

He was never supposed to survive — not his childhood, not high school, not the seizures nor the surgery, not the moments when reality itself blurred at the edges. His life, he had to learn the unspoken world: its language, its logic, its rules. Many times he collapsed from broken wiring, shattered memories, a fractured soul and a body that seemed determined to fail.

But he didn't fail.
He adapted.
He endured.

And somewhere between the breaking of his mind and the shadows of his past... something awakened after being forced into a deeper evolution instead of death.

This is the true story of how total continuous failure became complete success.

By a man shaped by suffering, betrayal, abandonment, and brushes with death so close they left scars on his soul.

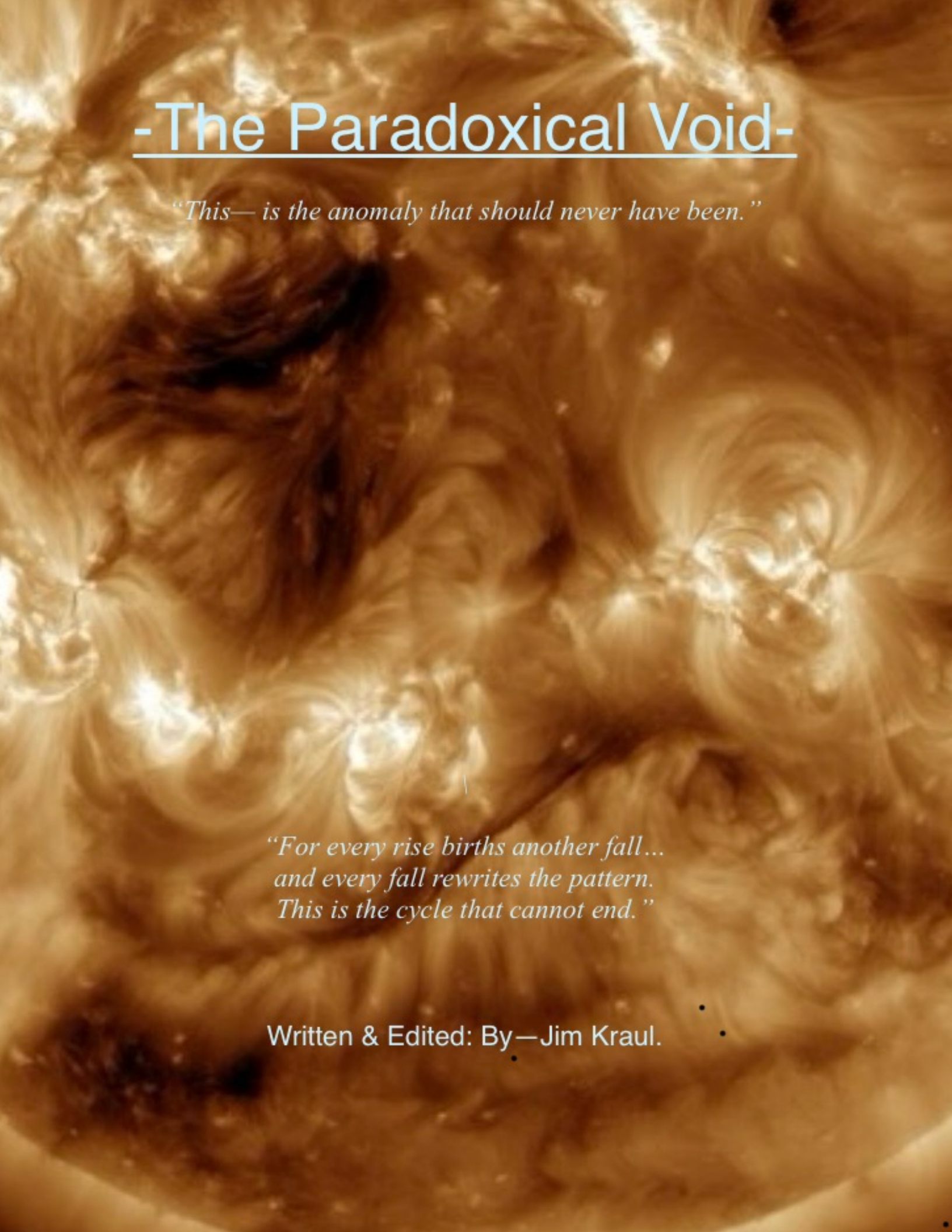
What happens when the darkness doesn't kill you, —because it wants to teach you..?

What happens when the mind that should have broken found a key to unraveling something some humans will never understand?

If death is afraid to claim you... what keeps you alive?

The Paradoxical Void is a haunting, gripping, mind-bending journey into trauma, survival, and the thin boundary between reality and the unknown.

It's the anomaly that should never have existed — yet here it is.
And now, so are you.



-The Paradoxical Void-

"This— is the anomaly that should never have been."

*"For every rise births another fall...
and every fall rewrites the pattern.
This is the cycle that cannot end."*

Written & Edited: By—Jim Kraul.

There are pieces of our past that never quite fade — they just settle quietly in the corners of who we become. What follows isn't a callout or confession meant to reopen wounds; it's a whisper to the echoes of my own history.

Every story here is drawn from memory — my perspective, my heart, my healing. I've left out names and details not out of shame, but out of respect for the lives that have grown beyond those moments.

If by chance the people woven into these memories ever find their way to these words, know this: I carry no anger. Only gratitude, forgiveness, and the hope that peace found you too.

"I have endured countless trials..."

To my very first love: your admission of betrayal on my 16th birthday helped shape me through chaos into the man I am now. Thank you for that, and know that I still forgive you.

To those who might recognize yourselves, I'm sorry for the walls I built and any pain I caused along the way. — My "first" girlfriend of five months told me on my 16th birthday that she was pregnant with someone else's child. The very next girlfriend, who I also was with for five months, repeated a similar betrayal on my 17th birthday, though she wasn't pregnant. Those experiences left deep scars and shaped how I approached relationships.

I also had learned from my parents experience—my father's infidelity devastated my mother and upended our lives—that I swore to myself I never wanted to hurt anyone that way. Yet, I was always on guard, expecting chaos based on what I'd been through. When I saw signs of what I thought was trouble, I'd withdraw, shaped by those early traumatic lessons.

To the two women I wronged:

To the first, thank you for saving my life, though you may not realize-it. — I never cheated on you with another person while I believed we were together. Instead, I struggled with a substance, introduced by someone I thought was a positive male role model, that led me into a dark place. I'm still truly sorry for how I was to you.

To the second, Once I was "diagnosed" with epilepsy, I didn't know the medications clouded my mind and kept me from being my true self. I didn't realize then that my experiences weren't "normal." I kept my struggles private, not understanding how much they affected me. I apologize for letting those medications I was on cloud: my mind, my actions, my judgement, making me not me, and allowing my trust issues and fears, rooted in past betrayals to affect our relationship.

Those two women in my life whose names I cannot publicly share, but we were together at the turn of the years 2003 - 04 and 2008–09. I'm sorry this apology is late. After what I believe was an 18-year medical misdiagnosis, I've finally woken up. I checked and from social media posts I see you both living your lives, seemingly happy and committed, so I won't reach out directly and risk causing trouble. Instead, I'm leaving this here for you to find if you're curious. I'm truly sorry, again.

- Legal Warnings and Disclaimers-

(Yep, It just got real...)

This work is presented as a creative nonfiction - a dramatized memoir inspired by true experiences of someone with an incredible ability to recall. All events are described as

I received them, certain names and locations have been altered to protect privacy. Interpretations are my own, "A portrayal of what I remember from the years, and may —not reflect others memories or interpretations."

"Dates of these events are authentic and accurate."

"This story includes dark and potentially disturbing situations and images, such as emotionally dark artwork, near-death experiences, narcotic use, medical procedures, police brutality, victimized bullying and attempted suicide, told from the perspective of someone with an exceptional memory. If you are sensitive, please be advised—it can be graphic."

"I survived.....

And I've seen hell;—you better be strong enough to read this."

-Before we start, y'all, please know that I had to relearn most of the written English language at age 27. Writing this was a huge challenge for me, and I did the best I could without causing myself intracranial hemorrhaging 😂.

This is just some of what I've been through. A lot has gone around about "who I am," and it's time to unguard the Enigma.

-Maybe others out there will be able to see.

While now knowing they're not alone, even when it feels like they are.

My whole life, I was misunderstood, like a paradox... No one would believe me. Some of y'all thought so negatively without even listening. You heard me, but didn't really listen, and when I spoke up, I was crucified, told I was wrong, and called a story-maker. Imagine going through life knowing you know, but always having people — including very close ones in your life — tell you it's different, or say, "You can't possibly remember like that; —you're lying!"

-This is why I'm the way I am.-

(First off: We're fairly positive I have this or a mild form of it. Not a simple thing to diagnose.)

What is: "Hyperthymesia" also known as Highly Superior Autobiographical Memory (HSAM), is a rare condition that allows people to recall almost every event in their lives with exceptional detail. Individuals with hyperthymesia can often remember specific dates, events, conversations, and even their emotions from decades ago.

"What most people forget remains etched in their minds as if frozen in time. For them, every moment is perfectly stored, which can often bring back painful or traumatic experiences with haunting frequency, leading to mental strain. For someone with Hyperthymesia, forgetting becomes nearly impossible. Everything is so vivid and clear, it's as if it just happened yesterday."

(Unknown Author)

Welcome to my void.

-I've been told I can "overwhelm people with information," so here's the short version...

I was a surprise baby. —My mother named me in honor of "Saint James." She never clarified between "The Greater or The Lesser" though... But she always smirked when the Greater was mentioned.

These early years shaped how I saw the world, they will seem a little dull and boring but they are my foundation (every story has its needed boring build, and that's my opinion to my childhood). I learned to think that being bullied by adults was normal, that having an absent parent was just part of life, and that speaking up only made things worse. Over time, I started to believe it was easier to stay separate.

(There's no memory of these events I had when I was younger, only what my mother told me): At six months old, I suffered a severe reaction to a now-banned version of the pertussis vaccine. I was told I had a low grade fever and made a continuous "high pitched wine" for almost 12 hours. By age three, doctors discovered I had chronic fluid in my ears, causing me to hear everything as though I were underwater.

Between the ages of five and seven, I have only short, photographic, emotionally charged memories. Early on, I was diagnosed with a reading comprehension and speech disability and placed in special education classes, which of course led to bullying. Also much of my early childhood was spent in hospitals, battling severe allergies to bees, fire ants, and similar insects — I had to go through skin testing many times, where they would grid my back, and do at least 20 or more needle pokes for testing. It felt like torture for me, screaming with fear in anticipation of the coming pain.) These allergies also nearly killed me more than once (anaphylaxis).

I have two character-building memories from those years I'll share.

One of them was during my time in Cub Scouts. My dad had to cancel our camping trip at the last minute because of a job interview. “The job was important and needed” but that meant I had to go on the camping trip by myself, with my friend and his dad instead.

I learned early on what it felt like to be a third wheel. In Cub Scouts, you had to have adult supervision for most activities, especially camping. One of my strongest memories from that time was the Pinewood Derby. I wasn’t allowed to carve my car because all the adults were busy helping their own kids. Still, I managed to put mine together, hoping I could at least race it.

So there I was—five years old, overwhelmed and on my own in a group of maybe fifty kids and their dads. Nervous but determined, I decided to walk up and register my car. The man behind the desk greeted me kindly and asked where my dad was. “I told him, simply, “My dad’s not here.”

He hesitated for a moment, then said the words that stuck with me: “You can’t race without a dad.”

So I moved on, found a good position near the track, holding my uncarved pinewood derby car. While standing alone I remember watching, mesmerized by the vibe, the aura of the environment, every kid was happy with their dad by their side.

I never got to race my car. I just stood there feeling the sting of something I didn’t have a name for yet. Disappointment, maybe. Loneliness. Or just the quiet realization that life sometimes draws lines you can’t cross without someone beside you.

It bothered me back then, but I didn’t say anything. Because i thought this was normal. I just slipped it into the background, pretending it didn’t matter. From that young age, I learned to “go along for the ride.” That even if you couldn’t participate, it was fun to be present in the vibe.

“Then about age six.

It was just another day playing outside, trying to be a kid, when a droopy red wasp landed on my left wrist. Before I could even panic, its stinger hit me. Oh no... These always ended badly for me. As fear set in, I was already sprinting to the back door, screaming for my mom, she met me there as I clutched my wrist, which was already swelling. “I got stung — it was a wasp!” I yelled.”

“By the time my mother grabbed her things and we made it to the car, the hive on my wrist had spread all the way to my elbow. As we drove, I noticed it had reached my shoulder — and that’s the last thing I remember from that car trip. (My mother later told me I lost consciousness. She had to carry me into the hospital like a rag doll, screaming, “He’s allergic! He’s been stung!” as the story goes.)”

“Somehow, I didn’t die that day. My next memory was opening my eyes to a classic hospital view from the bed — four people hovered over me. When the vision started, their faces were filled with panic and unrest, but as my eyes opened fully, those expressions shifted to relief and happiness. That was my first memory of meeting death — just a prequel to how many times we would cross paths in my life.”

—This happened a lot. Not always a full “rag doll scenario,” but I took plenty of hits from EpiPens growing up. That surge of adrenaline is an insane rush — a feeling I’ll never forget.

By now I can pretty much tell you what I did any day, of any month, of any year. These are just some examples of what my life is really like—not a “paid vacation” or a life you’d want to swap yours for, by any means. I just hold my head high, reminding myself,
—“This is normal for me...”

Very early on in life, around first grade, I vividly remember an event that stuck with me. I had just witnessed something fascinating happen to a bug I was watching. I was so thrilled by what I saw that I couldn't wait to tell the other boy in the house — my dad about it.

Over dinner, I excitedly told him what I thought was a perfect description of what had happened. He just looked at me and said I had a great imagination, adding that he didn't know how I was able to make things up like that. I told him it was true, but I could immediately sense his disbelief as he continued eating dinner.

That sort of thing happened a lot early in my life with many people, so eventually, I just stopped sharing — since disbelief always seemed to follow so quickly.

Life and the world seemed “okay,” at least that's the word I'd use now. I was still just a kid. Then, halfway through second grade, we moved to Florida. I started at a new school and, surprisingly, fit in pretty quickly. I made friends, and for a while, things felt normal — stable even.

I do have a very stern memory of my dad telling me “If they can do it, so can you.” Which would stick with me through life in a horrible way at first.

But as the next year came around, my father began to disappear. Well he really wasn't there, he was already always working but now his presence physically started to vanish. He started working longer — coding harder — hidden away behind glowing screens and closed doors. So much so that, both my sister and I had friends whose parents actually asked my mom if our father was real. These parents didn't even know each other, but both probably thought we had made my dad up just to fit in or be accepted.

What followed hit hard. When fourth grade started, my mother began pushing to get me into a private Catholic school before fifth grade — saying it was my best chance. Every teacher, especially my special ed instructors, warned her against it. The school didn't even have a program for kids like me. But my mother insisted, and so... it happened.

I was upset — I just lost getting to see my daily school friends, and it felt like — punishment for no reason. My mother tried to encourage me, saying I'd make new ones at my new school. Well... my new 4th -grade teacher bullied me, even getting the class in on it. "Look, kids, he doesn't know Spanish! Everyone point and laugh and tell him he's not going to make it!" (Yeah, that — and more really happened. But I thought it was normal.)

And so: That was my first real outcasting in life — and not the last time I'd feel it.

I lasted only nine weeks before I was pulled out and sent back to my public school. By then, the damage was done. I'd done every school day alone, on my own. My routine and any sense of safety got lost, almost left behind.

That Catholic school was a nightmare — cruel, cold, and suffocating to my soul.

Later, I learned the entire staff — teachers and administrators alike — had been fired after serious complaints. But by then, I was long gone, the trauma had been done... and I was still trying to convince my parents to believe what all I had lived through.

During this time, there was so much yelling — it was terrifying. Even though "it took an adult sixty-three walking steps to get from the kids' wing of the house to the master bedroom," the twenty-five-foot-high ceilings did nothing to muffle the hate and anger flowing through the house. It was like an electrical current pulsed with every word — every hate-filled spark of defiance in a response. No one ever talked to

me about it. I thought everybody went through these things, just... not to talk about them.

With my thoughts over time, I started thinking that my own voice wasn't welcome. Any time I tried to explain what I felt or even clarify what just happened, I was either cut off — and dismissed mid-sentence like my words didn't matter, or given a false reassurance that "it would be okay" just so the conversation could end without getting heard or helped. It happened so often that I eventually stopped trying altogether. I buried what was happening inside me because I was terrified I'd speak at the wrong moment.

Then everything flipped, twisted, and turned upside down. We moved again. I lost all my friends — again. And once more, my mother promised that it would be okay... that things would get better once we settled after the move.

We ended up back in Georgia, and my fifth-grade teacher bullied me. (She seemed to hate me. One of the many things that happened: She wrapped the corner of the room in tin foil and made me sit by the window where the sun came in. By the time I finally got someone to believe me, it was ninety-six degrees in that seat. I was sunburned and blinded from the reflection all day.) I was told things would get better when I reached middle school — and I wanted to believe that.

Sixth grade started, and I was fat, misunderstood, outcast, and bullied from day one. I was five-foot-two and two hundred pounds. They called me "Porky." That's when I started drinking and smoking — but it's also when I met my best friend, my "brother". Some of the things I would hear included remarks like, "You don't have an upper lip—you can't kiss, You're never going to get a girlfriend." Then there were others saying, "Ooo, lookie here—we've got a 'sped' in our presence." You know, things like that. But honestly, the verbal assaults were nothing compared to the bus ride.

My brother and I rode the bus together every morning, and one day he gave me some advice on how to deal with the bus bully. See, that was the thing — the second I

stepped onto that bus, I became his target. He was in eighth grade, bigger, louder, and meaner. Every morning he'd slide into my seat and unleash a storm of punches — my ribs, my back, my arms — anywhere the bruises could hide beneath my clothes.

So, I decided to take my friend's advice. But here's the funny part — I didn't really understand what he meant by "stand up for yourself and kick him out of your seat." I understood stand up for yourself, but the rest? Not so much.

That morning, I was ready. I knew the eighth grader would be coming down the aisle like always — hunched over, trying to stay out of the driver's line of sight. I'd already positioned myself perfectly, one foot cocked back, waiting for the moment.

When he lunged toward my seat, I let it fly. My "Spartan kick" hit his shoulder and rolled right into his face. I thought "Yes!" As he went sprawling into the aisle, arms flailing, before shouting for the bus driver that I had kicked him.

I got supervised suspension on the bus for a month where I had to sit in the front seat behind the driver. Honestly, that turned out to be a blessing in disguise. At least up front, I was safe from the bus bully — now I just had to face the ones waiting for me in class.

The bully left me with an interesting last memory, though. On the very last day of sixth grade, he slid into my seat again. As I watched him pull his right arm back, I braced myself, thinking he was about to hit me. But then, the unbelievable happened — he held out his hand, asking to shake mine, and said he was sorry for the year. I didn't really know how to react or even understand what had just taken place, but because of how my soul is, I said it was ok, and good luck in high school.

At the start of seventh grade, my new best friend was quickly placed in another school.

That's when I remember how sad I became. I actually started to miss the bully from the year before — at least someone had wanted to be near me, even if it was for all the wrong reasons. It sounds strange, but in a way, that chaos had still felt like company.

I almost wasn't able to join my brother at his new school. During that in-between time, I thought about leaving — about running away — because everything in my life just felt so broken.

By now, I was built on blind belief. I trusted the doctors because everyone said they knew what they were doing. I trusted the schools because I thought teachers cared about kids like me I just happened to encounter the “rare” bad ones. I trusted religion because I was told God was good — but if that was true, then why did the people in His name treat me like I didn't belong?

I honestly thought “following the good” meant life would be fair. That adults always knew best. That pain was just part of growing up. But through those years, every scream I had to hear, every quiet day by myself at home, the un-recognized abandonment started to chip away at that picture. I didn't see it clearly yet, but something deep down was breaking — something in me that still wanted to believe the world made sense. But something in me started to shift. I began questioning everything — the rules, the lessons, the things I was told were “bad.” I wanted to understand why things were the way they were, and who decided it had to be that way.

What I didn't know then was that I was standing on the edge of everything — and about to fall straight through it all.

The next chapter of my life would take me somewhere completely different — into a world of bad decisions, really scary times, and some good laughs and lessons I'd carry for the rest of my life.

Chapter Two

2001 — The first week of ninth grade.

I smoked weed for the first time in public with friends. It was supposed to be just a night of harmless fun. But it wasn't.

Looking back, that moment should've stood out like a warning sign — the kind that flashes red before everything spirals. But at the time, all I could feel was freedom....

-It's crazy because detailed flashbacks like this always randomly appear:

-“Oh man, this is going to be so much fun.” A group of us starts walking behind the old roller skating rink near Startime. I'm nervous — I've only smoked weed by myself before, never with people, never in public. As we all circle together, I've got the pipe — a classic old metal pipe, silver and blue, marijuana packed and ready to go.

We all started smoking, minutes later: I'm not really feeling anything, so I take a few heavy pulls from the pipe. I didn't understand yet that it can take a minute or five to kick in.

We finish up and start walking out from behind the building. As we head back toward Startime, the giggles start to kick in. We're all laughing and having a blast wandering through the parking lot when someone thinks it's a good idea to stop by the food court to grab something to eat and drink.

By the time I get to the food court, I realize I'm way too high — like, way too high. My friends notice, and I fill them in on just how messed up I am. We all sit down to chill for a while while they eat, hoping I'll come back down. But there's one little problem: I'm really high, and I'm not coming down. My friends want to go play in the arcade, so they ask "if I'll be alright?" I told them "yeah, I'm good," — and they took off with a stoned excitement in their faces.

Only minutes had passed and with cottonmouth now settling in. I made the decision to try going up to the counter for a refill, but the cute cashier I had just practiced all my lines for is gone — now it's some manager filling in. As I walk up, I try to ask for a "refill of Coke," but no words come out. I probably looked at him with the squintiest red eyes ever. I just pointed at the soda I wanted and handed him my cup. The manager filled it with a weird, suspicious look to him, and I headed back to my seat.

After sitting down, I noticed the manager walking out from behind the counter and straight up to two cops I hadn't even seen sitting there eating. My stomach

dropped. I knew exactly what was happening. I grabbed my stuff and went right out the side door — then jumped over the patio fence and took off around the complex.

I needed to reconnect with my group, but how? Oh, I know — I'll just go the long way around and come in through the back. So that's what I did. The back entrance opened right into the main hall of the arcade area. All I had to do was find my crew, and everything would be fine.

While walking, I saw a familiar face — the food court manager. He walked right up to me, put his arm out, spun me around, and said, "Hey, my friends need to speak with you." Then he called out, "Guys, over here!" I turned just in time to see two cops start hustling toward us.

Without even thinking, I threw my arms forward, shoved the manager flat on his ass, and took off running. I'm hearing the officers shouting for me to stop. —But I ran so hard, so fast — down the hall, to the stairs. As I hit the steps, I passed the local dealer doing his thing and yelled "Cops!" A mini madhouse broke out behind me. I kept running up another flight of stairs to reach the back parking lot.

I don't know what happened to anyone else in that stairwell, I bolted through the cut-through, crossing over to the far parking lot where I knew there was a graveyard. That's where I was going to hide. I made it and hid there for a few hours — scared out of my mind, trying to process everything.. My 15-year-old brain was racing:

What in the world just happened....

After everything finally settled down, I thought I had an incredible story to tell my girlfriend later — one wild, unforgettable memory. Which wouldn't be the last time I had a close call with the police.

Life was honestly pretty good for a while after that. —Things felt normal again, like I had purpose. — I had good friends, we were all having a lot of fun, and I had a wonderful girlfriend. We were planning things together, talking about the future — everything just felt right. (She was the second girl in my life. The first “real” girlfriend, — and one of three — of the first four girls I was with that carried the same name. One, Two and Four all have the same name...)

Then January 2002 came around, right on my birthday. My first real girlfriend. I had hope, and then it all just... changed. She took the Christmas gift I got her, didn't get me anything, blew me off on New Year's, and then disappeared. When I finally got her to pick up the phone, all she said was, “Jim, I'm pregnant. I'm sorry. I have to go.”

Click.

—That was the last time I ever heard her voice...

After that call, I was lost for some time. Confused. Empty. Days went by like static.

One night at StarTime, after asking my friends for advice and getting nowhere, I decided to talk to the local cop who watched over us — Officer Payne.

(Fitting name for a cop, right?)

I told him everything. Heartbroken and raw. He listened, then said something that stuck with me:

“Don't worry too much, son. If it was meant to be, it would've been meant to be.”

Then he smiled and said, “You should get a job. Meet new people.”

He looked around and added, “Looks like your group left you.”

I turned — my friends were already halfway through the parking lot. I thanked him and started to leave, but then he hollered at me.

“Hey... you wanna have a little fun?”

He waved me over. “Hop in my cruiser — let’s play a trick on your friends.”

He killed the lights and rolled forward in silence, stalking the group.

“When I give the signal,” he said, “we’ll both jump out and tell them to show their hands.”

And then — bam! — he hit the strobes, whooped the siren, and we both jumped out.

I was laughing so hard as he yelled, “Freeze! Hands where I can see ‘em!”

God, that moment... I needed it more than I realized.

Not long after, I took his advice. Got my first job working at a car wash after school. It was a nice, simple after-school job that closed every day by 6 p.m. There, I found structured guidance from my boss. I opened up to him about what had just happened, looking for direction, and he genuinely helped. Before I knew it, he was teaching me how to run every department—from sales and customer relations to detailing and delivering the finished product. Over that year, I was really learning how to run a business, and I started looking towards my boss as a role model.

Out of all of that one of the best things was the free carwash perks. It came in real handy later when I got another girlfriend for date nights.

I chuckle to myself as this memory pops in:

“OK, I’ll leave my car and ride with you, hunny,” I said as I jumped into my girlfriend’s black Mercedes. I honestly forget why we were leaving my car in the first place because the plans quickly changed. As we’re riding down the road, we passed her father’s car, and he called her. Next thing I knew, we were pulling over in some neighborhood, and my girlfriend got out of the car as her father’s black Mercedes pulled up nose to nose with ours.

All of three minutes pass before she comes back and tells me she has to go home and her dad is going to give me a ride back. I’m thinking to myself, “Sweet, I get to ride in the big body S 500. Ooo, this is going to be a smooth ride,” as I get in the shotgun seat.

Now, her father was a different type of man. Honestly, “Russian mob” is the first thing that comes to mind when seeing him. Huge man, like 6’6”, with a stern, strong look in his eyes that said he’s seen some shit in his life. Well, in today’s time, with today’s knowledge, I would know not to fuck with that kind of vibe. But we all gotta learn somewhere.

As we’re driving down the road heading back, her father asks me how the movie was that I took his daughter to see a few days before.

Folks, this is where you can’t be blinded by attraction and miss important vibes.

It turned out the movie we went to see was sold out, so I took her out to do what I did — street race.

So back to her father's question to me: "Yes sir, that movie was wonderful." Without a slant of hesitation, her father tells me, "That's a bullshit lie!"

Y'all... you do not know the vibe of fear I felt. And now it's quiet as he pulls out his phone and makes a call. "Yeah, yeah, you were right..." and he hung up. I'm thinking to myself, Who the fuck is he talking to? Who knew? What is—

That thought was interrupted as he told me to call my house and plan a ride. I told him my phone was back in my car—I forgot it. So he let me use his. When no one answered at the house for the second time, her father very sharply and fast pulled into a gas station, whipped it through the gas pumps, and into one of the front parking spots. I remember this huge "mob like man" telling me, "Here is one dollar to call your parents. Now get out of my car!"

You better believe me—I was out of that car fast, and he was even faster in reverse leaving.

I'm now 16 years old, with one American dollar on me. No credit, no smartphones yet, no phone in general. That day was a long, almost 10-mile walk to get home. Crazy thing is, I really liked that girlfriend. So I went back, apologized like a man, and asked if I could be forgiven and still date his daughter.

And he let me.

The way of life this girlfriend lived by at the time is a way I can't surrender to.

I experienced some very lavish things while being in a relationship with her—from the most upscale restaurants in Atlanta like Bones and Chops, to box seats at the 2002 Final Four game. When dinners cost \$50 a plate, and you need accessories for your clothing attire to attend. It'll open your eyes. But I really liked her, so I went along with the discomfort of the luxury life just for her company.

One night, after leaving her place, I lost control of my car, hydroplaned, and slammed into a tree. It was a close call... The officer who showed up told me straight out: "If you'd hit the driver's door, you wouldn't be standing here."

I still drove the wreck to the repair shop the next day, so many people just staring at me while driving. It sounds crazy now, but at the time it just felt like another day in my life — the chaos and aftermath was normal to me.

(My shiny wrecked car...👉)



What wasn't normal was how much it shook my mom. She was terrified enough that she enrolled me in a Defensive Driving School. And this wasn't some basic local class. They trained us using European performance cars, both manual and automatic. Some of the things we practiced on the inner track were— learning high-speed dry controlled spin-outs, high-speed hydroplaning, and high speed lane splitting. Plus a lot more all this happening while another full-blown racing school was running laps around the outer track.

The sounds, the G-Force.

It was intense. It was pure adrenaline. And somewhere in the middle of this controlled chaos, and some uncontrolled crashes and near-misses from others, something clicked in me. That was the day my passion for driving — “real driving” — locked onto my soul. Looking back now, this moment explains a lot about who I became, and how I was able to pull some things off later in my life.

Then, in January of 2003, my girlfriend of five months told me she had cheated on me— on my 17th birthday. After that, I honestly started thinking birthdays with girlfriends were more like a setup for an upcoming problem than a celebration.

By now, I just wanted to be away and distant from it all. I was no longer out searching for a woman—I just wanted to be me. No more pain, because all I had seen so far was a disturbing pattern starting to arise.

-Warning / Disclosure:

The pages that follow are not a guide, a how-to, or an invitation. They are a memory — raw, and real. What you are about to read is a journey through choices that nearly destroyed me, a path lined with drugs, danger, and darkness.

I survived, but not everyone does. What seems thrilling on these pages is often deadly in the real world. Every hit, every run, every “just this once” is a step closer to a bottom that doesn’t let you climb back.

This is a story. A caution. A window into dark chaos that isn’t glamorous, no matter how cinematic it feels. If you’ve been here before, tread lightly. If you haven’t, know this: curiosity without caution can and will be lethal, with all topics discussed.

—You are not me. These choices were mine — and mine alone.

To the woman who saved my life:

If you decide to read this, please go slowly. Do it in a space where you feel steady and supported — what follows can be heavy. Take care of yourself.

Come summer of 2003: I found my first truly bad male role models. (I didn’t realize At the time that I was inadvertently seeking a male influence in my life.) Which through a rabbit hole led me real big into the party scenes — I was a “candy kid” for a while. (I was very discreet. Somehow, everyone missed or overlooked what I was up to.) *Ecstasy, MDMA, hallucinogens like LSD and mushrooms.*

I was lost in motion, floating between lights and shadows. —Every face blurred, every night felt the same. But then came a time that burned itself into my memory.

It was August 1st. I was at a large house party when I saw her—

“Now, I could pretty much tell you the entire 8 days of memories, but that’s overkill so here’s a hot-notes version.”

Opportunity came, and I took it. But now I didn't have anything left. I was on the hunt, going all through the party looking for a connect. "Can you find any X? Hey, you know of any?" Each stop came to the same answer, and I just continued on looking when one of the people I'd just asked came back to me.

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure my friend can. They're upstairs—I'll take you."

As we're walking down the hall on the second floor, I felt my head heavy with a pull. I hadn't looked anywhere else—just followed this person to her friend—when suddenly, that pull snatched my attention to the left. I passed the door frame, and there, in the center of the room, she stood. She has a drink in her hand as she's facing me, we make eye contact, her aura was enlightening, intriguing... Then all I saw was the wall as I continued following the other person.

I thought to myself, Once I'm done here, I'll go back and find her. But she was gone at that point—moved on in the house to another location—and I was about to roll out to make a run.

Once I got back to the party, it didn't take long for the entire thing to collapse, and everyone took off. Then fate, on the fifth, I got a call. A friend was bringing all of us together because the host of that party had threatened to nark us to get out of trouble. And there she was when I showed up. Nervously, I played it cool, waited for the moment, and made the move. (The details are there, but remember "hot-notes version".) What I will get to is —this nervous fool —forgot to get her number...

But thankfully, I had told her where I worked, and since I was a service advisor, I offered her the hookup—because yeah, I liked her. So days later, on August 8th I remember writing up a customer when I scouted the line, and there she was in her green sedan, I couldn't believe it was her. While writing the ticket to work the system I

tore the customer copy to hand to her, thinking to myself “get her number, ask for her number.” But when I locked on those blue eyes, they just pulled me in, I couldn’t process life at that moment or what I was even suppose to do. Thankfully that angel asked if I wanted her number.

Just when I thought the day couldn’t get any better, while I was rushing to close up, my boss popped out the back door.

“Jim, we need you in the office for a minute.”

I thought “Oh Crap! Am I in trouble for hooking up that girl and her mom with carwashes?”

Wondering what’s up, while worried, but also still excited from earlier, I walked into the office. There’s my boss, an oil tech, and the cashier. The oil tech is sitting in the office chair with a sinister smirky look on his face, slouching forward with his hands in front of him under the office desk. As the door closes, he pulls his hands out—holding a long piece of tin foil.

“You wanna hit of crank?” comes from my boss’s voice.

I’d never heard of “crank,” which is actually just street talk for dirty meth. Because I had never heard it before, I was curious—but not until I saw it get passed to the cashier, who hit it, and then to my boss. I still so vividly remember the oil tech sitting there, bouncing in the chair with that smirk across his face.

I was thinking: Everyone seemed to be doing it. If my boss just did it, it can’t be bad... Because at the time I looked up to him, I was both curious and had that want for acceptance. So when the foil got to me, I hit it a little, looked at it, and passed it to bouncy boy in the chair.

I didn't really understand what the point of it was...

Then, all of a minute later—there it was. I knew this feeling. It was like a mild EpiPen. My body jittery, my cognition on fire, thinking I could solve anything. The desire to accomplish was strong. I went on with my evening, and it wore off all within a few hours.

I didn't fall into addiction right away, but over time my rare sporadical usage slowly started becoming more frequent, it sure caught up to me months later.

(Long gap is for privacy.)

If you've ever had any form of a flashback, you understand they just pop out of nowhere into play:

It's a blur fading into focus now — It was a cool November night, the 5th I believe. I can still smell the faint mix of carwash cleaners and damp concrete, the way the air felt light with mist. The kind of night where the lights from the carwash carve deep memories.

My boss had asked me to stay late, said someone was coming by he thought I'd like to meet. At the time, it felt good to be included — like I was finally being trusted. He wasn't just my boss anymore; he was someone I looked up to, a kind of older figure in my life I was always looking for. I hadn't felt that in a long time, Not since i was a young kid.

We were leaning against the wall near the carwash, the hum of fluorescent lights overhead, water dripping from hoses in slow, uneven beats. My boss pulled a crumpled piece of tinfoil from his pocket and opened it. "There's about a hit or two left," he said. "Try to leave me a little."

Before I could respond, the bell from the oil bay rang — that deep metallic clang that signaled someone pulling in.

“Come on, Jim,” he said, folding the foil shut. “That should be him.”

We stepped into the oil bay, the smell of grease and cold metal thick in the air. In Bay one sat an old, beat-up white Chevy S-Ten pickup with a camper shell. The headlights were off, but the engine still ticked faintly from the heat.

A scraggly guy with wide eyes looked up as we approached. The second he saw me, he jerked like a startled animal, fumbling for something near the floorboard. My boss raised a hand and said calmly, “It’s alright — this is Jim. The guy I was telling you about.”

I couldn’t believe it. He’d told someone about me. For a second, I didn’t even know how to react — part pride, part confusion, and a slow, uneasy feeling crawling up my spine.

The guy hesitated, then opened his truck door. I caught sight of a huge bag of yellowish-brown powder wedged under the floor mat. Not suspicious at all, I thought, trying to play it cool.

*My boss leaned in casually and asked?, “Cousin, Is that the fresh batch you just made....
can I get a sampler?”*

The guy froze, glancing from my boss to me. My thoughts spun — Made it? I thought. You can make this... yourself..? (Then, I hear My dads words run through my thoughts, “If they can do it, so can you.”)

And that was it. The moment everything started to shift.

That night, I met a meth cook — my boss’s cousin — the man I’d start apprenticing under soon after at only 17 years old... It didn’t really turn out like that TV show from a while ago... but then again, —maybe it did.

December 25th: By now, I was an active daily meth user. — Then, just a few days later, it was January 2004 and my 18th birthday. That’s when it all started going south—fast. Shortly after, — I began a two-month heavy bender. People started to notice, but no one said anything. — My climb up the ladder went fast — almost too fast — and before I knew it, things started blurring together. Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months. I told myself I had it under control — that I could stop whenever I wanted. But deep down, I knew I was lying to myself. My little secret was really starting to mess things up...

“Jim, grab that,” he said.

I pulled a heavy five-gallon bucket full of matchbooks across the floor and asked, “What are we doing?” While simultaneously thinking “wow what a good night to pick up a late phone call.” I had been home, sitting, learning on the computer to “refine a process.”

“We’re harvesting a needed chemical,” he replied casually, like it was the most normal thing in the world.

Sitting here inside a single-wide trailer, I start really looking around. It's rough: there is a cast-iron stove just in the center of the room, some very questionable plumbing running the smokes' ventilation out a hole he had cut in the roof.

He's bragging about this right now, while I'm thinking to myself, Why the heck would you do—before I could finish that exact thought in my mind, he answered it: “To control the humidity to a better level for cooking.”

Ahhh— it all made sense to me in a questionable way. Quality of the final result was the purpose, and by any means necessary was the lesson.

We're ripping striker pads off matchbooks, throwing them in the bucket while I continue looking around. The environment and vibe of this situation is unique, as I don't know words to put it in, other than: it was “a fucking redneck meth lab”. Glassware scattered in almost every corner of everything; there was garbage—so much garbage it was incredible. I remember reading that to make one pound of meth results in seven pounds of toxic waste.

I still honestly have no clue where he got rid of it all. I was never allowed to be a part of that or the actual gassing step. Dude seemed like he cared: he would make everyone leave the area when he would drop the anhydrous gas. So, anyways, with the dirty environment, the hodgepodge of glassware to garbage, broken items that were for some reason “highly needed”—only half of those I actually think were purposeful; the rest was just broken shit. Broken, stained, dirty furniture—nowhere looked clean to sit down.

“It is what it is,” was all I thought as I continued ripping striker pads off match books throwing them in the bucket.

This honestly went on for about four hours: two distracted tweakers trying to accomplish something that should have only taken twenty minutes. He poured “something” in the bucket, popped a drill with an auger, and started spinning it around...

I pause writing this now and can’t help but feel lucky. That was a bucket of highly flammable liquid with a power drill that occasionally sparked—how we didn’t blow ourselves up still baffles me.

That was just one of the early steps, for a single raw chemical. Each step (close to seventeen) was full of backwards, risky shenanigans like that—each one stepping up the level of risk and danger from fire and explosion to gassing yourself with numerous steps of deadly chemical mixes. “I’m going to take this moment to remind everybody this is a creative, dramatized story based on true events.” (Cya)

That night, the darkness I had been sliding into — it didn’t end when the sun came up.

The next day hit fast, like a punch I wasn’t ready for. Inside all night with the windows blacked out, I opened the front door for something and we both gasped from the sunlight.

“Shit what time is it!”

“Man, I’m late... look at the time — it’s 12:30pm! I gotta go!” Panic set in immediately. And in the chaos, well... this dumbass got lost in the mountains on Valentine’s Day.

No GPS. Twacked and lost.

That six-hour shift ran way past its end, and when I finally left the cook, rushing lost and tired I accidentally drove north instead of south along the backroads of two-lane Highway 9. Before I knew it, I was deep in the mountains, utterly disoriented. Everything looked the same, every road was so long to the conjoining

one. I was so lost I had to ask a gas station tweaker to scribble me written directions just to get back.

By the time I was close to returning, night was falling. I was exhausted, filthy, and still reeking of chemicals — the kind of smell that sticks to your skin and clothes no matter how much “smell fresh” you put on.

Then came the phone argument. I insisted I had to shower at my own place, not hers — because the chemical stench was unbearable was my thinking. But to her, I do see it probably just looked worse, like I'd been with another woman. Once I got to her at almost the end of the evening. I could see the hurt in her eyes, the look of disappointment and suspicion I had caused. She was probably thinking I'd been out cheating, gone all day on a day that mattered to her.

The truth? Nobody really knew the level of the messy reality I was in. The cooks, the length it took after he finally moved to the mountains, or the chaos that I chased for comfort. It was just the image they could see in front of them. What I allowed them to know. And by not being able to express myself well, it was more simple to keep it short. (I honestly don't believe she believed the level I was at. I told her enough to keep her safe, Honestly, that was my thinking...)

It wasn't long until about 3:30 a.m one night. I'm leaving my cook's place, packed and ready to rock—sped up, high as shit—flying down GA-400 near Exit 13 when I see him.

“Fuck, that's a cop.”

I glance at my speedometer. I'm sitting at 93 mph.

I kill the gas, with my foot hovering over the brake peddle, I pass his cruiser at 86mph.

“I’m going to jail,” I’m thinking while watching this patrol car in my rearview, parked on the side of the road. I’m slowing down, but not fast enough. The highway is dark, I don’t wanna tap the brakes and make it obvious that I knew he was there,

— Maybe 100 yards past him, still staring in my rearview, I’m thinking “he’s asleep!”

Then—blue lights...

A flash of blue hits my eyesight, illuminating the dark abandoned highway in my rear view mirror. I tap the brakes. Scared. In the distance I see, the blue lights flare again, then shut off...

— I just kept going. Shaking. Knowing that would have been ten years.

I had trained myself to recognize police-issue vehicles. Always good to know, I thought. I used to see them everywhere on my travel paths. Everywhere. But my activities would soon burn me in ways I can’t ever forget...

I had just recently been the villain on her birthday. It was actually car trouble. — (I’d been tweaking while working on my car and ended up causing all kinds of electrical issues in the previous couple months.) This included a constant known battery drain. But this time it wasn’t the battery. I was honestly out of gas, and with way too much meth in my system to even realize it. I sat there for three hours in Crabapple, barely five miles from her house. I still don’t know why she never stopped by; we talked on the phone, she knew where I was at the time. But when I finally showed up, she was with her best friend, and I felt the heat immediately. I noticed how much it had disrupted her. A short time later, everything finally clicked in my head one night.

The weekend of March 19th to the 21st: I actually asked for help. My girlfriend at the time helped save me that weekend.

That weekend, the memories are really fragmented, but here's how it went. I finally hit my breaking point — the moment of realization that I had a problem and needed help. We were at her mom's house when, if I remember correctly, an argument started that led to her telling me—I had a problem with crank. Her mom got involved soon after.

I remember her mom kicking me out of the house, I'm trying to bully my way to my car, I reach and open the door, but, My girlfriend slammed it shut. Before I could react: She pulled my left arm and set me in motion — and I started collapsing in her front yard. I didn't know why I fell then, but I understand now. As my girlfriend's mom stood over me telling me to leave the property, it was like my guardian angel pinned me down, refusing to let me get up. I literally couldn't lift myself off the grass. All I could say was, "I need help. I'm addicted to meth."

At that moment, I saw my girlfriend look at her mom and beg. "Please, Mom — he needs help." That single moment saved my life. Her mom invited me back inside and let me crash in her daughter's bed for two days. I remember waking up occasionally, — my girlfriend would get me to drink water or spoon-feed me what I think was chicken soup. Had she not stood up for me, and if I had gotten into my car two days earlier, I'd be dead. I would've wrecked it — speeding, emotional, and completely lost on the way home.

After the detox, I went home to fill my family in on what had been happening. Almost three days sober, —feeling fresh, clear, and stronger than I had in months.

When I got home, I moved my sketchbook off my desk and froze. Beneath it sat a folded piece of tinfoil — loaded. I'd completely forgotten it was there.

Before I even had time to think, I hit it.

The rush hit back.

Then it hit me what I'd just done. My hands started shaking as I crumpled the foil, trying to erase it, to crush the mistake — but before I knew it, I was trying to uncrumple it again.

That's when I realized... I needed more help than I thought.

So: I checked into rehab shortly after, but it went south fast. The staff there said all the right things to get me to voluntarily commit myself — and then tried to deny my right to leave once I realized everything they promised had been a lie.

There's not much good to say about those two weeks. When I first checked in, they told me I could sleep as long as I needed. Well, someone must've forgotten to tell Bubba and his buddy. I had checked in at 3 a.m., completely exhausted after months of barely sleeping. But by 7 a.m., I heard deep male voice say, "Jim, wake up!" I rolled over and ignored it. A few minutes later, again — "Jim, wake up!" from Bubba.

I told him to "fuck off."

That wasn't smart.

Bubba's buddy was three times his size, and together they dragged my lightweight, half-dead tweaker ass right out of bed and dumped me in the great room before locking my door. That's how it started...

Things only got slightly better when visitors came. I remember when my girlfriend showed up. She had taken the time — and used her heart — to write me an eight-page letter in cursive. The only problem? I can't read cursive. Still gives me trouble to this day because of my reading comprehension issues. I remember walking around asking if anyone could help me read it, but nobody in the entire place wanted to.

I never found out what she wrote: I lost it that day — a struggle broke out between me and the guards. I was relocated for “voicing my opinion” about how they claimed to help us, but refused to actually help us. Bubba and his buddy... both were a real problem for me. — After dealing with this little issue that seemed so huge to me at the time. — I felt stupid after how they treated and spoke to me. — I honestly felt worthless as a person, — All the bullying from my younger days about my reading started flashing back through my thoughts.

I’m sitting now in the great room, — No one here wants to help me. This cycle keeps happening to me and I felt overwhelmed as my soul started to crumble. But because of her actions, I knew my girlfriend wanted me — and that was enough for me to thrive, “a copious amount of fuel for my fire.” — I never found out what she wrote that day, I left it behind and pushed forward. — Because I thought she truly loved me.

With the help of some amazing adult friends (you know who you are!), I managed to get out of that place and transfer to another rehab — one that was actually great. It taught me the importance of sticking together with other sober people, and I did...

— My girlfriend at the time had saved me. I felt whole knowing someone cared like that for me. By now the doctors had also already started me on some what I would call “strange medications.”

— Things had been going super well those weeks after, I was sober. Hanging out with sober people. I could see life starting to clear the storm. I could be honest and open about where I had actually been.

Then:

It’s now April 21st, : On my one-month sobriety mark, my girlfriend this whole time was nowhere to be found. I couldn’t reach her — no answers, just panic, worry, and a feeling setting in. “I just tried calling her; it went to voicemail after three rings. I called her back, and it went after just one ring.”—

As I said what was happening out loud, a comment of “She’s probably cheating on you” came from the supposed friend I was with, —it triggered a flashback. I slipped in the moment and made a comment: “I’d do anything for a hit of meth right now,”

and instantly relapsed... because the person I was with was supposed to be sober. But she was a demon disguised and hidden within my alignment, with product handy and ready to go at that exact moment of weakness.

My sensation of “wholeness” shattered, as I slowly slid back into my void.

(I still don't know exactly what happened with my ex-girlfriend that day — or a few that followed. If she cheated, I wouldn't be shocked after what I put her through the last few months. I noticed she got a second phone and number not long after, which makes me think she was planning her best future, — she's smart like that. If that's what happened, I wouldn't hold it against her; — I'd forgive her. I just want to know if that gut feeling I had was real or just a lingering scar from the last two women in my life.)

-This is where some fog has started settling in on dates.

Sometime in June 2004: I misunderstood a fight as a breakup. (“Jim, —I can't do this anymore. — I'm sorry, I have to go,—bye...”) That sounds like an ending for that situation — and my friends at the time said the same thing. I called it quits after 3 days. I tried to go sober, took the pills I was prescribed, and missed the moment four days later when she showed up to my work, — because I told the truth and misunderstood the scene due to the medications fog. That's why I walked to write that car up, I went into “work mode” after getting scared from the yelling... —I was almost me again in that moment, and I don't lie, — that's why I told you about the rebound, my friends said it would help, but it just confirmed to me something more..

(I have never truly intentionally cheated, and I still never will. I honestly thought it was officially over after that fight the week before. That fight was about the two cell phones, and you kept trying to play the loop on giving me a definitive answer. All while I was raging on meth, stuck in trauma mode and I raised my fist towards you, —completely controlled by that narcotic. The moment I saw myself raising my fist, something in me snapped awake, I recognized I wasn't in control of myself, — and honestly I fought like fucking hell to stop it..., I tore the swing off your direction and buried it into my own car. I'm still truly sorry for how I was to you with tears pouring as I write this...)

I'm honestly thankful though it stopped at that moment — before that demonic drug drove me any further while I was around her. — Before it could push me into crossing a line I never have and never will. I never laid a hand on her. Even completely out of my mind — something in me grabbed hold for just long enough to rip that motion away from you and throw it somewhere else. — That fight inside me... that's a whole story by itself. And I never meant to bring you through hell with me, but God put you there for a reason. You taught me anything was possible..., —even the impossible...

After that last day, things got bad...

Right quick: Some side effects of meth come in many forms like: — paranoia, confusion. Others are even darker: uncontrollable rage, hallucinations, and the haunting sensation of bugs crawling across and under your skin...

They call it the meth itch — and it's pure torment. When it hits, you lose all sense of control. You scratch until you reach bone, desperate to dig out something that isn't even there. No matter how deep you go, the crawling sensation never stops.

You thought you wanted it...
You thought you could handle it...
You wanted to say no...
But still said yes.

Second guessing the nature of addiction,
Thinking you could handle it.

Upon it entering your system,
Guilt...

Only tonight runs through your head
Then you think "I have control."
Yet lying in your bed you crave for more
and so it starts, a one night stand...
That leads to morning one afternoon... and again, next evening.

So that one night stand has led to two,
You're SPUN around and gone Ka-few...
Ka-few is known when your short on breath...
Your eyes are black...
and your tang has not had a rest...
This is where you ask yourself
"am I really addicted" because I just fucking relapsed.

3 day binge

-Now after months of messing around with that dirty, redneck, anhydrous-made meth,



July came — and that's when I found the higher-quality crystalline form, after crossing paths with people deeply connected to the cartels.

That's a mostly closed chapter now — one that holds a lot of silence. A silence that can be pure and clean.

But I'll share just a glimpse of it:

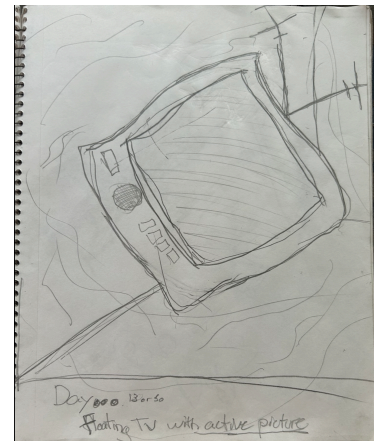
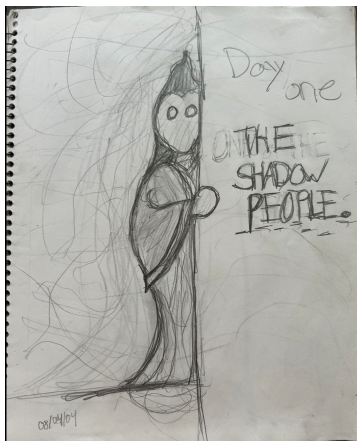
Like most things in my life, I rose up the ladder fast — really fast.

During that climb, my weight dropped to ninety-eight pounds, and I once stayed awake

for nearly thirteen days straight. Some drawings from that time still exist — “The Shadow People” (8/4/2004) and “Day...13 or so”, I still vividly remember the TV lifting up, tilting side to side, floating with me as I moved — all while an active broadcast

played with some news anchor talking like nothing was wrong

(More sketches on website.)



I was never a real “good street slanger.” Selling just didn't sit right

with me — I had trustworthy business ethics, and that doesn't work in that world. So when the opportunity came up early on with Flaco, I propositioned him for some independent contracting, I became one of his drivers — some guy transporting “nothing,” as we would laugh about it. Honestly it was easier. I was always around armed guards, no need to deal with tweakers trying to rob me again... I just drove.

I'd show up, we'd either load my car or I'd drive whatever was there at the time. But during that stretch, me and the main guy got close, like: "Hermanos Cercanos."

He was an older "Mano" to me. I thought his name was Flanco with an N at first. That day when they all tried so hard to get me to comprehend and understand there was no N in his name. They never laughed bullish like, they understood because they listened to me when I explained my disabilities. His name still came out my mouth continuously as "Flanco," and he would just give me a brothers grin and ask what I needed.

Right into one:

Jim!" —Flaco shouted excitedly as I walked into his apartment. It was empty — no one there except him and his girlfriend and the place full of the most expensive luxury items you could buy in 2004.

I'm thinking it's quiet, TV off, Usually, there was at least someone on the couch.

"Jim, come check this out," he said. As we walked into the back bedroom, I immediately noticed the bed was stacked with cash — perfectly lined \$10,000 bundled stacks laid out in a grid pattern. — Must've been a million, — easy.

More rifles stood in the corners than I bothered to count. — I'd seen AK's before, but never that much money in one place.

As I stood there staring, almost drooling, Flaco called my attention over to the closet. — He opened the door, revealing five or six large black duffel bags stacked on the floor. He grabbed one, pulled it out, and unzipped it.

The reflection from the light hitting the plastic was almost blinding — pure crystal.

"Shit, bro..." (was all I could think.)

Each duffel bag was loaded with kilos of meth. Before I could even take it in, —Flaco laughed, grabbed a kilo and threw it at my chest. I caught it — scared shitless that the bag would rip and I'd be in deep trouble.

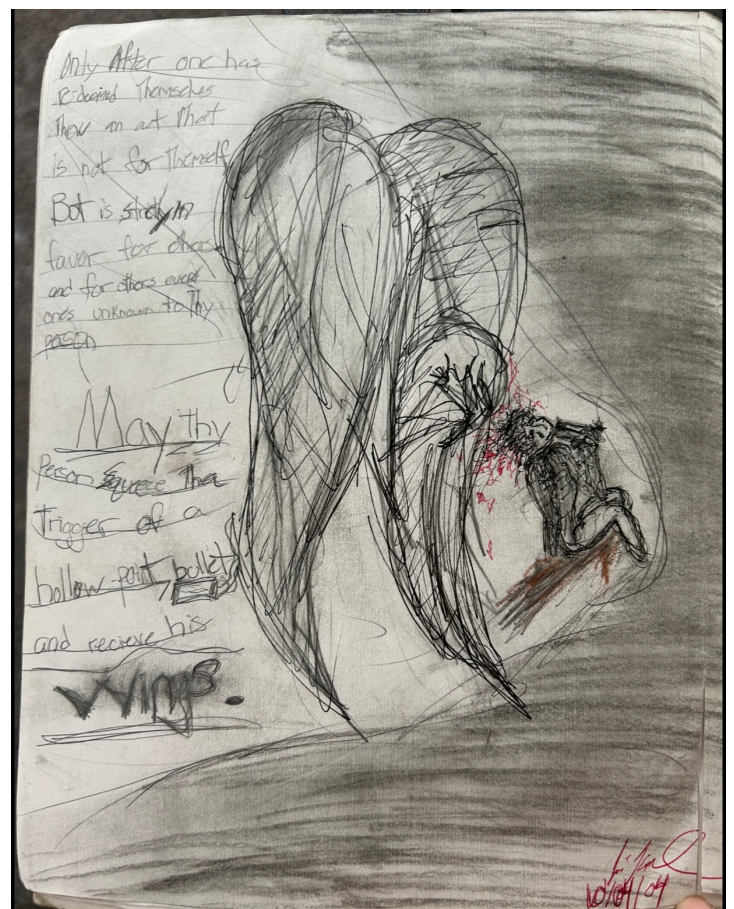
I'd also do other odd jobs for side cash or product — sorting weight, cleaning up seedy weed, stuff like that.

By September or October, I didn't even know what day it was anymore.

There was one night that stuck with me. I was sitting in my car on some random piece of property, just doing more dope. I felt this pull — this urge — to keep going. I ended up hot-railing three and a half grams of my usual product within an hour.

(For comparison, the average user takes about 0.2 grams every four to ten hours.)

When nothing out of the ordinary happened, it hit me — I either had a real problem, or the batch was weak. I went home and thought it through. Made some phone calls, and came to the conclusion that yeah, I had a problem.



But during that time, I had it easy with the cartel — no debt, no trouble but a feeling of acceptance, with no real desire to leave my friends, And that was all I truly wanted in life. They were chill, honestly. —No judgment, just another way of life. A way of life we can't ignore. They had to survive. — Because their own and other countries Governments came to disrupt, Tried to control, —then teamed up with some of them... There're not bad people, Just souls that learned to survive against the dark by using the dark.

Here's the flashback — the one that made me realize it was time to go.

It was a hotel party — a huge gathering. Flaco loved these nights, just throwing it all up in the air...

Tonight was supposed to be a work night for me. We'd rented a super-quiet hotel room so I could clean/de-seed ten pounds of weed. But it turned into a full-blown party instead.

Some high rollers showed up. One of them — dressed in nice cowboy boots, carpenter pants, a white shirt, brown leather jacket with face tattoos, — he was “El Carnicero” (the groups butcher...)

We talked a bit while I “de-seeded” and prettied up some mid grade weed. What he told me, though... I don't even know if I can write it all down here.

While he was talking, I kept thinking to myself: “You're ready to quit, you gotta get away. How are you gonna kick this meth thing?”

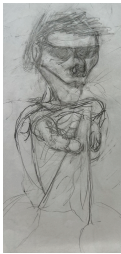
I looked down — there was literally half a bathtub full of weed in front of me.

Then it clicked. “I’ll take payment in green,” I thought. “Buy more whenever I get cravings, — I’ll just smoke instead myself stupid stoned. Yeah, there’s my plan.”

As I was thinking this, the butcher kept talking almost boasting about how he only needed one blood bag this time, to keep this guy alive longer while they removed body parts for what he did...

That’s when I knew, — it was time to go...

I kept calm while his words crawled through my head, noticing the large “tracker” like knife tucked across his back waistband. Then Flaco came back in.



“What’s up, bro?” I asked, as he grinned and dropped a thumbnail-sized piece of crystal meth on my table, and passed me a chelae pipe.

“Enjoy,” he said, before dancing off outside.

Then something unexpected happened..., the butcher, that hard-ass motherfucker, raised his hands like a coward and said, “I can’t do that stuff,” before walking away.

I was in shock, even that killer backed away from it...

I looked at that rock sitting in front of me, —the pipe in my hand, —then at the mountains of marijuana I’d just finished cleaning.

“You... you fucking piece of shit! You ruined my life! You ruined my relationship! you ruined everything!” As I’m screaming these thoughts to myself,

— I did it.

I grabbed the crystal off the table, then threw that hundred-dollar rock and meth pipe into the corner of the room, got up, told Flaco I was finished, and took control. I bought two pounds of weed, took my product, got in my car, and left.

It was so intense — that moment of driving away, knowing I wasn't going back.

Before I knew it, I was bouncing in my seat, excited, heading home to start detox at 4:20 a.m.

That moment will always stay with me — November 11, 2004.

(FYI: I smoked a pound of Mid grade "Popcorn Nugs" in three weeks... It's like a perfect medication for those on hard narcotics, all I did was literally smoke myself stupid, to the point I knew I couldn't drive... then I would have a stash of food nearby and just "munchie out." (It needs to be looked into as a way of treatment.) So then an additional 150z was smoked in 5 weeks, after having to retrieve the pound I had stolen from me at my two week mark... I'm going to let the rest of that part slide outta frame.)

During that time with Flaco, I'm pretty sure I was being followed by the feds — though anyone could write that off as paranoia.

Well, folks... I have my reasons.

When you've had two separate occasions — with two different people — both tell you, "I just saw that exact same person driving a different car," you start paying attention.

The second time this happened, I looked and saw her —a woman wearing oversized glasses, a big baseball cap, sitting behind the wheel of a minivan. And the moment I turned to look, she slammed on the brakes and made a sharp right-hand turn —way too fast, way too sudden.

Totally out of place for the moment.

Those friends never rode with me again...

There were plenty of questionable things that played out in front of me after that.

I started noticing cars always around — at least three to five of them, even in the dead of a tweaker's night at 3 a.m..

When I started testing it, the pattern stayed the same. I'd leave Flaco's place with nothing on me — no drugs, no criminal shenanigans — and drive in the complete opposite direction of where I'd normally go.

It only took a few times for me to start suspecting something. These same cars would follow me thirty miles or more in random directions. And when they kept up with me — even at speeds over a hundred miles an hour — that's when I realized — this wasn't just coincidence.

There was a pattern, and I really started picking up on their games.

(They stand out so well in the middle of the night, those folks having to run their systems off caffeine and zero sleep trying to keep up with tweakers, Honestly y'all stood out so much in public to us, you were so obviously law, with huge black bags under your eyes but healthy, that was the give away every time. "You had a full belly.")

It wasn't until one night, around 2:30 or 3 a.m., when I was sitting at a red light in Sandy Springs on Highway 9, that things got really strange. I looked over my shoulder and saw five to seven men and women stripping down, frantically changing clothes right there in the lot. Behind them, I noticed a stack of cars parked in the back.

I yelled out, "Hey, piggy piggy piggy!" — thinking nothing would come of it.

But they all froze — half-dressed, no longer frantic — and just stared at me.

Back in those times I'm pretty sure that's how they used to do it —back when a high-priority suspect's accomplices would be tailed, trying to build a case. Just a theory: It would be three to five on a follow team, teams storing and swapping stashed vehicles in random lots periodically scattered across known routes of travel. Each car keyed the same, so they could switch fast and stay invisible.

So yeah there's that example this also happen:

This is where things started getting even stranger. It had always been this way: There would be marked police cars around—always in the background, always “seen” when I was messing around with that redneck dude. Their presence was constant.

—But during this period?

Nothing... Almost no marked units at all. I'd catch a glimpse here and there, but I could go days without seeing a single patrol car. For me, that was weird. Unnaturally weird.

Then there was one night where I was really vibed up—paranoid, sure, call it that. I was getting back into my car at a familiar spot on some random piece of property, and I swear I felt eyes on me. Like something was watching from the dark.

I shouted out loud for those listening to hear, “I'm stashing all my paraphernalia and drugs by this tree,” and I did exactly that—hid the whole box under a pile of leaves and sticks. Then I walked back to the car, shut the door, and started rolling out like nothing happened.

It's about 2:30 in the morning. It's dark tonight. As I'm cruising down the back roads illuminated by the few random lamp posts and my headlights, turning from one empty street to the next... and then I see it:

A roadblock.

Police lights cutting through the trees.

Uniformed officers stopping cars one by one.

As I approach, I'm oddly calm—almost entertained—thinking, Alright, let's see what they try with us.

But instead?

They waved us through.

No stop.

No questions.

No flashlight in the face.

Nothing.

Every other car is pulled over... except mine.

But why?

(I had a passenger with me, —there is a witness...)

Then again... “maybe I was just paranoid.”

I did try, every time to tell Flaco what I was seeing, but just like most other times in my life I was brushed off and dismissed,— I remember him telling me almost every time, “Señor, No hay problema,” “Don’t worry about that amigo,” “We don’t want to get people paranoid.” But I did later hear that Flaco got busted in a joint DEA and ICE operation. (Never confirmed though.)

Since the change: It felt like a lot of life passed while I tried to figure out how to conquer this meth addiction. But in all reality I still wasn’t sleeping. I kept finding meth around — forgotten baggies, crumbs in the carpet — but I eventually realized what I really needed:

a push.

A motivational spark.

But at that time, I just couldn’t find it. So I started praying more for help.

So, —late in the same day, I got a call from my best friend — my brother. He told me I’d missed his birthday. He let me have it, and then he said something incredible:

“Jim, I don’t like what you’ve become. If you don’t change, I don’t think I can be friends with you anymore.”

That hit me hard.

That night, I threw away everything I had left — about a gram of crystal I had found on my floor— and went to lay down. The next day, November 16th, 2004, I started my sobriety from crystal meth, which eventually led me to break a two-gram-a-day habit.

I still had faith, I will always have faith.

“I had been praying, and they all were heard.”

If you ever know someone going through something like this, say something.

You might be the one voice that cuts through the noise — the one echo that reaches them when the world's gone silent.

Through that whole descent down the rabbit hole, only two people ever cared enough to tell me the truth — to tell me straight up or to look me in the eye and say:
“You have a problem.”

Everyone else just turned away.

But this time my best friend... he didn't.

He told me the truth straight, and that truth — raw, simple, and real led me to finally taste “Success.”

For the next few months, I went around trying to find and apologize to everyone for what I had become. Though some said I was forgiven, only one small group immediately opened up and invited me in.

“Thank y'all, and I do still love you.”

Chapter Three

—Yep, I actually have to put another “Warning and Disclosure:”

What you’re about to read is real — raw, and sometimes quagmireish, very dark, and ghastly... These pages trace the choices I made, — the comfort in chaos I chased, and the Stygian that followed. Nothing here is a guide, an invitation or instructions. Every thrill comes with a cost.

This is my story. My survival. My mistakes. If you step into it, know that curiosity alone won’t protect you. Remember what seems cinematic on the page, can be deadly in the world outside.

Based on true events...

I started trying to get back into the world — you know, do “the right thing” by society’s standards: college, work, life. But I kept running into trouble. I always seemed to choose the wrong people to be around, and the wrong environments kept drawing me in. These next two years got dark, while I became friends with demons — I continuously prayed for help.

It's January 2005, a good day but it's cold,.

I still can't believe everything I've been through.

The air feels lighter somehow — maybe it's just relief, maybe it's hope. Either way, I'm driving to my friends' place, the only group that fully invited me back into their lives. I'm excited, but there's a knot in my stomach. I just hope it won't get weird if they disappear into that computer room again.

That happened last week. We were all watching TV when I thought I saw somebody had pulled out a little bag of something and led the party off to the computer room. I could hear the laughter through the walls — that muffled kind of joy that makes you feel left out. I wasn't invited, so I just stayed in the TV room with one of their roommates.

Now, as I pull into their driveway, I see the house — an old 1960s place with chipped paint and punk-rock vibes, cluttered but alive. I step out of the car, walk through the kitchen door from the carport, and cross into the TV room.

They greet me like I never screwed up, like all the damage I caused never happened. That feeling hits deep, —forgiveness, warmth, belonging. I sink into the couch and take the bowl that's making its way around. The first hit burns smooth; for the first time in a long time, I feel almost normal.

About an hour passes. The kitchen door opens again, and every head turns toward it. One by one, everyone starts heading for the computer room. I just sit there for a second, unsure what's happening. Then the guy who looked me in the eye a few weeks ago — the one who told me I was forgiven for all the meth madness walks over.

“Hey, man,” he says. “If you wanna join us, we’re just watching music videos on the computer.”

That’s it? I think. I guess I misjudged that bag I thought I saw earlier.

Relieved, I get up and follow them in. The room is dim, screen glowing, laughter starting to bounce off the walls. I find a spot on the couch and look around.

Then I see it,

—A plate on the table. White powder. Razor blade. Rolled-up dollar bill.

“Hey, Jim, you want a bump of coke?”

The words hang there. Part of me hesitates. The other part — the lonely, grateful part — just wants to belong. So yeah... I trusted that guy.

And that trust carried me through years of blind faith but it led me away from this group which was actually softer than most, it was just that one guy.

I thought forgiveness meant safety at that time in my life.

I later learned It didn’t & — *I don’t have any hostility towards you bro, Just know where you helped lead me over the years,— good and bad. And thank you for the trials I got to experience by knowing you.*

If you've ever known of someone who's lost everything to a narcotic here's some advice: *"don't invite them to the coke party."* It was my choice, my fault, but after losing so much, I was desperate for friend acceptance. That moment and where it led to — is forever etched in my mind.

That computer room as I'll refer to it was not a common daily thing in the beginning or even at that house. It would happen randomly and only little amounts were done like bumps and numb'ies (rubbing it on your gums).

Here's another crazy event I'll never forget that happened in that house.

Same computer room. Same crowd. I'm leaned back on the couch, feeling loose, maybe too loose, when suddenly I feel it — that strange pull to lean forward. It's strong, almost physical.

So I do.

At that exact second, someone slams their hand against the wall. A loud crash follows — a broken car rim that had been hanging right above my head falls, smashing into the back of the couch.

If I hadn't moved, it would've taken me out.

Trust your intuition.

Then one day around late February 2005, I was hanging out at their house. I'd just gone into the kitchen to grab a drink from the fridge when the door opened.

A man stepped in — half-alert, half-faded with that look people get when they've been up for too long. Within seconds, the guy who'd forgiven me walked in behind me and said, "Jim, this is Tod. Tod, Jim."

As the handshake played out, Tod set a zipper pouch on the counter and started laying things out, piece by piece.

Oh... this is the dealer, I thought.

He had a parcel full of options — and I saw what I truly wanted. I knew what was happening. And in that moment, I told myself it might be smart to get his number — you know, for when I needed weed.

So I did.

— When they say marijuana is a "gateway drug," —this is what they mean:

The simple solution would be to legalize it fully — but politicians clearly don't want to stop what happens next...

It wasn't until I was hanging out with a completely different group, unrelated to the people I'd just been talking about, that someone asked, "Can you find anything?"

“Yeah,” I said. “I can find pretty much anything.”

They wanted cheap weed. So I called Tod.

He made it happen, — but we had to go pick it up first. No big deal, I thought. Just another helper run to grab what someone’s looking for.

While we were driving, Tod offered me a bump of coke. I took it. We kept talking, and somewhere between figuring out where the hell we were going, he offered another. I took that too.

By the time we got to the trap, I’d had three bumps in maybe fifteen minutes. I could feel it surging through my veins — that sudden rush, that false sense of being whole again. A fake completeness that felt so real, I couldn’t see it for what it was.

We finished the run, and on the way back, I took two more. Then, as a “thank you,” Tod handed me what was left of his personal baggie before we split.

“Here ya go, man. Have some bumps for the ride back.”

That kindness — that twisted form of generosity — overwhelmed me. I didn’t know it then, but that moment was the start of a blinding darkness I was about to fall straight into. (By the way, If you don’t know, This is a typical tactic of a pusher, free samples. I was never told this nor another lesson you will learn shortly as well.)

I never got hooked on coke the way I did with meth. I'd use a gram or two a week — just enough to fit in, to stay part of the circle. But after a while, those times started to feel familiar. Too familiar.

Once again, I was slipping into patterns that mirrored my old meth days. I got in good with the dealer, doing what I knew best — being the driver.

But this time, there was a twist.

Before long, I was helping my dealer “drop pancakes,” cooking ounces of coke into crack. That was mid 2006.

“Watch this” Tod said: “When I pour cold water on it — it'll drop...”

I stood there, watching as he tilted the pot, he drizzled the cool water around while that thick oily pancake of crack floated, then you could see it congeal, harden, and slowly sank to the bottom. We let it cool, harden, dry.

And I remember thinking — completely unexcited... “Joy, I know how to cook crack.”

At first, it didn't seem like much had changed. I told myself I was just helping out — running errands, making deliveries, keeping things smooth. It was easy times, easy conversations, totally deceiving.

About that that's the thing about the dark — it never rushes in all at once. It creeps. Slowly. Quietly. Like smoke filling a room before you even realize you're choking on it.

One day we were heading back to the trap, same routine as always. But this is where the details matter—and nobody told me the Plug had been dry for days. That meant everyone in Bankhead was pulling up to the same spot at the same time...

When we arrived, the place was packed.

Twenty cars deep.

At least sixty people outside.

The kind of crowd size where you can feel the risk rising in the air. I'm on guard, sensing something's coming.

We were almost wrapped up when Tod started walking back to the car—then suddenly his head snapped hard to the right.

Reading him, I followed his line of sight.

A police cruiser was inching down the street. Window down. Officer leaning out, eyes locked on the crowd, one hand holding his radio.

Tod jumped into the seat screaming: "GO!!!"

I was already in reverse. The whole block exploded—people scattering, cars peeling out, chaos everywhere. —It looked like someone kicked a bee hive wide open.

I threaded the car through the madness.

We were the second car out of the hive as we hit the main road.

The first traffic light was red, Tod was lifted up scanning looking for cops like his life depended on it.

“Run It!” He shouted.

With light traffic, no hesitation and full trust, I threaded us right in it making a left hand turn with traffic.

At that moment Tod said “calm down, we’re good now.” As I slid myself back in society, —we came to a green light which I stopped at, that’s when we both saw several patrol cars with lights blazing, all sprinting back toward the trap we’d just left..

Right about this time is when weeks started blurring into months again. Every run felt a little riskier, every conversation a little more coded. I was driving the same streets, seeing the same faces, but it all felt different now — colder. Familiar, but hollow...

Tod started trusting me more. He’d leave me in charge when he needed to disappear for a few days. I told myself it was just temporary, but deep down, I knew I was already too far in.

.

There’s a strange comfort in chaos when you’ve lived through it before.

You start mistaking survival for control — thinking you can walk the edge without falling.

But the edge wins easy with this topic,
and you will fall...

“I dropped it — said I’d never smoke it, — but Karma found me.”

It was late in 2006. I was down in the trap, already riding a steady coke habit. The place was alive — a multi-apartment party buzzing with people, noise, and the smell of weed. I was just standing there, minding my own, when a pair of long arms came around my shoulders from behind.

A glass pipe slid in front of my face.

Without thinking — (because I’m a weed smoker) — I hit it.

It wasn’t weed...

I had taken such a huge hit. It literally cracked and popped as I inhaled. The guy laughed while saying: “Wow, you’re ’bout to blast off, boy,” still chuckling as he disappeared into the crowd. (FYI: I later heard the saying: “Remember brother, If you’re ever at a party in the hood, don’t hit the pipe... Most likely its not what you think it is.” Wish I had heard that one earlier.)

That one hit changed everything. It turned into a little crack habit that wrapped around me like a chain. I couldn’t believe I’d fallen back into another rabbit hole — but I told myself I could beat it, the same way I beat the meth.

But when your main source of “affordable marijuana” is also a crack dealer, it was a little challenging..

So I continued to pray. Every day, Every night. Just asking for help.

Time passed, and Tod actually just disappeared, and little by little, I started sobering up — down to just weed again.

Then one day, the phone rang. It was a call from the local jail. The “guy who forgave me” had given my number to our Tod.

After hearing what happened to him, I agreed to help get my dealer out of jail the next day.

7/7/2007 — The World’s Luckiest Day (and definitely mine too). I was on my way to start the bail process when I had my first seizure —while driving down five-lane Highway 9 during Friday rush hour. The road curved, but I went straight — coasting free for just over 300 yards. Somehow, I missed everything except five curbs, a “For Sale” sign, and a bush.

During all that chaos, one of the curbs I hit caused a bowling ball I had in the back of my car to eject straight through the rear windshield. When the car finally stopped in the bush, my dog jumped out the back and ran away, witness’s had stated.

Little did I know what was coming. That single moment would end up stealing my life’s automotive passion and education from me — among other things.

(Animal lovers; we found my dog 9 days later.)

All I remember is coming up to a well-known right-hand bend. It was just me and my dog when I started feeling super exhausted, slouching over toward the center console. The last thing I remember seeing was my car's stereo head unit.

Then — nothing.

I woke up in the back of an ambulance. I sprung up, panicked, as the EMTs guided me back down. Through the back doors, I saw my car far off in the distance, stuck in a grassy patch — buried halfway in a bush. As my vision refocused to inside the ambulance I saw an officer holding a neon green card talking.

I interrupted demanding to know where my dog was...

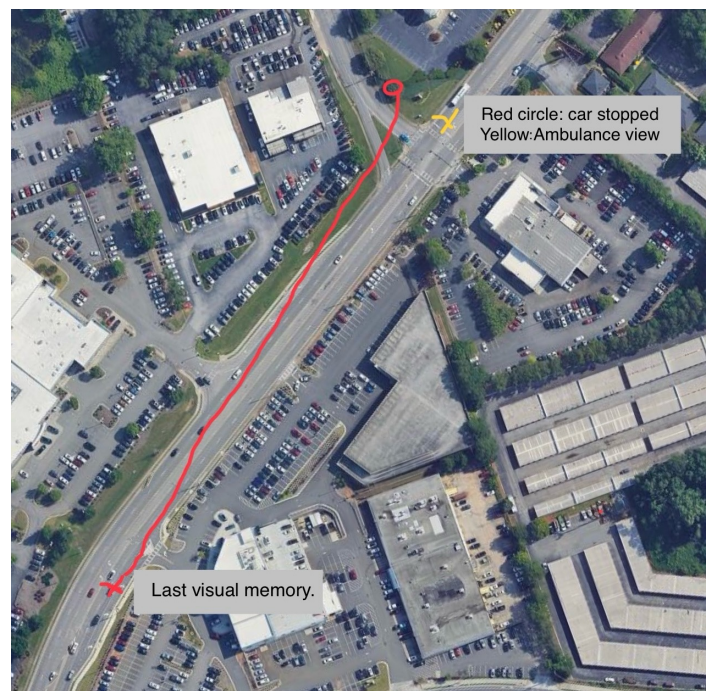
But was quickly told she ran away, after hearing that, I couldn't really comprehend what was taking place anymore, —but I was being arrested for suspected DUI by Officer Payne, the same cop from before.

(As time went on those charges got dropped but I had to pass by that accident site almost every day for years, each time a consistent trigger for a flashback.)

By the way — after a seizure, your entire body feels like it's just swum and run a marathon. Everything hurts.

(That was one of three car wrecks caused by my seizures.)

I didn't even know I was "epileptic" until months later. By then, I'd already clawed my way out of that coke and crack habit — finally breaking free, finally feeling like I was moving forward.



Then came October 18th. I was working late, same as any other night, when everything just... stopped. They told me later it was a seizure — my first witnessed one. Said it was violent. Said it lasted more than five minutes. I only remember we're getting ready to walk out and close up the store, when I woke up in an ambulance, and my boss who was an amazing person with spark and character, was "yapping" at me about how he had to leave his wife's cooking and come down here to see the trouble I was up to." I honestly don't know how much time passed between those parts. I knew my boss lived close, but that would require some time in my opinion.

Also another funny important thing — my old dealer had just gotten out. He'd reached out that day, said he wanted to catch up. Not for dope at least —that's what I told myself. Back then, —I still thought he was my friend. If we had..., well, we both know where that road would've led.

Between the years of 2008 and June 2010 — It was like a continuous cycle of doing well- just to fail. —But "I will always stand and never give up"... —While everything would be on track — life, work, college — moving forward, only to have a seizure yank my license away, making it impossible to get to class, forcing me to drop out. Or the medication would cause so many issues with girlfriends, leaving me unable to be myself or think clearly. It was "like a fog was lingering without fully knowing why this was the way it is."

All because the medication was actually the wrong one for me, though I didn't know it at the time. (Anticonvulsants are a twisted class of medications, especially when you don't need them. You can have seizures when you don't need them...)

I have noticed most memory pulls I try and do between 2008 and 2013 are much more limited on the verbal part of the memory I can recall. Since the surgery, the visuals are like detailed videos. I can literally play it like a movie in my head. I can see almost everything perfectly: From trips I took with people to the experiences I had during these years, But I just cant verbally hear some memories during this gap. Super weird for me honestly because it's just like "completely missing."

This is a hard one for me to write, because I think I do understand why my mind stopped working the way it should have halfway through my relationship with that wonderful woman back in late 2008. The truth is, —after the surgery, every conversation I ever had with her — has lost its sound...

The words are gone..., — removed from my soul..., — but the visual moments remain.

I can still see everything: Every morning, Every night, Every smile. I remember the warmth in her eyes when I'd walk through the door after work, that spark of excitement like she'd been waiting just to see me. But no matter how hard I try, I can't hear a single word she said...

Halfway through our relationship, I remember things starting to shift — not between us, but inside me. It began with a simple change in medication, or so I thought. I got a heads up the pharmacy switched manufacturers for my anticonvulsants, and what most people don't realize is that generics can legally vary between 80% and 120% of the "Bioequivalence", "a measure of the statistical similarity in the rate and extent of the drugs absorption". If I went from lets say a 100 to a 120, it would explain a lot.

Instead of just stopping the seizures, it started dulling everything else — my judgment, my focus, my reasoning. It was like being trapped inside my own head again, watching the world move through fog. Generic switches were something I always had to look out for; it's well-documented that abrupt changes can cause serious issues for patients. But I missed identifying this one early and it slid on and got by, like a Trojan horse.

Because of those unknown emotional feelings I had flowing, that subconsciously couldn't find their exit to be spoken and known. I felt overwhelmed

without a known reason. Some nights, after leaving her place, even some good late-night triple digit wreckless driving wouldn't do anything to help. When that didn't work I tried swinging by my friends — the one who'd stood by me through all the chaos. Being there helped me decompress my soul a little. But even then, everything felt... off. The ability to think clearly, what used to come naturally, what once flowed through me effortlessly, had started to fade. The storm in my mind was growing, and the fog kept getting thicker.

— But in the end, I guess the devil won that round by slowly overmedicating me.

To her — I'm still so sorry I melted into myself on those medications.

So: you might wonder why I haven't reached out — why I've chosen silence over closure. The truth is, I've heard that one of them can't stand me, and, in a way, I totally understand even though it was such a long time ago. I have been coming out of my 20 year fog and only recently found clarity. So when I looked back in September of 2025, I saw how content and grounded both their lives had become — the smiles, the sense of peace in every picture and post on social media. It was clear they both had built something steady, something good. The last thing I could ever forgive myself for would be disrupting that. (I do understand the theory of a "Screen Vail.") but:

I've carried enough regret to know how easily old memories can reopen wounds thought long healed. I would never want to bring that kind of weight back into someone's life unless they chose to face it again. So I keep my distance — not out of bitterness, but out of respect. If they ever decide they want to talk, I'll be here. But I won't be the one to reach across the silence.

As my mind began to sink deeper into that uncomfortable dark, I tried to pretend I was joyful — or at least what I thought "happy" had become. But it wasn't

me. The spark I'd felt less than a year before had vanished, and I couldn't yet understand why. So, I did what I'd always done: put on my mask and played along with the world, convincing both myself and everyone else that this numb existence was my new version of "happy."

But the uncomfortable pressure inside me kept building, and it didn't take long for the medication to fail. And when it did... It was a test for many souls that day.

*"Like a ghost in the system,
— a seizure would come out of nowhere,
— revoke my driving passion,
— then vanish for months..."*

Thank you again brother for being there when I had that seizure on your jet ski,

It was Summer of 2009.

The story is great and he tells it best:

"You were face down in the water, so I floored the jet ski and dove in,—all like Baywatch, to get you."

(He just so happened to be a trained lifeguard.)

Let's just dive right into it, no pun intended: I still remember holding on to my brother while we tore across the lake. The sky was crystal clear, the waves were organic. The bouncing was rhythmic — then that rhythm turned a "oh-shit-I-know-that-feeling". — As my world started to fade and my body went numb, I took my hand off my brother to try to get him to slow down. That's all I remember from the ride.

When I opened my eyes, I was on what looked like a pontoon boat — though I didn't realize that at the time. All I could see was a wall of silver and a floor that

resembled green grass but felt completely synthetic. I was trying to process everything, when I noticed a woman in a yellow bikini squatting over me, with this curious look on her face.

“Did I just die? Is this a...”

The thought never fully finished, as darkness swallowed me again.

When I woke next, I was at a dock, chaos and celebration collided. Firefighters cheered, clapping, their faces a blur of relief and adrenaline. My brother — with panic etched in every line of his face — was standing in the distance, frozen in disbelief..

Once again, I had to start the process of switching medications and waiting six long months without a seizure before I could get my license back. With the new medication, things slowly began to improve — and I stayed seizure-free long enough to finally drive again.

God, it felt good to be behind the wheel — my one true passion. For the first time in a long while, life started to come back into focus. Everything began to clear, and for once, I could see a future worth planning again...

—It’s just kinda funny to me now how quickly everything could and would just spontaneously change...

It was June 24, 2010:

... These long training days were brutal, and I was running late again. My mind raced as I jumped into my car and threw it into drive. As I climbed the hill, the road was coming to a right hand bend, Just before the bend that familiar, overwhelming exhaustion started to crawl through my body — the kind that doesn't just make you tired, it pulls you under. My vision began to fade, the edges closing in like a slow shutter. I slumped toward the center console, the world slipping away.

Then — black.

When I opened my eyes again, everything was wrong. Gravity wasn't down anymore; it was sideways. My brain scrambled to make sense of the tilt, the smoke, the airbag powder hanging thick in the air. It smelled sharp — like burnt metal and dust. My ears rang, muffling everything except my heartbeat.

—“Why... why is it like this?”

That thought echoed in my head as I stared at the deflated airbags. “Oh no... my airbags deployed. That means the car's totaled. Oh, fuck... that means I wrecked!”



My exact thoughts played out, As the mental fog from the seizure started to lift, the realization hit — I was stuck sideways against my door, seatbelt holding me tight, body screaming in pain. I couldn't move. Panic rose in my throat as I started yelling for help.

Somewhere in that haze, my thoughts went clear — survival instincts fighting confusion.

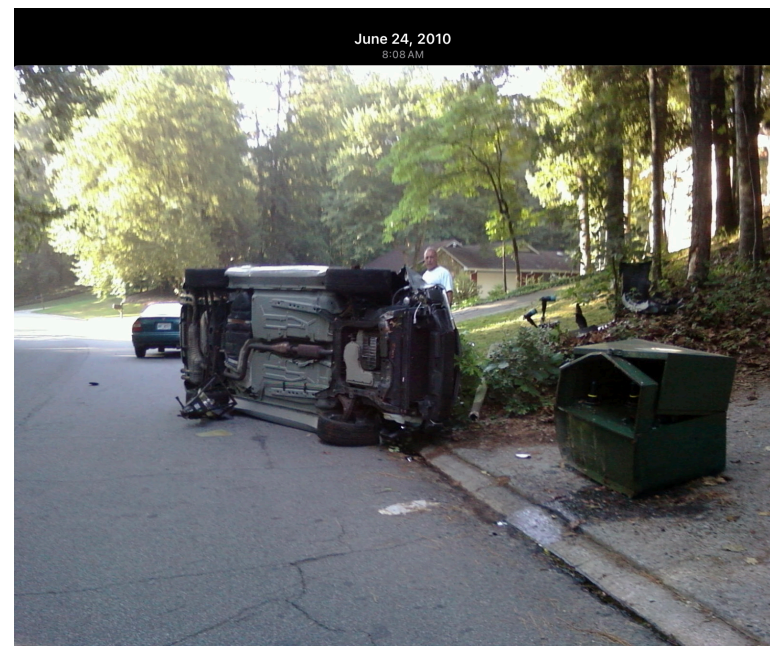
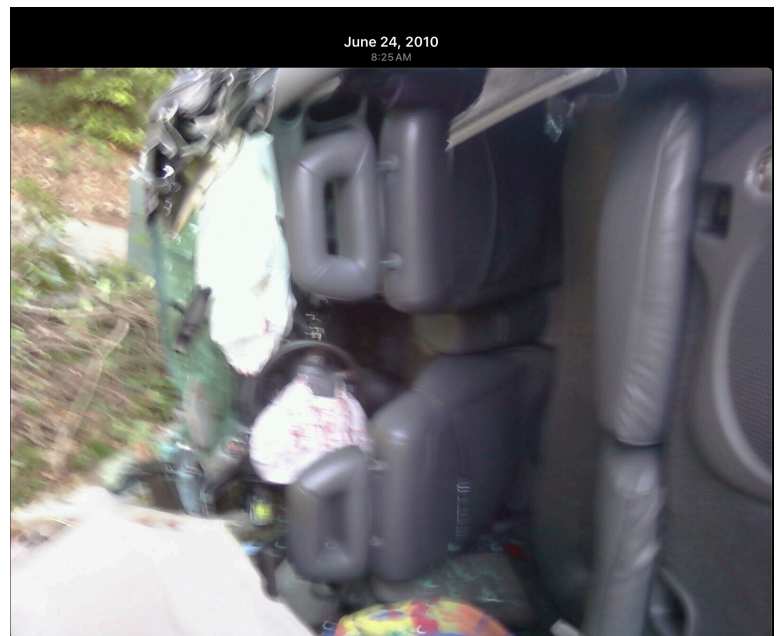
“Wait... I’ve got a quarter of weed and a pipe in my pocket. I’ve gotta get out and ditch it.”

I grabbed my pocket knife and tried to cut the seatbelt, but my hands weren’t working right — shaking, weak, disconnected. I nearly sliced my finger off before remembering the one thing I should’ve thought about first: Physics.

Snap

Gravity takes over

I drop — hard — wedging myself even worse.



For what felt like forever, I stayed there, half-conscious, half-fighting. When I was finally pulled from the wreck, the last thing I remember was a hand slipping into my pocket — and my stash disappearing. I never got charged, though...

It turned out I was three days into training for a management position when I had a seizure on my way to work. I rolled my car in my neighborhood and was trapped for twenty five minutes. One of the cuts from the broken glass could've bled me out if it had been just a few millimeters closer to the artery.

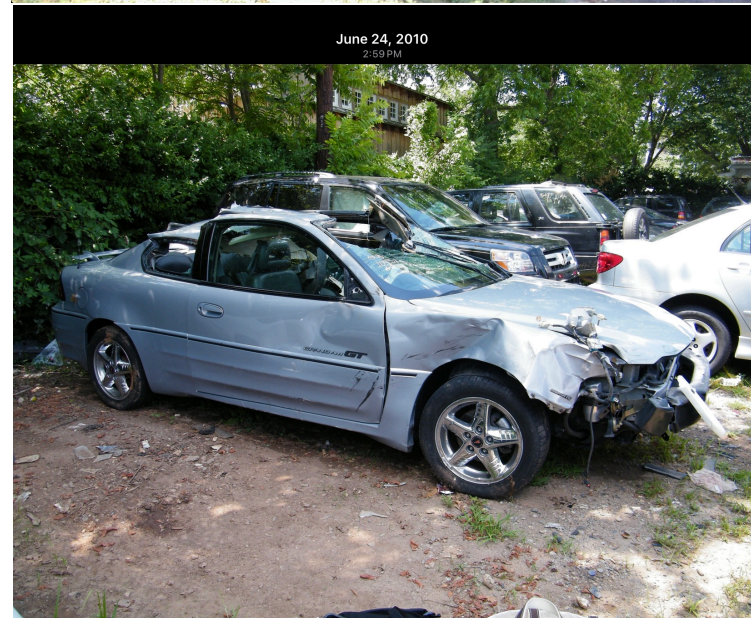
(More pictures posted on the web page. Caution: Some can be graphic, just blood, and a chunk of my finger that almost went missing.)

The worst part came later. The crash site sat right at the neighborhood entrance. Every time I left home or came back, I had to pass it — that scar in the dirt where the grass never grew right again. Each pass-by distributed a hard felt flashback — the smoke, the sideways gravity, the fear and panic.

(That was wreck number two of three caused by a seizure — the third one's wild...)

The second Half of 2010 to October 2013 — It was really bad. A lot of seizures, a lot of falls. I was having three to five grand mal/tonic-clonic seizures every few weeks and each one had it's recovery time. (I curbed myself once, removing all the skin down one side of my face while outside at work. "Locked, fell, and slid down the curb full face," one witness stated.)

That's just one example,
I've fallen easily more than 50 times, each one usually resulting in a head hit.

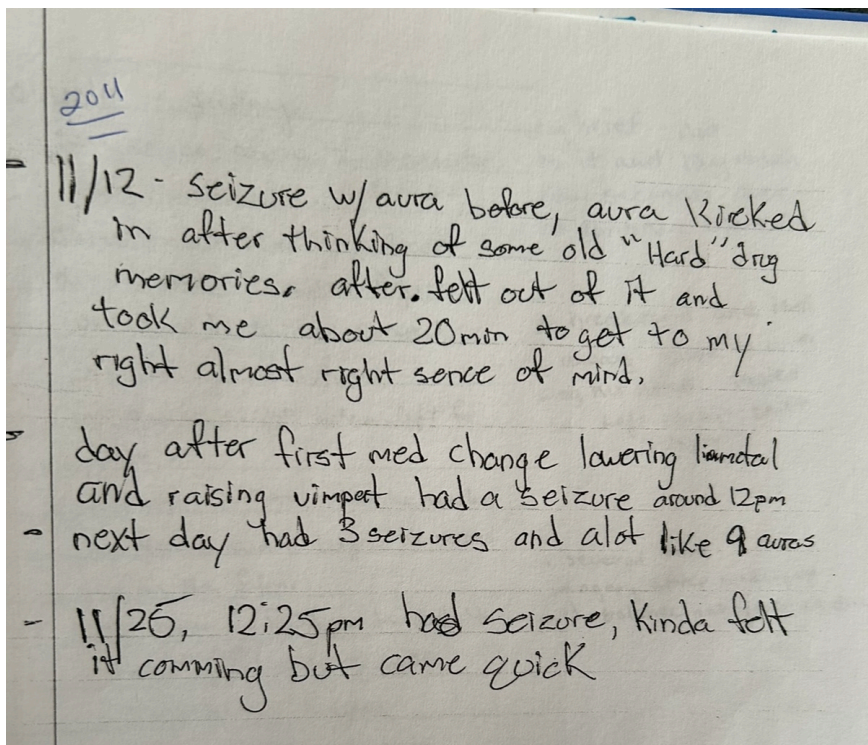


Here: The one where I hit my head on the corner of the TV stand, and the aftermath of the post-ictal state.

(Post-ictal: That's the period of recovery that follows a seizure — usually causing temporary confusion, drowsiness, and other neurological issues. "It's like when you have to re-start your computer and it has to boot through "Safe-mode" first. Things are working, But not everything.")

I had a deep gash on my head and was completely disoriented — just standing there, holding it, wobbling, constantly trying to catch my balance. I wandered around in confusion, barely aware of where I was, placing my hand on anything nearby to steady myself before pressing it back against my head that throbbed with pain. By the time it was over, I kid you not, it looked like a murder scene — blood and bloody handprints smeared across the room. That wound ended up requiring six staples to close.

It got to the point a lot of my friends were scared to be near me, worried I'd have a medical emergency. It really closed the circle and started showing me the truth about people.



2011

- 11/12 - Seizure w/ aura before, aura kicked in after thinking of some old "Hard" drug memories, after felt out of it and took me about 20min to get to my right almost right sense of mind.
- day after first med change lowering lamictal and raising vimpat had a seizure around 12pm
- next day had 3 seizures and alot like 9 auras
- 11/25, 12:25pm had seizure, kinda felt it coming but came quick

By this point, my neurologist tried me on many different anticonvulsants and other medications at the same time, — Each one designed to quiet the so-called "storms" in my brain. But all they really did was cause more trouble as time moved forward...

“Unfortunately, it got to the point the side effects of those medication heavily clouded my vision, —both physically and spiritually. It was, as if, —my soul was fighting just to stay tethered to my body, —slipping further away each day. In that haze, choices were made... but I don’t think I truly understood them.— My heart was trying to process what my mind couldn’t see clearly anymore”

2012 - *“This...isn’t me, —I can’t give up..., — I don’t just give up..”*

-(Caution/Graphically Dark!)-

Fall season is one of the hardest for me. I can’t really remember the date, but I remembered that chilly night... I was sitting outside, looking at where I used to park my car... I was fogged out on too much wrongfully prescribed medicine and horrifically depressed, with a 9mm in my hand.

I had checked out., — Life was so bad...

My thoughts turned wretched, — all my dreams just died.

While watching others get to build and live their lives, I fought endlessly to grow mine, — only to seize, — fail, — and once again have to start over...

I broke down, crying from the weight of it all. I stood and screamed at God, cursed Him, raged, then collapsed into tears, leaning against a wall . I thought He had forgotten me. Everyone else’s path I had crossed looked so blessed compared to mine., and I couldn’t help but wonder if He hated me, — or was this just abandonment — was I meant to keep failing no matter how hard I tried to rise above my past.

I was so lost...

And I had just chambered a hollow point... I didn't know why I put the gun to my head, but as I did—my finger slid perfectly in place, —the smooth articulation of the safety fell naturally under it. I remembered trying to squeeze the trigger..., feeling the micro-movements as it slowly pivoted back. I'm Jamming the barrel hard into my left temple, tears just flowing down my face as my finger slid closer I realized: "I can't do this... I can't give up," as that moment of clarity hit my left arm started going numb— then at that exact same moment, — everything went weird...

I felt a numbing daze come over me. In a super-fast yet slow motion, my vision started to blacken from the outside in. I felt wobbly. I heard the distinctive sound of metal hitting concrete as I slid down the wall I had been propped against — and I really can't say where I went...

I opened my eyes a short time later. I was staring at my pistol.

-“Panicked”

—What had just happened..?

Had the gun gone off..?

My thoughts raced. As I tried to move, I realized everything hurt — it was a familiar pain.

While picking up my pistol, I noticed it was cold: no smell of discharge, no empty brass, no blood on my head—but blood in my mouth from a chewed tongue.

Thankfully I still had God with me — because I think I had a seizure instead...

—To the Devil: Even when I’m buried and confused under the influence of multiple hard core medications at once, —stuck in the loneliest of solitude.

I will always fight, — and never give up...

I’m not just a survivor,

I’m a fucking warrior.

and I honestly still completely refuse to believe being drugged like that is — “ok and normal.”

(“Breathe *Jim...* venting...”)

It honestly and emotionally got even worse after that, but by then I had recognized that I was destined to go through this life. My true soul can’t take that “shortcut.” So I walked away from death once again—but not for the last time.

Between Early and mid 2013 — I had to go through all kinds of epilepsy testing. (One-hour MRIs are thrilling, by the way.) I also traveled out of state for a few tests. One type involved them injecting radiation into my thigh while an active X-ray image of my brain was displayed on a 90-inch TV right next to me. I was awake for this — and had to do it twice. Radiation is chillingly cold; — you can actually feel it moving through you... After the second attempt, as I was leaving the hospital, the first thing on the radio I heard — “*I’m radioactive..., radioactive.*” I couldn’t help but notice; “It felt like the universe was mocking me.”

They've got me gowned up, rolling into the operating room. Everything gleams — sterile, bright, spotless — like a place where science and madness shake hands. I'm calm though. By this point in life, I'm no longer scared of death, and fear's just background noise.

"I know what I signed up for."

Then, mid-prep, an assistant walks in carrying a stainless-steel box. That symbol catches my eye — the black-and-yellow trefoil for radiation. My curiosity is intense. The whole room keeps moving in this strange, organic rhythm — nurses talking, instruments clinking — but all I can see is that box.

It's like a standoff: me and the radiation emblem, two silent opponents waiting to see who flinches first.

They open it...

Inside sits a heavy looking syringe. The syringe itself feels out of time, — Oddly shaped stainless-steel and glass, like something pulled straight from a 1950s horror movie. Filled with a pale liquid that looks alive, almost wanting to pulse under the lights.

"Okay, Jim, we're about to get started," a voice says. A nurse moves my right thigh, finding the artery.

"Alright, this might feel a little cold."

Well, —Cold was an understatement. The moment it entered my bloodstream, it felt subzero — a liquid glacier carving its way through my veins. I could feel it slither upward, tracing its path like an icy serpent: through my lower body to my heart, my lungs, ... each organ feeling like it froze in sequence until the chill reached my head.

And then — everything lit up.

From the corner of my vision, I saw what looked like my own brain come alive — veins glowing in the feed, like a dark lined map spreading through every blood vessel. It was mesmerizing..., — right up until my body decided it was a good time to have a seizure...

That was the first attempt, Second one came a month later.

From all the crazy testing I had done, the second radiation test was the one the doctors said “gave them the location” of the supposed issue. And in October 2013 — I underwent brain surgery. (This was a level of physical pain I didn’t know existed.)

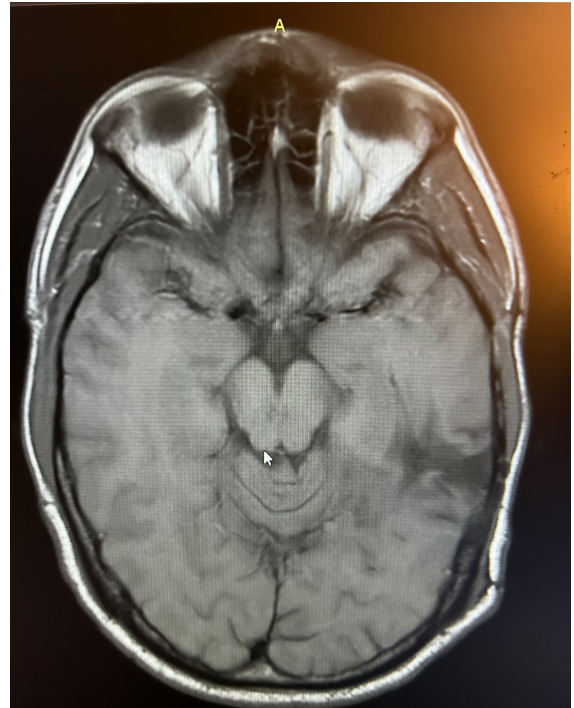
Nine days. Most of them were spent forced awake — no sleeping — with sixty-four electrodes hooked up to my left temporal lobe, wires literally coming out of my head. (An open wound, missing a piece of skull so the wires could pass through.)



The electrodes were turned on and off individually, each one messing with something different in my body — causing muscles to twitch, vision to blur, and thoughts to scatter — all before they said they found “the issue” near my hippocampus.

They told me my case was rare — highly rare. So rare that a team of twelve neurosurgeons was assigned to it. Out of those twelve, nine quickly said nope to doing the surgery. Two wanted more time to think — hesitant, uncertain. And just one neurosurgeon had the guts to mess with someone else’s brain that deep.

That was the issue — what they said they found was buried deep. The surgeon basically had to bore out a spot in my brain. I joke about it now, saying the surgeon must’ve carved out a place for the hamster in my head — a spot where he can take a break from spinning the wheel. (MRI on 9/16/2025. “Mirror image” Left is right and right is left. You see the missing darkness? More pictures on the webpage.)



After

the surgery, I was told I’d been published in medical magazines for the outcome of the procedure. The only thing that really happened was: I lost those already mentioned batches of auditory memory. I still get random migraines daily. Sometimes I struggle

to put sentences together, and I had to relearn most of the written English language — reading comprehension, spelling, grammar.

No biggie — that's just a challenge to me.

About seven days after surgery, I remember trying to make a pack of Bagel Bites. I had to walk upstairs, absolutely bawling with tears to ask for help because I couldn't read the microwaveable directions... It was weird. I knew a P was a P, but I didn't know it was a P. Same with most of the other 25 letters and some of those cool things called punctuation marks. I hadn't forgotten the entire language, but it was heavily fractured and broken from lost information.



Over the next few months, Thank you to everyone that stepped up and took a moment to help correct my "English fails". Without y'all, it would have been a much slower recovery for me.

*"Being nice is nice, But if that person wants to grow,
You gotta be the villain and call them out so they know."*