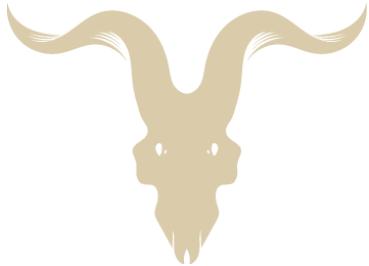


THE  
SETUP



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*For my father, Thank you for diligently  
proofreading this book. Sorry I didn't take any of  
your suggestions.*

---

**“If you release this book as it is, it will be an  
unmitigated disaster.”**

**PAUL BILZERIAN**

---

**“Rather than love, than money,  
than fame, give me truth.”**

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

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# EPILOGUE

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



# Foreword

Ten years ago, you would have never seen my ass writing a foreword for Dan Bilzerian. I would have said I had absolutely nothing in common with the guy. The guy's family was loaded; I grew up in poverty. He gambles, I don't. He takes drugs, I don't. He's had sex with thousands of women; I don't even have morning wood because I work out so much! I was guilty of judging someone like Dan. I saw his wealth as privilege, an unfair advantage and head start in life. The playing field was not level and odds were all stacked in his favor in my jaded eyes. My black ass had been judged my entire life, and here I was doing the exact same thing.

My biggest problem was that I always used to see life through a very small scope therefore my field of vision was very narrow. I didn't have the ability to see beyond my own insecurities and fucked up life. I saw a person like Dan and said, "Me and this motherfucker have nothing in common." It wasn't until I started gaining perspective that I learned no one is exempt from life fucking you up. Unless you have been them or been there, the appropriate thing to do is shut the fuck up and go on your way.

Where the rubber meets the road, I am truly no different than Dan. The biggest thing I found that we have most in common is the uncommon desire to change the very beings we were in our young lives. Regardless of how different our circumstances were, no matter how much he had, and I didn't have, we both ended up in the same exact spot- we both felt inadequate.

Like most of us, the crux of all of our problems in life came from the very things we didn't have. For me, I wasn't a tough kid, and I wanted to be tough, so my only goal in life was to be the hardest man that has ever lived. In Dan's case, he sought approval and affection from his father. He thought he was unattractive and unappealing to women. All of these things and more drove Dan to master what he calls "The Setup."

Neither of us should have ended up where we did. In my high school yearbook, you never would have seen my picture with the description “Most likely to become a Navy SEAL and *New York Times* bestselling author.” More likely it would have said “Most likely to be repeating Senior Year.” For Dan, no one would have ever predicted that by his mid-thirties he would become the modern-day Hugh Hefner...on steroids- literally and figuratively.

That is the beauty and power of the mind! There is great power in your insecurities, but you must have the courage to examine them in order to find it. You have to look at yourself in the mirror and accept what you see and know to be true,—internal and external, and still be willing to put yourself out there and go for it. You have to not give a fuck about your chances of success, falling flat on your face or what others may think or say...to look in that mirror and not see exactly what you want to see but still have the confidence to bet on yourself. For both Dan and I, our insecurities were the fuel for the drive. Our drive took us down different paths but we both ended up as extreme outliers.

As fucked up as it may be to some, Dan Bilzerian had a dream to fuck as many hot women as he could and become rich as shit and own the best of everything—cars, toys, houses, planes, and bongs (or whatever those things from which shit is smoked are called!). Like it or not, whatever game the motherfucker was playing, he won. “The Setup” has made Dan one of the world’s biggest social media celebrities. There are tens of millions of guys all over the world living vicariously through Dan’s shenanigans on social media and, on top of that, there are millions more silently following Dan while talking shit about him.

My “setup” was to take the souls of all those that doubted, made fun, and bullied me as well as those that called me nigger and ultimately, own real estate in their minds. One thing I respect most about people is their ability to be vulnerable and unapologetic about who they are. This motherfucker is not asking you to like him. He’s not asking you to follow him on Instagram or other social media platforms. Look at how the motherfucker dresses—he wears the same shit every fucking day! He truly has gotten to a place in his life

where he does not give a fuck what people think about him. He welcomes the criticism. If more people in this world could get to that place, more people could just be who they truly are and want to be. Whether people accept them or not, it doesn't matter. They accept themselves.

The cold hard truth is that we are all born to die. No one can debate that reality. In that timeframe, you better go after whatever it is that you are seeking to find with all of the ability that you have to find it. For Dan, that was perfecting "The Setup." Ultimately, it is your life to live and no one else's. Not everyone is going to approve of what you do with and in your life and that's ok. If you choose to be a puppet and allow those around you to control the strings, you will be that gray man. Some of us are fine with being that gray man and blending in with the crowd.

In my opinion, there are enough average motherfuckers in this world already. What makes this world unique are the people who are willing to go against the grain and say the things that no one else is willing to say. But, if you want to make a statement with your life, you will need to master your own personal "setup."

DAVID GOGGINS

Retired US Navy SEAL, *New York Times*  
Best-selling Author, Endurance Athlete



# Prologue

I was bullied as a kid, didn't have many friends, and believe it or not, I had a hard time getting laid. Given where I started, where I ended up might seem impossible, but I am going to take you on the journey and explain as we go.

From a young age I was breaking the rules and trying to find boundaries that didn't really exist. I've been through some pretty traumatic shit and the best way to describe my life would be a rollercoaster with the highest highs and the lowest lows. I've been rich, broke, and rich again. I've hung out with rock stars, rappers, movie stars, athletes, and DJs. I've been backstage at their shows, I've been to their parties, and it was cool. I'll tell you about it. But ultimately it paled in comparison to the circus that my life became.

I'm going to explain what I learned about women and how to get laid with significantly less effort. What works with women will surprise you, but once you understand their subconscious thought process, my counterintuitive strategies will make perfect sense.

I'm going to tell you how I went from flat broke to making over \$10 million in a single day. Don't get your hopes up. This isn't a get rich quick book. What I did probably won't work for you, but the premise of *the setup* is universal.

I went from a guy who was made fun of relentlessly to "the most famous man in the world without a talent." I'll show you how I did that too, but once again, that probably isn't going to work for you because most people are too afraid of judgement to own who they are and accept the controversy.

I wrote this entire book myself. I didn't use a ghostwriter. I fact-checked everything, which meant going through thousands of pictures, and over a decade of text messages to verify it is one hundred percent authentic. This is the unvarnished truth, the good the bad and the ugly, not some highlight reel of my accomplishments.

I want all the people who said that I was their idol to understand exactly who they are looking up to. I am no hero. I've had more than my fair share of fuck ups, I've been selfish for the better part of my

life, and the world might not be a better place for having me. But I am honest. From a young age, I wanted hot girls to like me, and I wanted to be rich so I wouldn't have to listen to anybody's bullshit. These are hardly lofty goals; I wasn't trying to save the manatees here. I wanted to get tons of pussy, and I wanted total freedom. I achieved those things and all of my other fucked up, hedonistic goals beyond what I ever dreamed was possible. Surprisingly, I did so without ending up in prison, and I've lived to tell you about it.

This book gets progressively crazier as you continue reading, and everything will make sense by the end. No one has lived a life like I have, and it's given me a unique understanding of how to attract women, the power of wealth and a look behind the curtain of fame. I learned how to get whatever I wanted, and I did it by mastering the art of the *setup*.

## PART 1

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# Childhood



## Chapter 1

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# Prison

The day started off so normal.

I was walking up to my mom's Jeep when, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed my dad was sitting in the front. I smiled as I opened the door and tossed my backpack under the seat. *Are we going on a vacation, I wondered, maybe to Disney World?* Dad never drove with us to school—ever. It was one week before my 11th birthday, so I figured *This had to be something cool*, I thought, *some kind of surprise*.

My mom hadn't even pulled out of the driveway when I asked what was going on.

No response.

*I was right, I remember thinking as a smile crept over my face, definitely a surprise.*

We drove in silence, which was nothing out of the ordinary. Conversations with my father were usually monologues or him reciting "classic" movie scenes. After thirty minutes of anticipation, right before we pulled into the elementary school parking lot, my dad turned around in his seat, facing my brother and me.

*Here it comes, I thought.*

"Boys, I'm going to prison."

I sat there in shock.

For two years, as news circulated about his conviction and kids made fun of me, he swore to us repeatedly that he wasn't going to prison, that there was no chance. He sounded so convinced, so *sure*, I never doubted him.

As words hung there, spoken so casually like it was some sort of weekend business trip—Boys, I'm going to prison—my brother and I burst into tears. A whirlwind of thoughts went through my head. Most of it wasn't about my dad but me: *I am going to look like an idiot*

*for saying he wasn't going to jail. Everyone is going to make fun of me. I won't see him for years.*

After a couple minutes, he looked at his watch and said that we were gonna be late for school. *Late for school?* I didn't want to go anywhere near school. I wanted to stay in the Jeep. I knew what was waiting for me, but I didn't have a choice.

I wiped the tears away and tried to think about something else, anything else, but I couldn't. I was terrified and mortified, but I tried to be optimistic. *Maybe the kids don't know yet*, I thought as I opened the car door, *maybe I'll have a day to figure out a good comeback*.

As soon as I walked into my homeroom, reality set in—hard and fast. Everyone was laughing, fingers pointed. "Your dad is going to jail!" Since it was front page news, the kids all knew before I did. Everything they had been saying for the last two years was true and from that day on I was made fun of relentlessly.

People treated my family different after Dad went to prison. Some of the kids I used to hang out with in the neighborhood weren't allowed to come over anymore because their parents didn't want them "associating with criminals." I'd see adults whispering at the country club and I could tell they were talking about us by their reaction when I looked over. They'd avoid eye contact and keep their distance, acting like I had a contagious disease. Like the prison would rub off on them.

My father had lost the appeal, which shocked him. During the legal process, the feds offered my dad a plea agreement for a misdemeanor with no jail time and a small fine. He didn't listen to the attorney's advice to take it because he thought his innocence would prevail. In the past, he'd been right when everyone else was wrong, and he assumed the pattern would continue. His biggest strength was also his biggest shortcoming: thinking he could always win.

In the end, they sentenced Dad to four years in federal prison and ordered him to pay \$62 million in penalties. He was a genius at valuing companies; taking them over; firing their pampered, poorly performing CEOs; and selling off the assets to make himself and the shareholders a big profit. However, those ousted CEOs had a habit of making big political campaign contributions. So when Rudy Giuliani

was appointed US Attorney, he promised to crack down and did just that.

Looking back, Dad was a gambler, even with his own life. He had a clear path to no jail time and a small fine, but he rolled the dice on principle and risked a lot to win a little. It was a poorly calculated risk. When the government comes for their pound of flesh, they get it.

The lesson: Never gamble when the game is rigged...unless you rigged it.



## Chapter 2

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# Time Is Money

When we first moved into a modest home in the neighborhood, several years before my father's conviction, people didn't think my parents had money. The ladies at the country club would pull up in their Mercedes-Benzes sporting designer bags and tilt their noses up at my mother because they thought she couldn't afford those things. I could never understand why she drove a Jeep instead of a Ferrari, and I told her so, but that was my mom.

My mother's name is Terri, a petite fair skinned Norwegian with a permanent smile and a positive attitude. Her standard uniform consisted of tennis outfits she bought on sale at Macy's and running shoes. My mother rarely wore makeup and even though my father gave her expensive jewelry she only wore fake gold clip on earrings and simple necklaces. She really didn't give a shit about money or impressing people and I think she got that from her father Harry.

My grandfather, Harry Steffen was a wealthy rancher who'd made it through World War II with everything except his hearing. He had permanently squinted eyes and a thick salt and pepper beard that covered his windburnt skin. Having grown up in the great depression, he took pride in doing hard work every day. Even in the dead of summer he'd sharpen his lawnmower blades and carry metal cans of diesel fuel to his tractor wearing a scratchy long sleeve wool shirt and polyester pants. I remember watching him perplexed, wondering, *what the fuck is the point of having money if you're gonna spend your time sweating your ass off doing bullshit work.*

Harry had a ranch in Northern California, and the family would go there for Thanksgiving and Christmas. There were moose heads on the wall and bear skin rugs, but what I was always fascinated with was his guns. Occasionally he would take me around on his four-

wheeler to look for things to shoot. I remember him stopping after seeing a big hawk. He pointed up at it, and I looked at the majestic creature circling above us. Instead of saying, “Hey, look at that bird, it’s beautiful,” he said enthusiastically, “Look at that bird, let’s see if you can bust him!” I was taught to kill animals, and if you didn’t do that, you were a pussy, according to my uncles and cousins.

I felt bad shooting animals, but I thought it was just because I was a pussy. It wasn’t until later that I realized it’s actually the opposite, shooting animals for sport doesn’t take courage, it’s what insecure guys do to feel powerful, but at seven years old, all you know is what you’re told.

One day, I saw a big rattlesnake slithering on the side of the road. Excited for the opportunity to kill something dangerous, I walked up behind it, quickly grabbed it by the tail and whipped it onto the pavement until it was dead. I was proud of my kill, because it was evidence that I wasn’t a pussy, so I triumphantly draped it over the stop sign and continued on home. Some of the neighborhood kids saw this and immediately told their parents, who told my father.

*My brother and I.*



“You killed a rattlesnake with your bare hands?” My father asked.

I nodded, unsure how he was going to react.

“That’s impressive, those are deadly!” he exclaimed. It was one of the first times I received his approval.

He told that story every time his friends visited, and I would just sit there and smile; he wasn’t lying. But what I never had the heart to tell him was that that fucking snake must have been dying of cancer because I’d never seen anything move slower in my life. But I rarely got praise, and I certainly wasn’t going to mention that small detail.

My dad, Paul, looked more like a PE coach than a businessman. He was an athletic six-foot, one-eighty-five with a bushy mustache and long sideburns. Whether it was a board meeting or a baseball game, my father always proudly wore his sweat-stained Boston Red Socks mesh back hat with his golf shirt neatly tucked into his swim trunks. He grew up in a poor family in Worcester, Massachusetts and enlisted in the military soon after dropping out of high school. After a tour in Vietnam, he aced the SATs and was accepted into Stanford where he would meet my mother.

Dad busted his ass and after four years got into Harvard Business school, which, as a high school dropout, was unheard of. My father was a machine, doing whatever it took to accomplish his objectives. And he was a complete maniac in the process. His work ethic was inexorable, but so was his temper. This most notably manifested itself in anything competitive like work or sports.

Growing up, I had very little interaction with my father because he would usually work around sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. The one exception was when he insisted on being my Little League coach. It sounded great, but sports with my father wasn’t fun. It wasn’t “Go out there and try your best”; it was “There are no points for second place.” And if we lost, he would go crazy, which included everything from screaming at me and the other kids to throwing equipment at us in the dugout. He wouldn’t speak for the entire ride home, and I could practically see the steam coming out of his ears.

Eventually, this doomed experiment in parenting resulted in my dad suing the Little League for slander.

## Bilzerian Strikes Out\*

*Paul A. Bilzerian, the multimillionaire corporate raider and convicted felon, struck out again with his slander suit against a St. Petersburg Little League official. On Wednesday, a three-judge district appeals court panel in Tampa sided with a lower court order dismissing Bilzerian's suit against Rick Brannelly, vice president of the Northeast Little League.*

*Bilzerian sued Brannelly in May 1988 after the Little League official told the St. Petersburg Times that Bilzerian reneged on a pledge to give the league \$5,000 if the 5-, 6-, and 7-year-old players raised an equal amount in a fund-raising drive. The league, selling household goods door-to-door, fell short by \$52.25.*

*Bilzerian's suit was dismissed last August by Pinellas County Circuit Court Judge Fred L. Bryson Jr. after Bilzerian failed to prove he suffered damages from Brannelly's statements. Bilzerian, in fact, had a great year in 1988, buying Singer Co. for more than \$1 billion and selling off most of its assets at a personal profit estimated at between \$50 million and \$100 million.*

*Meanwhile, Glenn Burton, the Little League's attorney, said the League "never got the \$5,000...and both sides spent at least twice as much litigating this nonsense."*

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\* James Greiff, "Bilzerian strikes out," *Tampa Bay Times*, October 17, 2005, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1990/07/21/bilzerian-strikes-out/>.

It started when the vice president of the Little League told the newspaper that Dad welched on an agreement. Pops said they lied about the accounting by over a thousand dollars and were trying to extort him, but either way, it was front page news.

By this point my father was worth hundreds of millions, but you'd never know looking at the guy. He'd pull up to the country club in a shitty Jeep wearing a Casio watch. It was very strange to me; I didn't understand why he never bought nice things or what he even wanted all the money for.

Nothing about my father was normal and his parenting was no exception. The one thing I distinctly remember learning from my dad, other than to do whatever it takes to win, happened when my mother gave me shit about not making my bed at breakfast.

Mom was a genuinely good person who never had a bad word to say about anyone, and I remember her giving me a lot of insightful tips that, as a kid, I just laughed at. She said, "If someone talks bad about their friends when they aren't around, they will talk bad about you when you aren't around" and "The things people dislike the most in others are things they don't like about themselves." She was really smart, but I didn't realize it because my father would steamroll her any time there was a disagreement. She was too passive to fight back and I mistook her submissiveness for stupidity because she would effectively lose every argument.

"Dad doesn't make his bed!" I pointed out when she tried to get me to make mine.

Thinking she had a good life lesson all teed up, she turned to my father and said, "Honey, why don't you make the bed and be a good example?"

"I make ten thousand dollars an hour," he snapped back. "I pay the maid fifteen dollars an hour to clean this house. You want me to spend nine thousand, nine hundred, and eighty-five dollars to show your son how to make his bed? Think about how stupid that is. Time is money."

We sat there in the breakfast nook in shocked silence. It was such an unexpected response, but it made so much sense. The lesson was, *understand the value of your time and don't do work that is below your pay grade*. It instantly made me want to make a lot of money, so I wouldn't have to do bullshit work like make my bed. My father didn't act or think like everybody else, and the rebel in me liked that. That

mentality made him rich, but it also made him stand out, and that made him a target.



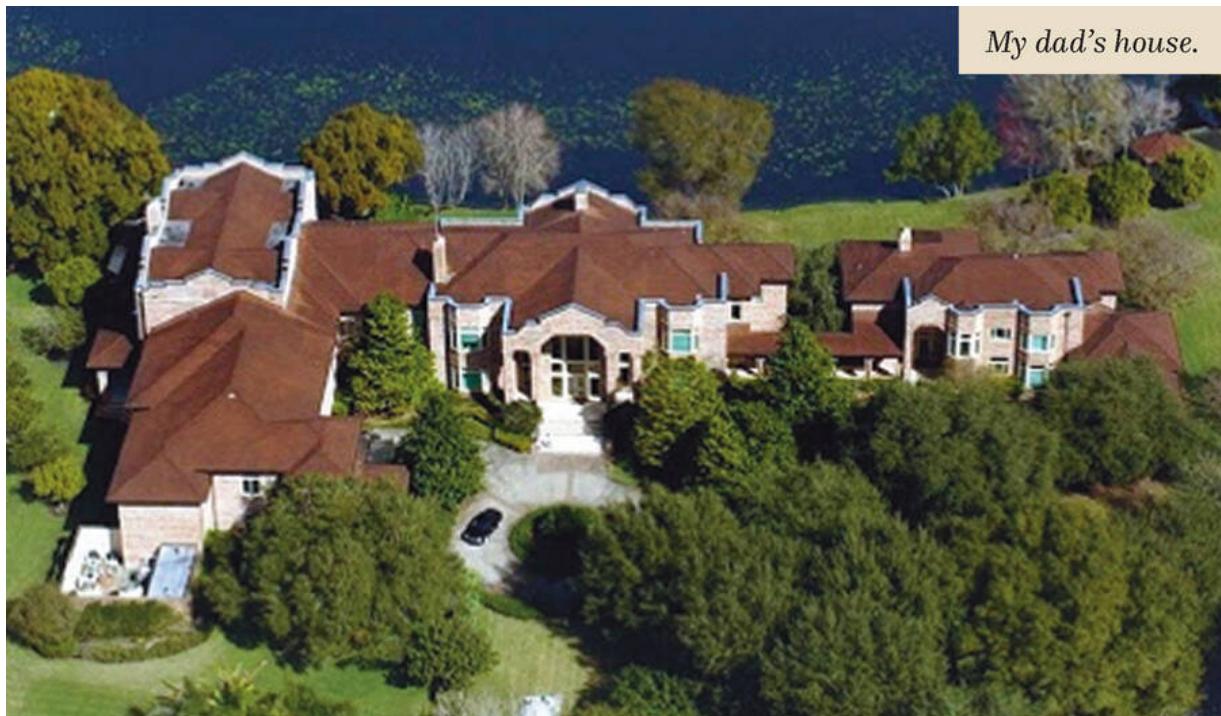
## Chapter 3

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### Ernie

You know the cliché “the grass is always greener”? Well, Ernie’s grass really was fucking greener, but it wasn’t his well-manicured lawn I was envious of.

Right before he was released from prison, my father’s 36,000-square-foot flagship mansion was finished. After what seemed like four endless years of waiting, we moved in.



All of a sudden, people were nicer, and everyone who had doubted me before, now wanted to visit. I proudly gave tours and spouted off the figures of the house. The twenty-one bathrooms stat was my favorite, along with the expression on people’s faces when I opened

the doors to the indoor basketball court, which was equipped with bleachers and a scoreboard. I found some identity in that house, and it felt good to finally be respected and have people admire me for something. This was probably the beginning of a lifelong pattern. The other part of that pattern was *wanting more*.

I stood on the balcony of our mansion and gazed over the wall at Ernie's 9,000-square-foot house that was only about a fourth the size of ours but seemed so much cooler. There was a Lamborghini and a Rolls in the garage, WaveRunners in the back, and a seemingly endless stream of beautiful women going and coming. He had everything we didn't have; he had everything I wanted. I remember thinking, *If I ever get rich and have my own money, I'm going to live like Ernie, not like my boring-ass parents.*

Our neighbor Ernie was a good-natured car dealer in his mid-thirties. He was tall with blond receding hair combed to the side and perpetually sunburnt, reddish skin. One summer Ernie came up to our lake house in Minnesota with an insanely hot, skinny college girl with big fake tits. I was shook. I didn't want to get caught staring at her, so I averted my eyes to Ernie. He was sporting a gold Rolex with a big diamond bezel, dress pants, and an expensive silk shirt. His friendship with my father was strange considering they were polar opposites. Dad was happily married, wore cheap clothes, and wasn't flashy. He worked all day and never smoked, cheated, did drugs, or drank alcohol. Ernie fucked around on his many girlfriends, partied, smoked cigars at strip clubs, got drunk, and took the dancers on vacation to the Bahamas.

He was a true inspiration, proof that money could buy happiness.



*Ernest B. Haire the 3rd, "Ernie."*

One Saturday, he pulled up, and I got in his new SUV for my first experience with paintball. I was nervous that it would hurt because I'd heard stories about the bloody welts and bruises, but I loved guns, and this was as close to combat as a little kid could get.

On our way to the paintball field, we stopped at a McDonald's drive-thru and I asked for my favorite breakfast item: beautiful deep fried, crispy hash browns. Three orders. As soon as Ernie yelled into the speaker, I heard a *whack, whack, whack*. The side windows of the cab seemed to explode in color. His redneck buddies were shooting paintballs at us while we were trapped in the fucking drive-thru. When the paint first hit the truck, I was scared. But that quickly turned to excitement. It felt like we were in an action movie shootout scene. I'd never been around adults who acted like this.

Ernie handed the girl a hundred-dollar bill, grabbed our food, and told her to keep the change as he peeled out. I couldn't believe it; he'd just given that girl an eighty-seven-dollar tip without a second thought. I'll never forget the look on her face as we sped off.

We pulled onto a state road, headed to the field when his fucking lunatic friends opened up on us again. The passenger was taking it seriously, shooting rapid-fire at us out of the truck's sliding back window like a machine gunner in a pillbox.

"Can I fire back?" I yelled to Ernie. For a minute, he tried to be responsible and told me no. But we were barreling down the road at seventy miles per hour with the wipers slinging paint off the windshield, and the dude in the other car was pummeling us.

"Okay, get the damn guns," Ernie ordered. I jumped over the seats and grabbed his state-of-the-art Automag paintball gun along with a Tippmann Pro Lite. Ernie leaned out his window with a gun in his left hand, and I had my right arm hanging out the passenger side as we started to unload.

I walked the stream of red paint closer to my target until I finally popped the shooter right in his mouth. His head dropped and he started gasping for air, which freaked the driver out because he didn't know if his buddy was spitting up blood or paint. My following paintballs continued into their cab and hit the *inside* of the windshield, rendering their wipers useless. As their vehicle swerved

all over the road with the driver struggling to see where he was going, Ernie egged me on.

“Let those bastards have it!” he yelled. And I did.

That’s what I liked about Ernie. He was rich, but he didn’t act or think like the snooty country club guys in my neighborhood. While they were contemplating new golf clubs or what spoon to use for their caviar, Ernie was thinking about a new Cigarette boat or what girl he wanted to bring to a tropical island.

A couple months later, Ernie took me to a strip club for the first time. When we pulled up, the valets recognized him and rushed to open the doors of the car. “It’s good to see you again Mr. Haire.” Ernie nonchalantly slipped the doorman a hundred-dollar bill while the girl at the entry register smiled and flirted with him as he walked by. No one asked to see my ID as I strolled in, unbothered, behind Ernie, like the kid in the gangster movie *Goodfellas*.

Ernie and I were escorted to a private VIP section where he ordered a couple of bottles of Dom and lit a big Cuban cigar. Before he could say anything else, a barrage of topless women engulfed us. Blondes, brunettes, redheads. Their big tits bouncing as they walked had me mesmerized. Time stood still.

He bought me lap dances, while I sat there awkwardly, trying to figure out what to do with my hands. I didn’t have any experience talking to hot girls, let alone having them grind on me naked.

Ernie smoked cigars and drank champagne while the dancers he was dating jockeyed for position and competed for his attention. I observed the interactions and sipped my club soda with lime until the club closed to the public. Then we proceeded to sit there for a few more hours while the manager hosted us privately.

They kept the thousand-dollar bottles of champagne coming until Ernie was good and hammered. He signed the bill around seven in the morning before stumbling out with a couple beautiful, scantily-clad strippers. I was put in a separate limo that dropped me off at my house. The sun was coming up as the iron gate slid open. I walked towards the house contemplating what I’d just witnessed.

Ernie was a very average looking guy, so *How did he do it?* I wondered. Up to this point, I’d only heard girls at my school talk

about “hot guys.” I remember thinking, *I’ll never be a hot guy, but if Ernie could get girls like that, then maybe I could too.*

I had never seen women swoon over a guy before, and it started an obsession. In bed at night, I’d fantasize about having just one superhot girl flirt with me like that. In school, I’d imagine what it would be like if one of those women showed up in class and fawned all over me. What would everyone in school say if I walked out holding her hand? They could talk shit all they wanted, but they’d have to respect me if I pulled a girl like the ones they had posters of on their walls. That was my goal. Have a hot girl on my arm like Ernie. I couldn’t even imagine having more than one like he did.

Meanwhile in reality, my classmates continued to make fun of me for having buck teeth or because my dad was in jail. Every morning, I hated going to school. I was in a rebellious stage—maybe not a “stage” since I’m still like that—but I didn’t want to do what I was supposed to.

I had a hard time concentrating in class, so Mom took me to see a specialist. After running his tests, the doctor diagnosed me with attention deficit disorder. My parents weren’t fans of medication, so my mind would be constantly going a million miles an hour. There were no smartphones providing endless hours of entertainment, so most of the time I was bored. My family encouraged me to be fearless, and the only guaranteed way I got attention was when I did something wrong...so the trouble started early.

After thirteen months, my dad returned from prison. I can’t remember much about his return, but I do remember that one of the first things he had to do was meet with my principal Joe Merluzzi. The principal told my dad that I refused to respect authority and he had no choice but to expel me from the 7th grade.

“It will be interesting to watch Dan grow up,” the headmaster said. “He will either become president of the United States or a master criminal.”



## Chapter 4

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### Big Dan

My father's world revolved around money. It was the lever he used to move the world and anyone in it. He liked the way money gave him power over others who wanted it, including my brother and me. He would give us money if we got up waterskiing or if we tried a new sport. It reached a point to where I was like an '80s supermodel—I didn't want to get out of bed if I wasn't being paid.

But being back home with an uncontrollable kid who'd just been expelled and a wife who didn't know how to discipline, however, soon wore my dad down. And he quickly decided that life might be better without me around. He also knew my brother would be much easier to deal with when I wasn't around to pick fights with him.

So Dad pawned me off on my mom's stoner brother Big Dan in Minnesota. My uncle, who weighed 130 pounds and was only 5'5", was referred to as "Big Dan" because compared to me, he was the bigger Dan. Pops pitched the whole adventure to Big Dan the only way he knew how: with money. He'd always curried favor with my mother's side of the family by buying them things. He bought my uncle new skis that year to butter him up for the big sale.

He offered Uncle Dan four grand a month to take care of me along with a weekly allowance to be doled out at my uncle's discretion. It was supposed to be tied to my good behavior, so if I got into trouble, then I lost the allowance that week. I only remember receiving the money twice, so I can only assume Big Dan pocketed the cash the rest of the time. He'd put his wallet in his pants, climb on a snowmobile, and spend my allowance at the bar.

One day, he was on his snowmobile run and my aunt was also out of the house. I found his bottle of Jack Daniels in the cupboard, and I wanted to see what it felt like to be drunk. I'd polished off a third of

the bottle by the time my uncle got home. He stumbled in obviously hammered and put a chicken potpie in the microwave.

“You’re way drunker than me,” I declared.

He contested my accusation, which resulted in a wrestling match on the living room floor. After he bested me in what seemed to be a fair contest, he pulled his chicken pot pie from the microwave and headed to his room. He passed out in bed with half-defrosted, half-eaten pie oozing down his chest.

By that point, I couldn’t stand upright, and I was crawling on the floor like a drunken sloth when Aunt Lisa came in the door. She started yelling, but I was too drunk to care. Lisa was getting more irate by the second, waking up Uncle Dan to yell at him, then yelling at me. “Either it’s him or me!” She spit out the ultimatum to her husband.

I will never forget the shock on her face when he chose me. It wasn’t through some sort of family bond or drunken loyalty, but practicality. Big Dan was a carpenter who lived well beyond his means, so wife or no wife, he wasn’t giving up an extra four grand a month.

Unfortunately, Aunt Lisa was bluffing. She came back after a day or two, and it was uncomfortable living in the house after that. I felt unwelcome and out of place. I didn’t have any friends, so I was constantly bored out of my mind with nothing to do and nobody to talk to. Life in wintery Minnesota was like living in a frozen circle of Hell.

I remember waiting for the bus in the snow when it was thirty degrees below zero. School was just as bad as home, only here they made fun of me for different things. I now received shit for not only my buck teeth—“bucky”—but also for being a “city boy.” The highpoint of my day came when the bus would stop to pick up Tanya, the Puerto Rican stepdaughter of Dan’s best friend. She was a grade ahead of me, and even though she was only fourteen, she looked like she was twenty. Her waist was tiny, and she’d wear tight, low-cut tops to show off her big tits. I tried desperately to get her to like me by putting on my Cool Water cologne and asking her dumb questions.

But she was banging high school guys and I was in seventh grade, so she wanted nothing to do with me. At least at the time.

My time in Minnesota came to an end when I was kicked out of 7th grade for the second time that year for leaving gym class on the back of a drug dealer's snowmobile. I didn't leave for any particular reason; I just figured fuck it, what are they gonna do? It's not like my life could get any worse. I was wrong.



## Chapter 5

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# Losing My Virginity

**F**or 8th grade, my parents sent me to a military boarding school called Admiral Farragut Academy, which the students lovingly referred to as Admiral Faggot Academy. The food was awful, and the barracks were even worse. I was crammed into a shoebox of a room with bunk beds and three other guys. The only thing I looked forward to was making a Cup O' Noodles every night with my illegal water heater. There wasn't a single hot girl in the whole school other than my blonde math teacher who wore blouses that were half-unbuttoned. I jerked off to her in the bathroom on a regular basis.

We had stupid fucking uniforms and marched in formation on the weekends. You'd have to really want your child to be miserable to send him to this shithole, but the structure and organization was probably better than the parenting I received at home. Another upside was there were exactly zero cool kids in the whole school, so there wasn't anyone to make fun of me.

One of my roommates was a Mexican kid we'll call Pedro. I hated my family at that point and was quite vocal about it, so when Thanksgiving break came, he invited me to spend it with him in Mexico.

"Why the fuck would I want to go to Mexico?" I asked.

"No, it's cool. I have my own house, a limousine, and we can do whatever we want."

"Can I buy a gun?"

"No, but we can buy dynamite."

I was sold. I was a sucker for limos and Mexican dynamite.

True to his word, we got picked up from the airport by a stretch limousine. Before even unpacking our bags, we procured the dynamite from a local flea market. It was really just gunpowder tightly wrapped in newspaper with a wick sticking out. And they

were probably only about a quarter of the power of a legit stick of dynamite, but compared to the fireworks in the US, it might as well have been C-4.

Pedro had the driver pull over into a neighborhood, and we tested our newly acquired dynamite on some mailboxes. They blew completely apart, like vaporized. The explosion was strangely satisfying; however, the ringing in my ears that wouldn't stop was not.

We headed back to Pedro's house, throwing dynamite out the window of the limo along the way. I checked to make sure the road was empty the first few times, but then I got lazy and started just throwing them blindly into the street...until it happened.

I hurled one out the window, exactly as a car passed us. The dynamite went right in the driver's window. Time froze. I started to doubt what I'd seen. Maybe it didn't go into another car. Or maybe I was just hoping it didn't.

Suddenly, it looked like a light switch was flipped on and off inside the car. The light emitted was blinding, followed by pieces of newspaper blasting out the windows, then darkness. Horrified, I looked over at Pedro. *Did we just kill someone?* I wondered as I glanced back at the car, which was swerving all over the road. I was equal parts relieved and scared when the driver of the blown up car regained control, sped up and came to a screeching halt in front of our limo. The driver leapt out, screaming.

Our chauffeur got out with a machete in his hand and started yelling at the driver, who shouted back at him. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but the machete went up into the air and that brought the conversation to an end. The guy got back into the car, managed to get it started, and rumbled off.

The chauffeur calmly put his machete away and proceeded to shake us down. Pedro and I had to hand over every peso and centavo we had to prevent him from telling Pedro's father what we'd done. After fleecing us of our money, he then confiscated the dynamite. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it, we had more cash back at the house.

A couple of days later, we were debating what we should do, when Pedro all of a sudden smiled. “Grab some cash,” he said. “We’re gonna get laid.”

I thought he was just talking shit.

We climbed into the limo and headed out. Ten minutes later, we arrived at a bar where a string of hot women in lingerie marched out and lined up in front of us. Pedro told me to pick one. In my head, I wondered, *Pick one for what?* but I didn’t want to act like I’d never done this before, so I pointed to the girl with the nicest tits in the place. She looked like a low rent, slightly out of shape Salma Hayek.

“How are you?” I asked her.

She ignored the question, took me by the hand, and led me to what looked like a dilapidated jail cell. There was no conversation because, despite taking Spanish since kindergarten, the only phrase I could remember was “*Donde esta la biblioteca?*” I’d never even kissed a girl, and before I could ask her the whereabouts of the library, she was sucking my dick.

*That escalated quickly*, I thought to myself. The gravity of the situation becoming more apparent by the minute. *Is she going to try and have sex with me? Where do I put it, what do I do?* I wondered. This was before the Internet, before little kids everywhere could go on Pornhub and see a chick with three dicks in her.

The hooker popped a condom in her mouth, slid it over my dick, and mounted me before I was fully sure of what was happening. After a minute or two of her riding me like Seabiscuit, I got my bearings and started to figure out how the whole sex thing worked. I got creative, bent her over, and after a couple of minutes, I wasn’t a virgin anymore.

I strutted out of the room quite impressed with myself. Pedro came out five minutes later and told me to give her forty bucks. I was so naive that until that comment; I had no idea she was even a prostitute.

Forty bucks! Shit, that cost as much as the dynamite.



## Chapter 6

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### Blackmail

Things only got worse in Utah. Dad bought a computer robotics company based in Provo, Utah, so we moved there my freshman year. I still had zero identity and didn't know where I fit in. I was fourteen, no girls liked me, I didn't get along with my brother, and I barely spoke to my parents. So life in Provo mostly consisted of getting high, watching TV, and jerking off at night in the basement. There was no Internet, so there were no porn sites. The best you could hope for was late night Cinemax and Showtime topless sex scenes. I recorded the best parts on a VHS tape and then would slither downstairs to watch it.

I didn't have many friends, but there was a girl in my neighborhood named Chalet who was a year older than me. Her father was business partners with my dad, so I got to know her when our families would go on trips together. She drove four wheelers, she could snowboard, and she was hot—she was my dream girl. I reasoned that if we hung out enough, maybe she'd eventually like me too.

At first, things with Chalet actually seemed to be going well. I spent various weekends during the first few months of the school year hanging out with Chalet. Her dad would load their big race trailer full of custom Banshee four-wheelers, then haul it behind his dually truck to the sand dunes. After we warmed them up, Chalet and I would repeatedly drag race each other up the face of the biggest dune. She beat me every time, which was frustrating, but really just made me like her more.

Things only got better when I went with her family to lake Powell on a wakeboarding trip. One night after her parents went to bed, we snuck away and cliff jumped naked off some thirty-foot cliffs. After toweling off, we laid back on the rocks, and it seemed like we could

see every star in the sky. I didn't try and hook up with her because I was nervous. I didn't want to screw it up. Still, I was excited because, for the first time in my life, it seemed like a hot girl liked me back.

On Sunday night, I was back home and had just finished unpacking from the trip. With nothing else to do, I crept downstairs to watch some Skinamax. I was in the middle of enjoying one of my favorite Provo pastimes when I heard a noise. I glanced up and saw something move by the basement window. Panicked, I turned off the TV and went to the window to get a better look outside. I didn't see anyone. *What could it have been?* I wondered. A person? After a second look, I convinced myself it was nothing, so I went upstairs and crawled into bed.

Ten minutes later, there was a knock at the front door. My heart pounded; my mind raced. I tried to tell myself, *it's probably not related*. But my mind raced until it settled on the haunting question: *Could someone have seen me jerking off in the basement?*

Downstairs, I heard my mom answer the door. "Dan it's for you," she called. *Fuck.* I wanted to hide, but my mom knew I was home. Peeking down the stairs, I saw it was some older thugs from my school. And they were smiling. Never in a million years would these guys just stop by my house. My heart sank, this was really bad. "Dan," my mom called again, "Come down! Your friends are at the door." Shit.

I did the walk of shame downstairs and they erupted in laughter like a pack of hyenas. I slunk towards the door as my mom stood there, beaming, looking proud I'd made "friends" in Provo. Thankfully she walked off when I made it to the door. After that, I don't remember exactly what happened or what was said because this was some traumatic shit my brain is still trying to block out. Still, I remember the gist of it. Not only did the thugs see me jerking off, but one of them recorded it. They demanded I pay them a large sum of money or they were going to release the video to everyone, including my parents—especially my parents—then beat me up in front of the school. I didn't have the money, and I was scared shitless.

I couldn't sleep that night. I just laid in bed playing out the scenarios in my head. When you're fourteen, sexual humiliation is a

fate worse than death. This is probably true when you're forty as well.

I went to school the next day in a daze, paralyzed with fear and anxiety. The worst part was I had no idea what to expect, wondering when—and how—they would strike. All I could do was try to keep my head down. I snuck into my first class without incident. The rest of the morning was also quiet. By lunch, I'd become somewhat optimistic, telling myself nothing was going to happen—at least not until school let out. As soon as the final bell rang, I booked it for my house while looking over my shoulder constantly. I burst through the front door and locked it behind me. I didn't know what was going on, confused why nothing had happened. I was about to get my answer.

## CHALET DASTRUP

### Family Friend/Dream Girl

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*Our fathers were friends and started doing business together, which lead the Bilzerian family to move to Utah. Our families spent a lot of time skiing, snowboarding, boating, going to the dunes, and traveling. Dan and I became best friends, always having a good time on some crazy adventure. We attended the same high school. I don't know the reasons certain people get singled out to get bullied, but I watched it happen to Dan. He was bullied.*

*I was at Will's Pit Stop, a gas station where everyone would meet up to hang out. There was a group of people watching a video and laughing. I heard them say TW's name. TW was a scary dude, known as a drug dealer and a local gang leader. He was someone you didn't mess with. I kept listening to their conversation about how TW was going to release this tape and humiliate the kid that was in it. Then a group of guys were going to jump him, beating him up in front of everyone at school.*

*Curious to see what was on this tape, I walked over, and as they replayed it, my heart dropped. It was a kid jerking off in his basement. It was Dan. I grabbed the camera, sprinted to my car and drove off. My adrenaline was pumping as I sped to TW's house.*

*I walked up to the kid who was sitting on the front porch and asked him where TW was. He pointed to the front door that was cracked open. I went into the house and walked straight up to TW. I told him I destroyed the tape and said they better not touch Dan. He yelled at me for walking into his house and said he'd do whatever the fuck he wanted.*

*As I walked away, I turned back to him and said, "Stop being a hypocrite. You jerk off in your basement too!" I couldn't sleep that night. I didn't care what they did to me; I just didn't want them to hurt Dan. I went to school the next day ready for anything to happen, but nothing did. Word of mouth was, TW was telling people to leave Dan alone.*

My hopes with Chalet were dashed when I learned she'd come to my defense and somehow convinced the guys to not release the tape. In my mind, having her see it and stick up for me was almost as humiliating as if they'd just released it. My heart sank. I felt like a charity case, and I was too embarrassed to even be around her. Things were not going as planned.

I'm sure TW was scared of Chalet's older brother Jarom; he was a big guy who played football, had a lot of guns, and was even crazier than Chalet. If anyone touched Chalet, I honestly believe Jarom would've straight up murdered them. Either way, I dodged a bullet because TW was not fucking around; he would've released the tape, and they would've jumped me had it not been for Chalet. A bunch of kids saw the tape, and I was made fun of regularly, but it could've been much worse. TW ended up getting killed in a drug deal years later.

Thankfully we moved back to Florida soon afterward, and I started sophomore year at Tampa Preparatory School. Determined to end the cycle of bullying, I began lifting weights, and tried out for the baseball team. Dad's years of torturing me with hours of practice paid off, and I made the varsity team. I was the starting pitcher, and I was actually winning games. I made friends with the guys on the team and now all of a sudden, I wasn't a loser. The kids respected me, and girls weren't repulsed by me, so I hoped it would finally be a good year.

And it was...until I predictably fucked it up.



## Chapter 7

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### Tampa Prep

My neighbor and I were getting hammered on a Sunday afternoon at my house when we decided to go to the mall to “pick up chicks.” He’d just gotten a new Jeep Grand Cherokee for his sixteenth birthday, but he was in no condition to operate it. I was only fifteen, so I wasn’t legal to drive or sober either, but I was less fucked up than him.

I smoked a joint as we passed a 40 of Schlitz back and forth on the way to the mall. We finished the beer and did a couple bong rips in the parking lot before walking into Nordstrom’s. Unfortunately the mall was full of old ladies and middle school girls with braces, so instead of picking up girls, we grabbed a couple slices of Sbarro’s pizza in the food court and took off.

It was pouring rain when we left. I took the freeway onramp too fast, and the Jeep fishtailed. Like an idiot, I stomped on the brakes and locked up the tires. The jeep slid sideways, a tire caught, and we started barrel rolling through the air. Everything happened so fast until the Jeep flipped. Then time slowed down. I glanced over at my buddy mid-tumble, and he was so fucked up that he was actually grinning from ear to ear.

The Jeep rolled three full times before coming to a stop upside down. A switch flipped in my head; I knew this was really bad, and I sobered up instantly. I pulled my buddy out of the window and immediately buried the bong, the weed, and the booze in one of the tire ruts while he sat on the ground in a daze. I was always good under pressure. In baseball, when the bases were loaded, and we needed to score, I would always come through. It was my one positive attribute. So I told him to be quiet and let me do the talking.

When the cops showed up, we were soaked, and the smell of smoke had been washed away. I told the officer we’d hydroplaned because of

the rain, and when they asked my friend questions, I interjected quickly, answering and explained that he was a bit shook up. They didn't consider the possibility that two kids would be drunk and high at two in the afternoon on a Sunday, filed the report, and let us go.

The insurance company paid up and somehow, we walked away scot-free. I think his dad knew the truth, though, because he wasn't allowed to hang out with me ever again.

A few months later when I turned sixteen, my dad coincidentally leased me a Jeep Grand Cherokee. I'd clearly not learned my lesson because the first thing I did was put on two layers of limo tint so I could smoke weed while driving. Having my own ride was a big deal because now I could go to parties and feasibly pick-up girls.

My school was located conveniently close to the ghetto where it was easy to buy dime bags of schwag weed from the local drug dealers on the corner. I'd sit in the parking lot after school rolling joints to smoke on the way home. After smoking a blunt in the parking lot, I drove across the street to pick up my brother.

Upon pulling into school, I saw my math teacher. Good and stoned, I thought it'd be funny to stick my ass out the window of my Jeep as I drove by her. She didn't think it was funny. So at the end of the year I was asked not to return to Tampa Prep, and my father was surprised when they turned down his bribe to build the school a new baseball stadium.

## PAUL BILZERIAN

### Father, Corporate Raider

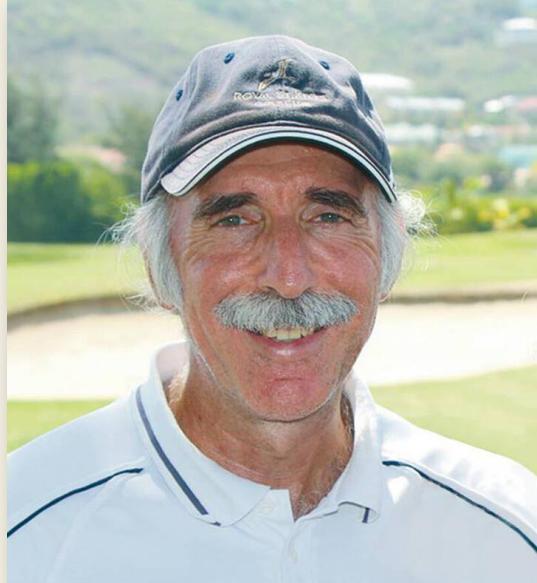
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*Dan returned to Tampa for tenth grade and attended Tampa Prep. He made the varsity baseball team as a sophomore. Dan was not only a great pitcher, but he was also the greatest clutch hitter I ever saw. I coached him on fourteen teams, so I saw him play close to three hundred games. Getting a clutch hit one out of three at bats is exceptional. In three hundred*

*games, I cannot recall one time when Dan failed to get a clutch hit. He reminded me of The Natural. Thirteen of those teams came in first place, and a good deal of that success was due to Dan. So we were rather excited about Dan's baseball prospects for his junior and senior years. Unfortunately, Dan mooned his math teacher on the last day of school his sophomore year, and he was permanently expelled, so we never got to see him play his junior year. Of course, as everyone knows now, he was arrested on the first day of school in his senior year and was ordered to leave the state of Utah, so he never played baseball his senior year either. Four years in the Navy later, and his baseball days were over.*

*Some birds just have to fly free; some men must blaze their own paths. I have no doubt when Robert Frost was writing his great poem, "The Road Not Taken," he had someone like Dan in mind.*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*





## Chapter 8

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### First Fight

Ispent the summer back in Minnesota. Tanya, the Puerto Rican girl I had a crush on, had gotten knocked up, had a kid, and dropped out of school. So she was just desperate enough to agree to sleep with me, and I finally lost my non-condom virginity. I got some confidence and continued sleeping with her to accumulate experience with someone who wasn't a Mexican hooker.

For my junior year, my parents enrolled me in public school, which had always seemed cooler than the private schools I was used to. However, I wasn't allowed to play baseball that year due to the same district school change. Since I couldn't play ball, I hung out with more of a juvenile delinquent crowd, one of them being a Hispanic kid named Fabian. This friendship lasted until a girl told him I was talking shit. I was not; the girl just wanted attention, but he believed her and called me out to fight him.

Fabian was a big dude with about five inches and sixty pounds on me. I didn't want to fight him, but I hadn't done anything wrong, so I refused to back down. I'd never been in a fight before, so I was scared, but I also wouldn't be able to live with myself if I pussed out. So it was either get beat up by him or internally beat myself up. Nothing was worse than the latter.

An audience gathered at the parking lot where kids met for fights, cheering like bloodthirsty Romans watching gladiators in the Coliseum. I threw a jab at Fabian just to get this thing going. He lunged and cracked me in the head with a right hand. I felt his metal rings hit my face, and it hurt, but the pain somehow didn't register.

I got a few shots in before he put me in a headlock and repeatedly pounded the back of my skull. Every time he hit me, I wondered if it was lights out. I saw stars, and each blow was like a concussive blast

where everything went quiet and then slowly came back to normal with all these kids yelling.

I eventually slithered out of his grasp, and we traded punches on the asphalt until I thought my heart would explode. I'd never been so tired and out of breath in my life. He was heaving and throwing looping lazy punches that shouldn't have landed, but I was too exhausted to move out of the way. This continued until he couldn't punch anymore and stopped the fight.

As soon as it was over, I remember thinking, *I can't believe I was so scared of fighting my whole life, and I really need to start doing cardio.* Taking a punch to the face didn't hurt nearly as bad as I imagined. When you're in a fight and you know it's coming, your adrenaline is going, so you barely feel any pain.

He beat my ass, but technically didn't win the fight since he's the one who stopped. It was simultaneously my first defeat *and* my first victory. The crowd was happy, I had blood on my face, and I was smiling, relieved that it was over. That could have been much worse, I thought. I didn't quit and learned I could take a beating. It was a lesson that I would relearn many times.



## Chapter 9

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### Approach Anxiety

Halfway through my junior year, my family up and moved back to Utah so my father could be closer to his work. We rented a house in a nice neighborhood outside of Salt Lake City called Sandy, where I finally started to find my place.

This was my seventh new school in five years. Though some kids feel like moving a lot fucks them up, the upside is you get a fresh start and that allows you to learn how to reinvent yourself, a skill that has served me well in life.

In Salt Lake City, I ran around with a diverse group that ranged from jocks to Samoan thugs. I kept lifting weights, joined a Mexican car club, and tried mushrooms for the first time. It was all coming together, and I was actually happy for the first time in my life.

My friends and I would typically meet up at the mall to get high and pick up girls. I was pretty shy, and like most seventeen-year-olds, I was scared of talking to hot girls. The fear wasn't of actually speaking to them but of being rejected by them. My buddy Wayne was the opposite, he didn't give a fuck. He would talk to every girl he saw, but he had a different approach than we did; he wouldn't hit on them. Sometimes he would even start conversations by making fun of them, something I never thought would work, but it did. Usually, he just asked a question, something innocuous to get them talking, and if they tried to dismiss him or act like they were too good, he would just crack jokes and turn it around on the girls, making them feel insecure.

His approach was genius if you understand the psychology, but this wasn't something he had figured out from textbooks on the human brain. It was natural, and it worked because he genuinely didn't care, and that telegraphed confidence. But most importantly,

by never hitting on them or displaying direct interest, he *set it up* so the girls never really had the ability to reject him.

It was inspiring to see a guy who wasn't afraid. I hated being scared of anything, and this was the perfect way for me to conquer that fear. After watching how Wayne worked, I began building up the confidence to approach women. I wasn't as witty or as comfortable talking to girls as Wayne, but the more I failed, the less I cared. And I quickly learned that not caring was the most important attribute you could have when picking up women.

Also, once I made it about talking to girls instead of hitting on them, I approached with more confidence. Before, I used to get anxiety because being rejected seemed like a big deal, but with my new strategy, I had less to be afraid of. I didn't get laid that much; in fact, I don't think I got laid at all from doing this, but I was making progress, and Rome wasn't built in a day.



**APPROACH, APPROACH, APPROACH.** Volume is the key. The more you fail, the less you will care, and the less you care, the more you will succeed.

I had a buddy who would only talk to girls he was positive were into him. He pursued two girls and slept with both of them. I tried with a hundred girls, and I fucked three. Sure, he may be "batting a thousand," but I still fucked more girls.

Do this at the mall or the beach. Get some practice with girls you aren't gonna see every day and just start a casual conversation or ask a question. If they seem interested, invite them to tag along to something you're gonna do anyway; that way their involvement doesn't seem important. For example: "My friends and I are about to go to a pool party/winery/lake house/concert/Chipotle/whatever if you wanna come."

*Don't hit on them.*

Around the time he broke ground on the Tampa house, Dad bought a peninsula of land in Minnesota with five homes on it. I'd been spending summers up there ever since, so when school got out in Utah, I loaded up my Jeep and drove north. My parents agreed to let me stay in one of the guest houses, so the only thing I needed was a wingman. I called my buddy John, a neighbor from Tampa and invited him up. He was a state champion wrestler but as much of a fuck up as me. After winning state, he went to nationals but was kicked out of the tournament for buying beer with a fake ID. The good news was he still had the ID.

It was summertime in a lake town, and girls in bikinis were everywhere. My cute five-year-old cousin Nick was a better accessory than a puppy dog for picking up chicks, so we'd send him in to ask girls if they wanted to come on the boat with us. My ski boat and the cooler full of beer helped continue the conversation. We wakeboarded and drank while blasting music from my carefully crafted mixed tapes. I was good, but my wakeboarding skills always seemed to improve when there were hot girls on board.

After an hour or so, buzzed, we'd head to my house to keep drinking. I finally started hooking up with girls and, surprisingly, without much effort. This was the moment when I first started to understand the importance of *The Setup*. My "game" with girls hadn't really improved, but my environment was now conducive to getting laid, and that made all the difference.

In the past, I tried too hard, and it was counterproductive. I noticed the less "I tried," and the lower my perceived effort, the more the girl would try and make me interested in her. I also realized the more fun and exciting my life was, the more girls wanted to be a part of it.

When my five-year-old cousin wasn't around, John and I took turns approaching girls. During the day, it was, "Hey, wanna go boating? We're wakeboarding and need a spotter." At night, it was, "Hey, wanna go to the keg party on Cross Lake" or "Wanna smoke?"

Inviting a girl to join us for something we were doing anyway made it a lot easier to talk to them, increased our success rate, and showed less interest than randomly approaching them. Then by doing something fun together, we could avoid the forced conversation and pressure that makes a regular date awkward.

John looked like an athletic Matt Damon, so he was usually pretty good at getting girls. One day, he was cruising around the lake on my WaveRunner when he saw a hot blonde laying out on her dock. He picked her up, took her for a ride, and somehow convinced her to suck his dick. Unfortunately, the girl's dad had binoculars, so he was waiting when they pulled up to the dock. After some hostile words, John panic-shoved the girl off the back into the water and sped off. The problem was that we lived directly across the lake from the girl's family.

We knew that her dad would be coming to talk to my dad about what happened, so I figured it was best to lean into this thing and not hide. John took a shotgun, I grabbed my AR-15, and we both started shooting cans and shit in the front yard. Moments later, we saw her dad's red pickup truck peel out of their driveway headed towards us. As he got closer, he must have heard the semi-automatic gunfire because he never made it to the house.

When summer was over, I packed up my shit and drove back to Utah in my Jeep. The drive took a couple days, but I was, for the first time in my life, actually looking forward to school.



## Chapter 10

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# Utah Code

## § 76-10-505.5

**I**had an AR-15 that I kept in the back of my Jeep, which kids thought was cool.

I laid out my best outfit the night before and couldn't eat much at breakfast because I had butterflies in my stomach. It was the first day of class, and I was excited to be a senior. I was eligible to play baseball again, I had a lot of friends, and people thought I was cool. Everything was set for this to be my best year yet.

On the way to school, I picked up a couple buddies, and as they tossed their backpacks in the trunk, they saw my AR-15. It wasn't an accident; I was proud of that thing and was always trying to show it off. They thought it was badass too, and as soon as we got to school, they told all their friends. Halfway through my first class, I was asked to step into the hall.

A cop stood there with some of the school faculty.

"Do you have any weapons in your car?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"I have a hunting rifle, a shotgun, and a pistol." (Ok the hunting rifle was a bit of a stretch, but technically you are allowed to hunt with an AR-15).

The cop glanced over at the administrator, who seemed to be trying to get her breath under control.

"Can I search your car?" he asked.

"Yeah, sure."

My whole life Dad had taught me to always tell the truth. But he didn't give me any lessons on dealing with the police, where the truth was not always on your side. Considering he was a convicted felon

and I was in constant trouble, that was the kind of mentoring I could really have benefitted from.

Had I refused to speak to them, gotten in my car, and driven home, there would have been zero trouble. But I naively gave them permission, so they searched my car and slapped handcuffs on me.

Dad rushed down to the juvenile detention center. I was sure he'd be pissed, but he was very calm and said he was going to get me out. I was shocked because he would get so upset about petty shit, yet he was calm about me being in jail. Mom offered some encouraging words. I told them, honestly, that I didn't know why I was in trouble since the guns were legal. I was parked about a quarter mile away from the school, and I had told the truth.

I asked optimistically if he thought I'd be able to get back into class that week. My dad said no matter what happened, I would never be allowed back at that school again, and my lawyer said I might never be allowed at any school again. Then my father gave me the bad news.

They were charging me with "possessing a firearm on or about school grounds." This was shortly after the Columbine shooting in Colorado, and that's when I understood why Dad wasn't mad. He knew this was serious, and I was looking at years in prison. I sat there stunned while he told me not to worry. The last time he told me not to worry, he ended up in federal prison, so I didn't feel very confident in his assertion.

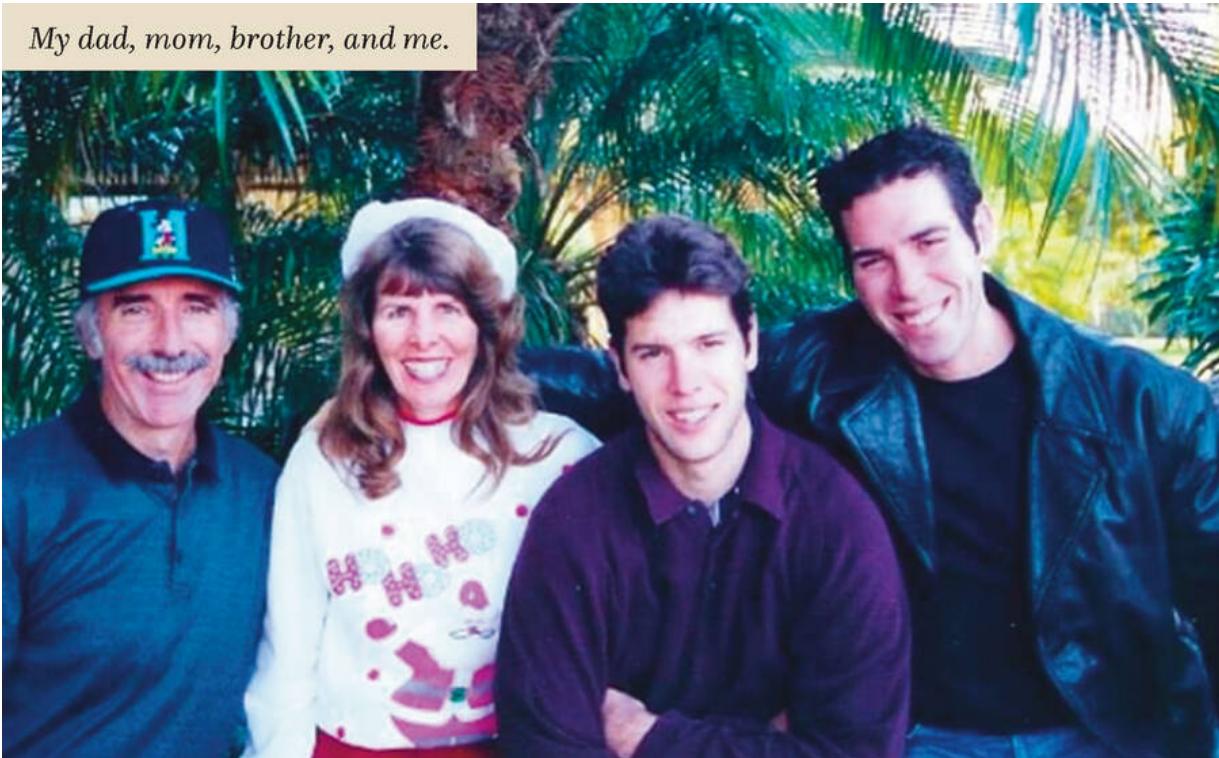
I laid in my cell that night contemplating how one mistake had completely derailed my life. I'd busted my ass to make a bunch of friends, I was finally popular, and for once in my life I actually wanted to go to school. My mind was still holding out some hope that my life would go back to normal, but one glance at the iron bars made it register. I was locked in a cage. I looked around the room at the metal mirror with gang symbols cut into it and the dented steel toilet with no seat and wondered, *Am I gonna have to get used to this?*

Two weeks later I'd accepted my fate, I was actually much happier in jail than I was when I got caught jerking off a few years prior, so I guess it's all relative. I was just upset they weren't feeding me for shit, and there was no weight room. I'd worked so hard over the past

two years to put on what little muscle I had, that losing it actually bothered me more than losing my freedom.

When I finally stopped caring I got the news...My lawyer negotiated a good deal since it was my first offense. I pled guilty and was sentenced to time served, which by then was twenty-one days, but there was a caveat. I had to leave Utah and not come back. I had never heard of someone getting kicked out of a state before, but it wasn't the first time I'd been booted out of something, and it certainly wouldn't be the last.

*My dad, mom, brother, and me.*



The drive with my mother back to Tampa while my brother and Dad stayed in Utah, was forty-eight hours of uncomfortable awkwardness. It was my fault. I'd singlehandedly split up the family. On top of that I couldn't get into any high schools in Florida because of the conviction, so I had two options: go to a shitty community college in hopes of transferring to a better university after two years of good grades or I could join the military.

Slinking into a community college was essentially admitting I was a failure so that was out. My father went into the military a high school dropout and came out a decorated war hero. He used that distinction to get into Stanford University, which at the time was my dream school. The path was clear. My whole life I'd wanted to get my father's respect and I knew he, along with everyone else would respect me if I became a Navy SEAL. It would also mean that I wasn't a loser or a pussy. But that wasn't the only reason I made that choice.

## PART 2

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# Military



## Chapter 11

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# Welcome to the Navy

I wanted to be a part of something serious and impressive, I wanted people to respect me, but, most importantly, I figured it would get me laid.

I went down to the Navy recruiter's office and asked what I had to do to become a Navy SEAL. The recruiter looked at me like a sucker who'd wandered onto a used car lot; he smiled and told me to take a seat. After asking a series of questions to make me qualify myself, he went on to tell me how great military life was.

I asked what the training was like and what I should do to prepare. He didn't know anything other than "It's really hard, you have to run and swim a lot." And "90 percent of the guys don't make it." When I pressed him for more information, he handed me a pamphlet that said "BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) Warning Order," which contained a basic description and the minimum requirements to be eligible. I went to the bookstore and looked up books on how to be a Navy SEAL. Nothing. I started asking around, and I couldn't find anyone who even knew anyone who was a Navy SEAL.

I hired a swim coach and started training my ass off. Every day I would do some form of cardio, calisthenics, and eat every three hours. Things were not progressing as fast as I'd hoped, and I wanted to delay shipping off because I kept getting shin splints any time I'd run more than a mile. But Dad wanted me out of the house, and he told me to build up my running base in boot camp.

I enlisted in the Navy and shipped out on April 29, 1999, four months after my eighteenth birthday. I was 165 pounds, and I'd never run further than two miles in my life.

Upon arrival to Naval Station Great Lakes, we were ordered to strip off our civilian clothes and put all of our personal items in a Ziplock bag before they shaved our heads. The reality of it all hit me

hard. I was truly on my own for the first time in my life, on equal footing with everyone else, and there was no turning back. I was also much uglier bald than I'd anticipated.

Boot camp sucked, but for different reasons than I expected. The food was unhealthy, and we barely slept. I expected to get into better shape, but the workouts were designed for obese couch potatoes. The farthest we ran was a couple miles and it was at a snail's pace. We stood watches, cleaned bathrooms, shined boots/belt buckles, and learned how to make beds and fold clothes. I thought this was going to be like the movie *Full Metal Jacket*, but it felt more like learning how to become a sleep deprived maid than a soldier.

After nine weeks of boot camp, it was on to six weeks of Quartermaster A School, where I would learn how to navigate a ship. Going through boot camp changed my perspective. All of a sudden I was appreciative of everything I used to take for granted. Getting eight hours of sleep felt amazing and food from normal restaurants now tasted better than Michelin Star dinners I'd had in the past. Even little shit like having the freedom to workout in comfortable clothes and shower whenever I wanted brought me a disproportionate amount of joy.

In QM A school, I met a squared away quiet guy named Matt who was going to BUD/S<sup>†</sup> as well. He was a good runner who followed the rules and rarely got in trouble. We were completely different but shared a willingness to endure pain and an abhorrence to quitting.

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<sup>†</sup> Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL.

Matt and I would do calisthenics, lift weights, and go for runs around the base. I preferred run-swim-run circuits because it allowed me to get good cardio exercise without putting too many consecutive miles on my legs. Lake Michigan was cold, but my shins loved it. After a few weeks of keeping up with him on runs, my shins began to really hurt. I went to medical, and after an X-ray, I was diagnosed with bilateral tibial stress fractures. The doc put me on crutches and ordered nine months of limited duty.

I was really happy to get this news because I knew I wasn't physically ready to go to BUD/S, and this would give me time to get in shape while my tibias healed. The Navy detailer who handled assignments had other ideas. "If you can't go to BUD/S now, then I'll put you on a ship for two years after your limited duty is finished."

"But then it will be three years before I can start! I can't wait that long."

"I don't care. Either you get declared fit for full duty now and go to BUD/S or you take your limited duty time and go to the ship."

I went back to the doctor and told him that I no longer had any pain in my legs.

"Sir, I'd like to be taken off limited duty please."

"Keep weight off of your legs as much as possible and take it easy," the doctor said as he signed the papers.

I called my detailer and informed him that I was now fit for full duty. He cut me orders to BUD/S and shipped me off to California. San Diego is beautiful, and the weather is 72°F and sunny during the summer. But when I arrived for training in October, it was cold and overcast.

The first thing you have to do at BUD/S is report to the infirmary with your medical records and complete a "Dive physical." Trainees must get cleared by the DMO (Dive Medical Officer), who, at the time, was Lieutenant Mosier. Doc Mosier was a no bullshit Vietnam SEAL, and he was intimidating. He glanced at me, scanned my paperwork, and then looked back at me.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "Why aren't you on crutches? You were documented with stress fractures four weeks ago."

"The doc at A School cleared me for fit for full duty, sir," I replied.

He didn't buy it and ordered a fresh set of X-rays, which told the same story as they had a month earlier: bilateral tibial stress fractures.

"You're not fit to train. I'm dropping you from the program."

"Sir, can you roll me back to the next class?" I pleaded.

"There are no *white shirt* roll backs," Doc Mosier said referring to the color of T-shirts aspiring SEALs wore before completing Hell

Week. After, trainees are given *brown shirts*. “And there is absolutely no way you can complete training with broken legs. Go to a ship, let your body heal, and then come back.”

With my back against the wall, I played the only card I could, one that was guaranteed to piss off every single person in my chain of command.

I requested Captain’s Mast.

Enlisted men essentially lose all personal freedom and rights. But you have one undeniable right: to request Mast. It’s the ultimate fuck you, the military version of Karen demanding to speak to a store manager. It goes all the way up the ladder to the base commanding officer. Once submitted, it can’t be stopped unless you withdraw your request.

Doc Mosier was pissed.

I ended up in the office of the captain, the highest-ranking officer on the base who was also a SEAL. In the military, you’re broken down and taught to fear and respect rank, particularly the officers, so it was extremely intimidating.

“I only joined the Navy for one reason, sir,” I said, standing stiff as a board, trying to keep my voice from quivering. “I want to become a Navy SEAL, and I will do anything in my power to accomplish that. Please clear me to train, sir.”

“I don’t think you’re going to make it very far,” he said. “But I’ll let you train.”

I was thrilled but also dreaded the trip back to Doc Mosier’s office. He was visibly irritated by the captain’s orders but seemed to offer a grudging respect.

“I’ll bet you twenty bucks you don’t make it through Hell Week,” he said.

“Yes, sir, you’re on.” I was bluffing. I didn’t really think I would make it. I was a massive underdog medically and statistically but felt like I’d look like a real fucking asshole if I didn’t accept.

He wanted to bet, he was confident, and he had a big ego. The *setup* was right to get a good bet; I should have asked for long odds, but I was young, and I had a lot to learn about gambling.



## Chapter 12

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# Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training

Before starting BUD/S, trainees have to complete PTRR (physical training rehabilitation and remediation) and Indoc (indoctrination). These courses are supposed to build trainees up and get them ready for first phase, but I think more guys quit in PTRR and Indoc than in the actual training. We were running twelve to fourteen miles a day, swimming, doing calisthenics, and completing obstacle courses, all while being wet, cold, and sandy.

My first roommate at BUD/S looked like a ripped-up *GQ* model hired to play a Navy SEAL in a movie. He told me that he lived off base during his prior stint at BUD/S. I was interested, but he said they'd only approve requests to live in private housing if the applicant is either married or an officer.

“Fuck it, I’ll submit the paperwork anyway,” I told him.

People who work in military administration roles often make mistakes. They shuffle endless amounts of paper each day, and sometimes they don’t read forms properly. And since they generally would never see this kind of request from an E-2 (my rank), I figured maybe I’d get lucky. And I did.

Through some mix-up in the bureaucracy, my application was approved. I didn’t talk to Dad much, but I called to share this good news. He was impressed and offered to send out my mother’s Jeep so I could commute to and from my apartment. The first thing I did was spend all of my saved boot camp money installing a lift kit and huge mud tires to transform it from Soccer Mom to Swamp Buggy. Then I outfitted a one-bedroom apartment in Coronado.

Moving off base was the first mistake I made in BUD/S. It took my pay from just under a thousand dollars a month to almost three

thousand, but it separated me from my classmates and made me stand out. Growing up, I craved attention, so I liked to stand out, but in BUD/S, the last thing you wanted to do was stand out. It also meant I couldn't ask questions or share tips at night like the guys in the barracks. Plus, I lost almost an hour of sleep a day when my round-trip commute was tallied up. That recovery time was important, given that part of BUD/S is intended to deprive you of sleep to test how you perform.

Each day started the same. My three alarm clocks would sound, and I'd wake up at 0300. I stood in the mirror and shaved, knowing the sun wouldn't rise for another four hours. I thought Southern California was supposed to be warm, but it wasn't unusual for the base temperature gauge to display temperatures in the forties during those early winter mornings.

It was pitch-black as we ran from the barracks to the CTT (combat training tank). The air was crisp, and I could see my breath with every exhale. It had been unusually cold that week, and the sign as we entered the base flashed between the time, 0350, and the temperature, 39 degrees.

The first step before entering the CTT was Decon, which was short for decontamination, where we were subjected to hundreds of gallons of freezing water from industrial pinpoint high-pressure hoses designed to wash dirt off military vehicles. As I felt the cold water seep through my uniform, I fully abandoned all hope of being dry and warm for breakfast, the one thing I usually looked forward to.

We stripped down to our UDT shorts, which were like Daisy Dukes made of a thick, heavy-duty canvas. They seemed designed by a sadist with special effort paid to pinching your nuts and chaffing the skin off your inner thighs. We sat down in our boat crews "nut to butt" on the cold concrete pool deck to wait for the instructors to arrive. The highlight of my morning would come if the guy behind me couldn't hold it any longer and pissed on my back and ass. It's funny how a stranger pissing on your back, something that at any other point in your life would lead to a lay down drag out fight, would, in this strange situation, be welcomed.

Headlights shined into the CTT, indicating the instructor's arrival. We did twenty push-ups, followed by acknowledging them in order of rank with "Hooyah, Instructor Patstone! Hooyah, Instructor McCleland!"

"Backs!" one of the instructors yelled. We flipped over, backs on the cold concrete while they turned on hurricane fans and sprayed us with water. After what felt like an eternity, the instructors ordered my half the class into the pool. Excited to warm up, I eagerly got to my feet and jumped into the water. Shit! The pool heater was either broken or turned off, because the water was freezing. If I had to guess, I'd say low sixties.

I swam as fast as I could, trying to warm up. After twenty minutes, I was exhausted. The water still felt cold, and I knew I had hours more to go. The negative thoughts quickly began piling up, and I started to question everything. *What the actual fuck did I sign up for? Why on Earth did my dad think I could do this? There's no way I'm gonna make it!* I thought as I swam.

I tried to imagine picking up a hot girl in a bar by telling her I was a SEAL or sitting on a warm tropical beach to distract myself, but my mind kept settling on *this sucks*. It was actually better when the instructors were yelling at you because at least there were distractions, other things going on. In the water, it was just you and your thoughts.

After hours of swimming and other drills, we raced to put on our cold, wet uniforms. Over half the people in my class ended up quitting because they were sick of the cold. Being cold for ten or twenty minutes sucks, but being cold sixteen hours a day for seven months straight is downright soul crushing.

Breakfast provided a few brief moments of rest and nourishment before we ran the mile back to the other base to a concrete training area called "The Grinder." There we would complete a rotating circuit of exercises that totaled around five hundred push-ups, almost a hundred pull-ups, and a seemly never-ending amount of sit-ups, flutter kicks and leg levers.

Rubber boats full of ice cubes and water were positioned near the pull up bars. If you couldn't finish your set, you had to dive into the

boat and crawl under the rows of inflated cushions and climb out the other side. If you reached failure during push-ups or sit-ups, the instructors would order you to “Get wet and sandy!” That meant run two hundred yards to the ocean, jump in, roll around in the sand until you looked like a sugar cookie, and then sprint back.

After an hour and half of calisthenics, we mustered on the beach for a run. The thick wool socks we were issued held water like sponges, so it felt like I had anchors attached to my ankles. I looked around, and the other guys didn’t seem to be struggling too much, which was a big mind fuck. The hardest thing for me to do was run next to a guy who didn’t get winded or show pain. If I saw a guy suffering, it gave me confidence and sometimes a second wind. But no such boost happened for me in the early days of BUD/S.

I was out of breath just a few minutes into the run. I tried to relax, but when the instructor led the class into the soft sand, I thought my heart was gonna explode. The soft sand was less painful on my shins, but each step took much more effort.

After about thirty minutes, I started to fall off the group’s pace and ended up in my first “goon squad.” This was a general term for people who couldn’t keep up or failed a test. The instructors had us get wet and sandy and then told us to “drop” and “push ‘em out.” If you heard “drop,” it meant a minimum of twenty push-ups, and you would stay in the push-up position until you heard “recover.” They “beat us,” which was a term for having us do repeated sets of various calisthenics with no breaks.

After about fifteen minutes of this, the goon squad was ordered to go into the surf, interlock arms, and lay down. The fifty-seven-degree ocean crashed over our heads, sand washed into our eyes, noses, and ears as we lay there, wondering how long this would last. This was called “surf torture,” and it usually lasted about twenty minutes but felt like an eternity.

The remainder of the day was spent doing some combination of surf passage, an obstacle course, drown proofing (swimming with hands and feet tied behind your back), underwater knot tying, log PT (workout with a half telephone pole), a two-mile timed ocean swim, etc. When we were finally dismissed around 1900, everyone was

exhausted but we still had to clean and prepare our gear. Trainees were expected to appear with polished boots, a sharp knife, clean UDT life jacket, and a perfectly painted helmet every day. All metal would rust when it hit saltwater, and my helmet regularly required a new paintjob after getting punted by instructors who didn't like me, which was pretty much all of them.

Painting a helmet doesn't sound hard, but it took hours to sand, prime, paint, dry, and then apply all the stickers. Hours that were destroyed in a split second with a swift kick. I can't count the number of times I watched in horror as my helmet spun through the air and crashed on concrete. I felt like the instructors were kicking me in the stomach, not to knock the wind out of me but worse—to make sure I lost three or four hours of sleep.

I was in the bottom 10 percent of the class physically, probably lower in terms of maturity. Aside from the stress fractures, I was suffering from iliotibial band syndrome, which manifested itself in golf ball-size lumps in my knees and caused sharp pain by pulling my kneecap to the side. I also had bilateral extensor tendonitis, and the Navy's answer to all of this was Motrin, which had given me acid reflux and almost burned a hole in my stomach.

I was immature, inexperienced, scared, broken, and unconfident. This was not what my class or the instructors were looking for, and I knew that in this pitiless environment, things would only get worse. And they definitely did.



## Chapter 13

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### Hell Week

It had been over two months since I'd checked into BUD/S and I was extremely over trained. My body was breaking down, and on Thursday when I started hacking up green flehm and it hurt to swallow, I knew I was in trouble. Medical encouraged us to inform them of any issues, warning that students had died in Hell Week from untreated respiratory infections that lead to pulmonary edema. I knew if I went into medical, they'd most likely pull me from training, and for the first time I considered taking the easy way out.

I sat in my car shaking with the heater on full blast thinking, *What choice do you have? Your cardio is shit without the bronchitis or pneumonia, why put yourself through all this? You're not gonna make it anyway. What's the point?* After five minutes of acting like a bitch and feeling sorry for myself I came up with an idea.

I called my dad's best friend Lane, who lived a couple hours north, and asked him if there was any way he could bring me antibiotics. A month after graduating bootcamp I'd gotten pneumonia from swimming in Lake Michigan. The bad news was, I'd be much more susceptible to getting pneumonia in the future now that I'd had it once. But the good news was a heavy dose of antibiotics had gotten me healthy in a week. Lane came through on Friday night, forty-eight hours before Hell Week was going to start, with a Zpac and a recommendation from his doctor "No strenuous activity for a week." *That's funny*, I thought as I swallowed two of the pills.

Hell Week is five and a half days of training with no sleep or breaks other than to eat and one two-hour nap on Wednesday. They said during the week we'd run a total of 144 miles, all while carrying 200-pound boats on our heads. The rubber boats would bounce up and down as we ran like perpetual jackhammers pounding us onto

the pavement and sand. It was the test of all tests, and we knew it would be unrelenting.

Sunday night the class voted, and we selected the movie *Predator*. Everyone yelled at the screen and recited Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jessie Ventura's lines, but I couldn't concentrate. I knew Hell Week could start at any moment. I just didn't know when. About forty-five minutes into the film, right after Jesse the Body died in the jungle, one of the instructors kicked in the door and fired an M60 machine gun into the classroom ceiling.

"Hit the surf!"

We poured out of the classroom and into the dusk, crossing the Grinder as explosions and smoke grenades detonated everywhere. What seemed like twenty instructors were yelling on bullhorns and firing belt-fed machine guns.

I ran over the beach and into the dark ocean. Right before the water hit my waist, I turned around and fell back. The cold took my breath away—the first time getting wet is always the worst.

The instructors use the term "evolution" to describe a different task or exercise in training. One of the first evolutions we had to do in Hell Week was called rock portage. This was equal parts dangerous and scary. We paddled our rubber boat toward an outcropping of huge rocks when the surf was at its most fierce.

It was a moonless night. All I could see was the green chem lights on our lifejackets and the distant headlights of the support trucks on the beach. It was difficult to see the waves, but we could hear them thunderously breaking around us. I knew they were big because as they formed, the lights on the beach disappeared. We waited outside the surf zone until the instructors gave the signal to come in.

The red chem light waved; it was game time.

We paddled our asses off toward the rocks. Once we'd gone thirty meters, I knew we were in the impact zone (dangerous section where the waves are breaking). I looked back at a growing ten-foot wall of water, and I thought, *Oh fuck, we're gonna get smashed*. We picked up speed quickly as we rode the face of the wave. I paddled as hard as I could, but the nose dug in, and before we knew it, our boat turned sideways, and we were ejected. I held onto my oar, covered my face,

and went into the fetal position. The wave came down like an engine piston and held me underwater as I tumbled like a rag doll in a laundry machine.

When I finally surfaced, I took a big relieving breath of air. It took a second to get my bearings, but when I saw the chem lights on the boat, I made a beeline. Everyone scrambled to right our craft, and guys pulled each other in by the tops of their lifejackets as a wave crashed down behind us. The whitewater pushed us forward as we paddled, trying to stay straight. We rode it in and braced for impact as we approached the rocks.

Upon arrival the coxswain leapt out with the bowline. We quickly exited. Fast but careful because if you fell between the boat and the boulders as a wave hit, bones could get broken.

After carrying the boat over the rocks, our boat crew mustered on the beach, backs straight, eyes front, boat resting on our heads. Boat crews were assembled based on height because everywhere we went, we had to run carrying the boat on our heads. Everything was a race, and “It pays to be a winner!” the instructors taunted. The winning boat crew got fifteen minutes of rest while the rest of the class got beat. That’s what I heard anyway; my boat crew never won a race.

The one thing we had to look forward to every six hours was a break to eat a hot meal. A couple times they yanked that rug out from under us and instead of hot mess hall chow in the warm mess hall, we got cold MREs while sitting waist deep in the ocean. Saltwater got into my food, and I couldn’t look down to see what my fork was hitting because I had a boat on my head.

On the second day, an instructor took me to the surf alone, which was very unusual for Hell Week. He told me to lay down in two feet of water. After about twenty minutes, my whole body was shaking uncontrollably, fighting to generate heat. Eventually, it stopped. When you shake frantically, that means you’re really cold. When you stop shaking, that means you’re hypothermic. Your body isn’t shaking because it’s shutting down. Delirium often follows.

Instructors watch the trainees pretty closely and usually bring them in while they’re still shaking. When he didn’t let me up, I began

to get worried because I certainly wasn't going to get up on my own. I just hoped I wouldn't "hyp out" (pass out from hypothermia).

"Get in here, Beelzebub!" the instructor finally yelled. Nobody could pronounce my last name, so they substituted all sorts of nicknames.

I came into the beach and stood in front of him at attention, waiting for him to ask me questions to determine my level of hypothermia. He didn't; he just looked at me.

"It's time to go away."

"Negative, I'm not going to quit, instructor!" I said, feigning confidence.

His face seemed to soften, and he took on a different tone, not angry, more like a father offering advice.

"Listen I'm not saying this to be an asshole. I'm not trying to make you quit; I'm being completely honest with you. You are not going to graduate, the instructors don't like you, the class doesn't like you, and no matter what you do, they will not let you graduate. I'm being serious, I'm telling you this man to man, not as an instructor at BUD/S. I think you're a tough kid, but you need to go away, prepare, and come back in two years if you really want to be a SEAL because you will not graduate with this class."

Instructors had beaten my ass before, and they'd tried to get me to quit many times. But this was different. He was serious, and I could tell he wasn't lying. It meant I would be enduring all this pain and misery for no reason. There was no light at the end of the tunnel. No good outcome. This hit me like a ton of bricks.

I took it in and processed it.

I could quit and come back when I was healed up, or I could go through all this pain for nothing. Seemed like an obvious choice, but I never wanted to do what I was supposed to do. After hearing this, I really didn't believe I was going to graduate, but I also wasn't going to quit. I looked at him and calmly said, "You're gonna have to kick me out because I'm not quitting."

This wasn't because I was some badass, in fact quite the contrary. I was a 160-pound insecure weakling who'd been bullied, shamed, and

humiliated for the better part of my life. I just didn't want to add self-loathing to the list.

When times were tough in Hell Week, the instructors would try to seduce you into quitting. They offered hot chocolate, warm blankets, and donuts to anyone who rang out. To quit in training, you are required to ring the bell three times, signifying that you have reached your limit and don't wish to continue. I watched guys in far better shape than me, who'd suffered way less, ring that bell.

Sometimes I'd see a guy with a thousand-yard stare and just know he was gonna quit. Guys would get glossy-eyed and emotionless; lights were on, but nobody was home. When they finally left, it was as if their soul had been plucked from their body and just a shell of a man was trudging off the beach. Other times a guy would be doing fine, smiling, and then out of nowhere, he'd just quit. But every time I heard that bell ring, it sent a chill down my spine. They call it the BUD/S curse because that decision will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

The Steel Pier was an evolution notorious for making guys quit. The instructors waited until the middle of the night when the temperature was at its lowest, and then they hauled out the hurricane fans. They had us strip down to our Speedos and instructed us to lay on the cold steel pier. The instructors sprayed us with hoses and turned on the fans. The steel felt colder on my skin than the ocean, but it was a slower, more controlled drop in core body temperature, so they were able to drag it out longer.

When I saw the first guy get up off the pier and slink towards the SUVs carrying a Styrofoam cup of hot chocolate, I squeezed my eyes shut and just concentrated on making it to Wednesday. If you could hang on until Wednesday night in Hell Week, then you could make it, nobody quits after that.



**WHEN YOU ARE GOING THROUGH** something difficult, set achievable goals. Don't look at it like this is seven months of hell; take it a day at a time. Don't think *I have to stay up for five and a half days*. Look at it like *I just have to make it to the next meal or get through this evolution*. If it's really shitty, take it a minute at a time. You can do anything for a minute.

We were finally granted an hour of sleep on Wednesday afternoon. I wasn't planning on sleeping; my uniform was soaked, and I was freezing. I laid down on the uncomfortable metal cot, pulled the sleeping bag over me, and curled into a ball trying to warm up.

I unexpectedly woke up to whistles and machine gun fire.

"HIT THE SURF!" the instructors screamed through bullhorns.

I tried to stand but my hip flexors were so knotted up, I couldn't even extend my legs. I rolled out of the cot onto the sand, temporarily paralyzed in the fetal position. I pushed myself up and hobbled my way to the surf wondering, if any second, my hip flexors would tear.

Every twelve hours there was a medical check. The medics examined everyone's injuries, but it was frowned upon to verbally express anything that wasn't life-threatening. If you said, "My back hurts," then the doctors would be obligated to do something. Some guys used that as a way out of the program to avoid the humiliation of ringing the bell. If they could articulate a spinal injury or something serious, then the doctor would have to diagnose and treat, which almost always meant being pulled out of Hell Week.

I was in bad shape, but the antibiotics had worked, I was still spitting up flehm, but my sore throat was gone. As I got through every medical check, Dr. Mosier appeared more and more surprised. On Wednesday, he personally examined me.

"How do you feel?" he asked, hoping I might take the easy way out.

"I feel great, it's so weird. I'm not in any pain at all. That Motrin really works, Doc."

This was the only time that lying to an officer's face would not result in court martial. The dishonesty was actually encouraged. Dr. Mosier smiled, knowing that I was completely full of shit, and looked at my file. He reached down and pinched my shin. An indescribable pain shot through my entire leg. I started sweating, and tears welled up in my eyes and ran down my cheek.

"Are you sure?" he asked. "Your leg feels extremely inflamed." He put his thumb directly on my fracture and pressed like he was being fingerprinted.

"Hooyah! It's just a little tender from banging against a log on the O Course."

He kept his thumb on the fracture and looked at me. I swung my gaze to stare him eye to eye. This was a major no-no. In the military, you're expected to look straight ahead and always avoid eye contact with someone of higher rank. But I looked into his eyes and without saying a word, I communicated everything I needed to say: I might be broken, but none of you motherfuckers are going to break me.

I probably looked like a big fucking pussy with tears coming down my cheeks, but I took my tiny victories when I could get them. Doc Mosier smiled and released his thumb. He paused like he was going to say something but just stared at me curiously with what I interpreted as a look of respect. It was the only time in the military I had felt respect from anyone higher ranking than me. He and I both knew that I was going to finish Hell Week, and he was gonna lose that bet.

By Thursday, I was a zombie. We'd just set our boat down in front of the obstacle course after a long run. The next thing I knew, the instructors were yelling at me. I'd actually fallen asleep standing up, and they were screaming at me to "hit the surf!" Normally instructors yelling at me would incite fear, but for the first time, I wasn't afraid.

The instructors operated a lot like bullies, preying predominantly on the guys who were weak or scared. Now that I knew I was going to pass their ultimate test, my perspective changed. The mystique was gone, and now all of a sudden SEALS didn't seem superhuman. Once I viewed them as normal people and removed them from the pedestal

in my mind, I noticed they gave me more respect. This is no different than women, when you put people on pedestals, they know they don't belong on, they respect you less for putting them there.

Things were getting worse but my outlook was improving. My knees hurt, my body was breaking down, and the searing pain in my tibias was there like a constant beacon in the darkness reminding me that this wasn't a dream. The good news was, I'd been in pain for so long that I'd learned to accept its presence. Once you reach a certain point of discomfort, a confidence develops because you know things cannot possibly get any worse.

Twenty-four hours later, I found myself doing backward summersaults in the thick mud. My eyes were burning, my ears were plugged, and I was choking on saltwater that'd made its way up my nose. I laughed because somehow, they'd figured out a way to make it even worse—impressive really.

I low crawled through the demolition pits under the barbed wire. Every cut, rash, bruise, and open sore on my body burned from the gunpowder and nasty shit in that sludge we had to wade through. Nothing mattered, though, because I knew it would end soon.

We ran back to base, and the commanding officer came out to inform us that Hell Week was secured. I remember proudly standing there on the beach, hoping he would notice and recognize me. He had to remember. We started with 119 guys, and there were only 17 of us left. I was sure I was going to get at least a smile or a nod, maybe a "congratulations" or "I can't believe you made it!" He pivoted and walked off.

Of all the pain I endured and all the hell the instructors gave me, the CO simply not acknowledging me hurt the most. There was pizza and brown T-shirts laid out for us. I put my shirt on, staggered to my Jeep, and drove to my hotel.

I'd accomplished the unimaginable, but it felt like nobody cared. Like winning the lottery only to find you're the last person on earth.



## Chapter 14

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### Tijuana Steroids

I turned nineteen the day after Hell Week was secured and for my birthday my father got me a room at the Hotel del Coronado to recover. I was beyond exhausted, but I couldn't for the life of me sleep for more than an hour or two at a time. Every time I woke up, I felt worse than before. The pain seemed to be increasing, and everything was becoming more swollen by the hour. My ankles didn't want to bend, and my feet looked like rubber gloves that had been blown up like balloons. The bulk of my toenails had fallen off from the swelling, and my shins hurt so bad that even the thought of touching them made me wince. The ITBS in my knees had gone from golf balls to Easter eggs, and my extensor tendonitis had gotten so bad I couldn't lift my foot upward an inch. On top of that, I couldn't take any more Motrin for the pain or swelling because it was burning a hole in my stomach lining.

When I woke from the second nap, my body had locked up so bad that I needed to literally crawl to the toilet to avoid pissing myself because walking was no longer an option. As I was crawling, I remembered laughing cockily at one of the medical staff who offered me crutches after we secured Hell Week. *If only he could see me now,* I thought.

Training started that Monday morning like always, except the class was allowed to walk for the week instead of run. Some of the guys bounced back quickly, but not me. I was in bad shape physically, but honestly, I was in worse shape mentally.

I've noticed when I work really hard on something, I feel melancholy upon completion. I put everything I had into finishing Hell Week, and it remains the hardest thing I've done in my life. Maybe it's because I expected to feel happier, or maybe because of the suppressed hormone levels, but I really felt like shit. Instead of

feeling like I'd climbed a mountain, I felt more like I'd fallen down one.

I made it an additional three weeks in training before imploding. Doc Mosier was the only person who knew about my stress fractures. The instructors just thought I was a shithead who sucked at running, which was true, but having fractured legs certainly didn't help. I was limping, skipping, and galloping to try and reduce the pressure on my tibias, but the pain was completely debilitating. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't complete the four-mile timed run in under thirty-two minutes.

The instructors sent me to medical, and I was given a rollback. I was slated to continue training with the next class in two months after they finished Hell Week and was tasked with quarterdeck watch during the days. When you get this assignment, you're not supposed to leave base for the full twenty-four-hour "duty day." However, I had watch every day, and I lived off base. To the letter of the law, I was not allowed to go home at all, even though my stuff, my clothes, my bed, and everything was in the apartment.

One of the instructors who didn't like me spotted my unmistakable Jeep rolling out the gate, and he reported me. The next day I was called into a review board. I stood there stiff as a board as the instructors took turns telling the commanding officer what a poor performer I was. This kangaroo court was just a formality. They wanted me gone, and there was nothing I could say or do to change it. I was subsequently dropped from training and put in X-Division where they house quitters awaiting orders to their next duty stations.

I checked into X-Division with a chip on my shoulder. I had gone through all of that for nothing, all the pain, all the cold, and I was right there with the guys who rang the bell the first day. My brown shirt, the thing I was most proud of in the world, had been taken from me. I'd only worn it for a few weeks, but it felt good to be given respect for something I earned. Now I was back at the bottom. Back to being a loser.

My body hadn't recovered from Hell Week, and I was in a bad place mentally because my cortisol levels were sky high, and my testosterone was low. My buddy Matt from Quartermaster school was

in a similar situation. He'd been medically dropped from training after injuring his back, and his mind worked like mine.

"You wanna go to Tijuana and shoot some 'roids?" I asked.

"Fuck it, let's go."

I had toyed with the idea of steroids ever since I saw my cousin gain twenty pounds of muscle one summer on a heavy cycle of Dianabol. Going to Mexico for a trip like that could get you sent to military prison, but Matt and I felt like we didn't have a lot to lose. Information about juicing (taking steroids) was limited before Google and YouTube, but I'd read a couple books, so I wasn't flying completely blind.

The bus let us off right before the border, and we marched into the nearest pharmacy. "Do you have any steroids?" I asked. The only anabolic steroid they had was fifty milligram *rediect* Deca-Durabolin. I'd read that Deca was pretty safe, so I dropped my drawers in the back of the pharmacy for some guy who barely spoke English and didn't care much for proper sterilization practices. He swabbed the site with alcohol, then open hand slapped my ass before jabbing me with an eighteen-gauge needle and hammering in two ccs of oil totaling 100 milligrams. I later found out that the massive needle was about twice the size it needed to be, and the Deca dosage was absurdly low. Small dose or not, the shit worked. My body finally started recovering and after a few days felt better than it had in months. I upped my caloric intake and began lifting weights.

The following week, I went back to Tijuana and had the guy shoot me with 150 milligrams. I gained about ten pounds. It was mostly water, but my muscles looked full, and I was getting a lot stronger. My attitude improved immensely, and for the first time in my life, I actually *looked* like I was in good shape.

Third week, I did two shots of 100 milligrams, one in each butt cheek. People say your first steroid cycle is where you make the best gains, and that was certainly true for me. I'd transitioned from all calisthenics to weightlifting, my daily calories went from a deficit to an excess, and I was able to get decent rest. It was the perfect scenario, and I went from 160 to 173 pounds in three weeks. I was looking and feeling great when the brass gave me the news.

I was required to report to San Clemente Island to work as a janitor while class 227 finished Third Phase. Anger built up inside me; I wanted to break everything in my apartment. I was more pissed about that than I was when they dropped me from training. Hormones play a big role in your thought process and mentality. Overtraining lowers your testosterone levels, making you more passive and more willing to tolerate bullshit; the opposite is true when you're juicing.

There was no way to bring the Deca with me, so my hormone levels would inevitably crash, and my first steroid cycle would be ruined. I'd been railroaded out of the program, and now these dickheads were sending me to a barren island that didn't even have a weight room. I was pissed, but I had no choice. I went out there, lost most of my newly acquired muscle, and swept floors for a few weeks while I came up with a plan.



## STEROIDS

Do not take steroids before you have stopped growing! Steroids will fuse your epiphysial plates and stunt your growth. It isn't worth it.

If you want to take steroids after you turn twenty, then do it correctly. Get your blood work done and establish a baseline testosterone level. If you have naturally low testosterone levels, then have your doctor prescribe you testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) along with Arimidex to prevent aromatization (when excess testosterone turns converts to estrogen). If your testosterone levels are normal or high, I would not recommend doing steroids because you can possibly irreparably damage your ability to produce testosterone.

Steroids can cause side effects, especially if you use high doses. Most will cause your estrogen levels to increase dramatically, and you'll need to know what to look for in order to determine how much antiestrogens to take. Night sweats, water retention, mood swings, and nipple sensitivity are all indicators that your estrogen levels are too high. Having your hormones elevated or out of balance can cause acne, hair loss, prostate enlargement, and it can even cause a man to grow breasts or a woman to grow a beard. The crash after you stop taking steroids can also be shitty; many people lose most of the muscle they put on, and moving backwards always sucks.

If you don't give a fuck and you want a performance advantage or you have shit genetics, then I would recommend doing a lot of research before you start a cycle. Always error on the side of doing less. The risk versus reward of doing really high doses is rarely worth it.

The heaviest cycle I ever did was:

- 100 mg of testosterone and 200 mg of Equipoise every three days.
- 1 mg of Arimidex every three days.
- 3 IU's of HGH every day.
- 10 mg of Dianabol twice a day.

Testosterone is your base; it is essential for sexual function and mental state. You can add anabolics, but you should never do a cycle of just an anabolic like Deca or Winstrol unless you don't want your dick to work. The converse is true as well; you should never just do large doses of testosterone by itself. Combining an anabolic will give better results with a lower incidence of side effects. Low doses of HCG are typically administered during or at the end of the cycle to get your nuts producing testosterone again and to prevent testicular atrophy.

There is a plethora of information out there, so don't be lazy. Do your research and make an informed decision. Talk to a hormone replacement doctor. But keep in mind most doctors don't know jack shit about juicing, so do your homework and find one who does. Be responsible, get your bloodwork done frequently, use proper sterilization techniques, and only take what your doctor prescribes—black market drugs can be mislabeled, unsterile, and inaccurately dosed.



## Chapter 15

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# The Nuclear Half Marathon

While in X-Division I received orders to the USS Mount Vernon. I was supposed to be on crutches working a desk until my legs healed. Instead, I was motoring towards Okinawa, standing watch because my CO (commanding officer) was an asshole. He refused to honor the medical recommendations for me to be on crutches. Instead, he wanted me to rely on an improvised cane they made like I was Jiminy fucking Cricket.

After three weeks at sea, our ship arrived in Okinawa, Japan. As soon as we pulled into port, I requested to see the dentist on base because my wisdom teeth were getting impacted. I didn't really give a shit about my teeth, but it was an undeniable medical condition that would put me in front of a doctor who wasn't on my ship and that was all I needed.

"My legs have been fractured for six months, and they just won't heal," I told the base medical staff. The doctor ordered a nuclear bone scan, where radioactive tracers are sent through the blood stream. After a couple of hours, the tracers gravitate toward tissues that are injured and working to repair themselves. It also helps reveal how much damage has been done to bone material. The staff told me to come back in two hours for the next step of the examination when they would look at the tracers in action.

This was my chance. I shut the door to the medical building and took off running. I wasn't gonna let the CO of that boat fuck me over for one more day. I was supposed to be on crutches, and I was gonna make sure that happened even if it took breaking my legs completely in half. I ran around the base for almost the entire two hours, and the pain was just as bad as it was in BUD/S, so I knew they were still fucked up.

Back at the hospital after my little jaunt, the staff asked a series of questions.

“How much pain are you in?”

“It’s pretty bad, sir.”

“On the scans, your tibias are lit up like Christmas trees. What did you do on the passage over?”

“My commanding officer had me on the bridge standing watch for eight-hour shifts.”

“Your medical records say you’re supposed to be on limited duty with crutches.”

“Yes, sir, but I always follow orders, sir. They did provide me with a cane.”

I told him everything. Everything except for the half marathon I just ran. He rang up the ship CO and chewed his ass, threw in some references to gross negligence, and then recommended a medical retirement for me from the United States Navy. I was ecstatic; I didn’t even know that was a possibility.

Medical retirements don’t happen overnight, but me leaving that ship certainly did. I packed, said some proper goodbyes along with a few fuck-yous, and got the hell off that boat.

I stayed in Okinawa for four months letting my legs heal and waiting for the retirement paperwork. I spent my free time working out and I was really happy to finally have some normality in my life. I hadn’t had sex in over a year but didn’t really stress over that. I’d been so physically beat down that I didn’t even have the vigor to jerk off.



## Chapter 16

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# If at First You Don't Succeed

I was ready to make a second run at BUD/S.

Over eight months had passed since I started the process of retiring from the Navy. I'd gotten up to 180 pounds swimming, lifting weights, and doing steroids. After five months of staying off my legs, I was finally running with zero pain. I trained like an animal, fanatically monitored my diet of five or six lean meals a day, didn't chase pussy, or drink booze. I lived like a monk. A monk with a monkey on his back.

At first, the idea of getting out of the military sounded like a gift from God, but my failed attempt at BUD/S was eating at me. I had literally nothing going on in my life and it was all I could think about. During my workouts, I imagined the respect people would give me if they saw a SEAL trident on my uniform. I imagined a girl asking me what I did for a living and how cool it would be if I didn't tell her and she later found out. I thought being a SEAL would solve all of my problems. When I enlisted, I didn't really think I could do it. I looked at it like a Hail Mary pass—if I caught it, I would be a hero. Now things were different. I knew I could do it, and I knew if I didn't finish what I started, it would haunt me forever. I had to go back.

When my OIC said he wasn't going to approve my request to go back to BUD/S, once again, I had nothing to lose, so I requested Captain's Mast.

"You are at a limited duty command because a panel of highly-respected naval doctors determined that you're permanently disabled to the point you can't perform regular duty. You're currently scheduled to be medically discharged from the Navy, and you want me to approve your request to go to SEAL training? Is this a joke?" the captain asked.

I assumed these were rhetorical questions, so in a rare show of good judgment, I kept my mouth shut.

“Request denied. Get out of my office!”

My father wasn’t surprised at the CO’s reaction.

“Son, you’re going to be medically retired. That’s better than honorably discharged. You’re going to receive money and benefits for the rest of your life. If you go to BUD/S and don’t make it, you’ll be on another ship for two years...You should take the retirement.”

I appreciated his perspective, but, of course, his advice just made me want to do the opposite. Nothing inspired me like proving people wrong, and the best way to motivate me was to tell me I couldn’t or shouldn’t do something. That said, I was out of options, and I was desperate. I hated asking my dad to use his connections, but I saw no other way out.

“Dad, you’re probably right, but I have to do this. Can you call in a favor, please?”

Pops came through.

“I don’t know what kind of shit you pulled, Petty Officer Bilzerian,” my CO growled. “But if you end up back here because you quit, I’m going to make your life hell.”

I couldn’t help myself. I held in the laugh as much as I could, but the thought of going through all this shit and then quitting was a pretty funny punch line to me. I sputtered and smiled.

“You think that’s funny? You think BUD/S is easy? Less than 10 percent of the guys that show up make it through, and I’ve seen guys a lot tougher than you quit.”

I’d like to tell you I said something witty like, “Are you taking bets?” but I didn’t. The truth is I just smiled and said, “Hooyah, sir.” Hooyah was a great word because of its ambiguity; it could mean many different things. Here, it meant “Fuck you.” Guys like him were the exact reason I wanted to go to BUD/S. I loved that he doubted me.

When I left BUD/S, I was a broken, near cripple of 160 pounds. But when I checked in this time for BUD/S Class 238, I was a rock hard 178, and the instructors barely recognized me.

About a month into PTRR, I was eating breakfast in the chow hall when all of a sudden, the place got real quiet. Forks were lowered, and everyone’s eyes were glued to the TVs that were on with no audio.

It was September 11, 2001, and two planes had just crashed into the World Trade Center.

As we ran back to the NSWC (Naval Special Warfare Center) base, things escalated quickly. Snipers appeared on the rooftops, soldiers patrolled with full combat loadouts, and armored vehicles with manned .50 caliber machine guns were rolling down the street. The base went into Threatcon Delta, the highest level of threat assessment possible, indicating threat level *critical* and terrorist attack imminent.

For hours, we waited with no clue what was going on, until we finally received word. Shit was about to get serious. The country was going to war, and that meant *we* were going to war. At this point, there were SEALS who'd been in for ten years without seeing any combat. But that was all about to change.



## Chapter 17

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# Looking for an Edge

**B**UD/S is one of the few military training programs where officers and enlisted guys go through training side by side. This created an interesting dynamic because the instructors were mostly enlisted guys, and they were ordering around and “beating” the officers. Officers who, one day, could potentially be in charge of their platoon, team, or their entire base for that matter. The officers in the class were usually the boat crew leaders, enlisted guys had to call them sir, and fraternization was not allowed.

Chris Regan was my “swim buddy,” the Navy’s version of the Army’s “battle buddy.” It meant anytime I had to hit the surf or do anything, Chris was right there with me. Students were never allowed to go anywhere without a swim buddy, so Chris and I got to know each other pretty quickly. We shared a similar sense of humor, and I respected that he wasn’t a pussy.

Being pushed to your limits mentally and physically usually brings out the worst in people, but when things got bad, Chris didn’t falter. He was regularly there by my side to get beat because I had a tendency to get creative with the rules. I took my medicine with a smile, and Chris did too; he never bitched; he took the beatings like a man.

**CHRIS REGAN**

**Former US Navy SEAL**

*I met Dan during our early twenties—that formative time of life for young men when they’re testing themselves. Meeting in*

*BUD/S meant taking that test to a whole other level. All of us showed up wanting to be Navy SEALs, to do crazy shit and be violent, so it attracted a certain type of person. But even the toughest guys quit at the beginning.*

*Those who passed the test and were eligible, met at the Grinder where the physical education selection is done. That's where Dan stood out to me immediately, as the guy who commented out loud on the ironies that were apparent during this intense process, things that other guys didn't have the balls to say. So I liked him right away—and, with a similar height, we were partnered together in a boat crew and got to be friends. With Dan in my crew, we received a lot of extra attention. By that, I mean the physical beatdowns you get when you're not quite in line. But I was unconcerned about it, and so was he. So when I watched him do this shit, it made me laugh, and I didn't mind the extra push-ups or whatever punishment we were given that day. We knew we'd get through it, and we did.*

*He was a team player but also on his own program, getting creative with the rules. Like, at the beginning of training, you're given all the gear you need. There's no option to bring your own shit. But Dan, he brought his own—these split fins that I would never keep up with. I looked at him and said, "You realize we're not going to swim; we're going to get our ass kicked." And they looked at us, and looked at his fins (they were like Ferraris compared to the issued Fords), and we proceeded to get our ass kicked. I had to give him credit for trying.*



*I value our friendship because you get the real, unvarnished truth—and that's rare these days.*

Tiko Crofoot was an officer and one of the top performers of our class. He graduated from the Naval Academy, but he didn't have the same sense of smug entitlement that most of the Academy guys did. A lot of officers acted like they were better than you, but not Tiko. Which was funny because he was one of the few who was actually better than me at almost every single thing. He was an elite athlete, and I don't say that lightly; the guy did a 163 consecutive pullups, ran sub six-minute miles, and all while looking like a bodybuilder.

We were the only guys that I know of who'd go lift weights at night during first phase. I remember one time I was driving us to the gym, and he asked me why I wanted to be a Navy SEAL. I told him the only reason I wanted to be a SEAL was to tell people that I was a SEAL. That answer surprised him, and it's probably not what he wanted to hear considering he's spent his life in the teams, but that was the truth.

## TIKO CROFOOT

### US Navy SEAL, Commander

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*No matter how prepared you were on the first day, BUD/S had something that would humble and devour you. For some, it was the endless running or always being wet and sandy. For others, it was the swims; choking on saltwater while trying to fight the waves and the currents. For all, it was the cold water, sapping willpower and desire twenty times faster than the air.*

*It was incontrovertibly hard, and it left most exhausted at the end of each day.*

*Most went home, showered, and fell into bed dreading the next morning. However, a few of us traded precious hours of sleep each day for the “fix” of the gym. Dan was one of those few. I would see him there each night, often still with dried salt on his skin and grains of sand in his hair. He loved the gym as much as I did, and he wasn’t doing maintenance workouts either. Every one of his workouts was as intense as the day we’d just finished, and I respected him immensely for the sacrifice I knew he was making to be there each day.*

*I got to know Dan well over the months we spent together in BUD/S and at the gym. Often, he and I were the only two from our class in the gym at the end of a long day. He had a ready sense of humor, flecked with sarcasm and a sharp knack for pointing out the irony of much of the military dogma that was constantly being purveyed. He was a kindred spirit in that respect as he and I shared much of the irreverence and disdain for the more rote and perfunctory tasks we would regularly perform. He was intelligent and looked for ways to accomplish things smarter and faster, even when it ran counter to the rules.*

*Dan showing up to a swim with the latest technology in fins only made sense to the two of us. Actually, it made sense to everyone, but not everyone was brave enough to buck the system so overtly. Chris and Dan paid dearly for his slight to decorum, but he never stopped looking for ways to do things better. Ironically, a short time after Dan showed up for his swim with split fins and got punished severely for doing so, BUD/S recanted and began issuing them to all new SEAL candidates. Being Icarian is not always painless or without its setbacks.*

*However, Dan turned out to be right, and I’ve never forgotten that lesson.*

Throughout training I was always looking for an edge. If there was a better, more effective way to do things, I wanted to figure it out. After my stress fractures healed, I figured out the reason I was getting shin splints and fractures was because I was an overpronator. So I had custom orthotics made for my boots to fix my gait. When we were doing land navigation and pack space was limited, I went to REI and bought freeze-dried food to replace the bulky and unhealthy MREs (meal ready to eat) we were issued. My vision was 20/70, so I had a hard time seeing the targets at three hundred meters with iron sights. In BUD/S, students weren't allowed to wear glasses or contacts, except at the range, you *had* to wear shooting glasses, so I had custom ones made with prescription lenses. Able to see the targets, I went from being a good shooter to the best shooter in the class.

Steroids seemed to be the ultimate edge. Winstrol was the water-based steroid that got Ben Johnson, the world record Canadian sprinter, busted in the 1988 Olympics. My books said it would offer strength without water retention, leading to very lean muscles. I mixed it with Equipoise, the oil-based horse steroid that I was doing, and injected it into my quad. It was painful, so I just assumed that I'd hit a vein or a nerve. But as the day went on, the pain got worse and worse.

I later learned I shouldn't have mixed the oil and water in the same syringe because it can cause an abscess, which is exactly what happened. This sucks under normal situations, but when you're running fourteen miles a day in BUD/S, it's crippling. My leg muscles kept giving out, and I had tears in my eyes from the pain, but it wasn't like I could stroll into medical and say, "Hey, I shot some bad gear, can I take a couple of days off?"

I was shooting 100 milligrams of test and Equipoise every four days while popping twenty milligrams of Novadex every day to prevent estrogen buildup. These were Mexican veterinary steroids, so I'd get abscesses from time to time due to a lack of sterility. It was horrible. Sometimes I'd get flu-like symptoms and feel like I was going to die; but there was nothing I could do other than laugh at the absurdity of my predicament.

Guys in my class probably thought I was nuts, crying and smiling, but I didn't give a shit what anyone thought. I just wanted to graduate. I thought about giving up steroids a few times, but I looked good with my shirt off. And no one likes a quitter.



## Chapter 18

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# Adventures in Keistering

Billy, Dale, and I were cruisin'. The sun was out, so I rolled down the windows and shut off the air conditioning. We were on a cliffside stretch of coastal highway, about an hour south of the Mexican border on a quick trip to restock our steroid inventory.

I was starting to figure out that many of the guys going through BUD/S and at the teams were juicing. Dale had done a couple of mule runs for our group, but we knew training was going to get super intense, and we wouldn't be able to go down every week. So I decided we should all keister (put up your ass) a couple bottles and save ourselves the constant trips. This was a big risk because if we got caught, we'd all be thrown in military prison and kicked out of the program. But the juice was worth the squeeze.

Dale was a former truck driver and part-time model. A tall, loud, outspoken Norwegian with blond hair and blue eyes who looked like Ivan Drago from *Rocky 4* but with a full sleeve of tattoos that continued up his neck. Billy was an older, squared away ex-Marine. He was a big Native American Cro-Magnon-looking motherfucker with a strong chin and a constant dip in. Our various looks and personalities could not have been more different, but we had one thing in common: We fucking loved steroids.

At this point, I was hanging out with a cute Navy girl-next-door type who cleaned my apartment, bought me groceries, and would cook while me and the guys watched movies. It was a strange relationship because, despite some occasional flirting, we never hooked up. Even though I was getting almost no pussy, I still didn't want to sleep with her because she was about ten pounds overweight. I'm not sure why she did all of this; maybe she liked me, or maybe she just liked doing stuff and hanging out. Either way, none of us

wanted to use our vehicles for the Mexico run, so we borrowed her truck but didn't say what for.

A couple hours later, we arrived at a veterinary shop in Ensenada that sold local ranchers the steroids for their livestock and racehorses. After some intense haggling and pretending to leave, I got a bottle of Testosterone, some Winstrol, and Equipoise. Dale and Billy bought their gear, and we headed to the truck like kids toting Christmas presents. Then I stopped at a pharmacy where we purchased some condoms and lube. On the way home, our last stop was a bathroom in a sit-down Mexican restaurant close to the border. We each piled into a stall, shut the door, and got to work.

"Fuck, this hurts."

"Use more lube," Dale advised.

"There's no way this is going to fit in my ass," Billy replied.

"Stop being such a pussy," Dale instructed.

Brain surgeons operating on Ebola patients don't scrub their hands as much as we did before leaving that bathroom. All three of us shuffled out sweaty, guilty, and bow-legged. I'm not sure if there was someone in the bathroom who heard us or if the walls were just thin because the restaurant went silent and everyone stared at us as we exited the bathroom, which made our walk of shame that much more awkward. To this day, I still don't know if they thought we had chosen that bathroom to buttfuck each other or if they figured we were smuggling drugs, but considering the looks we got, I'd say butt fucking.

As we waited in the never-ending line to cross the border, I cranked the A/C as high as it would go to alleviate my sweating. I'd never been so uncomfortable in my life. It felt like I had a flashlight in my ass and my body was doing everything in its power to get rid of it. *Oh, shit it's escaping*, I thought as I gritted my teeth and clenched my ass in an attempt to retract the turtlehead that was now sticking out.

As I got closer, my mind began racing with possibilities. I couldn't help but imagine what would happen if they pulled us into secondary and I couldn't hold it any longer. *What if I actually shit myself?* I was on the verge of panic as we approached the booth, I handed the

customs officer my military ID and nervously answered a few questions. “Pull forward,” he said.

*Fuck, I’m screwed,* I thought as I approached the secondary inspection.

“Stop.” He looked in the bed of the truck and then back at the military decal on the window before waving us through.

*Thank God.*

We’d barely spoken a word the entire drive, but as soon as we passed the checkpoint, Dale screamed at me to pull over. I took the first exit and turned into a Goodyear parking lot as Dale yelled, “Stop! Stop! Stop!” He leapt out of the truck before it had fully stopped and exploded a pile of shit onto the concrete in broad daylight. We were only ten minutes away from my apartment, and we didn’t want to follow his example, so we yelled at him to get back in the vehicle. He scooped the condom of drugs out of the pile of shit and gingerly climbed back into the truck, trying not to touch anything. The smell was grotesque, and it required all the windows rolled down not to vomit. We had accomplished our mission and were on the home stretch, even if we looked like the fucking three stooges doing it.

I double parked sideways at my apartment, slammed the shifter in park, and bolted out of the cab. I did some version of an epileptic sideways crabwalk to the door and burst into the apartment. I darted right into the only bathroom and immediately shit in the toilet without bothering to even close the door. I had been clenching so hard for so long, that when I finally let go, it sounded like a shotgun blast.

Billy made a frenzied beeline to the kitchen, where he, without hesitation, lifted one leg like a dog pissing and fired a shit right into the kitchen sink. Dale calmly strolled in, hands covered in shit, holding a stretched-out condom like those sticky rollout sheets of flypaper, and patiently waited for Billy to finish so he could wash his hands. Billy, meanwhile, grabbed a dish towel to wipe his ass. All of us exhaled like we’d been holding our breath for a record-setting free dive in the Pacific.

My girl, clearly horrified at what she’d just witnessed, screamed “Oh my God!” and ran right out of the apartment. I mean, the poor

girl was preparing lunch for us, and Billy literally fired a shit right into the sink she was using to wash the chicken. I'd left the truck running, so she must have gotten in and just drove off because we never got a chance to explain, not that we really wanted to anyway, so maybe that was for the best.

The fucked-up part of the whole thing was that I did all of this to save a hundred and fifty bucks because Dale would have happily smuggled mine back if I paid him a premium.



## Chapter 19

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### Soft-Ass OIC

I'd gotten up to 193 pounds by the time first phase rolled around. The extra muscle didn't help me with almost anything in BUD/S; it was more of a hindrance, but I didn't care. It felt good to be big.

My experience was a complete 180 from the first time I showed up at BUD/S. Going through training unprepared, scared, and broken was absolute torture. But it made going through strong, confident, and healthy seem like a walk in the park. The Seven P's—Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents Piss-Poor Performance—was a long-winded military way of saying my mantra: *Life is all in the setup.*

The time off had healed my injuries, the training and the steroids had gotten me stronger, and the strict diet made me ripped. The previous suffering and persecution had turned my mind into an impenetrable fortress of fuck-you confidence that declared, *Your mouth will get tired of telling me what to do before my body gets tired doing it.*

Instructor McCleland remembered me from before, and he'd beat me every chance he got. While we were in the classroom, he had me doing air chairs while holding my canteens straight out and vertical push-ups against the wall. I laughed and smiled as I pushed them out and said, "Hooyah, Instructor McCleland." The instructors liked to instill fear in the students; they liked when we played the game. So the more I showed I didn't care, the less enjoyment he got out of hazing me. When he told me to hit the surf, I smiled and said "Hooyah" as I ran out of the classroom. I made it very clear I would happily do this shit all day, every day. After an hour, he gave up.

I'd won that battle, but they would win the war.

The OIC<sup>‡</sup> of our class had a different attitude. He was a big pussy, scared of making mistakes, scared of getting beat, and scared of the instructors in general. I told him flat out, “They’re gonna beat us anyway, no matter how good we do, we’re gonna get beat.” Their goal in first phase is to make guys quit.

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‡ Officer in charge.

## ARIK BURKS

### **Retired US Navy SEAL, Master Chief, Former BUD/S Instructor**

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*By the time Dan’s class rolled around, I was the lead instructor for Hell Week, specifically Alpha shift, which was four to midnight. I remember Dan and his fucked up last name, but he didn’t stand out, and that rare distinction is only because he didn’t suck. You ask any First Phase Instructor, and they will tell you that you remember the students that are really bad or the ones that get rolled back. Dan was not one of the shitbags who refused to perform or hid among the guys that did. That being said, I did remember his OIC, who was one of those prior fleet lieutenants. From being an instructor in First Phase, I ran into just a handful of prior fleet officers, and I would give them a 50 percent score. Some guys were great and used their experience and maturity to lead their men well while also dealing with their own performance struggles. Others were not so good. Some were complete spaz monsters that thought every student sent to get wet and sandy was a direct reflection of their leadership. His OIC fit into this group.*

*He was very entitled and hated that an E-6 like me could tell him that he was a horrible leader. In the regular Navy, that type of interaction was intolerable, and you could tell it*

*rubbled him the wrong way. Despite being a SEAL with multiple deployments and ten years in the SEAL teams, I could tell he disliked that I had authority over him and an opinion on his poor decision-making. These officers who end up making it to the SEAL Teams struggle. They ignore advice from senior enlisted men who have much more experience, and in an effort to prove themselves, often step on their own dicks.*

The instructors would tell the OIC this was the worst class they'd ever seen; I would roll my eyes because they used to say the same shit to my last class, but his asshole would pucker; he would panic and yell at us. Fear breeds fear, and pretty soon all the officers were buying into his bullshit. I just put my head down and focused on passing my runs, swims, and O courses, and I kept not giving a fuck about our whiney-ass OIC, figuring a dude that soft would surely quit anyway.



## Chapter 20

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# Trust Fund Seizure

I was pulled out of class during the second week of First Phase and led into an office with a judge advocate general.

“Petty Officer Bilzerian,” the stiff JAG started. “The United States Securities and Exchange Commission and the Justice Department are seeking to settle your father’s dispute and release him from custody.”

Earlier that year, my father ran afoul of the feds again and was found to be in contempt of court by a judge in Washington. In classic Bilzerian fashion, rather than lay low after his first indictment and prison sentence, he had sparred with the government ever since. The judge decided to teach Dad a lesson and send him to jail until he “purged” the contempt by handing over documents and paying his fine. Between the intensely long hours of SEAL training combined with my usual family oddities, I didn’t communicate much with Mom and Dad during that time. I didn’t even know he was in jail for the first six months because my parents “didn’t want to worry me.”

While he was away, the FBI raided our home and even went through our trash bins. They took every file and computer he had. The feds wanted him to prove that he didn’t have money hidden in offshore accounts, but it’s hard to prove you *don’t* have something, especially when all your documents are locked up in an FBI evidence storage facility.

Meanwhile, Dad was experiencing what longtime inmates referred to as “diesel therapy.” The judge had ordered him to be bussed all over the state from one maximum-security prison to another in an attempt to get him to break. It was a terrible punishment, but if the judge knew anything about my father, he’d have known that the more you kicked him when he was down, the more it would motivate him to fight.

They'd been negotiating with my mother, which primarily consisted of threatening, "We're going to send you to jail along with your husband!" Mom agreed to give up the Tampa house, sell some stock, and hand over some cash. But before opening the cell door for Dad, they had one additional request. They threw it in like it was nothing. An "oh yeah, by the way..." kind of thing.

They wanted one third of the trust fund established for my brother Adam and me.

At one time, that fund was worth about \$96 million. But the government seized more than half during Dad's first fight. The stock had fallen dramatically in the interim when they dumped all the seized shares on the open market. As I sat in the JAG's office that day, the fund was worth slightly less than \$10 million.

"You sign off on this," the JAG said, "and your dad will be released in short order. Your family has struggled with this hanging over your heads for more than a decade. Do this, and your mom can finally sleep easy."

I scribbled my name on the line on the piece of paper. Adam got 33 percent, I got 33 percent, and Uncle Sam walked away with 33 percent. After being locked up for over a year, my father walked into the bright Florida sunlight a free man.

Dad was so pissed that I'd gone along with the settlement that he refused to speak to me for months. He was genuinely convinced that he'd done nothing wrong and that his conviction was for political reasons. My father would've gladly stayed in jail the rest of his life if it meant not giving the government another dollar.

The \$3 million in stock left in my trust fund dipped as low as a quarter million and was finally sold in 2019 and 2020 for a grand total of \$1,339,160 and one cent.

**SCOTT ROHLEDER**  
**Accountant, CPA**

*I have served in the capacity of accountant and financial advisor to Dan Bilzerian for the past seven years. I have intimate knowledge of his financial affairs, and I would like to provide the facts regarding Dan's trust fund.*

*Dan was the beneficiary of "The Paul A Bilzerian and Terri L. Steffen 1994 Irrevocable Trust." The trust initially had two assets, which were 2,313,500 shares of Cimetrix ("Cimetrix Shares") stock and 8,847 shares of Retail Holdings, N.V., formerly Singer, N.V. ("Singer Shares").*

*However, on January 16, 2002, a court order in the case Securities Exchange Commission vs. Paul A. Bilzerian removed 665,000 shares of the Cimetrix Shares from the trust, leaving 1,648,500 shares in the trust. This is public record and can be easily researched by referencing Securities Exchange Commission vs. Paul A. Bilzerian, Case 89-1854, Docket No. 603, pp. 4-6.*

*On April 1, 2013, Dan was provided ownership of the Cimetrix Shares, and on April 30, 2013, Dan was provided ownership of the Singer Shares, which are the only assets of the trust.*

*Dan held the Singer Shares until May 2019 when they were sold in the amount of \$269,052.35. He held the Cimetrix Shares until they were sold in December 2020 in the amount of \$1,070,107.74.*



COMMON SHARES

PAR VALUE \$0.1

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS  
OF THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES



SINGER N.V.

4602-0643

COMMON SHARES

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EX-REVERSE FOR CERTAIN DIVIDENDS  
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THIS CERTIFIES THAT

DAN BILZERIAN  
1500 BING TAI WAY  
BOX 24855  
90069-24855

EIGHTH THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FORTY SEVEN

IS THE OWNER OF

FULLY PAID AND NON-ASSESSABLE COMMON SHARES OF THE PAR VALUE OF \$0.1 PER SHARE (EACH) OF

GERMANIA  
NAME CHANGED TO  
RETAIL HOLDINGS N.V.  
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To Whom Ever of the Company Is Entitled to be Received by its duly authorized Managing Director

Dated

11-NOV-2013

COUNTED AND SIGNATURED  
MILLION INVESTOR PARTNERS LLC  
By



THE BACK OF CHECK HAS AN ARTIFICIAL WATERMARK. HOLD AT ANGLE TO VIEW.

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## Chapter 21

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# Graduation Is at Hand

**J**ust like I learned how to adapt from switching schools and getting to start over again, this second chance at BUD/S was going much better. The ability to learn is far more valuable in the long run than natural talent.

First Phase finally ended, and we swapped out our canteens and guard belts for big Gatorade bottles and dive tables. Second Phase, referred to as Dive Phase, was a big step; it was also uncharted territory for me. Pool competency is where the instructors really test how comfortable you are in the water, and it's one of the scariest things a trainee can face. If someone ran out of air and bolted for the surface, the instructors would grab his ass and drag him down to the bottom. This wasn't to be dicks: If a trainee inhaled from his tank at the bottom, freaked out, and didn't exhale on the way up, his lungs could burst.

I was good in the water but terrible at holding my breath. The instructors are supposed to let trainees get a full breath of air before they simulate a surf hit (getting smashed by a huge wave). I figured they were going to fuck with me because I'd been cocky with them, so I never fully exhaled. Sure enough, right as I exhaled, the instructor yanked out my air source and started tumbling me around. Another instructor ripped my mask off and tied my scuba hoses in knots. I already felt like I was out of air, but I tried to remain calm and follow the protocol. Just as I was certain that darkness was coming, I untangled the last knot and gratefully sucked in air from the tank. Air was like so many things in life; you don't appreciate it until you lose it.

Passing pool comp was a big milestone. It was pretty much the only thing a student could get kicked out of BUD/S for after finishing Hell Week.

Third Phase was Land Warfare; it consisted of land navigation and weapons/explosives training. The instructors loaded us up on busses, and we went to the mountains for a week at a time to learn to navigate various terrain using a topographical map and a compass. We'd patrol at night and take turns standing watch while we slept in the woods. There were no showers, so after five or six days, we came home smelling pretty ripe.

Before graduating BUD/S, students had to go to The Rock. Three solid weeks on San Clemente Island, no days off. Just explosives, live fire drills, underwater demolition, and lots of physical training. Inspection of our gear upon arrival at the island was routine, so I didn't dare bring my steroid supply. I had enough juice in my body for the first week, but I knew I'd crash in the second week, quickly dwindling down to prepubescent testosterone levels.

After the inspection, we had to knock out twelve dead-hang pull ups with thirty-five pounds of gear on to avoid getting wet and sandy before dinner. We ate, put our gear away in the barracks, and went to the classroom for a brief.

The instructors screened a National Geographic documentary about the waters around San Clemente Island serving as a breeding ground for great white sharks. The thick kelp beds around the island attracted hundreds of seals and sea lions, which in turn attracted dozens of monstrous great whites. This was a legitimate documentary with respected marine biologists lecturing on how sharks liked to feed at dusk. It was followed by actual footage of great white shark attacks. I remember thinking, *The sun is about to set. That means dusk, right?*

"Jock up for a three-mile ocean swim!" the instructors yelled.

*You gotta be fucking kidding me*, I thought.

Every stroke through those kelp beds, I'd feel the slimy weeds brush against my legs and shit started playing with my mind. I could see dark shapes in the water dart in front of me. They were probably seals, I told myself. The instructors on the surface periodically fired shotguns to add to the ambiance.

After the swim, my OIC informed me that I had the "midwatch" that night. The dickhead really didn't like me, so he regularly

scheduled me for the midnight to two in the morning watch, which pretty much guaranteed that I wouldn't get more than a couple of hours of sleep. There was nothing I could do, and by the end of the second week, I was delirious.

The class regularly went to the range to do IADs (Immediate Action Drills), which involved moving and shooting as a group. The instructor ordered us to drop and aim down range, so we did. He ordered us to rise and walk towards the targets, so we did.

"About face!" he yelled. "And drop!" This meant to turn 180 degrees, drop down, and prepare to shoot.

So we did.

Essentially, our entire group did as commanded, which meant we pointed our weapons the wrong way on the range, right at the instructors. This wasn't a trick. The military didn't exactly train for free thinking; they wanted you so intensively drilled that your body responded to orders with muscle memory. That's exactly what we did. The instructor had made a mistake. Regardless, they gave half the class safety violations for pointing our weapons the wrong way. We didn't argue; it wasn't even a conversation. We just signed the paperwork and continued training.

After almost three weeks, we had one night left on the island, and everyone was exhausted. I was in rough shape with the testosterone of a little girl and all those midwatches ruining my sleep. We practiced shooting and then peeling out, one by one, until every guy in the platoon was running. We did this for thirty minutes and then switched while the other half of the class took their turn.

It was about eleven at night, pitch-black, and we all wore earplugs. Some guys took catnaps while others talked about their family coming in for graduation, which was only thirty-six hours away. My own family was beginning their travels to San Diego to see me, at long last, graduate from something. I laid back and smiled. It had been almost eight months since I checked into BUD/S, and I couldn't help but think about how good it was going to feel to be finished. I closed my eyes and envisioned my father's face at the graduation ceremony. I knew he would be proud of me.

Suddenly there were instructors standing over me, screaming. They ordered me to climb into a tub of ice water. As the cold shock rolled over my body, I tried to figure out *what the fuck was happening*.

“Why didn’t you show up to muster?” one yelled.

“Why were you sleeping during live fire drills?” another one shouted.

I assumed that I’d fallen asleep, and my boat crew leader hadn’t woken me. The instructors gave me a safety violation and said I was being submitted for a review board. They told me to pack up and be outside the barracks ready at 0600. My mind was racing as I grabbed my things and threw them into the big green duffle bag. I laid in bed for five hours watching the seconds tick by on the white wall clock.

The instructor didn’t say a word as he drove me to the island airport. I was sick to my stomach. It felt like I’d just come home to find my safe with everything I cared about *empty*. Usually when you get robbed, you never get your stuff back, but there’s always a chance. On the plane back to San Diego, I couldn’t help but wonder if by some act of God maybe they would still let me graduate.

In front of the master chief and captain, I was at a loss for words. The instructor read my list of violations, and it sounded really bad on paper. Bilzerian pointed his weapon at the instructors. Bilzerian was sleeping during live fire drills.

The CO asked me if these violations were accurate. I really wanted to explain what happened, but we were told to never make excuses, and my father taught me not to be a snitch.

“Yes, sir, they are, sir,” I said calmly.

He presented two options. I could go to another duty station and come back to BUD/S in a year, or I could join the next class at the very beginning of Second Phase. Instead of four hours until graduation, I was now looking at four more months.

“I’ll do it again, sir.”

I had been royally fucked, but I didn’t rat on the instructors. I hung my head and walked off.

That was the longest drive home ever. I was too tired and beat up to even get angry. I was just sad. My parents, brother, and friends had their bags packed. They expected to see me graduate, and I was

going to have to tell them I was going back almost to the beginning. Making that phone call was the last thing in the world I wanted to do; I was depressed, humiliated, and I felt like a failure.

I sat on the floor of my apartment and began to sand the red paint off my helmet. Trainees in First Phase wear green helmets. Second Phase means blue helmets. Third Phase proudly sport red. It took a while to get the paint off, but finally I polished it, sprayed a coat of primer, and waited for it to dry. I didn't have any blue paint left. I took off my uniform and put-on jeans and a T-shirt so I could go into town to purchase a new supply of blue spray paint.



## Chapter 22

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### Class 239

I went into base the next morning to muster up with my new class. It was embarrassing to drop down a phase, but my new classmates found me useful because I could tell them what to expect.

The OIC of BUD/S class 239 was a big boy; he weighed around 240 pounds and was built like a linebacker. He had a hard time passing his timed runs as big as he was, so he was used to getting beat, and so was the class. This was music to my ears. It was a complete change from 238. This class didn't whine, and they would laugh when the instructors sent us to the surf. They had a completely different attitude, and the difference was our leader.

I got along well with everyone in the class, and it felt good, like I was finally part of a team. So when one of the guys got hypothermia during our 5.5 nautical mile ocean swim and needed a swim buddy to accompany him, I volunteered to swim it again. And during land navigation, when I finished early, I went back out to help some of the weaker guys.

Things were going well with the class but not with the instructors. I knew they were trying to figure out a way to drop me when I received a safety violation for taking a shit in the woods six feet from my gear instead of three feet. The instructors were clearly trying to fuck me for anything they could, but it was hard because after doing so much training, I was good at most everything.

The day before we were scheduled to go to The Island, one of the instructors pulled me into the office and said they were going to drop me from training. They didn't have any real safety violations—I'd passed everything—so they just decided to "admin drop" me. My OIC and my LPO went to bat for me, but the instructors didn't care; they'd heard enough from my previous OIC and decided I wasn't a good fit.

I'd rubbed my previous OIC the wrong way, and he quickly turned the rest of the officers against me. The instructors followed. The officer in charge has a lot of power, and he dictates how the group thinks. SEALS aren't the John Rambo cowboys the movies portray. The guys they want aren't the free-thinking risk takers; they want guys who follow orders. It's pack mentality. If there is a guy who doesn't kiss ass or mesh well with the leader, they'll all gang up on that person. They don't like outliers, and I've seen it happen to some solid guys like David Goggins and Jesse Ventura.

I was pissed; I'd just done an entire year straight of BUD/S with no break. But these motherfuckers had yanked the rug out from under me so many times, I wasn't even surprised at this point. I fucked up. I honestly thought if I passed all my evolutions and didn't quit that they had to let me graduate. I didn't think the instructors had as much power as they did, and I was wrong. I was cocky this time, but I believed they would look at this like my father and respect the lack of fear.

I figured, I'd go to college, have fun, and finally fuck some girls. I could endure endless amounts of pain, but I wasn't built to take orders, and I wasn't the best at following rules. I was a leader, not a follower. I didn't do well kissing ass, and I was ready to get the fuck out of the military and begin a new adventure.

## PART 3

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# Gambling



## Chapter 23

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### Frat Orgy

A

fter four years, I was honorably discharged from the United States Navy on the anniversary of the day I joined, April 29, 2003.

I was accepted to the University of Florida, while my brother Adam attended the University of South Florida which was located in Tampa. He lived at home and worked part-time at Ernie's car dealership. He spent his spare time playing golf at the country club and hustling Dad's friends in poker games. He was working hard studying, striving to transfer to a good school in two years. Adam didn't date much, and his only real social activity was his membership in Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

I had a BMW, money saved from my time in the military, and monthly disability checks from the Veteran's Administration. You get a percentage score at discharge for injuries sustained while on active duty, and after 510 days of BUD/S, my medical record was pretty thick. The VA rated me 60 percent disabled, which meant I would receive 60 percent of my military pay and free medical care for life. I was also expecting my GI Bill cash any day, which meant I would be getting almost five thousand dollars a month tax free.

Adam heard about all my extra money and decided I should learn how to play poker, primarily so he could separate me from the loose cash. The whole summer, we battled Texas Hold 'Em at the kitchen table. My losses had a silver lining because Adam rushed me as a PIKE at USF so I could essentially go onto campus at UF in the fall as a brother and not deal with rush and hazing. I felt I'd paid enough dues in SEAL training that if some nineteen-year-old kid was hazing me, I might have just killed him, so I was doing the right thing.

All the PIKEs were jocks and meatheads, so I fit right in. My first semester, I had a 4.0 GPA and fucked thirteen hot girls, which was more than my whole life combined prior to college. I was in amazing

shape, I had money, I was popular, and I was banging superhot girls. Finally, this was my time.

In San Diego, the local women hated military dudes and poor guys. I was both. They had heard every line in the book and expected men to take them to dinner and pay for overpriced bottles in the club. But in college, the freshmen girls were accustomed to nervous high school guys with no money and no game. They were away from home for the first time and just wanted to get drunk and have sex with strangers. After four years of getting my teeth kicked in, I was in fucking heaven.



PIKE had a big party at least once or twice a semester. There was Hawaiian, where the pledges had to import thousands of pounds of sand and palm fronds. Platoon, which was an army theme, and Day

Glow, which was the best one by far. The themes gave girls the excuse they needed to wear next to nothing and not feel slutty about it. There were around fifteen good sororities on campus, and we invited all of them. This ensured an absolutely ludicrous ratio of girls to guys as no fraternity ever threw a party on the same night as another house.

Day Glow was a body painting party where the women started out in bikini bottoms or thongs with white T-shirts or wife beaters. The guys wore board shorts or boxers. Girls gravitated towards the guys they were interested in and asked to be painted with glow in the dark paint. When the guy finished painting the girls, those girls would then paint him. It was basically an excuse to grope each other. Some girls took full advantage, going right for the dick. This got absurd; multiple girls would rub each guy down, and it got competitive because there was a massive shortage of guys. The setup was pure genius.

After everyone was painted, they'd shut off the regular lights and turn on the black lights so everyone glowed in the dark. The DJ started getting everyone hyped up, and pledges went around pouring shots down people's throats like it was spring break in Cabo. People would dance/grope each other until they couldn't take it anymore. The party gradually moved upstairs to the showers, which, as everyone got drunker and more sex crazed, turned into a full-blown orgy.

It was fascinating to see dudes who wouldn't get laid in San Diego in a million years banging two girls at a time. Some guys went for the easiest girl they could find while others searched for a girl they wanted to date. I had a more pragmatic approach, fucking the hottest girl who was into me as quickly as possible and then going back out for seconds or thirds. It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

Day Glow showed me how important the setup is. Everyone had a room within fifty feet that they could go have sex in, so the logistics were solved. The ratio was absurd, so girls had to compete for the attention of guys. There was no need for awkward conversation because everyone was drinking, the music was loud, and the girls had already made the first move by painting the guys they were into. The

environment was good because everyone was hooking up openly and the girls felt comfortable because there was no judgement.

I had been taught about the laws of supply and demand in economics class, but now it clicked. This was by far the most valuable thing I learned in college, and I would be implementing that knowledge soon.



IF ANY OF YOU GUYS READING THIS are about to graduate high school, I would highly recommend going in the military for four years and then going to college. This allows you to fuck around for a few years with no consequences and no worries about your GPA. You'll get some real-world experience to help figure out what you want to do with your life. Plus, you'll get into a much better school as a veteran because universities value diversity.

When you are eighteen and male, no girls want to fuck you, and no guys want to hang out with you. However, when you go to college at twenty-two, you get to have four years of basically being a senior. You will be older, more confident, more attractive, and more experienced—plus you'll have more money and value the degree.

Then there are the financial benefits: You get your school paid for, you're eligible for more grants and student loans with zero interest, and you get free medical. Trust me, it's the move.



## Chapter 24

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### Going Broke

Toward the end of my first year of college, I began playing more and more online poker. A couple of my fraternity brothers would often play for ten to sixteen hours straight at the frat house. I'd watch them, and they'd let me play on their accounts until my addictive personality gave way to a full-blown gambling addiction. Poker was a rush like nothing I had experienced before, and even when I wasn't playing, I was thinking about it.

I downloaded Party Poker, and soon I was skipping meals, the gym, and class. Instead, I was joining the brothers in their marathon poker sessions and playing the local \$200 buy-in game with *Rounders* looped on the DVD player in the background.

I had a roommate who was as addicted as I was but with a different style. I had a super-aggressive style that, if played with discipline, could make a lot of money but with a couple missteps could also lead to big losses. He, on the other hand, was a very tight, disciplined player who always maintained a balance in his online poker accounts.

Living with him made it pretty much impossible for me to stop playing poker. I would come home after a night of drinking, and gambling always sounded like a good idea, but it never was. Poker requires patience, so it may come as no surprise that a drunk guy on steroids with ADD is not a winning formula. I knew this would happen, so I'd cash out before the weekend. The problem was he always had money in his account, and I knew all I had to do was kick his door in and force him to transfer me money. No matter how many times I told him I wouldn't pay him if he ever transferred me money again, I would still cut him the check in the morning, knowing that he really had no choice.

It all came crashing down halfway through my sophomore year; I was broke and in debt. Unpaid loan on my BMW, maxed student loans, savings drained to nothing, and I owed money. Even my own family, from Dad to Adam, was smart enough not to help me. I was a total degenerate and had gone from having more money than I could spend in college to having nothing.

I scraped together \$750 for one last shot at a win by selling two pistols and a shotgun on Craigslist, then took that money to a gambling boat in St. Petersburg. If I lost on that boat, I wouldn't even have gas money to get back to school.

I played the \$200 buy-in until I had \$1,500. Then I played the \$500 buy-in for six days straight, only stopping to sleep until I reached ten grand. I was easily outplaying the guys on the boat and figured I was ready, so I bought a one-way ticket to Las Vegas to take a shot, just like Matt Damon in *Rounders*.

At the Bellagio, I played every day for sixteen hours a day. My soundtrack was 50 Cent's "Get Rich or Die Tryin'" and I daydreamed of having enough money to tell everyone to fuck off. I wanted financial freedom. I wanted "fuck-you money."

There was Internet now, so after a quick Google search, other players in Vegas assumed I had financial backing from my father, which wasn't true, but I leaned into the perception. I played super aggressive, and players called me with barely anything just because they were frustrated. I bet, bet, bet until I met resistance. I would rarely make huge bluffs, but I was capable of it, so as a result I'd get paid off in spots that nobody else would. This unpredictability made me much harder to play against, and it threw players off their game.

Starting with that boat in St. Petersburg, I had played every day for a month, sixteen hours a day, and made \$187,000. I went to the main cage and exchanged my remaining chips for cash. At that moment the win became real; it was the most money I'd ever seen, and it felt amazing knowing it was all mine. It gave me confidence and the ability to do what I wanted. I no longer had to answer to anyone. All the stress about paying my bills and debt was gone. It felt like freedom in a briefcase. Winning was like a drug, but the high lasted longer, and it was more addicting. I wanted more.



## Chapter 25

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# Fuck-You Money

I took my briefcase full of cash straight to the Range Rover dealer.

I had daydreamed about paying all cash for a car ever since I saw 50 Cent do it in *Get Rich or Die Tryin.*' In the movie, he goes to the dealership and the guy doesn't take him seriously, so he later returns with a backpack full of cash and throws it at the car salesman before driving his new car off the lot. Maybe it was the snobs at my country club when I was younger, or maybe it was all the people in my life who told me *no*, but nothing seemed more appealing than flexing on them and seeing the shocked expressions on their faces. None of that happened at the dealership, but it was fun to play out those scenarios in my head. I traded in my BMW plus forty thousand in cash for the best used Range Rover I could afford.

I had noticed that players were more willing to gamble with me when I had a bunch of money on the table. I saw the value of being perceived as rich. So buying the Range Rover wasn't totally reckless spending, but even if it was, I didn't care. I wanted to present an image of being as rich as possible to the gambling community, and the Range Rover was the perfect car because, at the time, it was the most expensive SUV out there.

I was a new man who no longer had to break down doors to drunkenly demand a loan. I had a newly discovered discipline, developed in my intensive month of grinding at the poker tables. I figured out when to put on the brakes and be patient, which screwed up all my old online opponents. They had notes on me saying "always bluffs, never fold to him," and so forth. I got paid off on all my big hands and ended up winning \$87,000 in a week just playing a \$1,000 max buy-in game. Around this time, Chris Moneymaker won the World Series of Poker on ESPN and turned twenty-five bucks into

millions of dollars. That was the best thing to happen to poker as it attracted tons of newbies, and just like that, poker became the new gold rush.

I spent weekends in Vegas, the Bahamas, Monaco—wherever there was a poker tour event. Everyone else tried to get famous for being the best poker player; they wanted to win tournaments and collect shiny bracelets. I did the exact opposite. I never played in the actual tournaments. I looked for cash games. My goal was to be perceived as being a rich, shitty player so that I could get into private games with other rich, shitty players and beat them for the big money.

At a Bellagio 25/50 game, where I was splashing around and playing loose, I met Nick Cassavetes, the guy who directed *The Notebook*. And probably because he thought I was a sloppy player, he invited me to play his private home game in the Hollywood Hills. Porsches, Ferraris, and Range Rovers lined the street, and there wasn't one pro player in the place.

It was a 50/100 ten thousand-dollar minimum buy-in cash game. I played a lot of hands and showed my cards if I made a bad call and mucked like I was bluffing if I got cold-decked. A cold deck is when two players have extremely good hands, and the loser has no choice but to put his money in. A lot of poker players would bitch when they got unlucky, but I didn't say a word. I wanted them to think I was playing bad, not *running bad* (getting unlucky). It wasn't hard to figure out how everyone played; I made my adjustments, gave good action, and cashed out for six figures the first night.

I enjoyed college, but I really only got one good year in before going over to the dark side (gambling). I was much happier my first year, but I loved the action and excitement of poker, not to mention the freedom and power the winnings provided. For a college kid in Gainesville, Florida, where a pitcher of beer was a buck fifty, I had stupid money. And that money went a long way. I paid one kid fifty bucks to drink a shot of warm piss. I gave another guy forty to eat a live roach and then later a hundred and fifty dollars to fuck the fattest, ugliest girl I could find at a street festival.

My priorities had begun to shift; I used to lift weights almost every day and run thirty to forty miles a week. Now I was only lifting four days a week and barely doing cardio. Even when I was having fun, going to parties, banging girls, and hanging at the frat house, poker was constantly in the back of my mind. I couldn't escape it; it was always there, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; I could get on my computer and be in action.

By my fourth year at Florida, I was superficially a senior, but I didn't have that many credits because I'd dropped so many classes. It was impossible to pay attention to school given how much gambling I was doing.

The poker books and self-help courses will never tell you this, but the first step toward succeeding at anything—from poker to attracting women to life in general—depends on finding a way to cram the most experience into the shortest period of time. That might seem obvious, but I looked at the average live poker player and did some simple math. Playing in a home or casino game, live players see, on average, around twenty hands an hour and usually sit for a ten-hour stretch. That works out to seeing around two hundred hands per day.

I would play ten online tables at once, seeing around one hundred hands per hour at each table. So, by playing fourteen hours a day, I looked at roughly fourteen thousand hands each day. It wasn't long before I'd seen more hands online than what even the most obsessive live players saw in a lifetime.

And this was when online poker was still relatively new. The poker fad was coming but wasn't huge yet, so you couldn't find tutorials online, and solvers hadn't been invented. The best you could hope for was a poker book providing a very rudimentary explanation.

My volume of play gave me a monster edge, especially because certain aspects of the game—like learning people's bluff/call tendencies—were only learned through experience. Lots of experience.

An even bigger advantage was understanding my table image. How I was perceived by other players usually dictated the way they

reacted to my hyper-aggressive style of play. Recreational players usually did one of two things:

The first approach—They would play really tight, refuse to bluff, and wait for me to bet. This strategy was easy to defeat. I ran them over, stole pots, and bet huge on my big hands.

The second approach was to play back at me, which meant they bluffed more frequently. This was harder to counter, but it yielded the most profit. And the most fun. When a bad player tries this, it leads to all sorts of mistakes: bluffing at the wrong times, taking betting lines that make no sense, and giving off tells. I mopped up with those guys.

Earlier that year, I'd found a poker site with an online sports book attached called Bodog. This was a big deal because sports bettors would wander into the poker room and blow their newfound winnings. I recorded the biggest monthly win in Bodog's poker history, clearing around \$400,000 only playing three tables with a max buy-in of only \$2,000 per table.

That week, I was sitting in class, tired from the long hours in front of the computer, when the professor said something to me in a condescending way. In no mood to take shit, I replied, "Who the fuck do you think you are?"

"I'm your professor!" he screamed. "And you will not use profanity in my class."

I never liked academia, I didn't respect him, and his sense of entitlement bothered me, so I doubled down.

"You think you can talk down to me because you've read some books?"

He looked bewildered and declared, "I have a master's degree!" as if that somehow settled the argument. He said it like he'd landed on the moon.

I rolled my eyes.

"And what have you done?" he hissed, clearly getting himself worked up. "Graduate high school?"

"Nah, I got a GED. But I'm a veteran, and I made more money in the last week than you will in the next three years."

The professor stood there dumbfounded for a second and then fired back, “If you’re so rich, why are you in college?”

As stupid as it sounds, I hadn’t really considered dropping out, but the asshole did have a point. I sat there in silence for about six seconds and thought about it.

“That’s the first intelligent thing you’ve said all semester. You’re right, I’m out. Enjoy earning thirty thousand a year, you fucking dipshit.”

The kids went crazy as I walked out of the classroom and shut the door on my college career.



## Chapter 26

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# Russian Hitman

**I**t felt good to tell my professor to fuck off. I'd always wanted to do that since I was a little kid. As I drove back to my apartment, I couldn't help but smile. For the first time in my life, I had no obligations and nobody to answer to. I was free.

Bouncing between private games in New York City, Las Vegas, and LA was more lucrative than I thought. My parents couldn't say shit about me dropping out because I was making so much money. Dad kept telling me to take the money and run, but that was his style as a corporate raider, not mine.

Eddie Ting ran a private game in New York with super rich businessmen and the occasional pro he took a piece of. Some nights, he raked (taking a percentage of the pot for the house each hand) over a hundred thousand dollars from the game. But it didn't matter; the players were so bad, I could beat the rake easy. I almost always won. Eddie saw all the angles and knew I had skill, but I was liked by amateurs, and I was good action, so he let it slide. The New York guys had big money and liked to push it around, so I had to play tighter there.

Vegas games were usually smaller and tough to get into because the moment a whale (rich bad player) would come in, a game immediately built around them. I tipped the floor people \$100 for seating me, I gave out \$500 for a heads-up that a bad player had come in, and I would tip up to five grand for doing me a favor. Casino employees became like family, and I always took care of family.



*Showing poker legend Johnny Chan my hand while playing at Bellagio.*

I met Tom Goldstein at the Bellagio poker room. People were all watching the game and talking about what a fucking maniac he was. When I walked up, he had been playing without looking at his cards for two hours straight. Occasionally on the turn or the river, he would look and then fire huge bluffs.

To this day, I have never met anyone with less respect for money proportionate to their net worth than Tom. And I've met some true

degenerates. He wasn't very good at fundamental poker, but he was super intelligent and savvy enough to read people and situations. Those skills enabled him to play blind (without looking at his cards) and actually win.

He loved the action, but it was almost like he subconsciously wanted to lose. I think he liked that everyone at the table loved him so much, and as a ruthless lawyer, he probably didn't get that kind of a warm welcome elsewhere. The more he lost, the happier everyone around him got, and I think he was partially addicted to that feeling, but he was fully addicted to the rush of gambling.

I also met John Dolmayan, the drummer for System of a Down, at the tables in Vegas. John and his entire band were proud Armenians, so when he discovered I was Armenian, a bond quickly formed. Needless to say, with his shaved head and goatee, he looked more like a Mexican gangbanger than an Armenian rock star.

One time, a casino regular, who was a crotchety old bastard, mouthed off to John after getting beaten in a hand. The drummer bit his tongue, staying quiet and respectful before he finally had enough of the old buzzard and stepped away for a break.

“Do you not know who that fucking guy is?” I asked the geezer.

“No, who is he?”

“He's a trigger man for the Russian mob,” I told the old man to fuck with his head.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes, you fucking idiot, what's wrong with you?” I warned him. “He's got a shaved head, wears the same clothes every single day, and loses tens of thousands of dollars in cash here every week. What did you think he does for a living? Did you think he was an orthodontist?”

The old buzzard sputtered and stammered, asking if John was going to hurt him.

“Have you ever seen anyone react so calmly after getting yelled at?” I asked. “You know you were being a dick. Has anyone ever taken that kind of shit and just quietly walked away from you?” I paused for effect. “If he snapped back, or even punched you, I'd say

you're fine. But that was cold, the way he just left. That's not normal to be so emotionless. I've got chills. You better beg for forgiveness."

The buzzard spilled his drink while scooping up his chips. I didn't see him for another week, and he was usually an everyday regular.

A few weeks later, I was playing with the buzzard, and John walked up to the table. I had totally forgotten about my story or I would have clued John in. The old guy leapt up from the table.

"I'm really sorry about the last time," he stuttered. "I have a bad heart, and they switched my prescription. I wasn't myself. Let me buy you a drink or dinner. I'm sorry about the misunderstanding."

"No problem, I appreciate the apology," John said, looking around confused.

"Are you sure? Is everything okay? Is there anything you'd like me to do?"

I now remembered the whole thing and was grinning from ear to ear, doing my best to contain my laughter. John looked at me and knew something was up. He took me aside, and I explained the story to him. I saw the look in his eye when he realized this was perfect retribution. He returned to the table and fucked with the buzzard, scaring him for twenty minutes before saying that he would let the old guy live.





## Chapter 27

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### Molly's Game

I rented a house in the Hollywood Hills and a Ferrari F430 for \$45,000 a month to give the LA scene a shot and was paying for it all from Nick Cassavetes's home game. People saw the house and the car, and it bolstered the trust fund kid image I was building. I also played in the now famous "Molly's Game," which was stocked with celebrities or super rich businessmen and absolutely no pros. I made my living playing these games, but I wasn't winning tournaments or playing tight, so no one considered me a pro. They thought I was just a spoiled kid living off the money my father was presumably hiding offshore. While I acknowledged that I had a trust fund, I never discussed how much it was actually worth or that I would not have any access to it until my thirty-fifth birthday.

They recently made a movie about Molly's Game, and I'm not sure they did it justice. I walked into a \$6,000 a night suite at the Four Seasons in Beverly Hills that had every type of booze, cigar, and food you could want. Top agency models slinked around in revealing cocktail dresses, and the minimum buy-in was \$50,000 with no maximum.

Molly was a straight hustler. Cold and calculated, she saw all the angles. She had a genius level IQ and could read a room well. Within two games, she'd figured out that I was a good player. Incredible, considering she wasn't even playing poker. I'd watch her smile and flirt with the guys, convincing them they had a chance, but it was all business. She used girls like pawns and quickly accumulated dirt on most of the guys, a useful tool if they decided they didn't want to cover their losses. Her goal was the same as mine: to make as much money as possible by any means necessary.

MOLLY BLOOM

**Author of Molly's Game**

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*Dan showed up to the game and played the part of the trust fund kid fish perfectly. Almost—maybe because I didn't belong in that room, I recognized he didn't either. Bilzerian was an excellent card player; he was hustling them, no doubt. I saw through it in an instant—he would have bankrupted that table if I let him play regularly.*

*The other thing about him was that, under the surface of his gun-toting, womanizing, arrogant demeanor, was a man who had been through a lot. His childhood was pretty fucked up, his dad had gone to prison, and the instability and chaos that ensued with all of that surely left a mark. I saw the human being underneath. I recognized the damage and the mask.*



## Chapter 28

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# Heart Attack

I was gambling in Vegas when I got a call from my frat brothers who wanted to meet up in Lake Tahoe to snowboard. I booked a flight, and four hours later, we were having beers in a Tahoe casino.

I met a surprisingly hot girl on a chair lift, and I went out that night with her and a bunch of her friends. I'd just won \$40,000 gambling and was in a good mood, buying drinks for everyone in the dive bar. Later in her bedroom, it was my typical hookup. We made out for about twenty seconds while peeling off our clothes, she sucked my dick for a minute or two, and then we started fucking. After a few minutes, I remembered why I hate drinking. My dick was becoming more worthless by the second.

"Give me like ten minutes," I said. "I just need to get some water and something to eat, and I'll fuck you properly."

I ate some bread and a banana and pounded a jug of water. I knew if I didn't fuck this girl right, my ego wouldn't let me sleep. I smoked some weed and hopped in the shower. By the time I got back into the room, she was half-asleep, so I swatted her in her face with my dick a couple of times. She laughed, and the sex was great. I showered again, drank more water, ate another banana, smoked more, and fucked her again until the sun came up.

Moral of the story? Alcohol is a dick killer. Carbs, potassium, and hydration are important and weed is vital.

I didn't sleep; I went back and spent that last day in Tahoe riding the mountain hard. When I got to my hotel room, I was exhausted and didn't feel well, so I laid down. I couldn't sleep, and once I started throwing up, I figured I had altitude sickness. There wasn't any water in the room, so I slurped out of the sink because I knew if I got dehydrated, things would only get worse. Then I started shitting,

which was more like pissing out my ass. I spent the whole night puking and didn't sleep.

The following day, I took a bus ride into the airport in Reno and puked in the bathroom repeatedly. I couldn't keep fluids down. I felt weak and knew I needed an IV, so I asked the baggage check attendant to get a medic.

"If I give you an IV," the EMT said, "I cannot let you fly."

We went back and forth until I promised that I would cancel my flight, return to the hotel, and rest up. As soon as he slipped the IV into the disposal bag and left, I dashed off for the departure gate to catch a flight to Vegas.

At the Bellagio, I still felt like shit, but the poker tables were located between the valet and the elevator, so I never made it up to my room. I played all night and was up about twenty grand when some poker buddies said they had had a bunch of drugs and were going to meet some strippers. I snorted some coke in the Maserati on the way to the club.

I never really liked blow; it just always sounded like a good idea, even though it never was. I like to eat, workout, fuck, and sleep—and blow messes all of those things up. I lose my appetite, and coke is a vasoconstrictor, which messes up blood flow, thereby reducing oxygen to the muscles. It keeps you up all night and also makes it tough to get your dick hard, which for a sex addict like me is a deal breaker. It's honestly the worst drug in my opinion, and it sucks for girls too. They don't shut the fuck up.

I'm not into strippers or hookers, but I have, on occasion, had a moment of weakness. This night was one of those times.

I saw a stripper in a schoolgirl outfit, and I'm a sucker for short skirts, so I called her over.

"Would you like a dance?"

"I'm not into awkward lap dances," I said. "But I'll give you \$500 to suck my dick."

"I'm not a hooker."

"I didn't say you were. I just don't want a lap dance."

"Then why are you in a strip club?"

"I was gambling and got dragged here by my friends."

She smiled and stared into my eyes, which, given my current drug regiment, probably looked like saucers. The girl was sexy, but more importantly, I thought her tits were real.

“Well, when in Rome...” she implied.

“I just don’t see the point of lap dances.”

“So what are you going to do with yourself?”

“More drugs and hopefully get a blowjob.”

The girl asked if I had any Molly. I smiled and covertly gave her one before heading to the bathroom to do more blow. I was pleasantly surprised to find her still sitting there when I returned.

I was all jammed up from the coke and wanted to talk, so I ran a pickup artist routine I read in the book *The Game*, and it was well received. Then I took her hand and put it on my dick. She didn’t remove it, which was a good sign. She rubbed a bit and—surprisingly, given the amount of drugs I had taken—my dick came to life. She started grinding on me, and I stopped her. “Look, I’m not trying to get blue balls. What do you want to do?”

“Give me thirty minutes. I gotta cash out and change.”

“Please don’t change.”

My buddy offered me a Viagra while I waited for her to finish up. I had never taken one before, but I hadn’t slept in days, I was sick, dehydrated, and on Molly and blow. I needed the help. A few minutes later, nothing was happening, so I asked the guy for another.

“No way, you’ve had plenty.”

“This shit isn’t working, just give me the fucking pill!”

“Bro, these are hundreds.”

“I want it for tomorrow,” I lied. “Give me the pill.”

On the ride back to the Bellagio, I still didn’t feel anything, so I tossed down the second pill. In the room, we kissed, and the clothes came off. By that point, I felt like my dick had grown an extra inch, so I guess the Viagra was finally working. After what seemed like an hour of hardcore fucking, I could barely feel anything, my heart was pounding though my chest, and I was covered in sweat. Cumming did not seem to be an option for me.

I went to take a shower and was shocked at my reflection in the mirror. My face was beet red, and my eyes were bloodshot. I looked

like I'd just gotten out of an over-chlorinated pool. After an ice-cold shower, my dick was still rock hard and wasn't going down. I ordered room service and had to place my dick against my stomach and tie the towel around my waist when the food arrived forty-five minutes later. The stripper noticed, and we went at it again. It was late morning when we finished, and I couldn't sleep, so I went downstairs to retrieve the suitcase I'd left in the poker room.

I bet ten grand on the Florida game at the sportsbook and got a cab to meet John Dolmayan for lunch. We grabbed some greasy Mexican food at this hole-in-the-wall spot near his comic book warehouse. I was trying to be good company, but I felt like shit. I hadn't slept in days and couldn't even pay attention to the football game.

Back at the Bellagio, my shoulder started hurting as I walked to my room. I tried to stretch it out and massage it, but the pain felt deep in the muscle. I tried doing push-ups to get the blood flowing, hoping the pain would subside, but that seemed to make it worse. I called my mom and asked her to phone our family doc. While I was on hold with his office, I started having a hard time breathing. I didn't know what was wrong, but I knew it wasn't good.

I should have just called 911 and gotten an ambulance, but I thought it would be quicker to take a cab to the emergency room since it was only ten minutes away. That was a mistake because I ended up trapped in the waiting room for an hour before seeing a doctor. The girl at the desk wasn't moved by my symptoms or by my bribe of \$10,000 to get a doc immediately.

After what seemed like an eternity, I was admitted. A nurse took my vitals and quickly returned with a doctor.

"He's having a myocardial infarction," the doctor said in a surprisingly calm voice.

"What the fuck is an infarction?" I asked.

"You're having a heart attack," the doctor said as he applied nitroglycerin patches to my arm and chest.

I thought I was dying, so I called my parents. It wasn't easy to talk because I felt like I was breathing through a narrow straw, but I did my best to explain what was happening. I told them I loved them.

That's when I started to feel warm and happy, like I was floating in a field of flowers. I wondered if this is how it felt as you were about to die, but it was just the morphine kicking in. When I opened my eyes, my parents and my on-again, off-again girlfriend Nadine were at my bedside.



Dr. Conrad Murray had been my grandfather's doctor, and he later achieved some notoriety (and jail time) as Michael Jackson's

infamous propofol administrator. My grandfather had died of a heart attack the year before under his watch, and we all know how the King of Pop turned out. So maybe I wasn't in the best of care, but I didn't know at the time. He held a clipboard and took notes.

"I am going to ask you a series of questions, and I need you to be completely honest," he said.

"What drugs did you take in the twenty-four hours leading up to your heart attack?"

"I smoked some weed."

"I need you be thorough and exact."

"And I did some cocaine."

Mom perked up when I said that.

"And some Ecstasy."

Dad looked surprised.

"And I took some Viagra."

Nadine yelled, "What?"

"How much Viagra?" Dr. Murray asked.

"I think it was 200 milligrams."

"You took 200 milligrams? What were you doing?" He didn't look up but kept writing frantically.

"Yes, what *were* you doing?" Nadine squawked.

"Is that a lot? I've never taken it before."

"That's an insane amount," the doctor answered. "A normal dose is twenty-five to fifty milligrams."

This was a lot to wake up to. I sat there in my hospital bed with everyone concerned and upset, and I kind of zoned out a little bit. I had put my body through so much hell in SEAL training that I legitimately thought I was unbreakable. I'd stayed up for five days with no sleep, so I thought this wouldn't be a big deal, but I didn't account for the drugs. At the time, I thought it was the coke and Viagra, but only years later did I realize it was the horse steroid, Equipoise, that I was taking. That coupled with my sleep apnea had raised my hematocrit levels dangerously high, essentially thickening my blood into mud.

The next night after my parents went back to their hotel, I had a second heart attack. I asked to see my doctor, but it was late and most

of the staff had gone home for the night, so they said I would have to wait till morning. I was short of breath, but I was able to call my father, and I begged him to come down and raise hell. Dad came through and got the on-call doctor's lazy ass out of bed, and sure enough, I was having a full-blown heart attack...again. They administered more nitroglycerin and morphine.

The following day, doctors made an incision in my inner thigh and performed an angiogram to look at my heart. The results indicated I didn't have any lasting damage or blockage. They chalked it up to a combination of stress, travel, illness, dehydration, and lack of sleep. And a lot of drugs.

I'd like to tell you that two heart attacks at twenty-seven, hospitalization, and my near-death experience changed me. But the truth is that I stopped taking my prescriptions after a couple of weeks and got right back on the horse. Gambling and fucking.

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**“It’s better to have a short life that is full of what you like doing than a long life spent in a miserable way.”**

**ALAN WATTS**

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## Chapter 29

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### No Remorse

When I was a kid, the first concert I went to was Paula Abdul. My second concert was twenty years later standing on stage watching Metallica after I fucked a girl in the bass player's trailer. System of a Down had broken up due to "creative differences," whatever the fuck that means. The lead singer left and started his own band. The guitarist and my drummer buddy John Dolmayan followed suit and started their own band called Scars on Broadway. John invited me to watch their first big show when they opened for Metallica in Tucson.

At the Phoenix airport baggage claim, I saw a tall, blue-eyed, superhot model-looking girl. We had both flown in on the same flight from Cabo.

"Wanna see Metallica tomorrow?" I asked her. "My buddy is opening for them."

A couple of hours later, she texted me about meeting up that night.

*Where would I stay?* she asked.

*You can stay with me if you want.*

*I'm not going to have sex with you.*

*Who said anything about sex?* I texted.

*I just don't want you to be upset.*

*You could be a total weirdo. I'm not promising sex to some girl I just met in an airport.*

John and I went to a seedy strip club where the owner made a big deal about having a famous musician in the house. He tried to welcome us, but the pizza was subpar, and the dancers were all pretty beat. After a couple hours of drinking, John wrangled some hyena that looked rabid, but she had big tits, and after eight whiskey sours, I guess that's all that mattered.

The airport girl and I went to my room, where she changed into a semi see-through nightgown. Because of the texts, I considered not even trying to kiss her, but I'm not a big fan of the long game, so I said fuck it. She got in bed, and I pulled her on top of me. We kissed, but when I went to slide down the straps on her nightgown, she stopped me. So I got out of bed, went to the bathroom, and popped a sleeping pill.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

"Nope. All good, let's get some sleep."

I didn't say it in a bitchy way since I wasn't angry or dejected. I was only irritated at myself since my gut told me to wait until "it was her idea." I certainly wasn't going to whine, keep trying, and keep getting shot down like most guys. The more a girl rejects you, the lower your perceived value becomes in her eyes. It's like when you get stuck off-roading—the more you spin your tires, the harder it will be to eventually get out.

The following day, we met up with John and headed to the venue where they assigned us a golf cart to get around the massive festival grounds. We had all access passes, so we could go anywhere we wanted. My girl and I both started drinking the minute we arrived.

We were hanging in John's trailer after he finished his sound check when Metallica's manager came in. He asked John to come to his trailer next to the stage so they could talk business. We went to their trailer until it was time for John to perform.

Watching him and his band from the side of the stage was intense. I looked out at the sea of people, banging their heads in unison. After a few songs, my girl and I went in search of more booze. We walked down from the stage to the trailer we'd all just vacated. I knocked but no one answered, so we walked in. I poured some drinks, and she was right next to me, staring at me, so we started kissing. She was all over me. I put her hand on my dick, and without hesitation, she dropped to her knees and started giving me a blowjob.

A small amount of rational thought remained in my head. I knew this was not John's trailer, and we were definitely going to fuck; so I waddled over to the door with my pants around my ankles and locked it shut. She bent over the kitchen table, and I started fucking her.

After some riding on the couch, I picked her up and put her back on the table when there was a loud banging on the door.

“Gimme a minute,” I yelled. The knocking continued. I didn’t even consider stopping. I’d waited a long time to fuck this girl. Yes, I know it was technically only twenty-four hours, but I’d shared a bed with her, and we’d had the equivalent of six dates within that time period. Whatever. Fuck those guys. There’s no doubt they knew what was happening. Eventually, they gave up. Airport Girl dropped down and asked me to cum on her face.

I find these glimpses into the female mind fascinating. She wouldn’t let me take her top off, but after breakfast, two beers, and three songs, she let me do whatever I wanted. By me being willing to accept a no and then still hang out with her afterward, it allowed her to feel safe and think that I liked her for more than just sex. And this allowed her to then have dirty, cheap sex with me. Go figure.

Most guys are persistent and keep trying. That’s a bad tactic. I quickly came to realize that if a girl says no to me, music stops and I’m out. I don’t play that beggar bullshit. No games. If she isn’t super into me, then I’ll find a girl who is.

Don’t get in the habit of begging or allowing the possibility of sex to control the situation. If you shut it down, it communicates that you aren’t going to let her pussy run the show. Whether it’s a business negotiation or a hookup, the person willing to walk has all the power.

During the turnover of festival bands, I saw the bass player from Metallica giving John shit for me fucking in their trailer. John apologized out of respect for the headliners, but he thought the whole thing was hilarious. We watched Metallica play a few songs and took off. I love their music, but they’re some grouchy old bastards.

A couple years later, System of a Down got back together, and John invited me out for their European reunion tour. It was the craziest shit but not in a good way because, despite being massive rock stars over there and playing huge festivals, they didn’t do anything fun. They didn’t hang out, do after-parties, or go to nightclubs. The lead singer Serj was married, so he just hung with his wife. Daron the guitarist had a girlfriend, so they did their own thing. Shavo, the bass player, was doing a decent amount of drugs at the time, and John

only drank, so they didn't hang out either. The tour was a big letdown with respect to partying, but their shows were actually amazing.

I'll never forget the energy of the crowd. When the curtain dropped, the people went insane. There were times when the fans were singing so loud it overpowered the seemingly endless amount of speakers on the stage. I'd heard a few songs of theirs on the radio, but I'd never listened to an album, and I was shocked that I liked almost every song. To this day, those were the best concerts I've ever been to.

During the show in Nuremberg, the lead singer spread his arms, and the crowd parted like Moses with the Red Sea. He put his arms together, and the crowd charged at each other like a battle scene from *Braveheart*; they hit so hard I actually saw one guy fly up in the air a couple feet.

After the show, a couple hot girls somehow ended up in John's tour bus. He took one of the girls in the back as I sat somewhat awkwardly in the living room with the other. There was no music playing, we were all sober, and nobody hooked up. The whole thing seemed off to me, but I did learn some valuable lessons.

John was a perfect example of a guy who wanted to get laid and should've been getting a lot of pussy but massively underachieved. He had the trifecta of what makes it easy: fame, money, and social status. He is also known for having a big dick, which should also make it easier. The reason he wasn't getting laid as much as he should have was because of one thing and one thing only: His setup was wrong.

John is kind of an introvert who didn't have a lot of girls around, so there wasn't a sense of competition and a scarcity of dick. The two girls on the bus were probably surprised to see no other girls there. The scarcity of women lowered his perceived value while at the same time raising their relative value in the process because this made *them* the commodity in short supply. The laws of supply and demand apply the same to women as they do in business. In case you slept through economics class, I'll give you the formula: an abundance of women plus a shortage of dick equals getting laid with minimal effort.

John should've had an assistant prior to the show cherry-picking from the female fan mail and then combing the crowd for hot girls. At

the end of each show, John shoulda been putting down his drumsticks and stepping onto a tour bus full of hot women competing for his attention. Then if he brought those same two girls in, the one he wanted would perceive him as desirable, instead of desperate. Her inclination to hook up with him would be validated, and she would also feel pressure to do so, knowing if she didn't fuck him, then he would most likely fuck someone else.

Giving her undivided attention, which in the previous scenario was a negative, would now be a positive. Because any attention he shows one girl means less attention for the rest of the girls, creating scarcity, which breeds competition. This isn't exactly rocket science; in fact, it's obvious when you *actually* consider it. But most guys never do. When it comes to attracting women, most guys neglect—or *flat out ignore*—an intelligent setup and rely on dumb luck.

And luck, as the saying goes, is for the unprepared.

## JOHN DOLMAYAN

### Drummer from System of a Down

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*Dan and I met playing poker at the Bellagio; at this time my band (System of a Down) was on “hiatus,” which is a nice way of saying we had disbanded. I was in a toxic relationship, my future was unclear, and my life was an economic mess, so what better choice could I make then to play poker, risking tens of thousands of dollars a day?*

*I remember thinking, Who is this fucking loudmouth who never shuts up across from me? He's giving me a headache and plays almost as poorly as I do. I hated him straightaway until I saw his last name was Armenian. Being a proud Armenian and adhering to the adage that when any two Armenians meet, they will form a new Armenia, I announced to Dan that I was also Armenian before slow playing a full house and relieving him of about \$8,000.*

*It didn't take long for us to become friends; I think we went to eat after the game and fairly soon after were hanging out nearly every day. You see, Dan can come off as an uncouth ass, but he is actually an incredibly kindhearted, intelligent, and charismatic person who attracts and helps people in need. I've seen him bend over backwards to help people with no benefit to him, myself included, with never a thought of payback. We shared years of friendship, and I would say we could have counted on each other for almost anything.*

### ***Here Are a Few Fun Times with Dan***

- *Dan once had a heart attack and blamed me for taking him to a Mexican restaurant I frequented, not the three days of drugs, pussy, drinking, poker, and strip clubs he imbibed in.*
- *Dan fucked a random in Metallica's bass player's private dressing room when we opened for them. The guy had to wait for Dan to finish so he could get dressed for the show. Our dressing room was right next door, by the way.*
- *Dan fucked a random (this one was a ten) in my bass player Shavo's dressing room while we played on stage. Unfortunately, Shavo's entire family decided to go in while he was doing so. I heard shit about it for days and could never understand why Dan didn't simply use my room instead.*
- *I invited a few girls to my house. Dan came over and after a quick hello got a blowjob from one of them and came all over my guest bedroom sheets. Then he accused the girl (who had an ankle bracelet because of a DUI and could only leave the house to go to work) of stealing \$2,000 from his wallet. He then left, saying he didn't care about the money, it was the principle. The girl (ankle bracelet) looked confused, sitting naked on my*

*couch as Dan left. I slept with both girls but never found the \$2K.*



## Chapter 30

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# Don't Be a Sucker

In 2009, I moved to a penthouse in Panorama Towers so I could live in Las Vegas full-time. It was close to the Bellagio and Aria, so I had around-the-clock access to games and I played a lot of poker as a result. I trained at world-famous MMA gyms and got into Muay Thai, boxing, and jujitsu. I loved the city, but I can't say the same for the women.

Women in Vegas are polished like a marble countertop. Their bodies, yes, are porcelain smooth. But their mentality is cold and hard as well. In college, socializing was a whole different ball game. The girls were young and innocent and just interested in fun. In Sin City, they were surgically enhanced, attitude-drenched financial predators.

In Vegas, you're either hustling or you're *being* hustled.

Women always had some sob story or unpaid bill while secretly taking cash from four different dudes. If a girl told you she wanted to hang out but had to work because she *needed to make money*, then she was dangling the sucker carrot over your head. She wanted you to take the bait and say, "Don't go to work tonight, I'll give you some money."

The money wasn't an issue; I just refused to establish a framework where someone shook me down to hang out.

One night in a strip club, a stripper came up with the usual hustle wanting me to buy lap dances. I get it. That's their job, and we had entered her place of business. So I tried to think of a way that we could both come out happy. She tried to get me drunk and bragged about her own prowess indulging.

"I'll pay you \$1,000 if you can do a shot a minute for ten minutes and not puke for an hour," I taunted.

She accepted the bet, and I'll be fucking damned if that bitch didn't do it. She didn't even get up to piss. I was impressed, and I paid her

the thousand bucks.

She asked to come back to my place, but she was so sloppy that I wanted nothing to do with her. I put her in a cab, gave the driver a hundred bucks, and told him to make sure she got home safe.

The whole thing had been entertaining, and that was the goal, but it got me thinking. Could I offer this to Vegas girls trying to hustle me with the “pay me to take the night off work” routine? Ten shots was way too much, but what if I cut it in half? I bet a couple of cocktail waitresses, and they did it with ease, but it was still better than a typical date.

I’d been paying people to do dumb shit since college, but what was interesting about this challenge was the simplicity and the subtle complexity of what it accomplished. The hustler gets paid to entertain you, and it shows you don’t care about the money. It also challenges her to prove herself. Had you just given her money for nothing, then you’d be a sucker. If that happens, you can’t escape that designation. A hustler’s number one goal is to tax the sucker.

Most important of all, however, is this: When it comes to *setup*, you always want to conserve your most valuable asset—time.

One of my few regrets in life is how much time I’ve wasted talking and hanging out with girls. But that’s the price I pay for being a sex addict who doesn’t like hookers. I always envied the guys who loved hookers and were cool with fucking girls who weren’t into them. It makes life SO MUCH easier: The girl gets money, you get sex, and there’s no jealousy, no mindless conversations, and no wasted time. It is the purest interaction; both parties are completely honest and upfront about their expectations and everyone gets what they want.

Before all this social media shit where my life was on display and women knew exactly what they were getting into, I had someone I was dating freak out on me.

“Are you sleeping with anyone else?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Recently?”

“Yeah.”

“Who was it?”

“You wouldn’t know them.”

“It was more than one girl?”

“Yes.”

“How many?”

“What time frame are we using here?”

“This week.”

“Three,” I calmly replied.

“You fucked three other girls this week? It’s only Thursday!”

“I used a condom.”

I never apologized because I hadn’t done anything wrong. I’d never promised her monogamy, and I didn’t pretend she was the only woman in my life. In about a week, she came around. And our relationship was infinitely better because of the honesty; she opened up about things she hadn’t told anyone because she knew she could trust me. Plus, she was accepting of everything I did after because I set the bar of acceptance pretty high to start.

The quickest way to build trust is to answer truthfully even when you know the person won’t like your answer. It also shows that you aren’t going to go out of your way to make up a lie to try and make her like you, which indirectly communicates confidence and shows you aren’t desperate. If I ask a girl how many guys she’s fucked in her life and she says seven or nine—which they almost always say—then I don’t *know* she’s lying, but I assume she is. However, if she looks me in the eye and says she’s fucked seventy-eight dudes, then I’d bet she’s telling the truth. That isn’t a number a liar would spit out.

I can’t trust someone unless I have a little dirt on them. Give your partner honesty, give them unapologetic dirt, you’ll be very surprised at how far it goes in building trust quickly and making you two closer. One thing I’ve learned on my crazy journey is that everyone has dirt. Some people are just better at hiding it.



## Chapter 31

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### Antonio

After a few months living in Vegas, I was approached to join an online site called Victory Poker. A guy named Dan Fleyshman was the founder, and he offered me equity without investment. He hired superhot models to host fun events that involved racing cars, tropical vacations, or blowing up vehicles in the desert.

All the Victory Poker pros lived at Panorama, which had become like a fraternity house. We'd see each other in the gym downstairs during the day, and there was usually some kind of after party going on at night. You could always get stoned, jump in the elevator, walk in your buddy's door, and play *Call of Duty*. There was also a bunch of strippers and bottle girls who lived there as well. So many, in fact, that when you arrived late at night, there was a reasonable chance you'd take home a hot girl from the valet or lobby.

Antonio Esfandiari, a famous poker pro, and I butted heads as the alphas of the group. He liked to punish his friends by hustling them into prop bets where he'd propose something and wager on it. For example, "I bet you can't get below 10% bodyfat in 6 months" or "I bet you can't eat \$1,000 worth of McDonald's food in 48 hours." He even had a TV show called *I Bet You* based on this exact kind of thing.

He had a big ego because of his money and fame, so I had to check him once in a while with my typical honesty. I openly acknowledged that I didn't like him, and strangely enough, I think he appreciated that.

Antonio had a fitness trainer called All-American Dave. He was a clean-cut, good-looking guy with morals, so no steroids. We worked out together at Panorama, and he accompanied us when we traveled. I always gave him shit about his client Antonio, and we would go back and forth on why he should/shouldn't start juicing.

"Look at his physique. It's absolutely pathetic," I said.

“He hasn’t been very dedicated lately, and I’m working on upping his caloric intake.”

“He still has a belly and skinny arms. What are you feeding him, doughnuts and soymilk?”

“He doesn’t need steroids,” Dave replied.

“His genetics are awful; he looks like a fat Ethiopian.”

Despite having a body that resembled the Grinch, Antonio got a lot of girls, and I respected that. He hosted parties in his apartment with a professional chef, and he performed legitimately impressive magic tricks and illusions. He was the focal point. Antonio understood the setup and capitalized on it, managing his fame and persona well. He had a lot of standing in the poker world and got into good games because bad players wanted to say they’d sat with Antonio Esfandiari.

My neighbor Ernie opened my eyes early on to the power of money and having the confidence to live unconditionally. He didn’t hide his women and that worked in his favor. They competed for his attention. College experiences demonstrated the power of having a good ratio of women, the impact of jealousy, and the value of a good setup. Las Vegas taught me how to leverage money and status without overtly bragging. And Antonio gave me a glimpse into the power of fame and how people reacted to it.

## ANTONIO “THE MAGICIAN” ESFANDIARI

### Three-Time World Series of Poker Winner, Two-Time WPT Champion

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*Dan Bilzerian is a living, breathing, red-blooded stream of consciousness, strangely doing it without the assistance of drugs. I don’t think I could do it; you know, merge my inner and outer monologue, unleashing his unfiltered train of thought locomotive across the world, saying whatever I wanted, to whoever I wanted, twenty-four seven. The words that escape his mouth are often refreshingly pure, slicing*

*through boring small talk of everyday existence. Other times, his diarrhea mouth can be straight up offensive, shitting brutal truth all over unsuspecting egos. Either case, Dan's interlocutors always share the same nonplussed, surprised reactions that spew from this apathetic chatterbox of a man; a man with no fear of being judged, a man with cojones you can't help but respect.*

*One time we caused serious damage on KandyKruise, a three-day, twenty-four-hour debaucherous cruise ship party. At the end of the marathon party, Dan, was GONE, walking off the ship and into US Customs Control wearing nothing more than a speedo, stumbling, high as a kite. The stunned look on the custom agents' faces made me howl so hard that I nearly bust my gut. Needless to say, they skipped the search, Dan's airtight miniature speedo clearly not hiding anything.*

*I first met Dan at the Bellagio poker room in a 50/100 No Limit game. I noticed that Dan was actually a decent card player, a knucklehead in smaller games but consistently rising to the occasion when the stakes were high. Admittedly, we have always had a love-hate relationship over the years, not always seeing eye to eye. But the one thing I have to admit is that he is a man of integrity. In my book, it means a lot.*



## Chapter 32

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### Jessa

Jessa Hinton was a gorgeous 5'9", 115-pound, blue-eyed Jessica Rabbit-looking blonde with DD tits.

I met Jessa towards the end of 2009 when she worked as a commentator for Victory's first poker tournament. Her intelligence and wit were obvious as she effortlessly hosted the show.

The Victory crew was headed to a racetrack we'd rented for the day, and I asked Fleyshman to put her in my SUV. She showed me a meme in the car; I laughed and told her to text it to me. I didn't really want the meme, but I did want her phone number. We were two feet away from each other texting instead of talking like Gen Z kids. After she sent a couple modeling pics, I replied with a naked pic of myself.

*Sadly my modeling career hasn't taken off like I'd hoped,* I texted wanting to cut to the chase. It was an aggressive move, not one I would recommend, but it worked. I fucked her in the bathroom of my apartment later that night while her best friend made drinks in the kitchen.

After working my way through half of the Victory models, I ended up dating Jessa exclusively. I didn't want to like her. Deep down I knew it would eventually turn into a nightmare. But we got along super well, and the sex was phenomenal. We quoted *Step Brothers*, *Bridesmaids*, and *Dumb and Dumber* back and forth without missing a beat. Everything was great in the beginning.

Jessa was a showstopper. She would walk into a room, and everyone would stare. She got tons of attention, and she loved it. Going out with her was fun, until she started drinking, then she'd turn into a mess. All the warning signs were there, glaring in my face. But I really liked hanging out with her, and we'd have sex three or four times a day. I couldn't get enough. This is probably when I

started jokingly referring to myself as a sex addict. And there's a half-truth in every joke.



Jessa was loyal, though. One night in Vegas, I packed up my Range Rover with a couple guns and a bulletproof vest. I'd been cheated out of \$50,000 in Bellagio chips by a card mechanic (card cheat who specializes in sleight-of-hand and manipulation of the cards) in LA, and I intended on getting my money back. I decided to drive so there wouldn't be any flight records if things went sideways. I told Jessa that she should stay home because I had no idea how this was going to turn out, but she insisted on coming.

The mechanic was a seemingly harmless out of shape old white guy, but his partner was a six-foot-four black dude built like a linebacker. I offered to buy the chips back for cash at a slight discount, and they agreed. My plan was to hand over a brick of one-dollar bills wrapped on both sides with hundred-dollar bills in

exchange for the chips. I got a couple of knuckle draggers to come in a separate vehicle in case the cheats had back up.

I met up with the black guy in Beverly Hills. Before we could make the exchange, he spotted my goons and immediately took off running. I sprinted after him down Rodeo Drive, and my goons followed in their car. It was almost midnight so the streets were empty, but he came across some construction workers doing an overnight job, and he yelled at them to call the police. I probably should have just left, but pride is a powerful thing, and I couldn't stomach this guy getting away with robbing me.

I dialed 911 myself and told the dispatch that this motherfucker had stolen \$50,000 from me and I was actively chasing him down Rodeo Drive. The cops arrived, but nothing made sense. His version was that I, along with my backup, were trying to rob him. My version was that he had stolen my chips, and I was just trying to get them back.

"The casino can verify that I have play history with those chips," I offered.

Jessa pulled up in the Range Rover and corroborated my story. It made the most sense. I mean, what is more likely, me randomly chasing a huge 250-pound black guy through Beverly Hills trying to rob him or that he stole my two \$25K chips and was running away? I was in the homestretch until one of the cops asked to look at my phone. The officer saw a slew of missed calls and checked my messages. There were multiple voice mails from my thugs saying they were bailing out because there were cops everywhere. That didn't look good.

The cops asked Jessa for the keys and then proceeded to search my Range Rover. When they found my pistol and bulletproof vest in the trunk, it was all over. I was cuffed and put in the back of the squad car. The female officer was going through my phone while her partner interrogated Jessa on the sidewalk. He told Jessa that I was going to prison, and said that she would be, too, if she didn't tell them the truth. He said she'd lose custody of her son, and the female officer even showed her naked pictures of other women on my phone, but she never cracked.

I spent the night in jail while Jessa called around trying to get me out. She managed to find a lawyer and got me out on bail the next day. I was sure I was going to prison, but my lawyer said the case would never see the light of day. He was right; the cheats had a criminal history and didn't want to testify against me, so the authorities were forced to drop the case.

Jessa had demonstrated that she was a ride-or-die type of girl, and loyalty goes a long way with me. After this, I had no choice but to take her seriously and give the relationship a real shot. I played poker while she worked at the Playboy Club in the Palms Hotel & Casino and did modeling jobs.

I fell in love with her. She was the hottest girl I'd ever seriously dated and the smartest as well. It was more than that though: We could hang out for weeks at a time and never get sick of each other. It was hard because, despite everything, I still didn't fully trust her. I'd seen girls do so much fucked up shit in the past, usually at my instigation, that it warped my view. Jessa didn't have the best relationship with her father, plus she was sloppy when she drank, so I had reason to be careful. I wasn't used to being this into a girl, and I didn't like having that feeling of being out of control.

I think I got that from my father because he was a huge control freak. That was the primary reason my dad wanted so much money. It was never about buying things; it was because he liked the power and control it gave him. Well, there is nothing that will make you feel more powerless than being in love with someone you don't fully trust, especially a girl who gets and enjoys so much attention.

She was very independent and didn't want to have to rely on me to support her because she had similar issues and didn't fully trust me. However, to prove her devotion, she got my name tattooed on her. Twice. One *Dan* above her vagina with a heart and another *Dan* on her ear.

We went to the Bahamas for the PCA poker tournament in early January 2011. As usual, I wasn't playing the tourney but getting in on the juicy cash games that happened on the periphery. One of those games was being hosted by Eddie Ting on a big yacht he chartered and docked by the casino. There was only one open seat, so Andrew

Robl, a Victory Poker pro and I agreed to share it, taking turns playing and splitting the profits or losses.

## ANDREW ROBL

### High-Stakes Poker Player

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*The high-stakes gambling world is full of larger-than-life characters. But there is none bigger than Dan Bilzerian. Back in the day during the big game, Bobby Baldwin sarcastically told Dan after a big bluff, “You’re gonna be a big star.” Sarcastic or not, Bobby was right, and Dan turned himself into one of the biggest celebrities in the world.*

*During the process of becoming a “star,” Dan was able to monetize his outrageous personality into unheard of profit at the poker table. Dan taught me that turning a profit at poker wasn’t all about being good at poker. Honestly, I never thought Dan was better than a mediocre poker player. But everyone always wanted to play with him. He entertained the players with his outrageous personality, and he could always make people laugh with his stories.*

*But his best trait at the poker table is that people always underestimated him. I was amazed at how often Dan could get people to do exactly what he wanted at the poker table and make horrible plays against him. He would act like an idiot and show outrageous bluffs then for the rest of the night show the player he bluffed the “nuts” (the best possible hand).*

*I witnessed Dan win all the money at the poker table time after time despite being what I considered to be not very good! And the wealthy people he beat always wanted to come back and play him again, often for bigger and bigger stakes. He ended up capitalizing on this and played some of them for outrageous sums and came out on top. These abilities made him one of the winningest poker players of all time.*

*I was up a few hundred thousand when Jessa texted me a picture of her in the hotel room wearing only my boonie hat and socks. I figured this was as good a time as any to hand over the seat to Robl. When I came back to the table, I learned that Robl had lost the \$300,000 that I was up and was now in the hole \$100,000.*

“Get the fuck out of the seat,” I said. I was not in a good frame of mind, but I wanted to win the money back. It’s the last thing I should have done, going on tilt and playing poorly because I was angry. I made a bad call, and suddenly we were down \$200,000. I was really pissed at Robl, so when he offered to split and let me play on my own, I leapt at the chance to be rid of him. Shortly thereafter, a seat opened up, and Robl sat down. He and I got into a pot where he beat me for another \$100,000, and it really put me over the edge. I was furious, and I went on to lose another \$400,000 before I finally quit.

When it was over, I had lost over half a million dollars. It was the most I’d ever lost in a poker game, and it was about 20 percent of my entire bankroll. I went from winning in the game and feeling good to losing my ass and feeling like I’d been kicked in the stomach.

The following day, I woke up hoping it was just a bad dream, but I knew it wasn’t. I didn’t even want to get out of bed. Jessa didn’t understand gambling, and she didn’t know what losing felt like. I also didn’t have the heart to tell her how much that sum of money meant to me at the time.

When it went poorly, I hated gambling, I absolutely loathed it.

Jessa got a phone call from her agent with an offer for a one-day TV commercial shoot in Las Vegas. The pay was \$800, and she had to get back to Vegas in less than twenty-four hours. She accepted the gig and informed me that the flight cost \$850 and she needed me to pay for it.

“I’m paying more for the flight than you’re going to make on the job!” I yelled. I felt like she was abandoning me right after I’d lost my

ass. “After this, you’re on your own. Work wherever you want and pay for your own shit.”

When I got back to Vegas, I mentally checked out of the relationship and wasn’t feeling great about life in general. I felt shitty about my meltdown in the Bahamas, but the silver lining was that Eddie saw it and invited me to his game in New York City. The first night, I won \$325,000.

It’s hard for a normal person to understand the emotional swings losing and winning that kind of money creates. Playing on the edge of your bankroll can drive you insane. It’s why most pros will never get rich; they can’t handle the mental stress, and they’re scared to take a shot. But like Wayne Gretzky said, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take,” or as I less eloquently stated, “You won’t get rich betting like a bitch.”

Jessa started working at Encore Beach Club doing bottle service and drinking. I didn’t like her working in nightlife and wasn’t any more enthusiastic about the kind of modeling she was doing. There was no longevity in it, and the work consisted mostly of guys trying to fuck her. She resented my view and said I trivialized her career.

Modeling, to her, was an opportunity to become famous and get bigger opportunities. She liked bottle service because it was the quickest way for her to make good money, and that cash would allow some independence and security if we broke up—which, in her defense, could happen at any minute because our relationship was becoming pretty volatile.

She became a Playmate, and her *Playboy* issue came out in July 2011, back when that was a good career move for a model. She started getting a ton of attention, and things changed. Celebs began hitting her up, and rich guys offered to pay her \$5,000 to have coffee with them. Her social media was blowing up, and I remember her bragging about having one hundred thousand Instagram followers.

PLAYBOY PLAYMATE

*Autograph Signing*

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After trying to suck it up for a while, I came to the conclusion that I didn't want to date a bottle service girl. I said I would support her if she wanted to start a business, but I wasn't going to continue down this path. She agreed to start a company making bikinis, and I got her a Lexus in the business name to drive, plus a few thousand a month for expenses.

We would have weeks of normality and then get into crazy fights. She was pretty intent on moving to Los Angeles to model. I hated the idea. I didn't like the people, I didn't like the scene, and I didn't want to do a long-distance relationship. We had come to a crossroads. I was making hundreds of thousands in a night, and for her to expect me to uproot my life to support her modeling career was a slap in the face to me. The more money I made, the less bullshit I would tolerate. Winning made me cocky, and losing made me angry. This combination did not lend itself to peacefully settling disagreements.

Jessa and I would fight and break up frequently, mostly because of her drinking problem. She would drink after promising not to, so I'd break up with her and fuck other girls to get even. Then she'd come over to "get her stuff," which always ended in her seducing me. We'd have amazing sex all night and wake up happy as honeymooners, thankful to be free of the pain of the breakup.

Just like that, we'd be back together without any discussion of what I'd done during our break or addressing the reason for the breakup. This lasted until Jessa's curiosity would get the better of her. Eventually she'd ask if I'd slept with anyone, and I'd tell the truth. She'd go crazy, and I'd run down a laundry list of things she'd done wrong, thus carrying even more animosity into the relationship. This cycle continued longer than was healthy for both of us.



## Chapter 33

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### Ford vs. Ferrari

Tom Goldstein, my maniac bluff-happy attorney, texted me that he bought a new Ferrari 458. The sticker was around a quarter million dollars, but due to availability, you couldn't get one for under \$350,000. According to the online articles, it was faster than even the million-dollar Ferrari Enzo. I was jealous, so I did what most jealous people do. I talked shit.

"I'll blow your doors off in my '65 A/C Cobra," I told him.

In college, I wanted a fun car to accompany the Range Rover. I couldn't responsibly afford a brand-new Ferrari, so I settled for a classic vehicle. I figured something like Eleanor, the Ford GT500 from *Gone in Sixty Seconds*, or a Chevy SS would be cool and bolster my rich guy image. I started searching, and I came across a Shelby Cobra; it looked like something James Bond would drive.

Original 1965 Shelby Cobras were designed by the legendary Carroll Shelby, and they were monsters. They were also worth millions of dollars. Or there were cheap fiberglass replicas you could buy for \$30,000. But in the late nineties, Shelby American remade the classic in a limited production run they called CSX. They bought the rolling chassis from a company based out of Utah called Kirkham, and they were mint.

I found one with 700 horsepower and under a thousand miles. The car only weighed 2,150 pounds, so it was an absolute rocket ship. There wasn't any cage, crumple zones, or airbags, so it was super dangerous, but I didn't care; it looked amazing. The polished aluminum body was flawless. It shined like chrome and had two matte brushed racing stripes down the middle. It was listed for \$150,000 by a seller in Laguna California. There was no question. This was the car. I put some cash in a backpack and flew out there the next day.

The Cobra was immaculate, and it was hands down the fastest car I'd ever driven. I handed the guy a few bricks of cash, and he signed over the title. After arranging for the car to be shipped to Tampa, I headed to the airport. I was giddy; this was by far the coolest thing I'd ever bought.



I started racing the Cobra at Sebring International Raceway, a Le Mans-style road course in Florida, and easily passed Lambos and Ferraris on the backstretch. Nothing street legal could touch it on the straightaways.

“My car has a wooden steering wheel, and it’ll still smoke your Ferrari,” I bragged to Tom.

“Wanna bet?” he said.

Our initial wager was for \$100,000 on a road course, but he changed his mind when I told him I’d raced at Sebring. He said he wanted to do quarter-mile drag races instead. I felt like this adjustment favored him since my car was a stick and I had no experience drag racing, so he agreed to spot me two-tenths of a second. The salesman had assured Tom that the 458 was the fastest production car on the planet, so he offered to up the bet to \$300,000.

For all my talk, I wasn’t totally confident. However, the math was in my favor. My car was 2,200 pounds and had 700 horsepower while his Ferrari weighed 3,600 pounds and had 560 horsepower. But if I couldn’t put the power to the ground and get my tires to hook up, it wouldn’t matter. His tires were wider, and I wasn’t allowed to run drag slicks, so he had the traction advantage. The Ferrari had cutting-edge engineering, nine gears, automatic dual-clutch shifting, and launch control to ensure a perfect start every time. But being a math guy, I took the bet.

In practice, I recorded thirteen something to hit the quarter-mile mark. *Car and Driver* reported that the Ferrari 458 could do it in less than eleven seconds. We both took preparations seriously. I hired a drag race instructor, and Tom haunted online Ferrari and Shelby forums for advice and opinions on the outcome. 1965 was the year Ford famously beat Ferrari in Le Mans, so there were passionate enthusiasts eager to weigh in on both sides.

I was able to get down to twelve seconds or so, but not any lower. Nailing the takeoff and shifting the gears at precisely the right time was more difficult than I expected.

Tom talked shit the entire time.

“I’m going to buy a billboard outside your apartment and put my face on it to celebrate my victory,” he taunted. He tried to piss me off by saying he wanted Jessa to ride in his car. *I want her to see what a winner looks like*, he texted.

*You got it!* I replied. They say every hundred pounds adds a tenth of a second, and I needed all the help I could get.

As the race neared, his shit-talking got worse. The night before the race, he posted his \$300,000 in Bellagio chips and begged me to up the stakes of the bet. I said it was enough, but when he offered me an additional \$85,000 to my \$40,000, I had to accept it. He wanted to add that if I lost, I could not have sex or masturbate for a month. As a sex addict, this scared the hell out of me, but I figured I'd be too depressed anyway, so I agreed under the condition that if he lost, he had to get high with me.

Tom had taught law at Harvard and in his practice, he'd developed a special expertise for skillfully arguing before the United States Supreme Court. Despite his craziness at the table, he was a square in many ways and had never done a drug in his life. Gambling was one of his few vices, but he was a sicko, so he agreed to smoke weed if he lost.

Poker players and car enthusiasts from the forums showed up at the track early, eager to see the outcome. There'd been a lot of money bet on the side, and it seemed like everyone had a strong opinion.

I wore a helmet, gloves, and arm restraints that strapped my hands to the steering wheel, per track regulation. I also wore a fireproof suit in case my gas tank blew up and the car caught on fire, which Cobras were known to do from time to time.

I revved the engine to 5,000 rpm and dropped the clutch; the back tires broke loose, and smoke filled the wheel wells. This heated up the rubber, helping to maximize traction. I pulled up at the starting line and refused to look to the sides or acknowledge that anyone was within twenty miles of me. I was laser focused.

The drag tree lit up yellow, and I revved to 3,800 rpms like I had practiced. When the light hit green, I dropped the clutch and rolled into the gas. The tires didn't spin or slip at all; they just hooked up. My head flew back, and the car took off like a runaway freight train. Shift point, banged second gear home. Shift point, smoothly went up and over for third. Pedal buried to the floor. Shift point, slammed straight down into fourth. Crossed the finish line, hit the brakes.

It was the fastest ten seconds of my life. I hadn't accounted for how sticky a prepped drag strip was; my tires stuck to the track like glue.

Everyone was yelling and screaming as I pulled into the pits. The board read 10.75 seconds, 133 miles per hour. I'd won the race. No way he could beat that time, not without putting a jet engine in his car anyway.

Tom pulled an 11.51 at 121 miles per hour. It wasn't even close. Everyone was celebrating or upset, but Tom refused to acknowledge that it was over. He was like one of those people at a funeral who, despite seeing the body, refuses to accept that the person is dead. For the next thirty minutes, he checked his tire pressures and tried different start techniques, but it was hopeless.

I liked Tom, but he'd talked a huge amount of shit, so I didn't feel too bad for him. We met at my apartment to get high. I had made brownies the day prior with slow-roasted weed oil. It usually took forty-five minutes to an hour for the high to kick in, so we hit a few bong rips to get started.

"I don't feel anything," Tom insisted. He started saying that he couldn't get high on pot, that he was immune. It sounded like bullshit, but he was definitely inhaling, so he'd upheld his end of the bet. I couldn't hold it against him if he couldn't feel the high, so I cut him loose and let him go.

The phone rang ten minutes later.

"Blitz, the weed worked," he yelled.

"Where are you?"

"I'm in the poker room at the Bellagio. I couldn't drive anymore, so I left my car."

"Where's your car?

"On Las Vegas Boulevard."

I raced down there, and, sure enough, that asshole had left his brand-new Ferrari sitting on the boulevard with the keys still in it. He didn't even turn the lights off. I parked the car in valet and went to the poker room.

"Blitz, I need to borrow some money to gamble."

"No, you don't," I said. "You shouldn't play poker under any circumstances right now. You play bad enough when you're sober."

"If you don't loan it to me, I'm going to borrow it from someone here. I promise to only play with the money you give me, and you can

keep the Ferrari until I pay you back.”

“Dude, you should not gamble right now. You’re gonna lose.”

“Either you give it to me, or I’ll get it from someone else.”

“Fine.”

He obviously lost the money I gave him. It took him six months to pay me. But for once in my life, I had collateral on a loan, and with that car I didn’t care if he never paid me.



## Chapter 34

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# Ponzi Scheme

B lack Friday. April 15, 2011.

The day the United States Department of Justice shut down online poker in America. They effectively banned the game, seized everyone's assets, and generally fucked up players lives. I had millionaire friends begging to sell their online money for pennies on the dollar just twenty-four hours later. Private games suffered as players became credit risks.

Molly's Game fell apart when Tobey Maguire got sick of her making so much money in tips and ran her out of town. Also complicating matters was that Bradley Ruderman got busted for operating a Ponzi scheme. He'd stolen from his investors and lost over five million of their dollars in Molly's Game. In 2011, the feds and the victims tried to claw back the money by suing everyone who had won money from Bradley. They sued Tobey Maguire, Nick Cassavetes, Rick Salomon, and me.

I'd just turned thirty, and the last year had been some of the worst times for me in poker. I'd been cheated, stiffed, sued, and shut out of games.

Nick said that if I paid off the Ruderman lawsuits we both faced, then he'd let me back into his game. They were going after Nick for \$73,000 and me for a \$100,000. Nick had stopped letting me play because I'd said in an interview with *Star* magazine that Tobey Maguire played like a tight bitch. It was a big *no-no* to talk to gossip magazines and mention anything about celebrities, but I was new to this, and didn't know.

Nick and I would have been cleared if we aggressively fought back. But fighting required attorneys, and attorneys cost money. There was no upside in going to trial, so I settled both lawsuits for around

\$75,000 total, which was a gamble; I was betting I could make more at Nick's house.

Nick's game had a dream lineup—the guy who owned 7 for All Mankind jeans, *The Hangover* director Todd Phillips, Tobey Maguire, Owen Wilson, and more. I won \$85,000 in my first game back, so paying off the lawsuit turned out to be the right choice.



## Chapter 35

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# San Diego Vindication

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hortly after moving to Vegas, I realized promoters were the biggest cockblocks in the city.

Promoters would bring girls to their clients' tables and introduce them while secretly talking shit. The promoters didn't want their clients to get laid, they just brought the girls to drink the champagne. Clubs would pay promoters 10 percent of what their client spent, so the goal was to run up their tab. Waitresses would get 18 percent via auto gratuity, so their goal was the same, but their hustle was different. Waitresses were trained to flirt with the client, upsell bottles, and ask for drinks. They'd then take full glasses of champagne to the bathroom, dump them out, and repeat. The whole thing was a hustle designed to milk the sucker for all they could.

This was 2011, before the rise of social media, sugar daddies, and Only Fans. Back when hot girls went to nightclubs. I wanted to get laid, but I refused to take part in this scam, so I figured out a way to circumvent the nonsense. The promoters were perpetually broke, and the only thing they cared about more than pussy was money. So I established a deal with them where I would pay \$1,000 for every girl they introduced me to who I eventually fucked. But they couldn't be hookers, and the promoters couldn't pay the women. I even offered a \$5,000 bonus if I ended up seriously dating the girl. This changed the narrative. Now the promoter had a vested interest in talking me up instead of doing the opposite.

A Vegas promoter lined up some girls, and I chartered a Hawker 800 to take us to San Diego for a party. The party was at a mansion on Hillside Drive, one of the most expensive streets in San Diego. We walked in through a two-foot-thick iron door that opened up to an infinity pool and a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean. The pool

deck was on the edge of a cliff that boasted a 270-degree view of everything from the city to the valley to the coast.

The three-story mansion had curved walls of glass in every room. The master had a two-story closet with exotic wood and a bird's-eye view of the ocean and coastline. But it was virtually empty. It had barely any furniture and no decorations whatsoever.

The owner was a slightly out of shape country-club-looking guy named Charles. He wore dock shoes, no socks, and a polo shirt. He was loaded but prided himself on being thrifty, always working the angle, and getting a good deal. I was the opposite. I bragged about what I spent and wanted people to think I paid more than I did.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you what I pay to rent this place," he said.

He teased me before finally revealing that rent was only six grand a month. I had been looking at San Diego real estate and knew that was absurd. The place should have been \$80,000–\$100,000 a month. I was completely confused. It didn't make any sense, but I also didn't think he was lying, so I kept asking him for the story until he finally spilled the beans.

"The house was built on spec, and the builder declined an offer for \$18 million. Then the market crashed, and he rode it all the way down. Now he can't legally sell it or rent it because of some litigation with a neighbor over an encroaching support beam two hundred feet under the ground. The whole thing is a mess. The house was just sitting empty until he found a homeless man sleeping in the living room.

When my realtor told me what happened, I approached the owner directly. I offered to pay cash and keep an eye on the place. The house is great, but I barely use it, I'm only here a couple days a month."

"Shit, would you want to split that?" I asked.

"Probably not worth it for three grand."

"What if I fully furnished the place, made it totally livable? It would be dialed in when you came into town. We can split everything; I'll find a house manager and get it all done."

After some convincing, he agreed. I hired a property manager, housekeeping, decorator, and a pool guy. Charles got a crazy deal on a

used Ferrari and stuck it in the garage. I had the Cobra transported out and bought a seventies Land Cruiser. The garage was full, but there wasn't one practical car on the whole property.



I was fucking excited about this house. I'd wanted to live in San Diego, and now I was going to do it in the nicest house in the entire city. If this place didn't scream "rich motherfucker," nothing would. This would also help my image, making it easier to get into juicy poker games. Not to mention the most important reason of all: Since Jessa and I were in the middle of another breakup, I would get a shitload of pussy living in this thing and with minimal effort.

This was my chance to come back and conquer the city that once whipped me while in the military.





## Chapter 36

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# Hate Fucking

Dave Navarro texted Jessa a naked picture of himself with a hard on. Our on-again, off-again relationship had never been healthy, but celebrities really started coming after her once she became a Playmate.

Jessa and I had technically broken up a week prior, but we were still talking. She texted me in the afternoon that she missed me and asked if she could come over later. I agreed, which usually meant our breakup would be over and we would be getting back together. Meanwhile, she had made plans to meet up with a singer who we'd previously gotten into an argument over when he hit on her while we were together. She said she was going to a concert and would be over after, but she didn't mention it was his concert. A while later, she sent another *I miss you* text. I replied, *I miss you too, come over.*

An hour later around ten, she sent a selfie kissing the lead singer while giving me the finger and then turned her phone off. I sat in my apartment, livid, driving myself crazy thinking about her hooking up with that skinny asshole. Around midnight, she turned her phone back on and asked to come over. I was pissed, but my sex addiction was stronger than my ego, so I said ok. She replied that she'd be over in ten minutes, then gave me the runaround for two more hours before finally showing up completely shitfaced around two in the morning. I was fucking pissed for obvious reasons, but she'd also promised to stop drinking, and her drunken antics had been a major point of contention for our entire relationship.

I hate fucked her, came on her face, and told her to get the fuck out of my apartment. After I threw her ass out, it dawned on me that she had been drunk driving the Lexus that I was paying for, so I chased her down the hallway, asking for the keys. In the parking lot, I wasn't going to let her drive hammered, so I grabbed her purse. We fought

for control of the purse until I got ahold of the keys. I put the keys in my pocket, chucked her purse, and went back to my apartment pissed.

I was heartbroken, but I was also done with that bitch. I had limits to the amount of shit I would tolerate, and she'd blown right through that. We had been almost inseparable for over two years, so it hurt, but I had no choice.

I needed to get my mind off of her, so I planned a trip to Cabo with a couple buddies. Then I called a promoter and asked him to round up some girls. He told me to come out that night, and he'd introduce me. That evening, I went out to 1OAK and he had about fifteen girls at his table. The hottest one, a girl named Tina, looked like a Persian version of Penelope Cruz with bigger eyes, a bigger nose, and much bigger tits. He introduced me, we did some shots, and I flirted with her, and her blonde friend joined in as well.

They were dancing with each other and kissing, which was pretty hot because they seemed to actually be into each other, unlike most girls who do it for attention. I was standing with my back to the booth, drinking champagne and eating chicken fingers while Tina and her friend took turns grinding on me. Whatever the promoter said to them worked because they were all about it. Tina was sucking on my ear, and I suggested we get out of there.

"Can she come with us?" Tina asked.

"Sure."

The blonde went to the bathroom, and I asked the promoter if the girls were hookers. He laughed and said, "Absolutely not, they are bottle servers for Light Group." I paid my tab, told him good night, and walked out with Tina.

In the limousine, I raised the divider, and we started hooking up. She was sucking my dick before we hit the first speed bump. Five minutes later, we arrived at Panorama. That thirty-three-floor elevator ride was the longest of my life.

Our clothes came off as soon as we entered the apartment, and she beat me to the bed. Her tits were bigger than I thought and didn't even look like they belonged on such a skinny body. More blowjobs, a condom, and thirty minutes of fucking. I took a shower and heard her

screaming on the phone while I towed off. I figured she was fighting with a boyfriend.

But after hanging up, she let loose.

“You left my girlfriend at the club!” she yelled. “You are so selfish! How could you just leave her there?”

“Shit, I forgot.” It wasn’t really true that I had forgotten; I just knew she was a 100 percent to fuck me, and the threesome was probably 80 percent. “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” is what my Grandfather Harry used to say.

“My friend is pissed, and this is your fault! I told you specifically that I wanted her to come with us.”

“I don’t know why you’re mad at me. She’s your friend; you could have waited for her. You should thank me that I fucked you good and didn’t care about banging your friend, you crazy fuck.”

When I called her crazy, a switch flipped. Tina went from mad to outright fuck you. She grabbed my phone, ran out to the balcony butt-naked, and threw the phone like a Frisbee into the darkness.

This was before iCloud. Everything was on that phone. All my photos, all my contacts, my entire life. I really wanted to kill that bitch.

I wasn’t about to kill her, but I could five-year-old boy copycat her. I grabbed her clothes, her thong, her purse, and her phone. I hurled the entire pile of shit off the balcony. At least her crap could keep my dead phone company.

She started punching me, so I calmly picked her skinny ass up, deposited her in the hallway, and shut the door. I must admit, the thought of her having to take the elevator butt-naked to the lobby did bring a smile to my face.

I figured there was a small chance the phone memory could be transferred, so I went down to look for it. Miraculously, I found it within seconds of getting to the parking lot, and apart from a cracked screen, it still functioned perfectly!

Mark Twain once said, “Truth is stranger than fiction, because Fiction is obligated to stick to possibilities; Truth isn’t.” You couldn’t make this shit up; I mean, I wouldn’t have believed it if I didn’t see it. I don’t know what was crazier: her getting this upset because I didn’t

bang her friend or my phone surviving a 330-foot freefall onto the pavement.

My pals in the Panorama security office told me that Tina made her way to the desk, naked, and they gave her a robe. She left in a limo, in typical Las Vegas style.

That week, I partied a lot. I didn't want to think about Jessa, and the best way to distract myself was with new girls. My buddy had rented the Hugh Heffner suite at Palms, and we went there to after party one night. I was fucked up on GHB this time, and I saw a really hot girl with big tits walking toward the elevator. I stopped her and said, "Let's go smoke a joint."

"My boyfriend is downstairs waiting for me," she said with a smile.

"I gotta go down too. Let's just smoke this joint quick."

She was buzzed and giggly and said, "Sure, okay, let's go quick." She followed me into the suite. It was multiple stories with a big pool that hung over the city, and it had a glass elevator in the center of the room. I grabbed a lighter from the bar and sparked up the joint. We were smoking and walking as I showed her around the place. I saw the massage table room and figured that'd be a good place to bang. We started kissing and removing clothes. I put her hand on my dick and kicked the door closed. She wouldn't let me fuck her, but she sucked my dick for a while. I have a hell of a time getting off from blowjobs, so it ended with her licking my ass while I jacked off on her head. I got her number, and she ended up coming to Cabo.

I'd lined up around a dozen girls for the trip to Cabo. Some came from promoters, some the Playboy casting director introduced me to, a few repeats, and because I'm sick in the head, Tina, the psycho who threw my phone off the balcony. She actually came. It ended up being me, Nick Cassavetes, and nine girls on the chartered G4.

Before reaching cruising altitude, I banged Tina in the bathroom. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised when she came out topless, throwing Skittles all over the plane, and forcing the girls to do shots with her.

When we got to the villa, the girls continued drinking. A couple started doing body shots off each other. One girl was dancing on the

dinner table topless with maracas, and when Tina shot her in the face with a super soaker full of tequila, it almost started a fistfight. Nick and I escalated a slap-boxing contest to bareknuckle boxing, but we called it off when Nick cut his foot open. He was bleeding all over the floor and the place looked like OJ Simpson's crime scene. My lip was split open, and we couldn't help but laugh.

"I'm getting too old for this shit" Nick said as he headed towards the fridge in search of a Corona.

We chartered a yacht, and the girls went parasailing naked. I smoked a bunch of weed and rotated through the girls below deck, none of which minded me being with the others. They only had two options, and Nick wasn't giving them the time of day. I hadn't been in a situation with such a dick shortage since college, and I didn't think about Jessa once.



## Chapter 37

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# Instagram

I first created my Instagram account exactly two months after the Cabo trip, on May 1, 2012. At this point, I understood the importance of creating jealousy and competition with girls. I knew that showing something was more powerful than saying it. So I decided to show everyone that I was rich, sought-after by hot women, and doing fun shit. If done correctly, it would have a low perceived effort and wouldn't look like bragging.

Social media is a tool that allows you to communicate with tons of people at once. It's more effective than texting every girl in your phone because it accomplishes the same thing without *showing interest*. It allows you to pop into their heads via a photograph, and as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Those girls will see your picture and get FOMO<sup>§</sup> thinking about you doing something fun, or they'll see you with another hot girl and get jealous. This will make them want to reach out. Once they message you, it's all over. They've communicated interest; you're in the driver's seat, and getting laid should be easy. You can play the game and take a little while to hit them back if you want, or just ignore them completely; but make no mistake, *you* are being chased, and that is the goal.

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§ Fear of missing out.

Social media also helped me get into better poker games, and heads-up matches that made me tens of millions of dollars. It opened doors, but the truth of the matter is, the primary driver in starting my Instagram was to get laid with less effort. I also wasn't over Jessa, and I selfishly wanted her to see me doing well.

People will talk shit, saying that is manipulative, and they aren't wrong, but I wrote this book to tell my story, not to get people to like me.



## Chapter 38

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### Sam

**E**very Wednesday, I drove up to Los Angeles to play in Nick's home game. It was like printing money. One night, however, I was down \$130,000. I'd gotten unlucky in a big hand, and I wasn't running good. It was late, and I'd accepted I wasn't going to break even. I was just hoping for a slight comeback.

Nick got a text and perked up.

"Blitz, you might just get even." He hinted a mystery player was on the way. Nick was notorious for fucking with people, but he seemed especially enthusiastic about this prospect.

A dark-skinned guy about 5'8" dressed all in black stomped in like he was King Kong. It was obvious he was wired on something because he was sweating profusely and couldn't stand still. Nick introduced him as Sam Magid.

Sam sat down abruptly and bought in for \$50,000, which caught my attention. Most people buy-in for \$10,000 to start. In two hands, he lost the entire \$50,000. He reupped for another fifty, and before the button went around one orbit of the table, he lost that as well. He bought in for a third time with \$50,000, put some sunglasses on, and shoved all his money into the middle of the table—without even looking at his cards!

"Can you beat a blind man?" he taunted the players as he slapped his shaved head.

"Is this guy serious?" I whispered to Nick.

"I told you, motherfucker."

Sam was in total kamikaze mode. A guy took the fifty grand off him, and Sam bought in a fourth time, same amount. Finally he won a hand and doubled up to \$100,000 when he luckily caught a deuce to beat ace king. Unaffected he still just kept going all in. This was the most insane thing I'd ever seen in a game. There was \$150 in the pot,

and he was betting \$100,000 without looking at his cards. In a single hand, I could get almost even. Most people folded because a hundred thousand dollars was a shit ton of money for that game. Unfortunately, someone picked him off before I could, and Sam stormed off to the bathroom.

“Is he always like this?” I asked Nick.

“Sometimes it’s worse,” he smiled. “But it’s always a good show.”

Sam returned with blow all over his nose and face. It felt like I was the only one seeing this. Everyone else played it totally straight.

*Are we going to just sit here and ignore the fact that this dude looks like Tony Montana with coke all over his shit and is punting \$50,000 bullets like he’s pulling a five-dollar slot machine?* I wondered.

Sam bought in with yet another \$50,000 installment and actually started to look at his cards but shockingly played worse than when he played blind. He accidentally called a \$30,000 bet on the river from actress Jennifer Tilly with no pair because he misread his hand and thought he had a straight. When the dealer informed Sam that it requires five cards in a row to make a straight, Sam simply replied, “Good point.” It was fucking comedy hour, and the hits just kept on coming.

## JENNIFER TILLY

### Actress, Academy Award Winner, World Series of Poker Winner

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*It was two in the morning at Nick’s game. I had dug myself a deep hole and wasn’t going home anytime soon. All of a sudden this guy Sam shows up and within half an hour I was not only unstuck but I was up for the evening. I was just getting ready to leave when I looked down at pocket Kings. I bet, Sam raised. I decided to put a stop to the nonsense right then and went all in. He insta-called. Sam flipped over 3,7 offsuit like it was pocket Aces. “Can we run it twice?” he asked*

*happily. Sam had a childlike joy and wonder about playing poker, and most certainly a childlike comprehension of the game.*

*It was always a delightful thing when he showed up. Privately I called him “Samta Claus.” He had the ability to sprinkle his magic fairy dust on you and instantly transform you into a winning player. After a while he stopped coming. I heard he graduated to Bilzerian’s game and inklings of the legend that was Sam would surface from time to time.*

*Once I was in Vegas playing with Nick at the Bellagio when suddenly there was a big flurry like “The Eagle has landed!” Frantic texting was going back and forth, and then Chuck materialized behind Nick saying urgently “He’s here, he’s here, we’re all set up!” And with a courtly gesture Nick racked up his chips and said “Boys, I gotta go. I have a previous engagement.”*

*I was jealous. I knew they were going to play with Sam, and I wasn’t invited.*

Lazy Frank, Nick’s assistant, approached the table and whispered in his ear.

“It appears that someone tracked mud through the house,” he said.  
“Clean it up.”

Frank headed towards the back of the house. A couple minutes later he returned visibly flustered.

“I need to talk to you,” he said.  
“What do you want?” Nick asked.  
“It’s important. Can you come here?”

“This fucking guy is betting fifty thousand a hand without looking at his cards. I’m not going anywhere. Spit it out.”

Lazy Frank leaned in near Nick’s ear.

“It appears Sam took a shit, missed the toilet, stomped around in it, and then tracked it through the entire house.”

“I don’t care. Clean it up.”

I couldn't stay quiet. I had to jump in.

"Nick, you just gonna let this dude track shit all over your house?" I taunted.

"This guy is losing \$700,000 in a \$10,000 buy-in game. He can shit in my bed if he wants to."

I had no rebuttal...I mean, what the fuck was I supposed to say to that?

Across the table Sam had piled up a mound of blow right next to his chips and began snorting it right off the felt. Everyone was in a good mood, except the guy that Sam smashed with his nine deuce off suit. After losing another couple buy ins, Sam finally left in disgust.

"Is he good for the money?" I asked Nick.

"Yeah, he's super fucking rich. Chucky met him at Soho House, and he said he liked to play poker."

"Nick, what the fuck was that? How do you accidentally miss the toilet?" Lazy Frank queried.

Nick, ever the film director, slowly looked at Lazy Frank like we were in a scene from a mobster movie. "That wasn't an accident... That was a message."

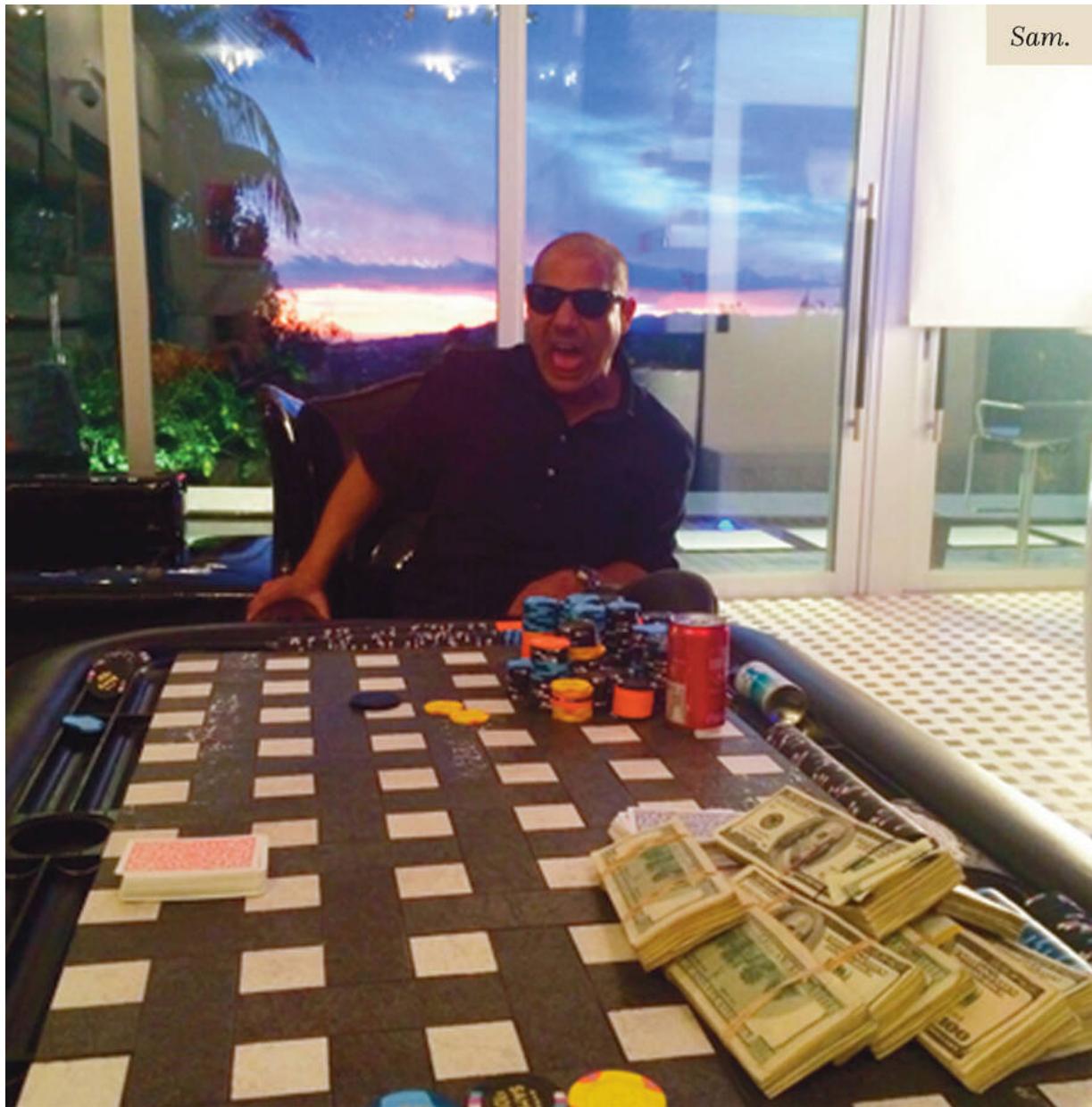
The next time we played at Nick's house, Sam challenged me to play him heads-up. Nick savvily claimed 10 percent of my action any time I played Sam, which was fair since he introduced us. It was damn near impossible to lose to Sam over the long haul. He didn't even look at his cards half the time and it seemed like he was more interested in bluffing and talking shit than he was in actually playing poker.

Sam's home in the prestigious Bird Streets of the Hollywood Hills had been dubbed the "*Vanity Fair* House" and was probably worth \$30 million dollars. He had lined the walls and gate with razor wire like a super max prison, and koi ponds surrounded the house like a moat. The floors, tables, and marble walls all had a black-and-white theme that reminded me of the movie *Clockwork Orange*. Everything was designer and super expensive, partially due to his late-night coke-induced online shopping binges. He had \$75,000 fountain pens, limited edition hand-engraved crystal champagne glasses, and Hermes blankets and pillows everywhere. There was a movie

projector outside so you could watch films on the side of the house while sitting in the hot tub. The place looked more like a high-end nightclub than a home.

First time we played heads-up, I beat Sam. He insisted we play again, double or nothing. I beat him a second time, he doubled down for a third, a fourth, and kept going. We started in the evening playing for \$20,000 a game and were up to \$200,000 by morning. I didn't have to risk a great deal in order to win a shitload, but the problem was Sam never wanted to stop. We played until sunrise every fucking time.

Sam.



In the beginning, he gave me cash on the spot, but as time went on, collecting became more difficult. He bounced checks due to insufficient funds and even wrote checks on accounts he'd closed months prior. One time, he gave me a quarter million-dollar check with a blood stain and so much coke residue on it that I was worried if I tried to cash it, I'd get arrested. He had plenty of money; he just hated paying gambling debts.

I tried to set parameters and say, “Just one game for \$30,000.” But we’d always end up playing all night. After he stiffed me a few times, I quit playing with him. But then I’d hear about him losing \$800,000 in a game and paying up the very next day. It was such an obscene amount of money that it was impossible to walk away. If Sam was going to lose to someone, I figured it might as well be me.

I suggested we go to Vegas, knowing we’d both have to bring money to the casino, and I’d be able to collect when I won. I told him I’d bring a million dollars in cash if he wired a million to the Wynn, and he agreed.

Sam ran around the house grabbing random shit and taking bumps every time he stopped to catch his breath. He furiously shoved designer garments into a duffel bag like they were dirty underwear. Just watching him gave me anxiety.

He had chartered a jet, and Paris Hilton and her whole family were already on board waiting for us. By the time he finally cranked up his all black G63 Mercedes SUV, they’d been sitting on the plane for almost two hours, and we were at least an hour away with traffic. The seats were upholstered in black leather with what looked like white stitching, but that was just the cocaine imbedded in the seams.

He steered with his knee while texting Paris, lying about how far away we were. On Sunset headed toward the 405, he jumped the curb and drove down the grass median to avoid a bit of traffic.

I remembered that the gas light had been on the entire time we’d been on the road and screamed, “Dude, you’re completely out of gas!” To which he replied, “Good point.” Traffic to the airport was bumper to bumper, and there was no way we’d make it without refueling.

At the gas station, he dumped in \$20 worth, threw the G Wagon in reverse, and backed into the center unit of the pumps, scratching the entire side of his car in the process. Completely unbothered by the whole situation, he jerked it into drive and took off, but not before ripping his entire back bumper clean off the truck. I gotta give the fucking guy credit though, he didn’t even tap the brakes; he just left half the paint from his door and the entire bumper right there at the pump.

He had the pedal pinned to the floor and was texting with one hand while scooping blow with the other. I double-checked that my seat belt was buckled and screamed at him to watch the fucking road.

He looked over at me, eyes bugging out, sweat dripping off his nose, and calmly said, “We’re late.”

“I know we’re fucking late!” I yelled. “Watch the fucking road, you fucking lunatic!”

He put his phone down, placed two hands on the wheel, and acted normal for a few minutes.

“You’re so fucking crazy. You left your entire rear bumper at that gas station,” I reminded him.

“No, I didn’t,” he replied in a monotone voice, lying out of his ass.

Paris and her family had been sitting on the runway for more than two hours, but they were very pleasant and not visibly upset. I was shocked because they were way too wealthy to tolerate this kind of nonsense. After some extremely awkward small talk and greetings, Sam sat down as far away from the Hiltons as he could. I was always fascinated to observe how well-regulated, well-adjusted, normal human beings interacted with that raging psychopath.

After about twenty minutes of fidgeting, he excused himself to go to the bathroom for obvious reasons. He came out looking like he had scarfed down a dozen powdered donuts. There was white residue all over his face and black shirt. I could feel the manic vibes coming off him. He looked like he was going to burst.

I had a military backpack with a million dollars of cash in it, Paris Hilton and her family behind me, and this absolute fucking hand grenade of a human being in front of me with a kilo of blow in his lap. *What’s going to happen next?* I wondered.

Walking through the Wynn, we were swarmed when people recognized Paris. Sam loved the attention because fame was the one thing his money couldn’t buy, and being her friend made him important by association. He was giddy, and I admit, after seeing that, I wanted to be famous too; I remember thinking it would feel good to be so admired by everyone.

We had a section roped off in the poker room, and people were gathered around, trying to take pictures while security kept them at

bay. I pulled out my bricks of cash, and Sam signed for and received chips from the million dollars he'd wired to the casino. Finally, I'd get paid when I won, I thought.

We agreed to play \$100,000 freezeouts. I played aggressive and lost the first one rather quickly, which did not make me happy. There was nothing worse than suffering Sam's lunacy and effectively paying to do so. As I pulled another hundred thousand-dollar brick out of the backpack, Sam grabbed it and literally licked the cash.

I bet \$25,000 on the turn, Sam smacked his head and called. The river card was a king; I missed both my straight and flush draws. I had nothing, and there was almost \$70,000 in the pot. I had a pot size bet left, and I felt like he was weak, so I went all in.

Paris's mom asked how much we were playing for, and Sam told her "a hundred."

"Oh, I wanna play!" she squealed, thinking he meant \$100.

"I have shit...what should I do?" Sam asked as he showed her his hand.

She wasn't paying attention and said, "He's probably bluffing." Based on her offhand remark, he called my all in with a pair of fucking fours and won \$200,000. Mom clapped and cheered, and everyone celebrated while I wanted to jump off a building.

It was not a good night; I was tilted and not playing patiently. After I lost another \$100,000, Sam decided he wanted to take a break and go to the club. We headed up to Sam's suite so he could lock what used to be my money in his safe. After securing the cash, he did a huge line of coke. I was so irritated that I did a line myself. Being around this maniac sober was just inhumane punishment.

He scooped the blow into a small metal container, screwed the top on, and we headed to the nightclub. The bouncers parted the ropes, and we walked right in. Sam ordered a bunch of champagne and handed the waitress a wad of cash. It's always painful watching people spend your money. He requested a little privacy from one of the owners, and we were escorted into his office.

I had a fully engraved nickel-plated .45 in the small of my back, and when I sat down in the wooden office seat, the gun dug into my

skin. I pulled it out and laid it on the desk. It was a beautiful pistol, and I certainly didn't mind showing it off.

Sam fumbled around with his coke-filled tin can like it was a goddamn Rubik's cube. The powder had gummed up the threads in the screw off top, and it wouldn't budge. He had really worked himself into a frenzy trying to open it, and I could tell he was about to blow a gasket. He threw the container on the floor, and it bounced off the ground, hit the desk and came flying back at Paris's friend, who dodged the incoming projectile. It finally came to a stop at the base of a cabinet, lid still attached. Fueled by frustration, Sam grabbed my gun from the desk and went to shoot the can. I leapt up and yanked the gun out of his hand before he was able to fire off a round.

This was one of those moments in my life when I say thanks because of just how wrong everything *could* have gone. There was a bullet in the chamber, and if he'd clicked the safety and shot a tin can full of cocaine all over a nightclub office with a world-famous billionaire heiress present, I can't even imagine the fallout. Just discharging the firearm would have been a nightmare. But add in the drugs and a backpack with \$700,000 and it was the trifecta—guns, cocaine, cash—that leads to only one place: prison.

I grabbed the tin can and smashed it with the butt of my pistol. The coke exploded on the desk like a piñata. Nobody wasted time, going in like a bunch of busy bees on a pile of honey.

An hour later, we were at the tables again. I lost \$700,000 that night, and I was really pissed. Every time I beat Sam, I had to chase his ass around the city to get paid—and now he had real money in front of him, and I'd just given him almost three quarters of a million dollars. I was sick to my stomach and had to take ten milligrams of Valium to get to sleep.

Financially, the loss obviously hurt. But it emotionally hurt as well. I'd been playing with real cash, dollars that I had personally counted and banded up, so it stung more than losing casino chips. Plus, I'd done blow, drank booze, and almost died on the car ride with Sam. I was stressed the fuck out. Gambling was so hard on my body; the stress spiked my cortisol levels, breaking down muscle and fucking up my ability to sleep.

I really needed to find a new job.

I managed to win \$300,000 back from Sam before we went our separate ways. However, I was still down \$400,000, and he'd torched a million at the Baccarat tables. The casino was the only winner.

A few days later, I got a text from Sam.

*I lick your money fag.*

The guy was relentless.

*At least I pay motherfucker.*

*Are you scared of me, I am your daddy. Are you scared of your father?*

We went back and forth for a while, until I finally told him, *If I come out there and whip your ass, you better fucking pay me, same day. You are my bitch. Come to daddy.*

*I'm bringing \$500,000. Go get some cash and I'll be there in three hours.*

*I have a cashier's cheque for half a million, he replied.*

I chartered a plane to LA and left immediately.

I beat Sam for \$750,000. His cashier's check plus another one for the difference both surprisingly cleared. I was trapped because I hated the stress of gambling, but there was no other way to make this kind of money this fast. I knew I had to eventually find a way out or this job was going to kill me.



## Chapter 39

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### Loan Survivor

Ilost over a million dollars in a game hosted by the owner of Cirque du Soleil in his Ibiza villa.

We were playing big, and the game was pretty wild. Players were having million-dollar swings, and I was on a downstroke. The average net worth at the table was over a hundred million, and the room was full of strong personalities. One of the founders of Facebook offered me \$150,000 to shave my beard, which was tempting. But I liked my beard, and taking that kind of bet would make me look like I wasn't as rich as I wanted people to think I was, so I told him to fuck off.

Clarence Wilson, a hedge fund manager from Texas, offered me half a million dollars of equity in his fund to go to a nightclub with him. If he offered cash, I would have happily accepted, but it was equity, and I didn't want to stop gambling. I was in full degenerate mode.

It was surreal to witness this type of wealth. We'd just taken Guy Laliberté's (the person who's house we were staying in) fifty million-dollar 178-foot sailing yacht out for the day. As we played poker in the living room of his hundred and twenty million-dollar home, I noticed a large book on a stand. I asked Guy what it was, and he said it contained all the pictures from his recent trip into space.

"How much did that cost?" I asked like the nosey bastard that I am.

"Six million," he casually replied. I'd been around money when I was younger, but not this kind of money.

Clarence pulled me aside after one of the games; he looked at me very earnestly and sincerely and said, "Dan, you're really bad at poker. I think you should stop playing and get a new hobby." This was funny coming from one of the worst players in the game, but it meant my table image was clearly working. I was, however,

interested in his advice about my future because I didn't want to play poker much longer.

"I've produced some movies. It's fun. I could get you into one if you wanna try acting."

"Ok, fuck it. I'll do it."

## CLARENCE WILSON (*NAME CHANGED*)

### Hedge Fund Manager

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*I met Dan playing poker. He was described to me as an arrogant ex-military guy with some family money. I saw Dan as a fellow fish (bad recreational poker player), but he fancied himself a pro. While my observations of his play never ever had me believe he was a pro, one thing he was acutely aware of, and took advantage to make large sums of money, was that there were richer people who played poker, and their skill seemed to be inversely proportional to their wealth. Although Dan may have been a bad poker player, he had a great skill for getting in games with richer people who were worse.*

*I learned this lesson from Dan too late as my ego would always lead me to play against the best instead of making money or saving money playing with the worst. When I went to get my ego checked at an emotional intelligence class, I convinced Dan early in our friendship to do the same. Dan happily and easily agreed, which was contrary to what most people would have expected. We became much closer after that and with new resolve in life.*

*Dan's resolve was to stop giving a fuck what people thought (loss of ego) and to run an experiment to get famous in order to get girls. We had always theorized that fame was more powerful than money with respect to sex. We just didn't know it was one hundred times as powerful. As Dan unleashed the genie of fame in a whirlwind of improbable and impossible*

*events and escapades, I witnessed and was occasionally swept up in some of the absolute lunacy.*

When we returned to the States, Clarence called his buddy Lin Oeding and got me a role in the Antoine Fuqua movie *Olympus Has Fallen*. Before I arrived, Clarence said, “Don’t be flashy, don’t let these guys know you have money. Just show up and blend in.”

“Hey, what’s up with the guy with the beard?” an actor asked Lin Oeding, the stunt coordinator.

“He’s a friend of a friend. I brought him on because I need ex-military guys to help train the stuntmen for the upcoming White House breach. Why do you ask?”

“I have that same watch he does.”

“And?” Lin replied

“Mine is thirty grand, but his is covered in diamonds, so it probably costs a hundred grand!”

“Really?”

“Yeah, and he’s over there rolling around in the dirt with it.”

On the first day, I already blew it. Lin knew I had too much money to be doing stunts, but he liked that I worked hard and didn’t complain. So when my uncle Big Dan died in a plane crash and I had to leave in the middle of filming to go to his funeral, he offered me a second opportunity to work on the movie.

“You gotta shave, though, if you want to play a helicopter pilot.”

Union scale for bit part actors doesn’t remotely equal the \$150,000 I had turned down to shave a couple of weeks earlier. But shaving this time wasn’t a bitch move, so I did it. Actors transform for roles.



*Me in the flight suit, beardless.*

When the filming ended, I went to Houston to see Clarence. We shot sporting clays, raced McLarens, and went to a strip club. Clarence's goal in life was to die with zero dollars in the bank—he even wrote a book about it—so he ran it up every day.

While in Houston, I got a call from Randall Emmett. He was a stereotypical Hollywood movie producer who went around telling everyone that he was a Hollywood movie producer. He asked me to invest a couple million dollars into his movie *Lone Survivor* staring Mark Wahlberg.

"Do not, under any circumstances, *ever* invest in a movie for financial gain," Clarence advised.

"Randall promised me a part, and they're in New Mexico now with the full cast. You want to go check it out?"

With Clarence's experience producing movies, I figured he'd help vet this potential deal. Plus, he had a brand-new Challenger 605 jet, which made getting there easy.

In a banquet hall, the cast and crew hosted a dinner for the families of the soldiers who died, inspiring the book and the film. I met Randall and Peter Berg, the director. They put on the hard sell and Pete pitched me on a role for Daniel Healy, a SEAL who died on the rescue mission.

"It's a legitimate role," he said. "A minimum of eight minutes on screen and eighty words of dialogue."

"If you can get that in writing, and you view this as an investment into an acting career, then it would be worth a million dollars," Clarence said.

I caught a ride back to Vegas with Randall on his lead investor's Lear jet. Randall was an asshole. He sent his assistant to return his rental car and then almost left him at the airport. He told the guy he had two minutes and made him sprint after the plane down the runway. When he finally opened the door for the winded, sweaty kid, there were two open seats, but Randall made the guy sit in the tiny-ass shitter the whole ride. Despite being a dickhead in general he was

nice to me, and after a couple of weeks of hounding me, we agreed to terms on my investment in the film.

When it was time to shoot in New Mexico, I chartered a G4 and brought my assistant and a hot brunette with a perfect body. When the flight attendant went into the back to make some food, the brunette started sucking my dick. A couple minutes later when she climbed on top, I noticed the flight attendant discreetly slip into the bathroom. After banging, I desperately had to piss, so I went over to the bathroom door and released the flight attendant. It was an extremely awkward exchange. I was covered in sweat, holding my dick down, and trying to not make any physical contact with her, but the galley was pretty narrow. I avoided eye contact and handed her a wad of cash when we disembarked.

*Flying to New Mexico.*



The following day, the brunette decided, in her infinite wisdom, to wear a schoolgirl outfit that could only have come from a sex shop.

She had big tits, wasn't wearing a bra, and relied on the absolute minimum of buttons to keep it all together. It was incredibly distracting.

"What the fuck?" the director asked me.

"What?" I played dumb. "Want me to send her back to the hotel?"

He laughed and suggested we put her in the next scene just to see Mark Wahlberg's reaction when he walked on set. The director was a sport about the whole thing.

During a break in my filming schedule, I went to the famous Halloween party at the Playboy Mansion. As a kid, I'd always heard about the crazy parties Hefner threw, and it was a dream to visit the legendary residence. Once the GHB kicked in, I became more adventurous and ended up fucking a superhot brunette with big real tits in the crowded Grotto.

Check that off the bucket list.

I went back to New Mexico to finish filming *Lone Survivor*.

Randall gave me the inside scoop on how everything was going since I was an investor. The movie had a \$40 million-dollar budget, but it only cost a fraction of that to make the film. They presold the foreign rights for around \$20 million, and the state of New Mexico gave production about \$12 million back as an incentive to film there. This meant production only needed to raise \$8 million to get the \$32 million. Surprisingly, my \$1 million was an eighth of the total money actually needed to make the film.

Pete, the director, said he was frustrated because Marcus Luttrell, the "lone survivor," kept changing his story, and they had to reshoot scenes to accommodate his evolving tale. Seemed strange, but I figured maybe the guy just had PTSD or something. The next day Marcus gave me the only line of dialogue that made it into the movie, which was, "The objective of this mission is to capture/kill Ahmad Shah." When I later found out that the mission was strictly for surveillance I remember wondering, *Is this guy completely full of shit?* Nobody forgets the objective of the mission that they write a book about.

While in "hair and makeup," I met the actor playing Shane Patton. Shane was in my boat crew in BUD/S class 239, so I gave him some

insight on what he was like. Marcus got upset because I didn't announce to the actor that I wasn't a SEAL and told Pete he didn't want me to be in any more scenes. Pete told me that he was in a bind because he needed Marcus to be happy in order to promote the movie. I was pissed, but at the time I believed Marcus was a real hero, so I did the scenes they asked me to do and went back to San Diego.



## Chapter 40

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# Betting a Bugatti

A

G followed my Instagram and kept up with what I was doing. He saw I was back in California and had heard about my Ibiza losses, so he thought the time was right to clip me.

Alec Gores was a multibillionaire notorious for being a shrewd businessman and an ultra-high stakes gambler. I'd heard stories about "AG," and the legendary heads-up (one on one) poker matches he'd have with Andy Beal, the billionaire banker from Texas. AG had reportedly beaten Andy for over \$700 million in the last year alone. So when AG first challenged me, I was as excited as I was nervous.

I employed the same strategy I did with hot girls; I didn't communicate too much interest or act eager.

*Maybe after my hunting trip. Marky Mark said he wants to watch if we play,* I texted. (Mark Wahlberg was Alec's neighbor).

*Yes, we'll have him come n watch,* Alec replied.

I showed up at his fifty million-dollar estate in Bel Air, and it was intimidating. The house reminded me of the Italian mob kingpin's home in the movie *American Gangster*. I asked him what he wanted to play for, and he casually said "A million, five million? Whatever." I didn't want to look like a piker, but I also knew I couldn't afford to lose millions of dollars in a single game. I hadn't anticipated being put on the spot like this; his girlfriend, the dealer, and even the butler were staring at me.

"Could we start off with \$2K/\$4K and a buy-in of \$500K?" I asked somewhat sheepishly.

"Sure, that's fine."

I let out an internal sigh of relief as I sat down to prepare for battle. Heads up is a whole different animal. It's a lot more aggressive, and

the swings are much bigger than a normal game with multiple players.

I came out of the gates firing, raising every time I had position (meaning I was last to act, giving me the advantage) and reraising about 20 percent of his raises. He was folding too much, and within the first hour, I'd won over a hundred grand without any big hands.

I looked down at pocket queens and reraised his opening raise. He played back at me with a four bet reraise. I shoved in my remaining \$600,000 in chips, announcing I was "all in." Before I had finished pushing the chips, he said, "I call."

Shit. I knew by the way he called that he had me beat. Sure enough, he had pocket aces, the best possible hand. I felt like I got punched in the stomach, but I pretended to be unphased as I nonchalantly requested another \$500,000 in chips.

I slowed down, figuring I'd try and double up before I attempted to run him over again. A while later, I picked up pocket aces and reraised him. He didn't reraise me and just check called down with pocket kings. I couldn't believe it; he had the second-best hand in poker, and he was afraid. This was all the information I needed; I started playing much more aggressive, and it worked.

I beat him for \$1,600,000. Then a week later for \$2,500,000.



## Chapter 41

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### LA

**I** was set up—living like I had hundreds of millions in the bank, and it wasn’t costing me hardly anything.

I was spending more time in LA, and I wanted to give the city a chance, so I offered to split a nice house in the Hollywood hills with Eddie Ting. I liked the concept of sharing houses with people who were never there, and Eddie fit that description. He would occasionally come to LA to play poker and recruit new rich players for his NYC game. He agreed to pay half the rent if I’d host a poker game at the house when he came in town. Eddie said the tips alone would cover our \$35,000 a month rent, so it made sense for both of us. He would have access to new players, and it would give me top tier properties in three different cities to crash in when necessary.

The poker game was a huge success. The tips from the first game more than covered the entire month’s rent, and Eddie and I both won on top of that. Hosting also brought greater access to other poker games and gave me more pull in the poker world because I controlled who could play my game. In order to get a seat, you needed to be two things: really rich *and* really bad at poker. The only exceptions were guys like Nick Cassavetes, who weren’t rich suckers, but provided access to other good games.

We hired models to serve drinks and give players massages at the table. The girls ended up making so much money in tips that we actually stopped paying them an hourly rate. Players would occasionally toss the waitresses \$5,000 chips and word traveled fast. I had one of the juiciest games in town, and every girl wanted to work it. This brought in tons of new women, which was good for me, the poker game, and my social media. The more money I spent, or appeared to spend, the more people wanted to gamble with me.



AG would text me every so often, and I'd always invite him to my parties or my poker game, but he never came. This time he wanted to play me at his beach house in Malibu. I accepted, and we agreed to play the following day.

I sat down confident and started firing at him like before. He began reraising me, and I folded, figuring he was getting some cards. I bet the turn in a big pot, he called, and I checked the river expecting to win at showdown, but he went all in. His bet didn't make sense,

which usually means a player is bluffing. I had a good hand; I wanted to call, but he'd never done anything out of line before, so after a minute, I folded. He laughed and eagerly showed me the bluff. Fuck. *If I called him, I'd be up three million dollars*, I thought to myself. He was playing different this time.

I started second-guessing my whole strategy.

My head was spinning, but I didn't have time to dissect what was going on. With him on the offensive, I found myself playing a guessing game. He was doing to me what I used to do to my old opponents. The difference was this was for staggering amounts of money, and if I was wrong, it would change my life. Before I knew it, I'd guessed wrong and was down \$2,600,000.

I irresponsibly bought back in for two million dollars. As I signed for the chips, I felt a wave of anxiety, so I excused myself to the bathroom. Sweat began beading up on my forehead as I washed my hands and stared at myself in the mirror. *You aren't playing right; this isn't the spot you should be taking the biggest gamble of your life in.*

I played a few more hands before telling him I wasn't feeling good. He didn't want to stop, and I don't blame him, but this was like the battle of David and Goliath, and I needed to be on my A-game if I didn't want to get squished like a bug.

I had a queasy feeling in my stomach as I drove home. The adrenaline from the game and the stress from the loss swirled together like a tornado in my mind. *How did things go so wrong? Should I switch my strategy? What if I lose again?* I started to question everything, including whether or not I should even be playing for this kind of money.

I'd come into the match with such good momentum. I was in the best spot of my life financially with the two previous wins to pad my bankroll, but that was gone now. Momentum is important; Alec played noticeably better and more aggressive when he was winning. Even though I was much better than he was, I knew I couldn't fade the swings, and I didn't want to end up broke.



## Chapter 42

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# Losing My Hair

**I** used poker to capitalize on my addiction to the rush of gambling.

I experienced some of the highest highs and the lowest lows of my life playing poker. It's hard for a normal person to comprehend the pressure of making a decision that determines the outcome of either winning or losing millions of dollars. The level of stress it causes can actually manifest itself into physical changes in the body and even your outward appearance.

When I was playing AG, I remember running my hand through my hair, and twenty or thirty hairs would fall out. It would also kill my appetite and spike my cortisol levels, which cannibalized muscle and made it impossible to sleep. Stress is powerful; it can cause depression and give you anxiety. Plus, it's linked to six of the leading causes of death.

High-stakes gambling also desensitizes you to money. It's borderline impossible to have respect for money when you are winning and losing such massive amounts in such a short period of time. It's hard to not get jaded when the flop bet is an exotic car and the opening raise is a lawyer's annual salary.

I think the most detrimental part of poker is something that most people don't think about. It forces you to mute your emotions. When you're at the table, you can't allow yourself to get happy, excited, or upset because you will give off information. If you get a big hand, you don't smile; you sit there stone cold and emotionless. You do the same when you miss a big draw and have to fire a million-dollar bluff at the river. When poker players win a pot, they don't cheer and celebrate like at the craps table. It's terrible etiquette, and it would probably get you banned from a private game.

Every time I won a big pot, I would think of something shitty to piss myself off. I did this to make sure I didn't get happy and because

being emotionally unaffected makes you appear richer. I found, the less you care about winning the money, the less your opponents will care about losing it.

All of these factors take a toll on your mental state. Not allowing yourself to be happy for hours on end while playing has an effect on your happiness when you aren't playing. People aren't robots, and they can't just turn their emotions on and off like a light switch. If you spend years of not allowing yourself to be happy, it can cause irreparable damage to your psyche. Poker is probably one of the hardest professions there is. I can't think of anything worse than going to work busting your ass and losing money.

## MIKE "THE MOUTH" MATUSOW

### Poker Player, Four-Time WSOP Winner

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*I've known Dan since around 2005 when he came in and started playing 25/50 no limit hold 'em with us at Bellagio. As time went by, we became pretty friendly and found ourselves playing tons of 25/50 together.*

*Having played professionally for twenty-four years, I can attest to how hard playing poker for a living is considering I've gone broke nine times in my life! After the fifth, I swore it would never happen again, only to let it happen again. In February 2016, when I lost \$200K in a forty-eight-hour session, I was dead broke with zero outs to make money or pay my bills. I couldn't sleep or eat, and I was suicidal every day for two weeks. The stresses and ups and downs in my life were crippling. It's something that very few can say they've gone through.*

*We always say poker is a hard way to make an easy living. As high of limits as I've played, I've never played as big as Dan has. So, knowing the ups and downs I went through in my life, I can only imagine the stress he has playing for*

*millions in a poker game. I would win or lose \$30K a night or day and was never happy when I won but always miserable when I lost. It takes a special person to play poker for a living and an even more special woman to put up with the lifestyle.*

*The hardest thing of all was having to drop down in limits once I started losing. When the money gets tight, having to play smaller stakes to survive is mentally torturous and demoralizing. It's something I've struggled with my entire poker career. But today I'm back on my feet, doing well, playing high stakes, but I am very careful to not make mistakes of the past.*

*I love Dan as a person, and I know he always fights the good fight on the felt.*



## Chapter 43

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# Don't Count Your Money Sitting at the Table

**M**y last session with AG haunted me. For days afterward, I replayed my hands, dissected the game, and kept asking myself what I could have done different. At the time, I felt like I was being bullied but after some analysis I determined AG had just hit a good run of cards. I also figured out a crucial detail: *things went south for me right after AG showed me that bluff*. That's what threw me off. He got in my head and made me question all my previous folds. It was a ploy; and a ploy recognized all-too-well since it was something I used to do. Something I used to do to suckers.

I'd fallen for my own trap.

My plan was to get back in the driver's seat and take control of this match. I'd noticed AG was more concerned with the total dollar amount bet, than the bet size relative to the pot. To him a half million-dollar bet meant strength no matter how big the blinds or the pot was. So I decided to double the buy-in and more than double the blinds for the next match. Beating me last time only served to whet AG's appetite, so when I suggested \$5K/\$10K blinds and a \$1 million dollar buy-in, he eagerly accepted. Part of me felt like I'd stuck my head in the lion's mouth. Knowing if I was wrong—or just got unlucky—the consequences would be disastrous.

I started off slow, letting him think I was playing conservatively for the first half hour and then I began to lean on him. By hour two I was fully steam rolling the guy, raising 100 percent of hands preflop and continuation betting 80 percent of flops. On top of that, I hit some big hands so when he pushed back, it was often met with more aggression.

I brought a hot Jewish brunette named Dalia, who I'd been dating for a couple months. She'd seen me battle Sam before, but it was nothing like this. She watched in shock as we bet hundreds of thousands—sometimes millions—of dollars each hand. AG saw how the game held my girl's attention and, in an attempt to impress her, started playing without looking at his cards. Unfortunately, this actually made him tougher to run over because he started thinking about the game in terms of what I could have, instead of just folding when he had nothing. It made him pay attention to the board more and fold less. He started picking off my bluffs and I was forced to shift gears and slow down. Thankfully, after beating me for almost \$2 million, he went back to looking at his cards.

As the game went on, AG decided he was now going to start betting “things” instead of money. He’d look up from his stack and casually say, “Mercedes” or “Ferrari,” and that meant he was betting \$100,000 or \$300,000 respectively. Occasionally AG would pump it up by saying, “I raise you a Bugatti” or “a Lear Jet,” and I would have a \$1 or \$3 million-dollar decision to make. It actually fucked with my head a bit, and I was glad when he stopped.



Battling with AG.



*Green chips are \$100,000, blue chips are \$25,000, and white chips are \$5,000.*

After dinner, he got tired and began to play more passive, allowing me to pick up pots easily. The mountain of chips in front of me was growing by the hour. My bigger blind strategy had proven to be effective, but by 2 a.m., I was exhausted. There was no question I'd given good action in the match, and I was up \$8,800,000 making this hands down the biggest win I'd ever had in poker. I was ready to gather up my chips and call it a night. But when I asked to quit, AG refused.

"I'll flip you a quarter if you want to gamble," I offered, "But I'm beat. I have to go to bed."

AG eyed me for a second then asked, "Wanna flip for your stack?"

*My stack?! I thought, How would I live with myself if I pissed away the biggest poker haul of my life? I was thinking a million or two, but I figured, I'm up 8.8 million...five and a half million is still a good win.* So I proposed we flip a coin for \$3,300,000 each. Despite there being over eight figures on the table, nobody had a quarter to flip. So we agreed to high card instead. We both counted out \$3,300,000 in chips, pushed them in the center, and the dealer placed the deck on the table. I spread the cards around and grabbed one. AG fished a card out of the pile. High card wins.

I looked down. A four of clubs.

*Fuck.*

My heart dropped and my stomach turned as my mind processed the loss. But then a thought gave me hope: *There are eight cards in the deck worse than a four of clubs and three cards that tie with a four of clubs.* That meant I actually had a 21.5 percent chance of *not* losing.

AG smiled before slowly rolling over the seven of diamonds. I played it off and gave him a fist bump before the dealer pushed him the pot. While losing a \$6,600,000 flip took some wind out of my sails, this was still the biggest win I'd ever had, and I walked away with \$5,500,000. Plus, AG seemed to appreciate my lack of respect for money, which had to be worth something.

Four days later, we met back at his Bel Air home. The blonde dealer smiled and asked, "How much would you like to buy in for?"

"Two million," I said as casually as possible.

"I'll take fifty million," Alec announced with a conviction I found unsettling. One thing was definitely clear: he wasn't going to be throwing jabs; he was looking for a knockout.

I'd determined the best way to play him was to have the blinds as big as possible, so we started at \$5K/\$10K and bumped them up to \$10K/\$25K within the hour. Those blinds were huge. To put that in perspective, it meant the opening raise was \$75,000–\$100,000. The preflop reraise was \$300,000. And since AG called almost all reraises, it meant there was \$600,000 in the pot *before* the flop (first three cards).

And there were still three more streets of betting on top of that.

I continued to play hyper aggressive, keeping constant pressure on him. It was like navigating a mine field because every now and then, he'd get a big hand, catch me bluffing, and beat me for a million or two. Firing multimillion-dollar bluffs worked most of the time with Alec, but when it didn't, it hurt. I'd swallow the pain and remind myself that losses would only increase the longevity of our battle. Like my Grandpa Harry used to say, "You can sheer a sheep many times, but you can only skin him once."

It was super stressful playing for that kind of money, but it was the optimal strategy. He played worse and folded more frequently when the stakes were higher. Playing as big as possible was risky, but it allowed me to win the most money in the shortest period of time, which was important because I knew he would eventually quit playing me.

I battled him until three or four in the morning. When he finally threw in the towel, I was up \$8 million dollars. He always tipped his dealers hundreds of thousands of dollars when he won, and I didn't want the dealers to have any incentive to possibly cheat me, so I tipped them \$300,000 and walked away with \$7.7 million. It's crazy to think a dealer could make more than the yearly salary of the vice president of the United States for one night of slinging cards, but that was the world I was living in.

The wire came in twenty-four hours later; nobody paid faster than AG. He didn't even flinch about it.

It was strange winning that kind of money in a night. I felt like it should have made me happier, but it was such a large amount, it almost didn't even feel real. I think I would have been more excited about it if I'd immediately taken a break, sat down for a moment, and truly contemplated what I had just accomplished. But I didn't celebrate or stop to enjoy the view because I was focused on climbing the mountain.

Another reason I didn't celebrate was because I knew if I lost, I would go back and play AG huge again. I didn't have the bankroll to sustain heavy losses at this limit. My whole life could potentially go up in smoke, and I could find myself in a different tax bracket, grinding the low limit games if things went really bad. I was playing

outside the limits of my bankroll. No responsible poker player would've taken a shot like this, but I didn't care. The edge was too big; I had to take the risk.

The last reason that I didn't celebrate the wins was because, just like Kenny Rogers taught the world, you don't count your money sitting at the table. You will almost never stop at your absolute high point, and you don't want to be playing thinking, "Damn, I was up more an hour ago" or "I don't want to call this bet because if I lose, I won't be up anymore." You should make the correct play, and the money shouldn't have anything to do with it. You don't hold on to your chips with a death grip because the game is fluid. Sometimes you have to risk to win, like drawing to make a big hand, or bluffing when its mathematically correct. You play the odds; your chips will ebb and flow like the tide, but over time, you'll win more than you'll lose.

Poker isn't like blackjack or craps where you quit after a good run. It's how you make a living; just like a stockbroker doesn't quit trading after a good day in the market. When you win, you should keep playing, because if you're winning, that means others are losing. You'll play better when winning, and they'll play much worse when losing, so this is when you have the biggest edge. The game never stops in poker; it's all just one long session.



## Chapter 44

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### Transition

I had a threesome and a foursome, but group sex with a girlfriend wasn't usually great. The girlfriend gets jealous, and the other women don't want to piss off the main squeeze.

I'd been seeing Dalia for a few months exclusively when she joined five other girls and Mike the sports bettor on a quick trip to Cabo to celebrate my win over AG. I began to think that having a girlfriend was impeding my lifestyle. Dalia was smart, hot, and laid back. There wasn't anything wrong with her, so it made it difficult to decide what to do. The trip was fun, but I didn't feel free. I felt restricted.

I told her I wanted to take a week break because we'd been together for a couple of months straight, and I needed time to breathe. The first thing I did was text some girls I'd been wanting to fuck. I took a group of them to Sam's for a poker game. I fucked one girl in his movie theater, another in his guest house, and I had another meet me at my house when I left.

I had girls coming over all week. I told them I could only hang for an hour and literally scheduled them like business meetings. I didn't miss having a girlfriend one fucking bit. After a few days of this, I called Dalia and was honest. I wanted to be single; I didn't want to be tied down.



Cabo.

I'd been wanting to hook up with Victoria for a while. She was a twenty-five-year-old investment banker for Credit Suisse and was absolutely gorgeous. I was being respectful of Dalia, so I didn't pursue it. But as soon as we broke up, I invited Victoria over.

When she arrived, I suggested we get high in the Jacuzzi. Victoria said ok, but prefaced it with a warning that she didn't know how to swim, which I found hilarious. I held her up by her stomach while she kicked and paddled like a helpless puppy. It wasn't until then that I realized how amazing her body was. She always dressed very

conservatively with big frumpy black dresses and sweaters, so it was impossible to tell if she was hot or obese.

After a minute of her flailing and saying she was terrified of the water, I decided we'd tackle that another day. We went to my room, and I took a shower to rinse off the chlorine. I invited her in and helped her take off the bikini. She was the perfect blend of innocent and confident. Shy enough to make you respect her, but bold enough to be sexy. I was trying to play it cool, but it took every ounce of my self control to wait for her to initiate.

I towed off after the shower and went to brush my teeth. As soon as she touched me we started hooking up and everything was going well. She was naked and super wet when I was fingering her but unexpectedly said *no* to the sex. I did the full stop, put on my clothes, and told her to take off. This one was painful because I really wanted to fuck her, but I stayed strong and thought of dead cats as I scrolled through my phone looking for a replacement. I texted a girl that I'd previously hooked up with to come over while she was getting dressed.

Victoria later told me she would've fucked me if I persisted, and I'm sure this is the case with some girls. But, I don't reward rejection with affection. It establishes the wrong dynamic.

Don't chase women; it will make them like you less.



## Chapter 45

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### Sam, Part 2

**I** didn't expect Sam to actually show up at the party, but there he was at the door in black jeans, Louis Vuitton crocodile combat boots, and black sunglasses. Sweat dripped off his face onto his chest.

"Did you run here?" I asked.

He grunted ambiguously.

I immediately escorted him to a hot girl who'd been begging me for cocaine and made the introduction. Then I made my rounds, saying hello and making sure everyone was having a good time. Paris Hilton and her new boyfriend lounged on the daybed. I was happy to see her; she was always nice, and it's good to have celebrities at your events, especially female ones.

A hot girl with great tits stopped me as I walked to the bathroom.  
"Are you Dan?"

She complimented the house and asked for a tour. There are a few things I've learned throwing parties. One is that there are certain code words or pass phrases.

"I'm so drunk."—Universal mating call

"Are you Dan?"—I know who you are, and I want to have sex with you.

"Is this your house?"—Let's have sex

"Can I have a tour?"—I'm interested in sex "Where's your room?"—Let's have sex now

I led the girl to my bedroom and opened the door.

Sam was seated at my desk, screaming, blood pouring out of his hand. A hot blonde struggled to hold his arm down. And a doctor in full scrubs hovered over him with a big-ass needle.

"What the fuck?" I yelled.

"You need to leave," the hot blonde said.

"Bitch, I live here. What are you doing to my friend?"

“Can you help me hold him down?”

Sam shoveled coke into his nose with his free hand while they wrestled with the other. Seeing him covered in blow actually made me feel a bit better. It would have been far more bizarre if Sam were sober.

The girl who wanted to fuck me was done. “I’m sorry, this is too weird for me,” she said and took off.

Now, equally irritated and confused, I yelled, “What the fuck are you doing to my friend?”

“Sam tried to remove a champagne cork with a machete. He missed the bottle and took off half of his thumb,” the doctor replied. I could see his thumb dangling, and there was a large pool of fresh blood beneath his hand. “We need to numb him up so I can stitch his thumb back on. Can you hold his arm?”

I grabbed Sam’s injured arm with both of my hands and pinned it to the desk. It was like fighting the Kraken. He was screaming and motherfucking the doctor. The doc injected his thumb with Lidocaine, and Sam hissed like a vampire burned by daylight.

The blonde who I’d incorrectly assumed was a nurse was tall, thin, and superhot. I inquired how she found herself involved in this unfortunate scenario. She told me her name was Angel and that she worked for Sam.

Meanwhile, Sam was burbling and making strange noises like he was underwater.

“Okay, let’s get him stitched up,” said the doc.

The doctor pushed through the curved needle, and Sam screamed and jerked his hand, ripping the suture out and sending the cocaine pile everywhere. White powder floated through the air, punctuated with red blood droplets. The doctor didn’t factor in Sam’s tolerance for drugs, so the numbing injection hadn’t done a thing. He gave Sam another shot of Lidocaine, and we finally managed to get him stitched up.

I couldn’t have Sam running around my party looking like Freddy Krueger, so I kicked him and the trauma team out of my bedroom. I got Angel’s phone number on the way out the door.

*I got*

*Your money*

*Come*

*Over*, Sam texted me a few hours later.

I had begun to notice a direct correlation between the nice things I did for Sam and the speed of his debt payments. I had to capitalize on his momentary willingness to settle his tab.

Sam's gate was open, so I drove all the way up to the house. The front door was ajar, so I walked in.

Just when I thought the day couldn't get any weirder... Sam's pants were down below his ass, and he was running around the living room. The same doctor was following him but with an even bigger needle this time.

"Stay back! Stay back, you butcher!" Sam yelled.

"What kinda Michael Jackson shit is going on here?" I asked.

"He called me over here for a testosterone shot so he would heal faster. I came all this way, but now he won't take the shot."

Sam paid a slew of concierge doctors exorbitant amounts of money to give him whatever he requested, but he usually chickened out when it came to needles. I grabbed Sam and held him down while the doctor did his thing. Sam kicked his legs like a five-year-old boy the entire time.

After it all calmed down, I went to the bathroom. When I came out, Sam and the shady doctor were seated at the table, playing heads-up poker for \$50,000. Immediately after winning, the doctor began grabbing the cash and stuffing it in his bag. Sam, meanwhile, retrieved the machete and came back, hissing at the doctor.

"You should leave," I advised the doc.

He listened and rushed out the door.



## Chapter 46

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### Sam, Part 3

S

am and I would arrange a time to play and then call a bunch of girls because there had to be at least one or two to deal. He'd offer the girls up to \$5,000 to do stupid shit like get naked and smash glow in the dark golf balls into his neighbor's homes at two in the morning. The girls would also make anywhere from \$500 to \$3,000 for dealing cards depending on how much was won.



I was up around \$700,000 when Sam made a comment about liking my new Ferrari. I'd just bought the second Lamborghini Aventador roadster in the country; I was running out of garage space, and I figured it would help me get paid, so I said, "You can have it." He was shocked, which was impressive because very little surprised Sam. When I tossed him the keys, he said he wanted to go to Soho House, a

members-only club for Hollywood parasites to network with each other. It was just down the hill, and I thought, *What's the worst that can happen?*

Sam slammed on the gas, and I frantically grabbed for my seat belt. We unintentionally drifted through the first corner, and it dawned on me. Not only was Sam a terrible driver, but now he was trying to impress me.

“Slow the fuck down!” I yelled over the roar of the engine, which, of course, made him drive even faster. I felt like I was on a rollercoaster from hell with Satan at the controls. We broke eighty miles an hour on Doheny Drive. The hill and the steep decline made us accelerate faster and the brakes less effective.

Out of nowhere, a dump truck pulled out in front of us.

I couldn't even get my vocal cords to work to yell the words, so I just pointed, and Sam stomped the brakes. The car skidded down the road, and I was certain we were going to die. Time slowed down, the whole world stopped. Sam turned hard right into the side road the dump truck had just vacated, and we missed hitting him by what seemed like inches.

“Stop! Stop! Stop!” I yelled, and Sam slowed down. I leapt out of the convertible to safety.

“Come on, Blitz,” Sam whined. “I'll drive slower, I promise.”

“Fuck you! You're unfit for the road!” He pleaded for me to get in the car, but I wasn't hearing it and took an UberX home. Sam must have felt bad about the whole thing because he wired \$700,000 off his debt into my account that afternoon.

A few hours later, Sam called about going to a hockey game. He had seats on the glass, seven hot girls, and he promised me that his bodyguard would be driving. Of course, Sam ran late, so we didn't even arrive at the arena until there were only twenty minutes left in the game. People had taken our seats since the game was basically over.

“Please remove the peasant squatters from our seats,” Sam instructed the stadium staff.

As we shuffled towards our seats, Sam got into a verbal altercation with a middle-aged dad sitting with his daughter. Sam said

something abrasive, and the guy knocked off Sam's hat. Sam threw about fifteen punches, none of which landed. I watched in horror as the stands converged on Sam. There were all these season ticket holders who sat next to each other game after game, one of which was a massive three hundred-pound corn-fed white guy who pinned Sam on the glass with his forearm.

I jumped out of my seat and put Cornfed into a rear naked chokehold. It was tough because the guy had almost no neck; it was as if his shoulders just attached directly to his head. I was thinking he was gonna turn and rip my head off my neck, but he kept his attention focused on Sam. I was under his chin, so the choke was in deep. I squeezed tighter and tighter until he finally released Sam.

Security came and broke it up. After asking a few questions, they took Sam. He assured us that he'd be back and told us to stay in our seats. I saw security ask for his ID and a cloud of blow went into the air as he retrieved it from his pocket. I thought, *Oh man, he's finally done it. He's going to jail.*

We continued watching the game, wondering if Sam would go to jail or if by some act of God they'd let the lunatic loose. After about five minutes, I went to check on him. He was in cuffs and by every indication, he was going to be arrested. There was no way he didn't have at least an eight ball of blow on him, so I was really worried.

He went to jail but somehow got out the same night. I learned afterward that there was evidently a pattern of Sam arrests that inexplicably resulted in no charges. My theory was that he had some sort of diplomatic immunity or that he was a government informant. The government informant seemed the most likely, but the thought of coked-out Sam working with the feds made me laugh out loud.

Earlier in the year, I told Sam that he was hopeless and that I wasn't going to play him in poker anymore because he was so bad. After I quit him, Ilya, a high-stakes gambler/bookie, sent Phil Ivey in to play Sam and started booking all his big sports action. When Sam didn't want to pay, the word on the street was people were sent to talk to him. I was told they took him off for around \$80,000,000 and got paid \$50,000,000 before a federal indictment brought the

syndicate down. The indictments went all the way to New York with Russian mob ties.

Ilya got locked up, and we found out that our phones had been tapped for at least six months. I was part of the investigation, so I was privy to the evidence in the case, which included everyone's text message history. It made for quite an interesting read.

The government froze \$2,500,000 of my money, and Wells Fargo shut down my private banking. The \$2.5 million was money Ilya had wired me a few weeks prior as a deposit, and anything he sent was frozen. When he asked me to sign it over as part of a settlement agreement with the government, I said no problem. This wasn't the first time I paid a ransom to the government to get someone out of jail.



## Chapter 47

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### Bet Everything

**M**ike was a super sharp guy who saw all the angles. He figured living next to me would be worth more than the rent he was paying and he was right.

After a few months of splitting the house with Eddie Ting, I realized I was spending the bulk of my time in LA. Ilya and Phil Ivey were paying \$45,000 a month to rent a house with an insane view up the hill on Blue Jay Way. After the Ilya indictment, Phil agreed to sublet me their house at a slight discount.

Mike, the sports bettor, rented a house across the street from me in hopes of doing business. He proposed that I get some big sports betting accounts and let him bet on them. Mike said he would give me 30 percent of the profit and agreed to pay 100 percent of the losses. That is what gamblers call a freeroll, and I like freerolls, so I said yes. I had a reputation for being rich, gambling hard, and paying my bills, so it wasn't hard to get major accounts established.

Mike came out of the gates firing. He was betting a hundred thousand a pop on sixteen different things. I thought five TVs in my living room was enough, but I had to get two more racks brought in just so I could sweat all the fucking games. It was fun to watch sports for the first time in my life because now I had a reason to care. We won around \$17 million on the first account before they shut it down, and we won more on others.

This was around the time when the Wynn Macau opened up, and the big Asian whales were wandering into the poker room looking to gamble. The savvy American pros made short work of them, and they responded by banning white guys from the big game.

I found an Asian American pro at the Bellagio who spoke fluent Mandarin. He couldn't afford to play the big Macau game, so I said I'd

put up all the money and agreed to split the profits with him 60/40 in my favor. I set everything up and sent him over there.

We spoke almost every day, and he kept me up to speed on what was going on. So when he informed me that the big Macau gamblers were coming to Vegas that summer, I started making arrangements. I knew about all the good games before they happened, so I bought pieces of the best players and made sure they got seats. I was also able to help some of the Internet whiz kids play above their bankroll and got them into juicy games that they otherwise would've been shut out of.

It was extremely profitable. One of the players I had a piece of won \$14 million that summer in Vegas. I won almost \$2 million in a single game myself, and the Asian in Macau was winning millions as well. Rick Salomon (the guy from the Paris Hilton fuck tape) was beating Andy Beal for around \$50 million that summer, and I had 25 percent of that. I had so much fucking money coming in, I honestly didn't know what to do with it. Too much of anything is bad, except for money. There is no such thing as too much money, or so I thought.

## RICK SALOMON

### High-Stakes Gambler

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*Tampa Dan told me he was going to be really famous, more famous than Paris Hilton. I laughed my ass off...thought to myself, Zero chance. I still don't know how this hillbilly got so famous. Somehow, he got girls before he was famous even though he admits he was a giant nerd. I remember being in the Rhino trying to take this stripper home, and she wouldn't go home with me, telling me she was in love with Tampa fucking Dan. I was def horny on some good cocaine, and this was not good news to me. You will not go home with me because you're in love with the king of the nerds?*

*He used to run around the Bellagio with all these kids who never left the house and were the most socially awkward humans alive. He staked them all and made a lot of money, and I had to watch and listen to their fucking nerd laughs that have now ruined poker. Poker used to be gangsters and cowboys. Now it's Blitz nerd camp with timing tells.*



*Rick, right before he married Pam Anderson.*



## Chapter 48

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### Victoria

D espite me kicking her out of my house, Victoria and I remained on good terms, and a few weeks later at my pool party, Angel, the girl I thought was a nurse, approached her about having a threesome with me. I knew Angel was bi, and we'd been fucking for a month, so I suggested she ask, figuring this approach could only help, and it did. Immediately after Angel asked her, Victoria came up to me and said she wanted to fuck me, but without Angel. I felt a little bad having Angel set it up and then not including her, but I'd wanted to hook up with Victoria for years.

Victoria hadn't been with a lot of guys, and the sex was phenomenal, so we started dating. I'd learned my lesson from Jessa and Dalia, so I made it very clear from the start that this would be an open relationship. She agreed and quickly became my main girl. Victoria was extremely loyal and refused to even look at another guy.

She was my perfect body type, her face was flawless without makeup, and the sex was some of the best I've ever had in my life. She would talk dirty and do anything I wanted. She didn't have any drinking problems; she was smart and wasn't materialistic at all. If I were to design a girlfriend in a lab, I would come up with *almost* exactly her.

I like submissive girls, but Victoria was too submissive. She didn't have her own opinions or a strong sense of self. I felt like she was always who she thought I wanted her to be. That was her only flaw. Honestly, if we'd had great conversations, I probably would have just married the girl.

When you like someone too much, sometimes you'll act differently and try too hard. You'll sacrifice your authentic self to appear more desirable, and this usually has the opposite effect. This was the problem with Victoria; she liked me too much, and as a result, she

wasn't comfortable enough to just be herself. I had no idea at the time, and it caused me to push her away, which only further exacerbated the problem.

One of the reasons women are attracted to assholes is because assholes project a strong sense of self. Assholes are selfish, and they do what they want, so they always appear confident. If you try too hard, it makes you seem weak and less authentic, and that gets boring in a hurry. To be clear I wasn't an asshole, I always treated people with respect, but my brutal honesty and unapologetic behavior was commonly misconstrued.

No matter how much stupid shit I would do, Victoria would never try and make me jealous like Jessa did. That said, I knew she didn't like that I was sleeping with other women, and after a while, she demanded monogamy. She deserved it, so I tried it for a week or so, but I couldn't give up the other girls. I'd been waiting my whole life to be in a position like this, and I'd worked so hard to get here. I didn't want to be restricted, so I was honest and ended things with her.

Soon after, she came back and said she wanted to be with me and didn't care, but asked that I lie to her about other girls if she asked. I agreed, but then she'd ask me a bunch of questions to try and catch me lying and get mad if she did. It was very strange, but she loved me, and I loved her back, so I tried to make it work.

It was difficult because I constantly had girls around for poker, parties, and the living documentary I was making of my life on social media. The more girls that were around, the easier it was to get laid, and having a main only made them try harder because it was a challenge. Vaginas and money are similar in that; when you don't need it, everyone wants to give it to you, and when you desperately need it, nobody wants to give it to you.



## Chapter 49

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### Sam, Part 4

I was in bed one night with Victoria when Sam called. This was very strange because Sam never called. His normal communication style was to send seventy-five one-word texts because he had such terrible ADD and did so much blow that he couldn't formulate a coherent sentence.

"Come over, come over. You gotta come to my house right now."

"I'm in bed with a girl, what's going on?"

"I bought you a present, and it's amazing. You gotta come over here!"

"Look, buddy, I'm in bed. I'll come over tomorrow."

"No, no, you gotta come right now. It's a surprise. You'll love it, you gotta come over right now."

I had given Sam a lot of gifts over time. Cars, Tom Ford jackets, fifty thousand-dollar watches, you name it. So I knew if he got me a present, then it was something badass. But I couldn't imagine what couldn't wait until the morning.

"I'm not coming until you tell me what it is."

"I got you a tiger shark, and I got me one, and they're like brothers, and they're gonna be like you and me, and they're gonna live together forever."

Sam was the embodiment of cocaine; like if cocaine was a human being, it would be Sam. Extreme highs and lows, always seemed like a good idea but never was, started off fun but always ended terribly. Victoria knew this and wasn't thrilled about going; she referred to his house as a black hole. Once you entered those walls, time no longer existed. You could get trapped for hours, sometimes days, and you never knew when you'd get spit out. The only thing you could be relatively sure of is you'd be leaving richer.

On the way over, all I could think of was *Where did he put these sharks?* He was infamous for doing crazy things in his house. At one point, he claimed to have spent \$3 million on Versace tile that he was going to line the house with. I figured he was just talking shit, but I'll be damned if it didn't arrive. He put it on the floors, in the shower, the backsplash in the kitchen, everywhere. He even had it inlaid on the top of his poker table over the felt, which completely destroyed it. The chips and cards flew all over the room, slipping off the slick tile surface.

Days later, Sam went on a bad sports betting streak and decided the tile was bad luck, so he had it all completely ripped out and thrown in the dumpster. He was capable of anything—hundred thousand-gallon fish tanks installed in the walls, multimillion-dollar aquariums outside, whatever.

We walked in the front door, through the kitchen, and into the backyard. I suspected that he had been exaggerating, but these were fucking tiger sharks. The real thing. Maybe six feet long, complete with the dark stripes on the side. And they were in his swimming pool.

Sam glowed and grinned from ear to ear. He was so proud of himself.

I noticed one of the sharks just chillin' in the shallow end with a half-eaten fish floating beside him. When I got close enough, I tapped the shark's fin. He didn't move a muscle. I grabbed his tail and pulled him back and forth; blood seeped out of his gills.

"Sam, this fucking shark is dead."

"What?" He looked shocked.

"Dude, they're saltwater animals. What did you think was going to happen?"

Sam looked at me like I was mentally deficient. He lowered his tone and hissed, "You don't think I thought of that?"

I noticed debris at the bottom of the pool. Some were smaller, clear, glass-looking objects. Others were bigger, cylindrical, with logos. Then it hit me—that crazy motherfucker had thrown all of his household saltshakers and canisters of Morton table salt into the pool.

In Sam's coked-out, convoluted brain, he figured that would turn his pool into a saltwater aquarium.

"Who would have known?" he muttered, clearly perplexed by the situation.

"I dunno, Sam. I probably could have guessed they wouldn't survive. Probably your housekeeper, your landscaper, your assistant, and the homeless guy who tries to sell newspapers on La Cienega. They could have predicted this as well."

I think it was some form of cocaine-induced psychosis, but Sam had really spun completely off the planet. I didn't even argue with him; I just left.

As I walked out, I noticed another dead shark had fallen over the infinity edge of the pool and was trapped in the recirculating mechanism. Sam let them rot for weeks until the stench was so bad that he had no choice but to call the pool cleaning company. They reported Sam to the police, but somehow his invulnerability to consequences protected him yet again.



## Chapter 50

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### Movie Roles

I was getting kinda tired of poker, and I thought being a movie star would be a much cooler job.

I knew I'd have to build my reel before getting any big parts, but I played poker with a bunch of directors and producers, so I put the word out that I was looking to get into acting. Nick Cassavetes was directing *The Other Woman* starring Cameron Diaz and offered me the part of "handsome man at the bar." I had to read for the role as a formality, so I showed up at the casting director's office with my lines memorized.

I stood in the middle of the room and was instructed to read my lines to the guy operating the camera. This was very awkward since I was effectively hitting on him while he read Cameron Diaz's lines. I was doing a horrible fucking job, and this, in turn, gave me anxiety, which only made it that much worse. I left the office feeling like a complete fucking retard. Nick rescheduled a fresh read with a woman, and I managed to read the lines without imploding.

I went out to New York a couple months later to shoot the actual scene at a bar located close to Times Square. I had a couple girls meet me at my hotel the day prior. We got high and ate room service between threesomes. I set my alarm, and the next day, I woke up, ate breakfast, put on a custom Tom Ford suit, and walked to the bar. I had my lines memorized, but I was nervous since Nick was my buddy and I didn't want to fuck this up, especially after my initial meltdown.

I showed up at the bar, and Nick and Cameron Diaz were sitting there waiting. Nick introduced me, and as I shook her hand, I noticed she was towering over me. We're the same height, but her 5" heels made her 6'2". Nick, who was 6'6", asked if they could put boosters in my shoes, which instantly made me feel like a midget asshole and second-guess if I was the right guy for the part.



Nick Cassavetes.

Diaz asked the prop guy for a credit card and complained when he handed her a shitty Visa. This was back in 2013 before every dentist with a BMW had a black card. So, thinking this was my time to shine, I proudly tossed over my American Express black card, hoping to get some kind of recognition. She couldn't have looked less impressed. *Fuck. This is going to be a disaster*, I thought.

As we rehearsed the scene, she looked at me like she wouldn't sleep with me in a million years, which totally threw me off. My lines landed flat, and Nick told me to just improvise and hit on her like I normally would in a bar. That went even worse since I am not the guy who goes to a bar or hits on a girl—ever. Nick had me do a couple shots of tequila with him to loosen up, and I could tell Diaz was getting frustrated.

Nick was confused; he had watched me fuck tons of girls and knew I got pussy all the time. He'd witnessed superhot girls competing to bang me and must have assumed this role would be like playing myself. What he didn't realize was, I wasn't the guy who hits on girls; I'm the guy who gets hit on by girls. My success was due to *setup*, not my one-liners at a bar. I hadn't hit on a girl since college, and this whole situation was so opposite of what I normally do that I felt like a fish out of water.

I fumbled around and fucked it up until we went back to the original lines. After about nine more takes, we finally wrapped. I did such a shitty job he ended up cutting the entire scene from the movie but didn't have the heart to tell me until it came out. Thank God he did. The last thing I wanted to be remembered for was looking like a flailing try-hard, attempting to hit on a cougar at a bar.

Shortly after this disaster, Lin Oeding, the stunt coordinator on Antoine Fuqua's *Olympus Has Fallen*, had teamed up with him again to work on a new film called *The Equalizer*, starring Denzel Washington. Lin suggested me. "He's got a good look, I like the beard," Antoine said, so I was on the next G4 available for charter, heading towards rehearsals in Boston with one of my favorite actors of all time.

Every day on set, the makeup artists put fake tattoos on me and made sure everything matched the previous footage. My primary scene involved a heavily armed gang of mercenaries who invade a Home Depot to kill the unarmed Denzel character.



*In hair and makeup.*



*Rehearsal with Antoine Fuqua.*

I met my death walking down an aisle and being confused by dirt and sand on the concrete floor. I looked down and then a barbed wire

dog collar caught around my neck like a noose. Heavy bags of cement were kicked off an upper row of shelving, and the weight pulled the noose tight and lifted me fifteen feet off the ground. My character hung suspended as Denzel stood on the upper shelf, staring me in the eye, coolly watching me choke to death. He stared straight into my eyes, his face only two feet from mine as I spit blood and died.

There had been a lot of rehearsal for the scene. I wore a “jerk vest” attached to a metal wire fed through a powerful pulley system. Those movie scenes where someone flies backwards after a superhero roundhouse kick are filmed using jerk vests. In the first rehearsal run-through, they didn’t have the weights and motors calibrated properly, so I was jerked all the way to the Home Depot roof until my head crashed into the metal. I was lucky that I wasn’t paralyzed. Mistakes on action film sets can be bad news. On one movie I worked on, they waited too long to activate the pulley on a stunt guy’s jerk vest, and he had half his face burnt off in an explosion.

After my scene, Denzel complimented my death. The part was small, but he’s one of my all-time favorite actors, and his compliment really made me feel good.

Small gestures like that impact people. It’s something I tried to remember when I started to get recognized shortly afterward. If someone wanted to take a picture with me, I always said yes. I have almost never declined a photo unless I was getting bombarded. It’s an insignificant, fleeting moment for the public figure, but it could be a huge deal for a small-town kid with big dreams.



## Chapter 51

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### Smushball Lawsuit

Michelle was a human Barbie doll with huge tits, big eyes, and a tiny waist. Though she acted ditzy, she was no idiot. She knew exactly what she was doing. Michelle was one of those women who oozed sexual energy and used it to her advantage.

Every time I saw her, she was wearing something low cut with no bra and had a champagne glass practically glued to her hand. She had been dating a poker player named Tom Dwan for a couple of years. He and I had hung out a few times, and we had mutual friends. He was usually referred to by his poker moniker “durrrr” and was a legend in the online poker world.

I thought about banging her, but I never flirted. I was always good about that. I wouldn’t even make eye contact with a friend’s girlfriend. Tom had been playing in Macau for a long time, and Michelle frequented the poker room in Vegas. Her tits seemed to get bigger and bigger while her tops got smaller and smaller. She wore a lot of Spandex, and you could see her nipples from fifty yards away. I don’t even think she owned a bra. She would flirt with Bobby Baldwin at the poker table before heading out to the club. We’d always look at each other after like, “What the fuck was that?”

One night, I was going out with some girls to meet a promoter at a club in the Wynn. Michelle texted and asked what I was doing. I invited her to join us, which was kosher because another girlfriend Lacy was coming and they were friends. Lacy was seeing a former Victory poker player named Keith, who I was staking in Macau. So they could sort of chaperone each other.

At the end of the night, Michelle and Lacy ended up at my place in Panorama. I could tell Michelle wanted to stay, but Lacy didn’t want her to. They sat there for over an hour until Lacy finally gave up and left.

“I haven’t spoken to Tom in a month,” Michelle told me before saying they were going to break up. I wasn’t tight with Tom, but we had done some business, and I knew I should refrain from nailing his girlfriend. But she put on the hard sell. I was capped up on GHB, and she was superhot, so we ended up banging that night and then the following day at her place, which was also his place. They lived together.

“This is pretty fucked up,” I told her afterward when the guilt kicked in. “You’re really breaking up, right? I don’t like screwing over guys I know.” She assured me they were done, that it was all over but the final goodbye. I suppose I also rationalized that he was better off without her if she was the cheating kind. And she was; I later discovered that I wasn’t the only guy she was banging.

Lacy said something to Keith, who said something to Tom, who promptly started texting and leaving messages on my phone.

“Don’t tell him,” Michelle begged. “We’re going to break up. We haven’t even spoken in forever. But I don’t want to fuck with his head while he’s in Asia. And if you tell him this news, he’ll be super tilted.”

The worst thing you can do is play poker in a shitty headspace. You’re basically guaranteed to lose, and Tom had already racked up some big losses in Macau. If their relationship was on death’s door anyway, then what difference did it make? It’s not like he was coming home and crawling into her bed every night. He was halfway around the world, and they weren’t even speaking to each other. So I lied to Tom. I felt like shit telling him that we didn’t hook up, but I couldn’t see any better solution.

Four days later, he asked again.

By now, I was starting to get suspicious about Michelle. After all this, she still hadn’t broken up with him. It was at the point where I would be doing him a favor by telling him what kind of woman he had back at home. I could have continued the lie and saved myself the headache, but if I was living with a girl who fucked other people in my circle the minute I left town, I’d want to know.

In a place like Las Vegas, there was always some meathead who wanted to fight any male who so much as looked at his girlfriend. That’s backwards. The meathead and lady meathead are the ones

with the agreement. Some random stranger doesn't owe either of them anything. Unless you have an ugly girlfriend, someone somewhere is always going to try and fuck her. And even then, someone still probably wants to fuck her. It's her obligation to decline the unwanted attention. If she flirts back, then it's only a matter of time before she will fuck one of them.

There is nothing worse than dating a girl that you don't trust. In spite of all that, Tom unfortunately did not seem to share my philosophy and didn't receive the honesty well. He went off the deep end and told everyone what a scumbag I was for the next year at least. I can't say I blame him, and I suppose I am a scumbag, but in the end, I would argue he's better off.

That said, Michelle did have some damn good cats. She had these amazing little longhair Persian cats that looked like mini-lions after grooming. I offered her \$10,000 for the calico one, but she wouldn't sell. However, she did promise me the first one if her cats ever had a litter. Michelle kept her word, chartered a plane, and brought me the calico baby girl as a present. She wouldn't take any money for the kitten but allowed me to give her \$7,500 for the plane.



The kitten had a limp, and Michelle said she had fallen but would quickly recover. After a day or two, I took her to a vet who did an X-ray.

“She’s been stepped on,” he said. “That leg is seriously broken and has mummified.”

He suggested euthanasia.

“No fucking way,” I said.

“It’s going to be a \$5,000 surgery, and the leg won’t make it,” he said. “We’ll have to amputate it.”

I got a second opinion, and there was no saving the leg.

“Do it.”

Which is how I ended up with my first handcat that I named Smushball. And I sued Michelle for the veterinary bills. It wasn’t about the money; she had lied to me and stepped on my animal. I was beginning to see traits of my father’s principled nature shining through in my actions. Writing this book, I was laughing, thinking what kind of asshole sues a Little League, and here I was being a bigger asshole, suing a girl over a cat.

## BOBBY BALDWIN

### **Former President and CEO of City Center and 4-Time Winner of the World Series of Poker**

*Shortly after this episode, I told Dan that I just saw Tom Dwan at the bar. He was having a scotch and soda and seemed distraught, and I asked him, “What’s wrong Tom, did you lose a lot of money in Macau or something?”*

*“No. I had a good trip in Macau, I actually won money... But I lost my girlfriend.”*

*“What do you mean you lost your girlfriend? You talking about Michelle?”*

*“Yeah, Michelle.”*

*“Well, how did you lose her?”*

*“While I was in Macau, Dan Bilzerian fucked her.”*

*And I said, “Tom, that’s not possible. I know Michelle, she’s a first-class girl, she hangs out with other girlfriends while you were outta town, but she always shuns the advances of other men, so that’s not possible. Who’s the idiot that told you that Dan fucked your girlfriend?”*

*Tom looked at me in his demure way and said, “Dan told me.”*

*So, having nothing further to say, I told him, “Well, Tom, if you live long enough, you see it all. Good night.”*



## Chapter 52

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# Better to Give Than Receive

I had made a ton of money but hadn't been as philanthropic as I wanted to be.

I used to take care of my grandmother by paying her bills, hanging out with her, and trying to do nice things for her as much as I could. I got her a giant TV and would hide five grand in her sock drawer every now and then. She was a crier, so whenever I did anything for her, Grandma would start weeping, and it felt good to know she appreciated it.

I had been giving her granddaughter money for the past decade as well, but that came from her asking to borrow money and me telling her I would give her the money with one condition: that she never ask for money again. I learned a good policy from my father. He told me, "Don't give loans to friends or family. If you are going to help them out, make the money a gift, or you will just end up ruining a relationship and causing nothing but animosity."

It didn't quite go as planned; she kept asking for money. Granted, she was in a difficult position being a single mother, and at the end of the day, she was family. So rather than have her go through the process of continuously asking, I just set up a direct deposit in her account every month. I noticed that doing things for people made me feel better than buying shit for myself. So I began searching for people I could help locally. I found a cancer patient who needed financial assistance and gave him twenty grand.

I saw a news article about the rapper The Game launching something called The Robin Hood Project. I messaged him to get involved. He came over to the house and told me his story, about being shot and how he had come up in life. I wondered if he was doing the charity for publicity, which a lot of celebrities do, and I always hated. But after speaking with him one-on-one, it seemed like he wanted to help people. So I decided to give away \$100,000 in cash

to people in need before Christmas. We worked together on a few projects, and I even got Mike the sports bettor to join in a couple times.

One family I found was a husband and wife in Las Vegas who'd adopted six children, all of whom they said had some challenge that made it unlikely they'd be adopted otherwise. Two of the children were born from a drug-addicted prostitute, and they'd suffered lasting effects. One boy had leukemia, and they were seeking \$10,000 for his medical treatment. There are a lot of opportunists who lie for money, so I did some digging and grilled the father. When his story checked out, I gave him \$20,000 instead. He broke into tears, and it felt really great to make such an impact. It was a relatively trivial amount of money for me, but it was almost a life-and-death matter for their son. Afterward, I felt more happiness than when winning one hundred times as much money. That was a big lesson for me.

When I was a kid, Dad had fed me the old “it’s better to give than to receive” cliché. To that, I responded, “That’s perfect because I love to receive, so you can just give me a bunch of presents, and we will both be happy.” I didn’t believe in that sappy bullshit back then, and no amount of talking could have convinced me otherwise.

Like many lessons in life, sometimes the only way to learn is through personal experience. This type of learning can lead to some real pain as you will soon see.



## Chapter 53

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### Puerto Vallarta

**J**ohn Racener asked me to stake him in the 2012 World Series of Poker Main Event, and I agreed to do so. But for some reason, he never came to retrieve the stake money. As a result, I didn't get my 70 percent of his \$5.5 million win, and it cost me \$3,882,168.

A year later, when a similar opportunity came up, I didn't take any chances.

"Hey, do you want to buy a piece of me in the Main?" a player named Jay Farber asked. "I'm selling 20 percent. How much do you want?"

"All of it," I said adamantly.

"Cool, I'll get the money when I see you next."

"No, I'll meet you right now. Where are you?"

"At Aria."

"I'll see you in thirty minutes."

Jay wasn't known as being a great poker player, but I didn't care. He went on to beat out more than 6,300 other players and took home second place in the WSOP Main Event, earning \$5,174,357. My \$2,000 investment netted me over a million dollars.

I sat in the front row to watch Jay play the final table of the tournament, and ESPN caught Victoria cuddling and stroking my beard. She loved beards and would absentmindedly run her hands through my bristles for hours. People later suggested that I had hired a beard petter for the event, which would not be out of the realm of possibility, I suppose. But I never saw a section for that on Craigslist.

I bought Jay a nice Audemars watch and chartered a G3 to Puerto Vallarta to celebrate the great showing. I brought a bunch of girls, two friends, and a promoter who invited even more girls. I was in the front section of the plane with a hot, tall blonde and a hot brunette

with big tits. The blonde was sitting on my lap, making it clear that she and I were hooking up.

We did some shots, and the brunette, not wanting to be left out, announced that she was bisexual. This quickly led to them making out, which led to them sucking my dick. The girls got naked, and I took turns fucking them on the couch. The stewardess walked in on us, did an about-face, and walked back out. I looked over and realized everyone in back could see us because I'd forgotten to close the drapes.

I was switching condoms between girls, and blowjobs while doing so was the natural order of things. I had one foot on the seat and one on the floor as I was fucking the blonde girl's face at a downward angle while unwrapping the new rubber when the stewardess walked in again. I think she heard it get quiet during our little intermission and thought we were finished. Visibly traumatized, she stumbled back to the front, and I didn't see her again for at least an hour.

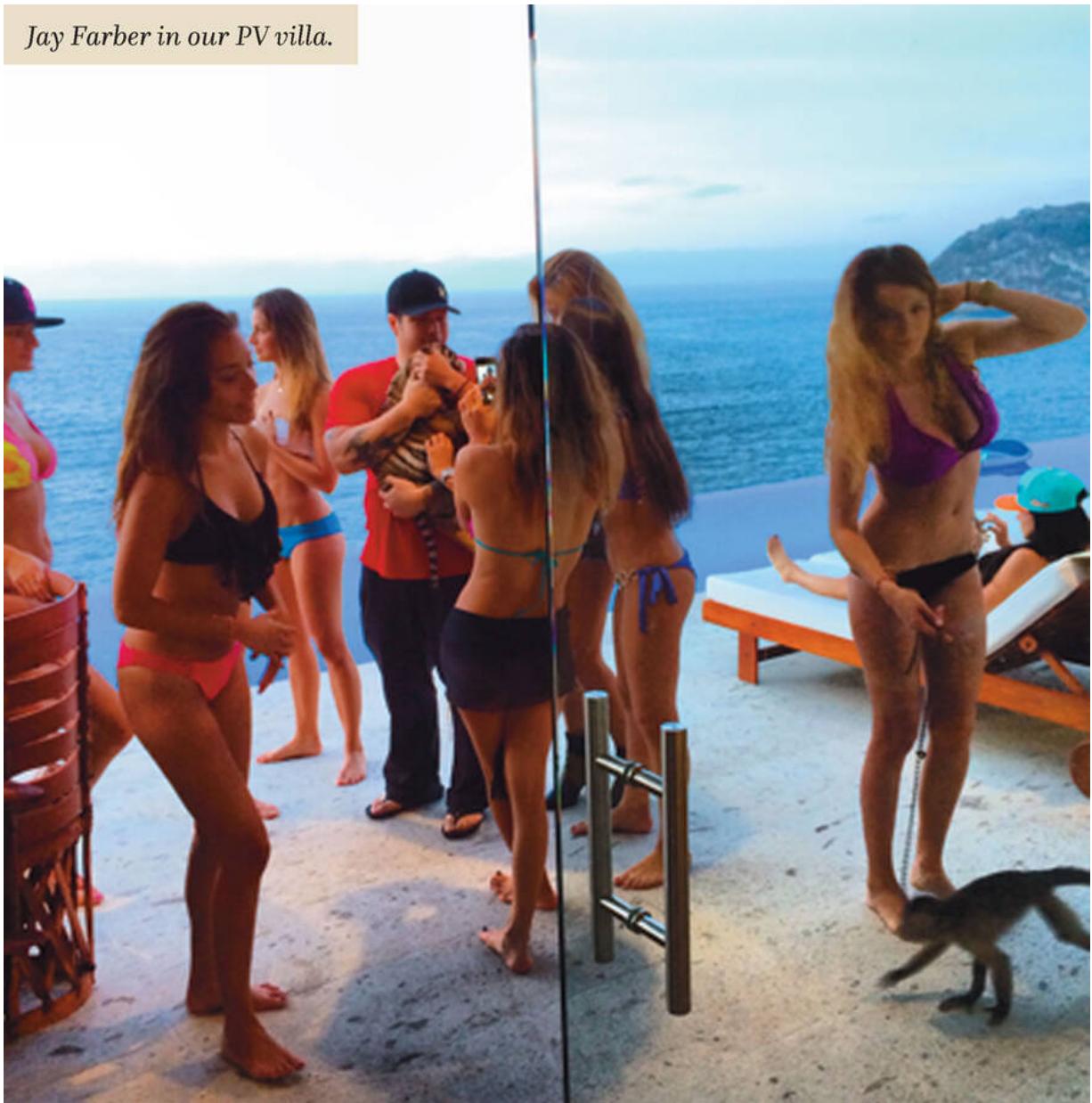
Jay told me later that he asked the stewardess if she had ever seen anything like that previously.

"Absolutely not!" the lady answered. Then she said, "But there was one time when a client asked me to cook him a meal, and when I came back, he was having sex!" She paused for a second and said, "And you know what? It was the same guy!"

There must be thousands of stewardesses working private flights. What were the odds that I would end up with the same woman catching me fucking twice? She turned out to be the same flight attendant who had worked my charter to the *Lone Survivor* set.

Our Puerto Vallarta villa was on a cliff, perched four hundred feet above the ocean with a beautiful infinity pool that seemed to just disappear into the sea. We went ziplining, chartered a yacht, scuba dove, and drank. Well, mostly we just drank.

*Jay Farber in our PV villa.*



The next day, a \$10.8 million wire transfer from AG for my last poker win posted to my account. I was sure he was gonna pay, but I never celebrated until the money was in the bank. It made me happy, like a big warm blanket of financial security. One less thing to worry about, and one step further away from normality.



danbilzerian

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December 5, 2013

Wire from Alec Gores.

I'd been grinding super hard all year. I made stupid, ridiculous, crazy amounts of money, but I hated being stressed out all the time. Gambling is one of the most tense, nerve-wracking jobs on the planet. So I had to take trips to get away and force myself to relax, to enjoy being on top of the mountain. It was always short lived, though, because when I got to what I thought was the peak, I'd see it was only a false summit and realize I had so much further to climb.



## Chapter 54

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# Five Million Minimum

The billionaire wanted to battle again, but this time with a five million-dollar minimum buy-in.

I walked into AG's house and, much to my dismay, found poker pro Mike Sexton seated next to AG.

"What's he doing here?" I asked.

"Your guy is with you." AG smiled. "I want my guy with me."

My "guy" was a casino pit boss who I'd brought to watch the dealers, not to coach me. AG wouldn't cheat, but his dealers certainly could. I should have told Mike to fuck off, but I mistakenly let him stay.

After eight hours, I was up around four million. Mike had been watching and studying me the whole time; at first it wasn't so obvious, but as the night progressed, I was the only thing he was looking at. I knew he'd be coaching AG after, so I wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible.

"I'm tired, how much longer do you want to play?" I asked.

"It's only eleven. Let's play till three or four."

"I can't. I'll do another thirty minutes. We can play again this week."

AG was pissed—I could see it in his face—but playing with a poker pro staring at me and dissecting my every move was bullshit.

"I don't want to quit, but if you want to freeze the chips, we can continue the match later," AG proposed.

This meant he wouldn't pay me the four million, and the next game, I would start with \$9,000,000 in front of me. I'd beaten the guy for around twenty-five million at this point, so I said sure no problem and went home to regroup, figuring the longer I stayed, the more information Mike would give AG.

Sure enough, when I returned, the billionaire was playing better. Mike had given him the answer to my hyper aggressive strategy; AG was now fighting back, reraising me and bluffing. So I had to shift gears and play more defensively because I couldn't afford to play a game of chicken for ten million dollars. I was back playing the guessing game like in Malibu. On top of that, every time we got into a big pot, AG peppered me with questions or offered deals to try and get information. Normally in a casino, I would just ignore this or tell the guy to fuck off. However, this was a more delicate and complicated dynamic, being that we were both pretending to be playing a friendly gentleman's game while secretly trying to take each other's heads off with the added caveat that we were playing on credit in his home, and I wanted to get paid.

Toward the end of the night, I had over \$18,000,000 in front of me, and AG had me covered with his usual \$50,000,000. I was on edge because I knew if AG said, "all in," then I would have an eighteen million-dollar decision to make.

I was dealt ace six of diamonds. I flopped a nut flush draw and raised AG. He reraised me back to \$2,000,000, and I called. The turn was a diamond, giving me the nuts, the best possible hand. My heart was racing when he bet \$3,000,000 into me. I didn't want the board to pair or another diamond to kill my action, so I made it \$6,000,000, leaving me with \$10,000,000 behind. *Holy shit* I thought, *this will be a thirty six million-dollar pot if he goes all in.*

I waited quietly for AG to act; instead, he started in with the questions again.

"I have a really strong hand; I think I'm going to have to go all-in. Do you want to do a deal?"

"What is your offer?" I replied.

"You can take your bet back and give me the pot."

"No."

"I have a strong hand. I can't just call. I might just have to go all in," he said, clearly posturing to negotiate a better deal. "Would you run it out for what's in the pot and not do any more betting?"

I declined all his offers. But he kept blitzing me with nonsense for about twenty minutes, asking me to show him one card. He seemed

really weak, and I thought he would fold if I didn't show. I also knew this was a good spot to bluff with a naked ace of diamonds. So after he hounded me forever, I showed him the ace. If I had shown him my six, I figured he would know I had a flush. It turned out to be a bad show because he flipped over a king high flush. I couldn't believe it!

In poker, when you are playing heads-up, there are certain spots when you just gotta get the money in the middle. Kings preflop and second nut flushes are hands where if the other guy has the one hand that beats you, you just gotta give him the money. It's referred to as a cold deck or a cooler.

I thought he had two pair or three of a kind. I never in a million years considered that he would be scared with a second nut flush. If I had his cards, I'd be dying to get my chips in the pot. I never dreamed he had such a strong hand. It was crazy how *scared money* this guy played, being as rich as he was, but that's also why I was able to run him over. I literally won almost every dollar off this guy bluffing; he folded *way* too much.

AG struggled with the decision about this one hand for so long that I left the table and sat in the bathroom. As I sat on that toilet, all I could think was *You dumb bastard, you just cost yourself \$13 million dollars showing him that ace*. It took almost an hour before he finally gave in and folded. I felt like an idiot for screwing up the biggest hand of my poker career. But it was hard to be too mad because I still ended up winning \$12 million. Plus, I think he would've folded regardless. At least that's what I tell myself so I can sleep at night.

The wire hit the next day.



## Chapter 55

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### A Sign

We were seated in Jack Nicholson's famed floor seats watching the Lakers.

At halftime, my friend and I walked around the court to go to the bathroom. The floor seats were always lined with rich guys and celebrities.

I saw the film director Antoine Fuqua sitting in the corner by the basket, so I went over to say hello.

“Hey, I was a stunt guy in *Equalizer*, good to see you again.”

“Yeah, I remember,” he said. “But who the fuck are you?”

“I’m Dan. We met through Lin Oeding.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.” He kind of squinted his eyes. “But who the fuck *are* you? I’ve never met a stunt guy who wears a three hundred thousand-dollar watch and has better seats for the Lakeshow than I do. What do you really do for a living? And don’t tell me a stunt man either.” He started laughing.

“Well, I also play poker.”

“Shit! I gotta start playing poker then.” He chuckled.

Right as Antoine and I shook hands and said goodbye, a guy who had been waiting came up and asked me for a photo, then a couple others did the same. Antoine’s eyes got big, and I remember the look on his face; I’ve never seen someone more confused and curious. I hardly ever left my house since the chefs and assistants ran all the errands, so this was the first time that fans had asked for photos. I figured it was a fluke, but it was a sign.

That whole interaction was surprising; I didn’t realize Antoine had picked up on all those things, but it felt good to be perceived as important. I was also usually so busy bragging to the world that this was the first time I had a slow reveal with someone. It reminded me of something my mother told me when I was younger. She said, “It’s much more impressive to find out someone is rich when they haven’t

mentioned it." Needless to say, it was too late; that train had left the station, and it was about to really start picking up steam.

## PART 4

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# Fame