick it up. My dad was married to Imelda from Central America. I mentioned that her son, Rábano, had special treatment. They bought him Near Beer. They bought him clothes. Even though he's the one who originally got me the job selling flowers, it was a temporary thing for him. With me, Jake, Vinny, and Huey, it was years. We bought our own clothes, like I said. And my dad had a thing about buying fuel efficient cars, even though the 1965 Chevy Nova sucked in so many ways. All the kids at high school wanted Mustangs, Cameros, and Chargers. They wanted muscle cars, but this was out of the question for me from my dad. But Rábano was given a Pontiac Firebird by his uncle which had a huge V-8 engine. The relationship I had with Rábano was rocky in the early years. I was glad when he first came to America. We played basketball, soccer, and Atari. I helped teach him English. Weird shit would happen now and then. We were in Las Vegas for one of my dad's IBEW conferences. We stayed at the Tropicana. Vinny came along with us. On the way home, I was listening to Journey on my Walkman. Rábano insulted me about my music. We lived in the same house, but we didn't speak to each other for months because of that. He drove me to Fontana High during my sophomore year, but we didn't speak. Eventually, after high school, we got along again. We went decades without arguing. We'd play pickup football, and we'd watch a lot of football. Oh! He eventually went to a Journey concert with his wife, Gale.

So Spanish is predominantly spoken at my house in high school. Rábano had special treatment, and Jake used to say that I was the step-son and not him. I laughed. It wasn't altogether a curse, though. My last name is Corona. I never

even heard of Corona Extra until high school. My friend, Jay, used to call me Eddie Corona Beer. I was the Mexican of our group. You have to hear this out. When I turned eighteen in my senior year, 1989, we weren't legally allowed to buy liquor in California. Tijuana allowed us to drink, though. It was believed that you had to have a Hispanic in your group when going to clubs if you didn't want to be messed with or taken advantage of. Somehow, I qualified for this distinction. So did Ray Villalona. Many of my friends were misfits. As Oingo Boingo might say, we were on the outside looking in. But we partied, and we had a major blast partying. The demographics of Fontana were mostly white in the late eighties. I mentioned Sammy Hagar. He sang "Best of Both Worlds" when he joined Van Halen. This is how I thought of my life. When things were going well, I had the best of Hispanic and Anglo cultures. I was able to go to TJ. When I turned twenty-one and we were going to local nightclubs, I had a cool last name. When we'd mingle with girls we wanted to dance with, Jake would tell them my grandpa owned the Corona Extra beer company. It was a gag, but it worked to some degree.

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*"I go to parties sometimes until four
It's hard to leave when you can't find the door
It's tough to handle this fortune and fame
Everybody's so different, I haven't changed ..."
— Life's Been Good*

=====

I wanted to discuss Rábano, though. I resented him during high school. Not the whole time, but for stretches here and there. We developed a decent relationship since then. We went decades without arguing. He got married, had a kid, and became more of a family guy. During football season, we'd see each other on a regular basis. I'd watch football at his house, or we'd go to *Logan's Roadhouse*. In the off season, we might watch the NBA Finals. The event we'd usually aim for was the NFL draft.

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*Bart Simpson's "Big Brother": Your dad ever take you to baseball games?
Bart: Nah. His game was blackjack. He bet our life's savings on a single hand.
Flashback to casino...
Dealer keeps dealing aces to Homer: 19.*

Homer: Hit me.

Dealer: 20.

Homer: Hit me.

Dealer: 21.

Homer: Hit me.

Dealer: 22.

Homer: D'oh !

=====

I've had falling outs with people. If I had to bet, I'll never talk to my dad again. I mentioned earlier that he failed as a provider. He gambled our house away. What's worse is that he didn't take responsibility. When I was a kid, he taught me the word "responsible" but he didn't exercise it. He blamed me and my sister Cindy for his mistakes. I said earlier that I made excuses for him. After the Fontana house was foreclosed on, there was still land which was not siezed. It was an acre and a half two lots away. We used to call it the "Property" and he had built a simple brick building which we called the "Barn". In 1995, my friends volunteered their time and labor to dig ditches to put in electrical, water, and sewage lines. He never thanked us. I can't remember a single time in my life where he said he was sorry for anything. I never remember him saying he was proud of us. In spite of the dog shit we went through, I thought of him as a friend at times. He failed as a provider, but I was determined to make it through horrible times. When I moved to Seattle in 2019, I realized he failed as a friend as well.

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"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee..."

— Exodus 20:12

"Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. And thou shalt eat it as barely cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their site ..."

— Ezekiel 4: 11 - 12

=====

There's a lot of weird crap in the Bible. Honour thy father and mother? Yes, if they were good to you! Bake barely cakes with human dung? Wow! Can't believe that's in there! When I was a kid in San Bernardino, we had a couple of

brass plates hanging on the bedroom wall. One was the Ten Commandments, and the other was the Lord's Prayer. Over the years, I've come to think the commandment should have been to honour your children! They're the ones who don't know any better! They're the ones who need guidance. It was a one way street with my dad. It was a bottomless pit. No matter how good you did, there was always severe criticism.

When he split with my mom in the seventies, there were a lot of bad stories about him. Some people called him a devil worshipper, but I brushed that off. We had a dog named India. She would have litters of puppies. My dad would get rid of them and it was somewhat of a mystery. I believe he said he let them loose in the hills near the Property. I heard other rumors that he would put them in a large garbage bag and suffocate them. Why bring this up now?

There's something wrong with that dude!

One of my early memories was being at my uncle Rudy's house in Mira Loma. He got drunk with my mom then got angry with her. He took her outside, put her in a head lock, and doused her head with water from a hose. I visited my sister for her birthday a couple of months ago and we talked about these weird times. Cindy stopped talking to him about a year before me. This was around early 2019. In the middle of nowhere, he threatened to make her get out of his car to find her own way home. That was the last time they spoke. I told my sister Jan about this recently and she brought up a time when he put a bat on my mom's porch. We're talking about a rodent bat, and not the kind you swing for baseball. In 1998, things had gotten bumpy at the Property. I was staying there working on my last semester at Pitzer College. I had bought a Fender Stratocaster and a Crate amplifier the year before but hardly touched it. The first time I plugged in, he attacked me. He physically attacked me. He had paid for karate lessons for me when I was ten. I never had to use it. Karate is a discipline of self-defense. When I was attacked, my instincts kicked in. He was a little bigger than me, and I was afraid of him to some degree, but I held my own. I never wanted it to go that far, and I held my own.

He threatened to chain me up and drag me around the Property. Some of these things, I can't necessarily remember if I've already written about, but one of the reasons I started writing *Blunder* was an incident we had in the Barn in 1998. I only smoked pot around him a couple of times. The first time wasn't bad. It was in Elko, Nevada. I told a friend from Pitzer that it felt like a decent bonding moment. Another time, he had a couple of vato buddies over. We happened to have a calf at the Property which was set to be slaughtered at some point in the

future.

One of the things that bugs me more than anything in life is when people use code language to get on your nerves. They use trigger words. They beat around the bush and use innuendoes and ententes. I'm writing fan fiction as Braden Callypso to vent this frustration. It centers around Austin Powers. While in the Barn with my dad and his vato buddies, we smoked pot. I thought it was going to be a cool experience like the first time in 1994, but it was bad. My dad always carried around a pocket knife. He bragged about cutting up guys when he was a teenager. Apparently, a couple of thugs threatened him and his girlfriend. But in the Barn, there was a watermelon. He was cutting it apart. His vato buddies had knives out as well. They were talking about the calf outside. If you've ever been around people who speak in entendres, you know when there's a code going on with multiple meanings. "If he tries to escape, we'll just cut him up right now," my dad told one of the vato buddies. I knew he was trying to frighten me.

I mentioned that he used to play this "game" when I was a kid where he'd grab my forearm and not let go until I was near tears. That's his underlying motive. He wants to capture people and not let them go. My mom felt this, my step-mom felt this, my sister Cindy felt this, and by 1998 I started to feel this beyond any degree of comfort. I was going to Pitzer College and getting ready to graduate. My plans were to move far away from Fontana. I wanted to use my Intercultural Environmental Studies degree in the Northwest where I felt it would be most usefull. But my dad had other plans. After losing the house in 1995, his credit was shit. In 1998, I went on vacation to Chicago with Booboo Johnstone. My dad had recently had dental bridge work done. While I was in Chicago, I had a nightmare. My dad's face was bashed in. Someone beat him up.

The trip to Chicago had strange moments. I would later believe the *Harold & Kumar* movie borrowed from the adventures I had with Booboo and his cousins. I would also think there were strange connections to *Chicago*, the movie, featuring Renee Zellweger and Catherine Zeta-Jones. In 1998 when I got home from my vacation, it turned out my dad got in a bar fight. Someone wrecked his new dental bridge.

These are things I've waited for years to get off my chest. It's been more than twenty years. I've held a lot in. Some of these things are known by family members, but they've been suppressed. As I was planning to graduate from Pitzer in 1998, my dad tried to buy land in Hemet. We had been staying in forty-foot trailers at the Property for a couple of years. I was proud that I lived through that tough time, but I was ready to move on. One night, my dad called me into his

trailer. He showed me blueprints. Similar to the Property, he was trying to buy land with a trailer house on it. He showed me where my room was going to be, but these are the things I'm talking about with unilateral decisions. There was no way I wanted to continue living that way. Since I was going to a well-regarded school, he figured I'd be making bookoo bucks. I tried to take it as a joke when he told me I'd finance the house he wanted to build at the Property. Like the "prisoner game" as a kid, I realized there was too much truth behind what he was trying to get across.

My sister made it into the Screen Actors Guild. She was doing well in Hollywood. She'd sometimes bring friends around to see my dad. I was about to graduate from one of the Claremont Colleges. I was doing fine. I remember my dad said something quite peculiar which stuck with me until now. He said, "You guys are out there succeeding in the world, but I'm really the one pulling the strings here behind the scenes." I took it as a joke. I humored him, but it remained as his true attitude from that point forward.

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*"Let's talk about family values
While we sit and watch the slaughter
Hypothetical abortions
Or imaginary daughters
The white folks think they're at the top
Ask any proud white male
A million years of evolution
We get Danny Quayle ..."
— Insanity by Oingo Boingo*

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I was baptized Catholic in August of 1971. Much of my family on both sides were Catholic but they started to split off, especially on my dad's side. I remember staying part of a summer with my aunt Carole when I was around eleven. She had five kids and her husband was a deputy sheriff. We'd go to evangelical church every Sunday. She was a member of the *700 Club*. She supported Pat Robertson when he ran for president in 1988. As I made my way through community college, most my friends identified as Christian. As I look back on things, I know something to be true. At some point, you're supposed to realize that Santa Claus is a good story, but it's still a myth. I believe, as you investigate religion, you're supposed to find the same thing. Santa Claus is good to believe in. Take your

young child to a mall in December to see him! And maybe teach your kids about Jesus. But are you to teach them about Scientific Creationism? No! Fuck that shit! I'm fifty-two right now and likely will not have children of my own. I was happy to have three godchildren, and that's enough for me. But I thought about this a lot. Right around the time I was in a biology lab at the Keck Science Center doing experiments on mitochondrial DNA, I realized the biologists know what they're talking about! I knew at a point I did not want to have a wife who was Protestant or Republican. I started veering toward Asian women when I was at Pitzer because they have different backgrounds and beliefs, in general.

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“And shall we just carelessly allow children to hear any casual tales which may be devised by casual persons, and to receive into their minds ideas for the most part the very opposite of those which we should wish them to have when they are grown up?”

— *Plato in The Republic*

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I used this quote for my entrance essay to get into Pitzer College. I have friends who are Protestant and Republican today. I look at this as a stage or else willful ignorance, for the most part. If it's a stage, it's not much different than belief in Santa Claus. You see a kid who believes in Santa Claus, you don't try to change his mind! It serves a purpose! Belief in Jesus Christ serves a purpose! I don't need someone telling me that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a dinosaur! There were dinosaurs on Noah's Ark! What a ludicrous thing! Google it! This is what's being taught in many Protestant churches. I was quite disappointed when I learned that the place I attended, Harvest, taught these things. It was in their book store. Alice In Chains has an album called “The Devil Put Dinosaurs Here” and that's the better way to approach this.

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“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ...”

— *Hebrews 11:1*

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This has always been one of my favorite Bible passages. While going to grade school and learning about dinosaurs, I thought it was possible that God put fossils

in the Earth to test our faith. I never thought science should or could explain why Adam lived to be 930 years old as is reported in Genesis 5:5. But Creation Scientists tried. There was “firmament of waters” supernaturally suspended above the Garden of Eden and the rest of the world. Basically, there was a floating ocean up there. This floating ocean blocked out ultraviolet rays and this allowed Adam, Eve, and others in early Biblical times to live hundreds of years.

I adored Dana, and she traveled part way down the Rabbit Hole with me. Eventually, she got cognitive dissonance. That’s how I’ll take it in this snap shot. I learned the term “cognitive dissonance” from Webster Tarpley as he described people who shut out the possibility that our government had anything to do with the planning of the Nine Eleven attacks. I included “cognitive dissonance” as a topic near the beginning of my book, *Cretins*. So I mentioned people believe Santa Claus delivers toys to millions of children around the world in a single night. One day, they realize their parents buy presents for them online or at a local mall. They wrap them, then put them under the Christmas tree. If you take biology at Notre Dame, a Catholic university, you will be taught a form of Darwinian evolution. You will not be taught Scientific Creationism, which states that our world is no more than ten thousand years old. It is my impression that Notre Dame teaches that God has some kind of guiding hand in the process, but they teach that mammals have been around for millions of years.

Dana went her own way, but I still had a thirst to find out answers to countless questions I had. In comes Dale Bakula. I told you I sold flowers and got a few people jobs. I moved on to Maxwell Street Pizza. A few of these people followed me there. A couple of years passed and I worked at a warehouse called Quilt. Maxwell Street functioned as a farm system of sorts. My girlfriend, Lola, was manager and she’d recommended workers who would be reliable. Dale Bakula was one of them. When I first met him, he was a skinny blond kid with a bowl-shaped hair cut. He was the best ever, though, amongst my friends to travel down the Rabbit Hole. I got him a job at *Quilt* and we’d party with a large brotherhood of friends. Dale had a similar curiosity about life, as I did. Sometimes, we’d spend all night discussing philosophy and religion. I recommended him to teachers I had at Chaffey Community College, and he listened. I recommended him to Pitzer College, and he was admitted.

Our friend, Booboo Johnstone, came from a staunch Catholic family. Booboo worked at *Quilt* with me, Dale, Jake’s brother, and a few others. The first time I went to his house, his family was in the middle of praying a rosary together. His mom was so devout that she attended church during weekdays. Vatican II took place between 1962 and 1965. There were many changes instituted to the modern

church. You no longer had to build churches made of stone. Mass didn't need to be in Latin. Of all things, you no longer had to believe angels literally existed as supernatural spirits. Booboo's mom differentiated between liberal and conservative Catholic churches. What I've come to find is that Catholics in politics are Democrats if they support labor rights. Cardinal Roger Mahoney supported Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. I know this because of my volunteer work with them. Catholics who are Republican are usually most swayed by anti-abortion issues. As a Libertarian, I am a government minimalist. Our government is better at building highways than the private sector, so let them do it. But the American government is not a theocracy, unlike Britain with its monarchy and Anglican faith.

Dale Bakula took a religion class at Chaffey and I was studying religion independently. We'd compare notes. The reason I'm put off by Protestant denominations which support Scientific Creationism is because I understand the motive. It boils down to Biblical authority. If the Bible is the only authority in the world, then the Catholic Church with its pope and magistrate are no authority at all. This creates circular reasoning and other fallacies. The Canon of the Old Testament comprises of thirty-nine books and was closed during the Hasmonean dynasty roughly a hundred years Before Christ. There is usually different speculation about the specifics. In the first few centuries Anno Domini, there were a few Councils of Carthage as they tried to whittle down what would be accepted as permanent holy scripture. There wound up being twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

I was confirmed as a Catholic in 1995 because it made the most sense to me on paper. With that said, I've always given advice to people that logic on paper shouldn't be the sole deciding factor. If a church preaches about love, make sure they practice it. I went through the catechism and a lot of my questions were answered. Jesus said Peter would be the rock on which he builds his church. Catholics consider him to be the first pope. After Judas committed suicide, the Book of Acts says the disciples drew straws to determine who would replace him as the Twelfth Apostle. That slot was filled by Matthias. Every time an Apostle died, this tradition continued. Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. The second pope beame Linus followed by Clement. In catechism, I learned about the Seven Sacraments, Seven Deadly Sins, and Four Ordinal Virtues. I learned the difference between sins of commission and sins of ommision. I learned about the difference between mortal and venial sins. I was okay with the process. Dale had gone to Harvest with me in 1993 and he was at my confirmation in 1995.

In the autumn of 1995, I started my classes in Claremont. The week before, I went

to a Doobie Brothers/ Steve Miller concert with Dale and a few other friends. It was my first time taking psilocybin. What a wonderful experience! We were in the grass section of the Blockbuster Pavillion in Devore. This is where the 1983 US Festival was held. I could feel the crowd around me vibrate and move together like we were waves in a calm sea. I had astral images in my mind, and for a few seconds, I believed me and Dale were both Jesus Christ in two different bodies. I had never grown my facial hair out, but I had my first goatee going.

I have a degree in Communication Studies. I learned to pay attention to connotation, linguistics, and etymology of words. Most Republicans will say they believe in Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness because it's in the Declaration of Independence. But what is Liberty? "Liberty" comes from the Latin word "Libertas" concerning a Roman goddess. Old French "Liberte" describes free choice and free will. And what do we call the people who believe in and practice Liberty? Actually, they're called Liberals. It's all in the same boat. Liberty, liberation, and liberal all derive from the same idea.

I felt liberated in the mind as I began my stint at Pitzer College. I had challenged my previous association with churches I grew up with. I felt I was learning. I felt enlightened. Me and Dale were both entertaining Eastern philosophy and religion. This is something the Beatles did in the sixties. Much of Christian theology held three things to be simultaneously true: (1) Evil exists; (2) God is all loving; and (3) God is all powerful. This is a logical contradiction, though. Two of the three can be true, but not all three. So Dale continued along and got into Buddhism. Whatever I learned about the Triple Gem and the Eightfold Path, I first heard from him. He taught me about the difference between Theravadan and Mahayanan Buddhism. One is the greater vessel, and the other is the lesser vessel. They can get you to the same place, but with different means. Dale eventually moved to Brooklyn, started a successful YouTube channel, and interviewed Noam Chomsky.

In religion, theologies are considered transcendent or immanent. Islam is considered a radically transcendent religion. The deity, Allah, is distinguished as being fully apart from humanity. In most of Christianity, God is still transcendent, but not as much. You can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and he can interact in your life through prayer. Catholic theology is both transcendent and immanent. God is in Heaven as a transcendent deity, but he manifests himself into our bodies through the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. Hinduism is a purely immanent religion. There are millions of gods in a pantheon. The Universe is alive. These are things I'd discuss with Dale. I stuck with the Catholic Church largely for social and traditional reasons. As for my personal theology, I'm more influenced by Eastern ideas.

I started down a road where I was talking about my dad and how I felt wronged by him. I said he failed as a father and as a friend. I can't escape the reasons, though. I said that I saw people who are Republican or Protestant as being caught in a stage, or else in willful denial. I'm okay with most of my life. I went to Harvest up until 1993, I researched their teachings, then I left when I didn't agree with them. One of the things the pastor, Greg Laurie, used to preach during his sermons was, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven." He's quoting what Jesus said in Mathew 10: 32 - 33. It's a high-pressure system. Parishioners are asked to walk to the front near the stage. What I didn't know until later was that there are councilors seated among the regular people. They get up and walk to the front. It's social psychology. Once you see a few people move forward, you're not as afraid to move yourself. And Greg Laurie doesn't cite Mark 3: 28 - 29, "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter, but he who blasphemies against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation." If he gave a full picture, people might not be rash about making such major moves in their lives.

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*"Things could be so different now
It used to be so civilized
You will always wonder how
It could have been if you only lied ..."*
— *Policy of Truth*

*"Every time I hear
How you never want to live a lie
How it's gone too far
And you don't have to tell me why ..."*
— *I Keep Forgettin' by Michael McDonald*

It felt like manipulation. That's the bottom line. We can call the beginning of a religious journey a stage. I don't regret being part of any stage. I searched. I searched. Then I searched some more. I wanted truth. I wanted answers. Yes, I wanted love as well. But there were lies. There were falsehoods. At the point you

realize this is going on, you've reached a fork in the road. Do I stick around and live a lie? Or do I leave and find something better?

I've seen too many people see the lies then pretend they're not there. This isn't only religion. It happens way too often in politics. Netflix had a couple of great original shows which served as metaphors, *Don't Look Up* and *Bird Box*. In *Don't Look Up*, a comet is heading toward Earth and is set to destroy humanity. The politicians are saying "don't look up" though. It's a metaphor for the proverbial elephant in the room. To me, it's the mountain of lies we hear on a daily basis. One lie builds on another which builds on another. But I'm a conspiracy theorist, and I'm un-abashed about it! I get to have a good time writing fiction. I watch these absurdities on TV and I listen to them during podcasts. In *Bird Box*, the only people immune from whatever's out there driving people to instantly commit suicide are the crazy people and the blind people. I'm one of the crazy ones! As people watch in horror at our government and world collapsing, I'm almost amused... because we told you so! I've been on conspiracy forums for years. These things are not surprises to us!

The moral of the story here is that I believe in Santa Claus. I really do. I believe in the guy at the mall trying to give your kid a good memory by taking a picture with him. I just don't believe in Santa Claus the way I used to. I want to, though. I also want to believe our two-party system can be a beacon the world is proud of! I want to believe third-party candidates have a legit shot to win the presidency now and then. As I've said, there are three different main factions of the GOP. Military, religious, and economic. I was okay with the party before the mind-numbing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Osama bin Laden was set up as a patsy. Alex Jones and William Cooper both said it would happen before the attacks of Nine Eleven. And since we're not a theocracy, I'd feel more comfortable if politicians wouldn't muddle church and state. As for Democrats, I don't know that they exist any longer. I wrote about this to my sister Cindy. I believe Big Money killed them in the late nineties. It was a modern version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The TV series *BrainDead* with Mary Elizabeth Winstead spoke to it well in comedic form. Democrats have become controlled opposition, in many ways. The ones at the top are bought and turned into puppets for treacherous people lurking in the shadows.

I included the Oingo Boingo lyric from "Insanity" for a reason. This is vital. I still want to wrap up my part about Rábano because it ties in. My dad wanted me to grow up to be Dan Quayle. I used to be clean cut. I liked going to Protestant churches. I thought Republicans were cool. My dad had a stage where he had Clinton/ Gore political pins in the Barn, but there was a family intervention in

May of 1998. He disavowed the left and became a talking head part of the Fox News echo chamber. Bottom line was that I was independent. I do my own research. Sometimes I wind up on the left, and sometimes on the right. There's a Native American proverb, "What I told you that the left wing and the right wing are part of the same bird?" Over the years, I've felt it over and over from different people. I often saw my dad as a dweeb. I see many conservatives as dweebs. I was a dweeb. That's what conservatives do. *They conserve*. They don't act on their impulses as much. That's what liberated people do. *That's what liberals do*.

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*"Well I wasted all my tears
Wasted all those years
And nothing had the chance to be good
'Cause nothing ever could, oh yeah ..."*
— *Holding Back the Years*

*"You can use your illusion
Let it take you where it may
We live and learn and then
Sometimes it's best to walk away ..."*
— *Locomotive*

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I last saw Rábano this past April at a Pizza Hut in Fontana on the night of the NFL draft. Things seemed to go okay with Rábano, but it's worth talking about. You see? There was no argument, and there was no anger. Often, after watching a football game, we'd go outside and smoke cigars. After the draft, it was no different. My uncle Rudy had recently passed away and his funeral was coming up. While outside smoking cigars, we discussed politics, family, and life in general. The last time I had seen him was during the Super Bowl between the Chiefs and Eagles. We talked about how Donald Trump recently got indicted and had a few more indictments coming. His mother was a huge Trump fan. We talked about my uncle passing away. I told him I hadn't talked to anyone on my dad's side of the family since we had our falling out when I took off to live in Seattle. We talked about his job status. The place where he worked as a truck salesman closed down so he was doing hard manual labor again. My uncle's funeral was coming on Cinco de Mayo. I didn't go. Four days later was my birthday. I didn't hear from Rábano. He's usually one of the more reliable people with a "happy birthday" but not a peep. I had texted him about watching a Laker

playoff game before this, but no response. I learned the term “ghosting” this year. It’s when someone starts to completely ignore you on social media or through texting. During the Super Bowl, Rábano’s wife said she believed Jake and Vera were ghosting them. Then around my birthday, I thought it might be happening to me.

I’m not upset no matter the circumstance. Everything has a shelf life. We ride along on this bus of life. Sometimes we get off at different stops. Since it was an unusual circumstance, I considered four possibilities. (1) It was something I said about Donald Trump. I voted for him in 2016 but I didn’t support the crazy shit that went down after the election of 2020. I’m a logos guy in regards to my national politics. I don’t need it to be a soap opera. I believe the people who still support Trump are ethos and/ or pathos people. (2) Maybe it was something I said about his mom. (3) Maybe it was because I no longer saw hope in having positive relations with my dad’s side of the family. In business, they say to cut your losses. When Rábano came to America, he didn’t have much family here. My dad’s side of the family were surrogates, in ways. If he chose them over me, I’m okay with it, but we’ll probably never talk again. In *Cretins*, I wrote about social pariahs. These people can’t leave well enough alone. It’s not enough to have a personal feud with someone. They need it to spill over to other people. Huey was like this. He paid rent to live at my house then one day he was buying stereo equipment for his truck instead of paying bills. This was not long before our house was foreclosed on. It’s more complicated, but this is a nutshell. The problem with Huey is I noticed a pattern. People who got along with me well before we had a falling out started giving me shade after they started mingling with him. Life isn’t fair, and I’m okay that life isn’t fair. I hosted a lot of parties and was good to as many people as I knew how. After the house was gone, it was bound to be that some relationships fell apart. It didn’t have to be so bad, though. I thought my dad might be in the same camp as Huey. Rábano wasn’t going to be mad at me unless my dad was. I could feel some of it on the day of the Super Bowl from his wife, Gale. Usually, she’s good to me. She asked how my dad was doing. I figured Rábano would’ve told her we hadn’t spoken in a few years. But I felt like they gave me the cold shoulder for a little while, probably having to do with him. But I’m okay with this. I saw Huey as a pariah so I didn’t just cut him out of my life. I cut out the fence sitters who seemed to be turning sour. It’s not ideal, but it happens.

(4) I considered Rábano might just be going through bad times. Like I said, he’s changed his job. So I apologize. If that’s the reason for the apparent ghosting, I apologize. I plan to send this to Jake, Rábano, and other family members and friends. It doesn’t matter the status of our relationships. I want to tell my story. I

want to be understood as much as possible. If we still go our own ways, so be it. I'm a believer in fate. If it makes our relationships better, then fuck yeah.

Either way, it's out of my control.

Remember there was a pop quiz at the beginning of this book? There were ten people you were asked if you could identify in the first few pages. Well, here are the answers! Let me know how you did!

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- 1) *Stanley Meyer — inventor of a water-powered engine, died mysterious death*
- 2) *Giorgio Tsoukalos — believer in UFOs, featured on History Channel*
- 3) *Rachel Corrie — while protesting Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, she was deliberately bulldozed to death*
- 4) *Judy Wood — PhD in mechanical engineering, expert on Directed Energy Weapons*
- 5) *Greg Palast — author of Best Democracy Money Can Buy*
- 6) *Athan Gibbs — black inventor of electronic voting machine which provided paper trail receipts, died mysterious death*
- 7) *Barry Jennings — last man out of World Trade Center 7, died mysterious death right before he was set to testify about witnessing mass casualties in building lobby*
- 8) *Edna Cintron — last seen standing in an open hole in the wall of the 93rd floor of the North Tower*
- 9) *Seth MacFarlane — creator of Family Guy, was supposed to board American Airlines Flight 11 along with Michael Jackson and Mark Wahlberg on September 11, 2001*
- 10) *John Hanson — black man, first president of the United States in 1781 under the Articles of Confederation*

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Today is Labor Day. It's 2023, a Monday of course. I had a good day writing and compiling this book. I finished the Vegas Portion today. It's not as long as I wanted it to be, but I'm still satisfied. I plan to cut this part, Rod, short as well. The last part, Blunder, is only a few pages from being thoroughly complete. I picked Labor Day as my cut off day, though. I'm fine with what I have. I really feel that if I wrote another hundred pages total, there would be more to tell. I have to be happy with what I've got. With that said, I have more inserts. They won't take long to throw in. I just won't be able to talk for too long about whatever

context brought them about. Hopefully, the inserts will do the talking for themselves.

This first insert is a blurb I wrote for my book, *Cretins*, when I uploaded it to Lulu. I know it sounds strange, but there were times I believed Donald Trump read this blurb and it inspired him to rile the crowd in Washington, DC on January 6, 2021...

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The dumbing down of America was not accidental. There are ruthless, power-hungry people making it happen. Let's consider how it is that we may catch wild pigs in the woods. You provide them with free corn to feed on. They become addicted to the food source. One day, you put up one side of a fence. They continue to come back for the corn. Another day, you put up another side. They still come back. You put up the third side then one with a gate which they learn to use. Finally, when the herd of pigs is feeding, you close the gate behind them. This is how we were caught as a society. We had free TV and cheap things. We have more gadgets than we need. Roman poet, Juvenal, once said, "Give them bread and a circus and they will never revolt." That's as true to our world today as it was when gladiators fought each other to the death in the Colosseum of Rome. Today's Westerner has lost its fight. Crappy things happen in our economy and in our government and no one fights. When they do, they are subdued, ridiculed and scoffed at. It isn't over, though. There are stragglers. There are people left who have nothing else to do except to fight the power. Cretins is a story about mass citizens beaten down by the Establishment. It's a story about guys and girls whom have become so zombified that they don't realize they've been duped and screwed. It's a story of hope, but not very much. The Establishment attained their power for a reason. It was no accident. They don't plan to give any of their power back but, then again, they can't stop every person every place every time from experiencing true liberation. Not everyone was built to merely subsist. Some people were born to thrive even if it wasn't drawn up in the original plans ...

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There's a thin chance the following section concludes *Rod* for good. It definitely will conclude it for the night. It's Labor Day, like I said. It's my self-imposed deadline. I'm fifty-two now and I've known Jake since I was ten. We've had good times, and bad. One of our favorite bands was Oingo Boingo. This last segment will consist of ...

— a lyric from "Where Do All My Friends Go"

— a text I wrote to Jake when I got to Seattle
— a text I wrote to Jake when I lived in Las Vegas

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*“When lightning strikes and we are sleeping
Tell me where my friends go
When everyone around is dreaming
Tell me where my friends go
When children aren’t children no more
Tell me where my friends go
When parents aren’t behind the door
Tell me where my friends go
When football’s over and the beer’s gone
Tell me where my friends go
When TV set no longer turns on
Tell me where my friends go ...”
— Oingo Boingo*

(text I wrote from Seattle, autumn of 2019)

*Hey Jake,
How ya' doing? Haven't heard from you since Thanksgiving. Today is Rábano's b-day, just in case you didn't know. And? The Bears play the Cowboys!!! Thursday Night Football. Here's a clip from Saturday Night Live. I think you liked this one.*

Life is going great, but when ya' dive into something like this, there are scary moments. It's this puzzle:

- 1. I don't have an established residence here, so some employers shy from hiring me.*
- 2. And if I don't get hired, how can I get a residence?*

The answer? First of all, somebody's gotta take a chance and bend a rule or two. Second, I had to sell the Lexus.

Carmax cut me a check for \$11,000. I deposited it into my bank Monday night. Gave me breathing room. Yesterday, I bought a 2003 Honda Odyssey. Lots of room to put all the stuff I brought. I stay at a hotel 1 1/2 hours from Seattle. Quaint. Costs \$30 per night. Affordable.

I'm headed to the Kit Carson Cafe across the street. It'll be my first time there. Then I'll head back here to my hotel room. I'll watch Dallas vs Chicago. It would be nice to hear from you.

The plan was to start a job at a Target warehouse tomorrow making \$16.50 & working 72 hrs/ week. Talked to the agency today. Background check hasn't come back. Next orientation is next Friday, but I won't hold my breath and wait. First, I'm moving out of the hotel & getting a place of my own. Second, I was offered an \$18 job by a different agency. I'll look into that.

The road was bumpy here & there but I think I'm gonna make it

(text I wrote from Las Vegas in spring of 2021)

I had a blast last weekend for my 50th birthday. Ten family members came & visited. We went to old Vegas, then Circus Circus (because there were a few kids). We visited the new Raider stadium. That was great! My niece spent the night at my place with the father of her kid. I told them in some ways, I haven't ever felt better in life.

Towns like this have problems. When I lived in Hollywood, it was the same. There's a give and take. The highs are higher than in the suburbs, but there's more desperation. More down and out people. I knew that when I came.

I'm sharing a couple of screen shots from sisters Marcia and Cindy. Both tried to warn me against "thugs" that took over Vegas. But that's why I left Fontana, or at least a big reason. My place got broken in to and my computers were stolen two Memorial Days ago. This "thug" thing had been going around. My very first experience coming into Nevada at Primm was getting my gas cap stolen, yes. It cost \$15 to replace. It set a tone, but you know me. I'm gonna see it as "glass half full". Remember "hell week" at Fontana High? We carried 90+ players on our football team, but the hardest part was trying out. It's like hazing. Did I think shit would keep hitting the fan? Yes, I thought it was really possible, but it's been feel-good ever since. I like my job, I like my apartment, I like the inexpensive steaks I've eaten at local casinos, and surprisingly, the weather has been good.

I hope you're doing well. I know you know I wanted to move to Vegas a few years ago. Then that shooting happened and I changed my mind. I put it on the backburner, but I love it here. I like it more than Seattle. I'm almost ashamed to say it, but it's true. It's not entirely fair because Covid broke out not long after I moved to Seattle, but I like being here ...

I made this video a little ago with you in mind more than my sisters. Yeah, I learned I like to do "the good, the bad, and the ugly". Kurt Cobain said something that stuck with me: "I'd rather be hated for who I am than loved for what I'm not." Something along those lines. So, now that the internet is here, rumors are different. The grapevine is different. It's light speed, and it travels all directions at once. So I slept in my van a few times to save money from staying at hotels. And I was up front. Then I learned my niece, Ann, had to sleep in Wal Mart parking lots a few times. I don't learn that unless I'm honest and real about the tough times. But why should I lie? It was worse living in a camper all those years on Oleander and Santa Ana. I'm proud I got through. Boingo had an album, Dark At The End of The Tunnel. I thought about that for many years. But, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." I'm glad I got to Vegas but I didn't know it would take so long.

And not mentioning names? These videos are instantly accessible to India, China, Zimbabwe, Brazil, New Zealand and the rest of the world. So people, not necessarily you, don't want their names mentioned in videos. As a rule (if you notice), I don't film people without their permission, and I don't mention names. It's for the shy people, more than anything else, but it avoids hassles sometimes ...

Yeah, still in Vegas. Not such a bad town to live in. Not necessarily what I thought it'd be like. Feels like Cucamonga about 95% of the time. Very routine Monday through Friday and the casinos are tuned out most the time.

Watching basketball most the weekend, but I just got back from grocery shopping. Surprised to see Memphis beating Utah. Lakers lost earlier. It passes time to watch the games. It was great to see my family a couple of weeks ago for my birthday. They want me to go to Cali next weekend for a nephew's graduation, but I told them most likely not. Maybe 4th of July, maybe start of football season.

Utah down by 3 w- 30 sec

I write fiction for a reason. Yes, I like it as a hobby and I was influenced by Stephen King. But it's a way to deal with life without being traumatized by bullshit. You can tell people what happned in life without re-hashing specifics.

Bad experiences can fade. Just to hit the tip of the ice berg, losing the Oleander house in '95 derailed a lot of my plans. I was doing good, but that's okay. I worked hard to steady the ship, and I worked hard to regain a path I thought I was supposed to be on.

The best way I can explain it is a typical Blacklist episode. You have Liz, Red & the gang planning a certain thing to overcome an enemy's plot. A, B and C are supposed to happen so they can achieve results X, Y and Z. But it NEVER, ever, ever goes as planned. Something unexpected happens so A, B, C are thrown out the window and D, E, F are improvised.

I thought of something before Tom Brady went to Tampa Bay and said something similar to what I was thinking. He said something about being on the "last hole" in a golf analogy. I've been thinking of something similar to this leading up to middle age. I remember golfing with Tom Lynn and we'd drink a few beers while on the front nine. What was my mind on? Actually, the back nine. And life is similar. Once we get to the back nine, now I'm thinking about drink specials at TGIF. I'm thinking about appetizers and Monday Night Football.

So we spend the first half of our life trying to gain friends, connections and opportunities. The back half? Me personally, I'm shedding a lot of people, places and things. My dad's a perfect example. He never realized not to yell at me for something I have no control over. There's a very, very great chance I never talk to him ever again.

Lots of negative things I've left behind. I describe the circumstances in Kiribati and Cretins through the characters Donovan Cobb and Preston Bancroft. For example, one of my pet peeves is people who use "wigger/ innuendo" language. What am I talking about? A guy I knew in college was balding early, similar to Jeb Chadwick. We used to meet up in ecology meetings and there was someone else who didn't like him. Instead of saying, "Shut up, Baldy", this guy would speak in entendres by using trigger words. Sarcastically, he'd say we should hike at Mt Baldy and it would piss the other guy off. Remember Austin Powers when Fred Savage had the big mole on his face? Austin Powers over-emphasized guaca-MOLE-ee?

Anyhow, I'm fine. Your dad said he'd buy you a 4x4. I remember it bothered you when it didn't happen. I had millionaire godparents and they seemed to like me when I was a young, cute kid. But, as an adult, I felt let down and it wasn't only the money. I felt treated like a second-class person on that side of the family so I realized I ought to change directions. I feel great about my life in many ways. It's

like the Blacklist episodes where you prepare for A, B, C but D, E, F happen. I have a handful of great, great relationships. My relationships with my three sisters are stronger since I took off to Seattle. When I created a new Facebook profile, I didn't add anyone from my dad's side. Does it matter? Some of these people I actually like, but the relationships are tainted and compromised. We're on the back nine, in the golf analogy. I'm not thinking about another round of golf. I'm thinking about a margarita during happy hour at TGIF. Some people in my life, I talk to on a daily or weekly basis. Some? I'll only see them once a year either at Thanksgiving or Christmas. Others? I'll never see again and I'm fine with it. Lots of bullshit happened in life and "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger". I haven't felt better in years. Do I wish I had my Lexus? Of course. Do I wish I didn't have to sleep in my van? Actually, no! I liked it! For a short period, I liked it! As long as it wasn't permanent. But I'll land on my feet! I'm doing good! When you mentioned about "going negative", that shipped sailed a long time ago! We lost our house from a bad business decision by my dad a long, long time ago. If it weren't for that, I would've been self-sufficient years ago. Instead, I stuck with college which kept me in a financial hole longer than I wanted, but I don't regret getting an education. After all this, I have a place of my own and I like it. I wish I would've had a better relationship with my dad, but it wasn't meant to be. As far as you "not being here" as I made my way to Vegas, it wasn't meant to happen. This was planned, but in a vague way. Lot of improv decisions made in the spur of the moment. For example, I got here on a weekend when the cheapest room through Trivago was \$150 per night. If I waited until Monday, it was down to \$40. So I slept in my van in a dry lake where others were camped. Saved a lot of money. If we were still sixteen, maybe the spontinaity would've been cool, but at this age it doesn't work the same ...

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Thank you guys for being there for me! It's been a roller coaster at times. I fought to have the best life I knew how to have. I fell short of my goals, but most of us do. The main part is I'm satisfied in this moment. There were years where I thought I would never be happy again. Bullshit came at me from all directions. I did the best I could and it took years, but I now have stretches where I'm content. The Beatles sang "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" but I can't resist at this moment. I'm thinking about past memories. Not everything was bad. I'm thinking about friends from years ago, especially our favorite friend, Vinny. I hope he's looking down at us from Heaven right now.

I dedicate this last lyric to him...

*“I’ll send the message in the bottle
Pray for the mercy of the sea
Stormy weather, oh yeah
Waiting for love to rescue me
Feels so good, feels so nice
When love comes around ...”*

— Van Halen