

Brandon Gets His Big Break  
Prologue (Revised)

*Note: As of this writing, a portion of 'Brandon' has been posted. I am sharing the book as I write it.*

Part One: Some Backstory

I'm going to tell you something and you'll wonder what the hell it has to do with my attached online novel *Brandon Gets His Big Break*. Trust me...it'll all make sense.

At the age of six, I was prescribed an anticonvulsant after the onset of epileptic seizures. I am currently taking a drug called [Carbamazepine](#) (trade name: Tegretol) and have been since the 1970's. I was grossly overprescribed the dosage. In the 70's, my daily use – as mandated by medical professionals – hit 1200 milligrams per day. [The maintenance dose for epilepsy is 800 to 1200 milligrams with a maximum of 1600 milligrams.](#)

For decades of my life – most of it – I was overprescribed the drug. For that period, I suffered intense side effects caused by the overprescription. For decades, I experienced the following emotional & psychological [side effects](#): suicidal ideation, depression, acute confusion, behavioral disorders. I was ***very literally*** insane. However, this insanity was not inherent in my physiology. It was produced by excessive intake of a drug that was mandated by the medical profession. I'm sane now. I only began to grasp this sanity in my 50's when the daily intake was significantly cut. From my teens to my 50's, I was a complete lunatic: this lunacy was caused – 100% - by the actions of third parties (the medical establishment and my parents).

I am now taking 400 mg per day (as opposed to 1200 that I for most of my life). The amount was not cut based upon the advice of a neurologist or other specialist. I cut the amount myself.

***I am absolutely not recommending that someone reduce the usage of a prescription drug of their own volition. Because that would be really fucking stupid. I only did so because the excessive overprescription resulted in intense emotional & psychological problems. I was acting exceedingly irrationally. This included skipping a lot of prescribed doses. In my case, the imposed lunacy caused me to act so crazy that it ultimately ended the lunacy.***

My dose reduction was not done as a rational act on my part. The high dosage (and trust me 1200 mg of this drug daily is insanely high) caused a severe set of both physical and psychological problems. And – hand to god - I only reached a satisfactory level of physical/psychological function 3-5 years ago.

It is important that I reiterate that I am currently taking 400 mgs of Tegretol daily and the stated range for maintenance is 800-1200. In other words, I required less than the stated minimum to realize effectiveness. In high school, the medical establishment just kept upping the prescription.

400 mg.

Every day. Also drank. I seized. Mom and dad took me to see the interdisciplinary team. Prescription upped.

600 mg.

Every day. Also drank. I seized. Mom and dad took me to see the interdisciplinary team. Prescription upped.

800 mg.

Every day. Also drank. I seized. Mom and dad took me to see the interdisciplinary team. Prescription upped.

1000 mg.

Every day. Also drank. I seized. Mom and dad took me to see the interdisciplinary team. Prescription upped.

1200 mg.

Every day. Also drank. I seized. Mom and dad took me to see the interdisciplinary team. Prescription upped.

...every day.

They just kept upping it until it rendered me mad.

I'm much better now. Hi.

For decades of my life, my normal physiological state was a sickly combination of feeling hung over and slightly drunk. That's how I felt when feeling good. At least once a month, I would have an intense toxic reaction that would render me completely nonfunctioning and I would be rushed to the ER to have saline pumped into me. There were other physical problems. For example, a side effect of the overprescription of Tegretol is the profound softening of the palette and gums. I could not eat solid food without considerable pain. As a result, I simply avoided stuff like certain fresh fruits. I just lived with this for decades. While I would bring such physical problems up in countless medical exams, no doctor ever suggested a medical audit regarding my clear overuse of an indescribably potent drug.

I never discussed my serious psychological problems with the doctors. That was reserved for the ragtag collection of counselors & shrinks that I spoke with over the decades (usually intensely distraught & crying like a...well...I was bawling). I'll concede that the training and skill level of these counselors & shrinks varied greatly. Some of them should have inquired about my getting a medical audit.

At this point, the physical and psychological problems are gone. Phhht...gone. Well, I am left with systemic problems, like a heart arrhythmia (which might be death of me).

I feel that these issues subsided to a satisfactory degree 3-5 years ago (I am now 63). I was/am dealing with a complex of issues.

- ◆ Intense, highly invasive, problems – physical, emotional, and psychological – that were side effects of the most potent of therapeutic drugs. If you have any hope of understanding me then you must understand this: Tegretol is an indescribably powerful drug. This shit is not Tylenol but a potent drug that reconfigures core brain function. Up until fairly recently, I was taking *at least* 300% more of it than I should have: this went on for decades. Doctor's orders.
- ◆ Alcoholic from my mid-teens to mid-thirties.
- ◆ Street drugs. I pretty much stopped this during my pointless college years. It could have been more intense but was intense enough. The only drug that I do now is pot. I am convinced, a sky-is-blue conviction, that it is highly beneficial. It acts both as psychotropic and an anti-convulsant. The research is less than stellar due to the systemic bigotry of the odious powers-that-be. I recently saw a neurologist for the first time in years. While I have real problems with this profession, the guy agreed that I should continue using it. He encouraged me to do so. A broken clock is right twice a day. As an aside, I laid out my position that the over prescription of Tegretol

caused profound and debilitating psychological issues: he did not disagree with or question that. He did not explicitly agree that his profession ruined my life either.

Any one of these would be a profound existential problem. In my case, they metastasized into something uniquely ugly. While very belatedly, I am just finally coming out of it (to a satisfactory degree). My story is really a life-affirming one. Never doubt the tenacity of the human spirit.

While simplistic, 'my deal' breaks into two parts:

- 1) From my mid-teens to mid-fifties, my fundamental awareness was intensely corrupted by either excessive alcohol, street drugs and overprescribed Tegretol in tandem and then just the overprescribed Tegretol.
- 2) After that, I had to work through all the psychological baggage that was created by step one.

My fundamental development was not retarded. Rather, it was obliterated. At 63, I am where I should have been at 13. That sounds like bullshit: it isn't.

I've lost track of the number of suicide attempts. My last attempt was a classic: I got into a full bathtub and dropped a running hair dryer.

Again...no more desire to hurt myself. That's gone. 100%. The incessant crashing of intense emotional states (anger, crippling self-doubt, obsessiveness, hate, etc.) is practically gone. That was my personal reality for decades and I can't honestly say it is fully gone. But it has subsided greatly. And what remains is almost completely vestigial.

I do not want to overstate that point. Now, I am at peace most of the time. At 63, I have the mental vigor that was my birthright. The old feelings return. I understand it now. I know what it is. And I know that it was a darkness forced upon me by others.

I am now clear about its genesis. My growing clarity, however, is causing me to reflect on a really fucked-up life, a life that was not fucked-up by me but those that I mistakenly trusted.

I am intensely angry at and feeling betrayed by a medical system that was too moribund to serve one of its clients. It is bad enough that medical care is based on commerce and not compassion, but the profession can't even create a good product.

I am intensely angry at and feeling betrayed by my parents. There are a series of well-earned tropes as to what constitutes 'bad parenting' and usually several apply in any single case. None of these applied to them. My parents were not indifferent towards me. Addiction was not an issue. My mom was an absolute teetotaler: dad was an alcoholic but was the functional kind. I was never slapped or physically mistreated. In many ways, they were exemplary parents. They were very loving, giving and highly engaged. While engaged, they were very literally incapable of making good decisions. I'm sure that there is a psychological term for this pathology.

And it was a pathology and not simply sloppiness.

I'll expand on that. But this, in part, meant that they could not advocate for their son as he was being fucked over by the medical system for decades.

As I said, I know that you are wondering why I am sharing such personal information in such a public way and what it has to do with my 'Brandon' novel. I'll tie all this up.

Oh...you might be wondering why the professionals kept upping my prescription. While I am no longer seizing, I was seizing heavily in high school (1974-1978). Alcohol consumption triggers seizing in a grand mal epileptic. And I was an alcoholic in high school (and was one until the mid-90's). This created a cycle that was repeated numerous times in the '70's. I'd seize. I'd go into [Kaiser Permanente](#) for a battery of tests (EEG/CAT scan/blood tests): my parents supplied me with excellent health care...yay. The dosage would then be upped in an attempt to bully the seizing into submission. You have to appreciate that a person can only take so much of an anti-convulsant. If it is not effective, brain surgery must be performed. It is my understanding that the upper limit is 1600 mg per day with Tegretol.

*Let's up it another 200 and maybe that will stop the seizing.*

What would have happened if my seizing was not brought under control? They would have cut into my brain.

While no attorney, I know that medical malpractice lawsuits are the bane of the profession. I must believe that therapeutic brain surgery is held to an especially high standard. As the amount of my prescribed anticonvulsant, ratcheted up higher and higher, getting closer to the point where the invasive procedure would have been triggered, I assume that the medical professionals told my parents about the circular relationship between drinking and the resultant seizing and did so repeatedly. I must believe that the cadre of professionals were imploring my parents to stop my drinking. At this point, my teen self was an unwashed stoner and not an 'Alex Keaton' type. It was insanely obvious that I was drinking. That means that my drinking was *the cause of my seizing*. If we accept that the premise that the objective of these highly trained medical professionals was to actually *stop my seizing*, they should have been addressing the drinking. They never even acknowledged it.

My parents encouraged my drinking by routinely buying me alcohol.

Because I was such a scary mess, my parents had me see a shrink at Kaiser. After talking to me for approximately a half hour, he reached for his pad and prescribed me [Haloperidol \(Haldol\)](#). Haldol is a very potent psychotropic that is used to treat schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. This was after talking to me for a short period of time.

I'm presenting that anecdote as evidence of the intensity of my mental problems. *I want to assure you that I am now fully lucid*. However, it underscores how greatly the overprescription was screwing my head up. As I said, these issues dissipated after I reduced my intake.

Haldol and Tegretol have an [interaction warning](#). It is described as *major* and is called a *reduction in blood level*. I honestly don't know what that means: it sounds like it could be fatal. I really don't think Doctor Shrink studied my medical records before speaking to me. I assume Haldol has a number of severe interactions. Did this guy routinely prescribe potent psychotropics without reviewing the patient's info? I was a minor and Haldol is a serious mind-bender. Was it routine for him to blithely prescribe a potent 'mind drug' to a child without first consulting the parents? Fortunately, I was livid that he was 'not listening to me' and refused to take it.

The highly trained team of neurologists & medical professionals just kept upping the dose. I have to assume that I was just as crazy when talking to these learned men & women. They knew that the side effects included behavioral disorders and mental confusion. They knew that drinking triggered the seizing that necessitated the next round of heightened prescription. Any fool - let alone these smart medical professionals – could look at me and see that I was an out of control teen drunk.

I was (and still am) a huge fan of [Alice Cooper](#). In 1971, his third studio album was *Love It To Death*. That would accurately describe my parents' style. They did love me – to a gross and sickly degree – and did anything to placate me and overindulge me. That – in and of itself – was highly problematic in how it undermined my psychological development.

I enjoyed drinking and – as an expression of their love – my parents encouraged it. Initially, they simply turned a blind eye to it. When I became too dysfunctional to socialize – this being my senior year of high school – they would routinely buy me beer and cigarettes. They would literally take me into the liquor store so that I could point out the desired brand and would then send me into the TV room to watch the tube in solitude. This happened *at least* once a week. I became so violent and antisocial that I was pulled out of the academic track and put into a program for incorrigibles. You know...you've seen the trailers that are behind the school. I finished out my senior year sitting in one of those with a group of kids that were as equally fucked up. It was like an off-Broadway version of *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* that wanted to be edgy.

This parental commitment to toxic – make that 'psychotic' – overindulgence, was *loving me to death*.

This insanely lax and enabling parenting was not limited to alcohol or my senior year of high school.

My parents aggressively enabled my downward spiral.

Here's an anecdote from my junior year of high school.

Me and a group of my druggie friends bought a significant amount of street pills (barbiturates). We went to my house and settled into my parents' living room. We partied and split up the pills. *I really need to emphasize that. I partied with my druggie friends and did drug business in my parent's motherfucking living room.* I seem to remember that my cut was fifty. I took some and passed out. When I awoke, my friends were gone. I looked out the bay window and saw mom walking towards the door. I was super wasted and prone on the couch. The pills were in one of those glass sheaths that a high-end cigar comes in. The container was on my stomach. My mom confronts me, and I give her the pills. I was intensely stoned. My memory is very fuzzy. I definitely started screaming and waving my arms. I may have struck her. I swear I have no solid memory of that but it's possible. She gave me my pills back.

Subsequent to that, nothing happened. Not the mildest rebuke or even the slightest acknowledgement of the episode. Nothing.

This was in my junior year of high school. Things just got crazier and crazier. By my senior year, I was a raving lunatic and attempting suicide. 100% antisocial. This is going to sound really nuts, but I believe it. When I became so damaged that I could not socialize with the druggies and drunks, I believe that my parents 'jumped in' and bought me alcohol in a conscious attempt to allow me to pursue my 'preferred lifestyle'. This is not pure speculation. At the time, an immediate family member did confront my mom about this. My mom told this individual that she felt that my drinking made me 'happy'.

When I was in my senior year of high school, my mom bought me a high priced bourbon in one of those toney bottles for Christmas.

*Mic drop.*

These are not an isolated incidents of absurdly inept parenting. My upbringing was one unbelievably insane parenting decision after another.

I should write a book.

Aw, heck. Here's some more:

I barely graduate HS. The combination of drinking, the side effects of my overprescription and street drugs resulted in artificially induced psychosis. Somehow, my parents got me into the University of Colorado at Denver. I assume it was some kind of second chance program. Dad must have located it: despite what you've just read, he was a meticulous man. I'll say this about them. They were loving parents and very attentive. But, Lord, they were clueless.

I distinctly remember that I didn't take the cellophane off my books until midterms. Not surprisingly, I flunk out at the end of the term. I then ask to go to a state college a couple hundred miles away. My parents agree enthusiastically: no questions, lecture, or ultimatum. I'm at the place 6 ½ years. I'm so unstable that I was kicked out of a dorm for not bathing.

That's a total of 7 years. I'm smart and should have completed it in half that time.

Even though room & board were paid, my parents sent me countless thousands of dollars. Even though I never worked, I had a bank account and used the money for drinking & drugs. Except for a couple real nutjobs, I was a total loner.

While I never hurt anyone *thank god*, I was a scary guy.

When I collapsed at a party from alcohol poisoning, I was rushed to the ER. My parents never said a single word...ever. It was never mentioned. Once when I was blind drunk, I broke into a vacant apartment and passed out. I was not arrested or suffered any consequences. My dad obviously both paid for the damage and more to hush it up. Again, nothing said.

Wow. That *would* be a good book.

So...not thrilled with either my parents or the medical profession. My greater ire is reserved for The Doctors. In the US alone, the medical profession treats hundreds of millions of people. Many – perhaps most – are stupid to some degree. When dealing with an obtuse patient, the attending has to get that person to understand the health situation. Obviously, my parents were my legal guardians when I was in high school. They were dimwits.

The colloquial use of the 'R-Word' is socially unacceptable. Pity.

They were also cowed by those with authority. While it may have been a *slight* challenge, my parents could have been fairly easily convinced to keep me from drinking: instead of actively encouraging it. And, in the 1970's when my Tegretol prescription was being upped repeatedly, it was clear that I was a 'head'. No doctor could look at me and not see that I was a drinker. It was also very obvious that I was doing street drugs also.

I need to mention that I was so screwed up that I quit bathing and wearing clean clothes in my senior year. My parents were fine with this. Really, it is inadequate to simply say that the medical professionals should have worked to convince my parents to care for me properly: they should have contacted social services. But I'll keep it simple. They should have reasoned with my parents to cause them to provide adequate care. Did I say 'reason with my parents'? I was a child, and my entire future was in their hands.

I haven't been to med school but am sure there are either required seminars or full courses on how to deal with difficult people. Instead of dealing fully with my moron parents, the professionals just kept upping the Tegretol. And, as I said, it almost got to the point where they would have cut into my brain.

Was I punished because my idiot parents were difficult to talk to?

I reject the notion that The Doctors practiced due diligence. At best, it was a cowed groupthink.

### Part Two: A Personal Acknowledgement

As promised, I'm finally getting to the point where I explain what this has to do with my book.

One more thing first. I want to give a shout out to Elliot Page. I'm posting this on-line and really do hope that you read this. So...I'm going to address this next bit to you directly. While I was working on 'Brandon', I read your memoir [Pageboy](#). It really helped me. Now, I'm not going to overstate shit and go 'Oooh, you saved my life'. I've been dealing with this situation for decades. I've been working through it for literally decades. This process has, for the most part, been a confused and truncated mess. A big part of when I was dealing with it was during my drug-fueled insanity: but, even then, I was working through it. By the time that I read your memoir, I had fought my way to clarity (I'm 63 at this point). I was trying to make sense of it all: going through a series of personal analysis.

It seems that I'm pretty smart. In my case, that is a [blessing & a curse](#).

And your book provided a needed piece of the puzzle.

You and I are not different. We were both kept from being our authentic selves.

*Elliot, the struggle to realize authentic self is the theme of 'Brandon': you inspired that.*

In both cases, people kept us from being who we are. In your case, it was – sorry... 'is' – a society that is bigoted and ignorant. In mine, it was a lazy medical system addicted to groupthink and parents who would do anything to indulge me: that included literally poisoning me.

Elliot, I'm an epiphany guy. Having reached a satisfactory level of mental acuity 3 to 5 years ago, things are just getting clearer and clearer. It can be overwhelming.

But, my brother, it's wondrous. I've been crying a lot. But they are cleansing. With each cry, it just get clearer. In each of our cases, those external people have been playing keep-away with our soul, our authentic self. That's one of the epiphanies that I got from you memoir.

And these externals did deny me from being my authentic self. My authentic self is to be a smart guy: the drugs – and the drinking – made me stupid. My authentic self is to be stable and clear-headed: the drugs – and the drinking – made me fucking crazy. My authentic self would have made me a success: the drugs – and the drinking – made me loser. And that's the truth.

For much of teen and adult years, my life has been a fucking dumpster fire.

I have somehow repaired much of the psychological damage (how this happened is a mystery). I am no longer driven by the ceaseless crashing of intense emotions. But I am intensely angry and bitter. My life was wasted (not simply wasted but hellish) I am not given the odd comfort that comes from guilt. Oh, I've done shit that I regret. But I did those things because people – people that I trusted and, in the case of my parents, loved – sabotaged me. The sabotage was not malicious (and so what?). Keep in mind that my head only fully cleared 3-5 years ago. I'm emotionally scarred. It is difficult to socialize with others and form attachments. I am friendless. And a girlfriend...or a boyfriend (part of this whole 'head clearing' thing produced the realization that I'm bisexual)...forget it. I had it in me to have a nice career. Instead of having done something cool with my life – and, at 63, approaching a well-deserved retirement – I am destitute and working a shit security job. And why? Because those I trusted kept me from being my authentic self.

Elliot, I get it.

I don't feel guilt for anything. I wish I did. Guilt facilitates ownership. The stuff that I've been writing about happened because of the people that were trying to help me. That is so frustrating. So motherfucking frustrating. How can I own a past that I don't feel responsible for?

Elliot, what is 'individuality'?

Things are getting clearer. I still have questions.

Anyway...

Elliot, I think that I understand you.

To be who you always were, you had to do big things...bold things. They were scary. There was uncertainty. Things could have turned out badly. And, god knows, everyone was against you. Or it really seemed like it.

There are things that I have to do. I have to do them to be who I am.

Life is about picking *the* moment. Not a series of moments. *The* moment. Let's assume that the shit that I've described did not happen. And - keep in mind, Elliot – my parents were attentive and loving, blessed with the resources of the middle class. If I had been free of those 'issues', I would have picked *the* moment. Possibly, I would have decided to be an environmental lawyer.



Possibly, as a kid in grade school, I would have decided to be a writer. Subsequently, I would have focused my energies and talent to make this happen. I need to say that I love writing. I'll leave it to others to decide if I have any talent. But I only feel free and am truly myself – *my authentic self* – when I am writing.

Elliot, I know that said that I am addressing this bit to you. I hope that it's cool if I direct some comments to someone else, another one of my heroes. Mindy Kaling.

Mindy – just hoping that referring to you guys by first names is not crass or inappropriate – you are one of heroes. As things started to come together – as my mind inched ever closer to meaningful clarity – inspirations would appear. Your first book – [Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me \(And Other Concerns\)](#) – was one of those inspirations. It came out in 2012: that was the same time that I became homeless.

Oh, I didn't mention the homelessness.

I want to remind everyone that the point of this bit is 'Life is about picking *the moment*'.

So, Mindy, the mental chaos got so bad that I became homeless around 2012. A person very quickly figures out how to spend his days. A [Barnes & Noble](#) in downtown Denver was kind enough to let homeless hang out there. That franchise later closed. I wonder if that was because of the corporate monkey shines, or the humanity shown by the management of that specific outlet.

I would hang out at that B&N before going to the homeless shelter. Obviously, I did not have the income to buy books (or place to put them) but would go there and select a book. I would read a portion and make a mental note of where I stopped. I'd return and continue reading.

If you go on to read the novel 'Brandon', you'll see that I love my pop culture. I recognized you from the [cover](#) as Kelly Kapoor. I started to read it. It was funny and inspirational. The funny is given – you're a fucking genius – but the inspiration was a sweet surprise.

You always knew what you wanted to be, you stuck with it, and made it happen. I can be a little whiner and go on about the reasons – which I've already eluded to – that my focus was decimated. *NOT THE POINT*. The point is that it is not too late for me to...

... pick *the moment*.

It took me a very long time to understand what your book was saying to me. As I told Elliot, you still there brother, I'm a big epiphany guy. Even in '12, when my head was still pretty messed up, I was heartened by your writing. Your story was one of personal strength. I needed to read that. You would inspire me and then make me laugh.

So...what's *the moment*?

Like you, Mindy, I am a writer. I will never reach your level of success. I'm just keeping it real: I'm 63. But it doesn't matter. Even if I never get published by a House. I can self-publish. I can post on this website. I can use social media to draw attention to my work.

*Mindy, this is the moment.*

It is what you are reading. It is the novel 'Brandon'. I'm putting myself out there – and baring myself – so that I am seen.

And – Elliot – I want to underscore a commonality in our two situations. They both need to be heard and openly discussed. Each is a story that resonates well beyond the person that is directly impacted.

Elliot, I feel that you had to pick *the* moment.

I know that you have been disrespected by the presumption of others. Should we ever speak, I will treat you with the respect that you deserve. It was very important to me that I say that.

I read *Pageboy*: I watched and read the interviews. But I can never know you. Person A can never know Person B. I mean really know that other person. All I know – *really know* – is me.

I was held back by others. Other people pushed me down and kept me from being my authentic self. They just kept upping the prescription until it turned me into the guy who screamed at strangers in parking lots. Our situations are profoundly different. There is an overriding similarity: we were both denied.

A moment came when you knew that you had had enough. And – fuck it – you had to take things in your own hands and act. You had *the* moment.

And...fuck it...

I'm having *the* moment.

You had to think – and act – outside the box: I have to think – and act – outside the box.

I'm just being real. Brother, you're a role model.

My story is one of external actors (the medical establishment and my idiot parents) who kept me from being a contributing member of society.

Elliot, I'm a smart guy. I simply should have been...something.

The reason why my story needs to be told – and is more than the unfortunate experiences of one guy – is that it's about a basic service upon which everyone relies...medical care. This is a story of a system that is so moribund that it'll just tear a young man's life apart because the complexity of his situation was just slightly outside the medical establishment's operating procedures. I can't believe that my story is an isolate example of systematic ineptitude. How many lives have been destroyed – are still being destroyed – by what is euphemistically called 'the best medical care in the world'?

Beyond that, Elliot, I want to be heard.

I sincerely believe that I understand you and – on the off chance that you do read this – I hope that you understand me as well.

I really do think that I get you. And I do respect you. While the specifics are completely different, I am implementing profound and necessary changes in my life (something with which you are familiar). I do hope that you reach out to me and advise me.

Thank you, sir.

Oh, you have a great sense of narrative flow: you should be a novelist.

### Part Three: The Novel

This brings me to the point of my novel *Brandon Gets His Big Break*.

I've always been fond of a novel that has meaning (assuming it is well done). *1984* and *Animal Farm* by [George Orwell](#). The novels of [Albert Camus](#) (don't get me started on Camus' philosophy of Absurdism.).

The themes and philosophy in 'Brandon' is a positive reaction to the shit that I'm dealing with.

Beyond that, [writing is therapeutic](#). I'm not breaking new ground: that really is cliché. I believe the great strength is the act of writing. When working on a time-consuming writing project like 'Brandon', I am forced to think about the concerns that I am discussing. Since these are fictional characters and situations, it takes these concerns out of the context of my life. It allows me to examine them with some dispassion. The whole *what am I saying* thing allows me to bring critical analysis to my concerns. While this is far from my first writing project, 'Brandon' was the most cathartic. I think that my head was in a place where I was very receptive to this technique.

'Brandon' is an allegory for social control.

The character Amy is a lesbian. This results in intense abuse from her evangelical Christian mom when she is a teen. Amy is brilliant. Instead of realizing her abilities in school, she ends up hanging with anti-social outsiders in HS. As an adult, she is dealing with some serious emotional issues. The actions of a third party – upon whom she relied – denies her from being her authentic self.

The various characters – even the 'bad guys' – are victims of this control. Actually, Jim comes off pretty unscathed. He's meant to be a counterpoint to the life experiences of Amy and Jane.

Keep an eye out for the conversation between Jim and Brandon at the BBQ place. Elliot, I work you (and myself) into that conversation in a way that I think is clever. Breaking the fourth wall. In this sequence, I wax philosophical.

A lot of people want to coop your authentic self.

Denying a person the realization of his or her authentic self is a form of territorialism. When you take a person's land, you eviscerate that person's essence. When you take a person's identity (authentic self), you eviscerate that person's essence.

Territorialism is about enrichment at the expense of another. When you take a person's land, you gain physical wealth. When you take a person's identity (authentic self), you gain a greater perception of

your self-worth. Since I give people shit about being gay or trans, I'm going to heaven. In essence, you take that other person's self-worth and apply it to yours.

Certain people are motivated to steal your authentic self in the same way that they're motivated go take your money or land.

Amy's mom attempts to murder her when she was thirteen for being gay (in a very disturbing manner): In so doing, her mom was trying to rob her of both her physical and authentic self. As a religious fanatic, she enriched her sense of self by her attempt to co-opt her sexuality (in a righteous effort to save her soul).

This is a recurring theme in the novel. Various characters are undercut by the actions of others.

In the case of Amy, there were those who helped her realize her authentic self. Her teenage girlfriend, Linda, both helped her realize her sexual essence and her autonomous intellect. Jane, Jim, and Brandon – with whom she forms a polygamous family – reawaken her understanding of her authentic self. It is a 'reawakening' because Amy's religious fanatic mom temporarily extinguished it.

Knowing Social Media as I do, people will read 'Brandon' and accuse me of cultural misappropriation. Sticking with the Amy character, I write about her experiences as a lesbian, and later, as a pansexual. As a man, how can I know about this? I can't. The point of the book is the universality of how a person fights to embrace his or her authentic self and how those around that person try to squelch it. Amy and Jane are the characters that underscore this idea most aggressively.

I hit Christianity really hard in the novel. I am not criticizing the faith but the institution that clearly is consciously designed to rob someone of their authentic self. I don't begrudge someone their belief in the Divine, just don't cram it down another's throat.

To be honest, however, I find much of the Bible to be really bat shit and have to call it out.

Amy is a liberal Christian. Jane is a Reconstructionist Jew.

#### Part Four: A Bit On My Beliefs

I believe in God. Actually, the Taoist concept of *The Tao* is closer, but 'God' works. God is the unknowable force that is responsible for the creation of physical reality (same belief as Brandon). Also – like my character Jane – I am a Reconstructionist Jew. There is great overlap between the conception of God (or The Tao) that I came to embrace and the [Reconstructionist view of God](#) of which I became subsequently aware.

Brandon's God (or *The Tao*) and Jane's Reconstructionist God is me looking at the same concept from two separate perspectives.

I'm a convert (my parents were Catholic). As a Reconstructionist, I reject the idea of a God who can break the laws of nature and act like a person. I further agree with them that God exists not in this world but in human experiences and events. God is not something to be 'believed in', but rather something to be 'experienced' in the everyday miracles of life. God is neither a deity nor a personage. She is the

totality of the creative. This might sound like baroque atheism. It is not. Atheism stresses that we should only trust that which can be proven. I respect that view deeply.

In the name of completion, there is no singular conception of God in Reconstructionist Judaism. Atheism is common within the movement. God might be viewed as a metaphoric ideal. Or a person's motivation might be primarily about the embrace of his or her Jewish Identity. The description in the previous paragraph is the view advanced by Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the movement's founder. I share it 100%. God is very real to me. She (and that's me: Kaplan didn't use the feminine pronoun) is a transcendent reality. All stories are total bullshit (me...not Kaplan).

God, to me, is not a story. She is the genesis of creation. She exists separate from physical reality. She is completely unknowable because linear thought cannot comprehend her. She cannot be described. But I do believe in her.

I was an atheist for years. Now, I believe in God, as I just described her, but know that I cannot prove it. That's fine. Belief and knowledge are two unique concepts. Out of narcissism, a person tries to conflate belief with knowledge. While my belief structures my personal understanding, only knowledge is of practical value.

Reconstructionist Judaism is one of the Big Four. It is one of the four major streams of Judaism in America alongside Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. Given that it came into existence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, that is...fucking cool. Reconstructionism's robust nature is due to both its popularity and [level of organization](#).

The writings of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan are the basis of [Reconstructionist Judaism](#). I recommend his book [Judaism Without Supernaturalism](#).

Besides Reconstructionism, contemporary Judaism has some amazing takes on life. As I said, I was an atheist for years. I still am in a sense. I reject 'story gods' as obvious bullshit: Jesus, Allah, and a literal belief in Yahweh. If I were still a 'full atheist', I might be a [Humanist Jew](#). This takes non-theism and humanism and interprets it through Jewish culture and tradition. The Torah and Talmud are studied from that perspective. I feel that it is not a variant of a religion but an attempt to simultaneously embrace atheistic humanism while maintaining an aggressive connection to Jewish Identity. Recommended book: [Judaism Beyond God](#) by Rabbi Sherwin Wine. [Jewish Renewal](#) is a progressive movement that integrates the mystical philosophies of Hasidism & Kabbalah into its approach: this link is just [cool](#). There is a richness of thought that is totally nonexistent in the other Abrahamic Religions: Christianity and Islam. This is because Judaism is both a culture and a religion.

The Jews have been persecuted for centuries and survived. That, as much as anything else, is why I want to be a part of them. Actually, it's the main reason: I find them aspirational.

They're fighters and I want to be a fighter as well.

I am a fighter. I can't stop now.

I love the Jews and have converted. Now my goal in life is being a worthy member of the Tribe.

Sadly, I know that there are people who will doubt my sincerity. As they absolutely should. The internet is a vile and disgusting place. There are a lot of horrible people on it: racists, antisemites, and the like. You should question my authenticity because I would. You might think that this is a sick and creepy set up. I really want to reassure you otherwise.

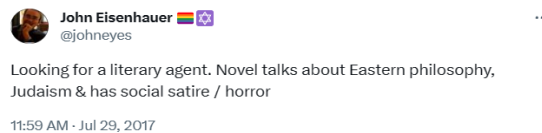
For that reason, I want to demonstrate my sincerity by documenting some history. In 2013, I announced that I converted to Judaism the previous year. and [posted it on a Jewish website \(Boulder Jewish News\)](#).

As I discussed earlier, this is when I was homeless. Two things helped me in that moment: Judaism and Mindy Kaling.

In the thing that I posted on *Boulder Jewish News*, I do a perky explanation concerning why I converted. I mix in some Buddhist stuff. I was too perky. I actually ended the essay with 'Guys, I think Jews rock.'. So...yup. Too perky. Too...too...perky.

As 'Brandon' demonstrates, I like writing an allegorical novel. I mentioned the books of Orwell & Camus. Using the novel format to expound on ideas appeals to me. Another example would be *Walden II* by B.F. Skinner. It's horribly written but is of that genre. I'd like to write a couple novels in that vein. I have unique ideas and would bring my own style. I actually have two separate manuscripts (each 2/3-3/4 done). I want to complete one of them.

In 2017, I tweeted about one of them. I mention Judaism as a theme. Five years earlier, I announced my conversion on the internet.



*Looking for a literary agent. Novel talks about Eastern Philosophy, Judaism & has social satire / horror*  
*@johneyes*  
*Jul 29, 2017*

### Part Five: My Aspirations

I want to talk about the kind of novels that I want to write.

Something that I want to talk about is being a decent person, just being the sort of person that is accepting of others. That's a simple message that we desperately need. To do so, I think that a person needs to embrace another's authentic self. At the same time, a person needs to embrace one's authentic self as well. To embrace this in someone else, you have to embrace it in yourself.

I can write that stuff and throw in some violence. Violence is reality.

I don't want to write pablum. I want to write shit that's edgy and takes chances. That is what I am doing with 'Brandon'.

My assumption is that decent people will read these books. And I want to challenge the reader by giving my novels some edge.

There are a lot of mean and creepy people out there. And, let's be honest, Social Media has given them a megaphone. This makes the decent folks out there – those who don't give a fuck about another's sexual orientation, race or whatever – to pull back and be hesitant. As a result, the decent people just cancel those trying to be provocative. But I just think that we are smarter than the haters. I want to challenge my readers. I want to express ideas in new ways and build to a point in a unique manner. We're so afraid of the haters that we can no longer talk to ourselves. In my small way, I want to help us to be comfortable in our own skin.

I want to be comfortable in my skin.

There's an upside to being on the outside. I don't have a career in the public eye and don't have to worry if any given remark will pull me down. I'm already there.

I want to take chances.

We should be the provocateurs yet we're afraid to provoke. We're fearful. And fear – and this is something that I know from personal experience – makes a person small.

And...sorry. I don't want to be small any longer.

#### Part Six: On Growth & Some More Personal Appeal

An interesting thing about my life is that, as I have existentially grown, things have come into my life that I was able to use of because of that growth. Or is it because of those things that the growth happened? Perhaps, a combination? It doesn't matter. Because those things came into my life and helped me. The Jews. Mr. Page. Ms. Kaling. [Broad City](#). Buddhism (and other forms of Eastern thought). My curious, but visceral, connection with the Absurdist philosophy of Albert Camus.

I don't want anyone's sympathy. But I do want to be heard: I want to be seen.

I'm addressing the next bit to Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson.

Guys, I think that you are amazing: smart, socially engaged, and talented.

A moment earlier, I listed [Broad City](#) as an influence that shaped my life. It was real, cool, and funny.

I listed it because of the 'real'.

In 'Brandon', Brandon is hired to be a staff writer for an imaginary reimaging of the classic sitcom *Friends* that has Ilana as the creator and showrunner. This motif is critical to the structure of the narrative. Beyond that, I use it to assist in the discussion of certain core ideas.

I want to make this show happen. I want to make it real.

When describing the imaginary show in the 'Brandon' narrative, I talk about the tension between the reborn versions of Phoebe and Ross. Phoebe is *trans* and Ross is hostile to her authentic self.

As just discussed, I feel a very strong affinity to the *trans* community. My specifics are very different. But I'm 100% sincere about this. It's all about how a person is kept from being his or her authentic self by others.

You guys are awesome. Oh, not simply the two of you, Ilana and Abbi, but all of you. What the manipulative fascist Svengalis call the 'Hollywood Elites', I see as smart and passionate artists. You guys enrich us all.

I want to be a part of it. Whether or not it happens is inconsequential. It's what I want to do and that's my target.

I'm totally good with tangential. I could work as a security guard in Hollywood. I envision being friendly with you guys (the Hollywood creative community). The actors, writers and so forth. Maybe I could grab coffee with some of these artists and talk about their current projects. Maybe, I can work hard and prove myself: I would show myself to be something other than some rando internet flake. Maybe, I would someday see the following during the opening credits of some cool show: WRITTEN BY JOHN EISENHAUER.

You guys are amazing. *Broad City* was a sincere look at two people as they grew as people. It was always about you: I mean that as a high compliment. We need people sharing their truth. You were sharing something real. We need more of that.

As I said earlier, when talking to Elliot, this is the moment for me.

I don't want fame and fortune: I just want my life to be more than it is now. Circumstances – that have been discussed – have put me where I am. I want to be somewhere else. Wanting more – but in a life-affirming way is the basis of growth.

### Part Seven: The Close

As a kid, my potential was crushed by a soulless medical industry. And that boy was smart and had dreams. This young man had a very real physical medical problem. He was a grand mal epileptic – and during the 1970's when he was in high school – he started to seize repeatedly. These were intense, prolonged and life threatening.

But my younger self was in luck.

The United States had a morally reprehensible medical system. Care was portioned out based on a patient's ability to pay: medical care should have been freely given in the spirit of compassion and decency. But I was lucky. Money was not a consideration. My dad had a good job and the family benefits that went along with it.

The seizing was being caused by my drinking and – given the reality of epilepsy – I should not have been drinking alcohol at all. I should have forsworn drinking it in the same way that any sane person



forswears drinking chlorine bleach or lye. Instead of stopping my drinking, my parents actively encouraged it.

While I got all of the medical care that I could possibly have asked for, it was simply very bad. In order for the problem – and that was my teenage drinking – to be addressed, the medical system had to go beyond the tight strictures of Medicine. I feel that criticism of Western Science tends to be ridiculous drivel that ignores the scientific method. The wags, who pen the criticism, tend to argue unproven nonsense like using acupuncture to, not simply supplement but, supplant proven methodology to address a serious medical problem. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that there are idiots – respected idiots – who argue that my kind of epilepsy should be treated by acupuncture and diet, not medicine.

My teenage seizing, however, had a behavior basis: my drinking. The problem was not going to be addressed by continuously upping my anticonvulsant. There should have been an intervention because the problem was holistic. A phone call could have been made to social service. When consulting with my parents, they could have lectured them to stop my drinking, given them shit. They should have done something. They should have done something *other than* repeatedly upping the dose. They had to think outside the box. Did none of these people see the TV show [House](#)?

THEY. SHOULD. HAVE. DONE. SOMETHING.

They just kept with the medical protocol. Keep upping the anticonvulsant until the seizing stops. Ultimately, the intense side effects kicked in. I was very literally made insane by these side effects (insanity was one of the side effects). And I have been insane for much of my life. That insanity took my youthful potential and twisted it into something ugly...something unrecognizable.

But I fought like hell.

I'm no longer insane.

What now?

I'll continue to write but will never reclaim the decades of waste. I believe that my authentic self was to be a writer. And my authentic self was destroyed for a very long time.

But I've resurrected it.

As for the medical system in the United States:

THE. MOTHERFUCKING. THING. DOES. NOT. WORK.

Namaste & Shalom,  
John Eisenhauer  
First posted draft: 10/22/2023  
Revised posted draft: 12/31/2023

I'll answer sincere people and block haters. Feel free to follow/friend me.

Threads  
Twitter/X  
Gmail

Jjetao  
Jhoneyes  
[professionalwriter.eisenhauer@gmail.com](mailto:professionalwriter.eisenhauer@gmail.com)