

CHAPTER ONE

MAXIMIZE MINIMAL POTENTIAL

I SAT AMONG THOUSANDS OF COMBAT VETERANS IN A PACKED KANSAS City Convention Center for the 2018 Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Convention. I wasn't just an active member; I was their guest. I'd been flown in to receive the VFW's prestigious Americanism Award—an annual honor for those who demonstrate a commitment to service, patriotism, the betterment of American society, and helping fellow veterans. The most famous past recipient was one of my heroes. Senator John McCain survived five and a half years as a POW during the Vietnam War. I've always admired the courage he exemplified back then, and throughout his very public life, he continued to set the standard for how I believe men should handle hard times. Now my name was going to be alongside his.

I was about to receive the greatest honor of my life so far. I should have been proud as hell instead of confused as fuck. For over an hour, I sat in the audience between my mother, Jackie, and my uncle, John Gardner. That's a lot of time to contemplate the meaning of the moment, and all I could come up with were the reasons that I shouldn't be there. That nobody should know the name David Goggins, much less put me in the same sentence as Senator McCain. Not because I didn't earn my spot, but because the circumstances that life served me should never have led me here.

Sure, I'm a winner now, but I was born a loser. There are a lot of born losers out there. Every fucking day, babies are born into poverty and broken families, like I was. Some lose their parents in accidents.

Others are abused and neglected. Many of us are born with disabilities, some physical, others mental or emotional.

It's as if every human being is issued their own personal piñata just for making it out of the womb alive. No one gets a sneak preview of what's in their piñata, but whatever it is will set them up one way or another. Some of us smack that fucker open and sweet things rain down. Those are the ones who have it relatively easy—at least at first. Some are empty as a dry well. Others are worse than empty. They're packed with nightmares, and the haunting begins as soon as the baby takes its first breath. That was me. I was born into a terror dome.

As the speakers took their turns on the mic, I was deep in my own dark cave, reliving the countless bloody beatings my father dealt to my mother, my brother, and me. I watched us escape to Brazil, Indiana, only to settle just ten miles from an active chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. And guess where those motherfuckers sent their kids to school? I recalled the steady flow of racist threats from some of my classmates and how I cheated my way through school and learned nothing.

I thought of my mother's fiancé, Wilmoth, a would-be father figure who was murdered before he could become my stepdad. I recalled my repeated attempts at the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a standardized test required for all military recruits, to fulfill my dream of becoming a Pararescueman. After I finally passed that dreaded test and enlisted, I quit Pararescue training when the water evolutions became too hard. That brilliant decision ultimately led to me becoming a three-hundred-pound graveyard-shift exterminator at Ecolab, raking in \$1,000 a month at twenty-four years old.

I was a shell of a man at that point, with no self-esteem or self-respect. I was still haunted by the same old demons that had tailed me from birth, and the harsh reality was that I lacked everything I needed to become the man I wanted to be.

Mind you, I wasn't thinking about all of that to punish myself. I was sifting through the files, searching for the catalyst, the moment that restarted the fire and ignited something primal inside me. I needed to remember exactly how and when I flipped the script and managed to

build a life of honor and service, but I kept coming up empty. I was so deep in my brain cave I didn't even hear them call my name. I wouldn't have reacted at all if my mom hadn't nudged my arm. Even now, I don't remember walking up the stage steps with her because I was still floating between my past and my disorienting present.

I heard them read my résumé, detailing the money I'd raised for veteran causes and the objectives I'd met over the course of my career. Before I knew it, they put a medal around my neck and the audience was on their feet applauding. That was the surest sign yet that this born loser had been reborn somewhere along the way. That there had been a moment that sparked my metamorphosis.

When it was my turn at the microphone, I gazed out at all the unfamiliar faces. Members of a brotherhood and sisterhood that I will always be a part of. The fact that this recognition came from them was the deepest honor, but I didn't know how to thank them. I was a sought-after public speaker by then, comfortable in front of crowds large and small. Factor in my work as a recruiter for the military, and I'd been a professional public speaker for over a decade. I rarely got butterflies, but that summer day in Kansas City, I was nervous as hell and my mind was still clouded. I tried to shake it off and started by thanking my grandfather, Sergeant Jack.

"He would be the proudest man in the world to see me up here right now," I said. Choked up, I paused, took a deep breath to compose myself, and started again. "I'd like to thank my mom, who..." I turned to my mother, and when our eyes met, the moment that permanently changed my life finally hit me, and the power of that realization was overwhelming. "I'd like to thank my mom, who..."

My voice cracked again. I couldn't hold back the flood any longer. I closed my eyes and sobbed. Like a dream that only lasts seconds yet feels like hours, time stretched out and scenes from the ultimate turning point in my life—the last time I ever saw my father—colonized my mind. If I hadn't taken that trip, you'd never have heard of me.



It finally hit me and I was overwhelmed by the work it took to get here.

* * *

I was twenty-four years old when I realized I was broken inside. Something had gone numb in my soul, and that numbness, that lack of deep feeling, dictated what my life had become. It's why I quit going after my goals, my biggest dreams, whenever things got hard. Quitting was just another detour. It never bothered me much because when you're numb, you can't process what's happening to you or within you. I didn't know the power of the mind yet, and because of that I had ballooned into a fat ass and taken a job as a cockroach sniper in restaurants.

I had my excuses, of course. My numbness was a survival mechanism. It had been beaten into me by my father. By the time I'd turned seven, I'd developed a POW mindset. Going numb was how I took my beatings and maintained some level of self-respect. Even after my mother and I escaped, I continued to be stalked by tragedy and failure, and numbness was how I coped with the fact that losing was all I ever knew.

When you're born a loser, your goal is to survive, not thrive. You learn to lie, to cheat, to do what it takes to fit in. You may become a survivor, but it's a miserable existence. Just like the cockroaches I was assigned to kill, you find yourself scurrying in from the shadows to claim the bare necessities while hiding your true self from the light at all costs. Born losers are the ultimate cockroaches. We do what we have to, and that attitude often enables some pretty severe character defects.

I certainly had some. I was a quitter, a liar, a fat, lazy motherfucker, and I was deeply depressed. I could feel myself unraveling a little at a time. Fed up and frustrated, bitter and angry, I couldn't take much more of my sorry-ass life. If I didn't change, and change soon, I knew I would die a loser, or worse. I might end up like my father, the hustler who was one quick twitch away from violence. I was consumed by misery and groping for some mental foothold to keep me from giving up for good. The only thing I could come up with was to go back to that house on Paradise Road that still haunted me. I had to get to Buffalo, New York, and look my father in the eye. Because when you're living in hell, the only way to find your way out is to confront the Devil himself.

I was hoping to find some answers that would help me change my life. That was what I told myself, anyway, as I crossed into Ohio from Indiana and veered northeast. I hadn't seen my old man in twelve years. It had been my decision to stop seeing him. At that time, the court system allowed children to make those decisions once they turned twelve. I made that choice mostly out of respect for and loyalty to my mom. He'd stopped beating us after we left Buffalo, but the one thing that never went numb was how I felt about what my mother endured at his hands. Still, over the years, I had questioned that decision and began to wonder if my memories, if the stories I told myself, were true.

On the long drive, I didn't listen to music. All I heard were the competing voices in my head. The first voice accepted me as I was.

It's not your fault, David. None of this is your fault. You're doing the best you can with what you've been given.

That was the voice I'd been listening to my entire life. *It's not my fault* was my favorite refrain. It explained and justified my lot in life

and the dead-end path in front of me, and it played 24/7. However, for the first time, another voice chimed in. Or maybe it was the first time I stopped listening only to what I wanted to hear.

Roger that. It ain't your fucking fault that you were dealt a bad hand, but...it is your responsibility. How long will you allow your past to hold you back before you finally take control of your future?

Compared to the first, more nurturing voice in my head, this one was ice cold, and I did my best to tune it out.

The closer I got to Buffalo, the younger and more helpless I felt. When I was 150 miles away, I felt like I was sixteen years old. As I pulled off the highway and wound through the Buffalo city streets, I felt like I was eight, the same age I was when we packed all our shit into garbage bags and walked out the door. Once I walked into the house, it was August 1983 all over again. The paint on the walls, the floors, the appliances and the furniture, all of it was the same. While it looked a lot smaller and out of date, it was still the haunted house I remembered, filled with years of grisly memories and palpable dark energy.

However, my father was warm and more affectionate than I remembered. Trunnis was always a charmer, and he acted genuinely happy to see me. As we caught up, I found myself laughing at his jokes, slightly confused by the man in front of me. After a while, he checked his watch and grabbed his coat. He held the front door open for his wife, Sue, and me as we headed for the car.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"You remember the schedule," he said. "It's time to open up."

The first thing I noticed about Skateland from the outside was that it needed a paint job. Inside, the floor and walls were chipped and stained, and the whole place smelled funky. The office had deteriorated too. That sofa we slept on as kids, where my mom caught him cheating on more than one occasion, still hadn't been replaced. It was filthy as hell, and that's where I sat after the grand tour while my father headed upstairs to spin hip-hop records in the Vermillion Room.

I felt dizzy and disoriented. It was strange how far the old man had let his standards slip. He wasn't the strong, exacting, demanding figure I'd remembered. He was old, weak, soft in the middle, and lazy.

He didn't even appear to be that mean anymore. He wasn't the Devil at all. He was human. Had I been feeding myself a false history? As I lingered in that office, steeped in the past, I wondered what else I'd been wrong about?

Then, at around ten o'clock, the bass line dropped upstairs and the ceiling started to shudder and shake. Within seconds, I heard hollering, laughter, and that steady stomping to the beat. In the same way a song can take you back to a distinct time and place, that thumping bass returned me to my darkest days. I'd been funneled into a relapse of my childhood nightmare.

I closed my eyes and saw myself as a first grader, tossing and turning on that very couch, trying to sleep after working all night and not being able to get more than a wink. My mother was there too, struggling to paper over our pain with "home-cooked" dinners prepared on portable electric burners in the cramped office. I saw the helplessness and fear in her eyes, and it brought back all the stress, pain, frustration, and depression that came with it. Those memories were real! There was no denying it!

I was disgusted to be sitting on that couch. I was sickened to have let my guard down and enjoyed my father's company, even for a few minutes. I felt like I was doing a disservice to my mother, and the longer I sat there and watched the ceiling shake, the more rage rose up inside until I was on my feet and racing up a back stairwell into the Vermillion Room, where my demon was slurping whiskey—the smoky elixir that gave him his power.

As a kid, I rarely saw the space in full bloom, and while it had lost most of its shine, it was still happening. What was once a glitzy nightclub serving funk to a well-dressed crowd had become a packed dive bar flush with hip-hop. Trunnis was in the DJ booth orchestrating the energy, spinning records, and sucking down scotch after scotch until closing time. I watched him work, drink, and flirt, and the more wasted he became, the more my memory synced with reality. After locking up, I drove us all to Denny's for an after-hours breakfast, just like old times. More than fifteen years had passed, yet the ritual remained the same as ever.

Trunnis was sloppy as hell by then, and he could tell it made me uncomfortable, which ticked him off. While we waited for our food, he

glared at me as he dissed my grandparents and claimed they were responsible for the breakup of his family. Liquor always brought his ugliness out, and I'd heard that argument so many times before, it didn't have much effect on me. But when he started in on my mom, I wasn't having any of it.

"Don't go there," I said quietly. But he didn't care. He barked about how everyone turned on him and how weak and sorry we all were. His spittle flew. The vein in his temple throbbed.

"Trunnis, please stop," Sue said. There was something in her tone, a mixture of fear and dread, that I recognized. She wasn't standing up and telling him how she felt. She was pleading with him. It reminded me so much of my mother and how powerless she felt when Trunnis would rage on and on. He was the type of guy who would call a woman over to the house at 3:55 p.m., knowing my mom would be coming home at four o'clock. He wanted her to catch them in the act to show her that he had all the power and would do whatever the fuck he wanted at any time of day or night. It's the same reason he beat me in front of her and did the same to her in front of me.

The very same day we left, Sue moved in, yet he often told her, and anyone else who would listen, how beautiful and smart my mother was, as if she were the one who got away. He needed Sue to feel she wasn't good enough for him, and never would be.

For the first time in my life, I felt for Sue and realized that Trunnis' specialty was the weaponization of disrespect. It was a tactic he used to bully women and children into submission. He knew that once he choked a motherfucker out mentally, they would lose all their fight and self-respect, which would make it easier to manipulate and dominate them. That's what he was after. Not love. He craved dominance and subservience. It was like oxygen to him. He harvested souls with violence and rage. He wanted the people closest to him to feel wounded and empty. Decades later, my mother still struggles with self-respect, decision-making, and confidence.

Trunnis' face was red from alcohol. His jaw clenched with tension as he kept talking shit. There was no doubt that he was the bully and abuser I remembered, but not because he hated my mom or Sue, or my brother or me, but because he was a sick, fucked-up old man who

didn't believe he was worth a damn and could not and would not help himself.

Years later, I would learn that he had suffered abuse when he was a kid. His father made him stand in front of a flaming-hot coal furnace in a dark room, and after a torturous waiting period, his dad would show up with a belt and lash him, buckle-side first. If he moved away from the belt, he'd get burned, so he had to accept his father's lashings and try not to move. He never dealt with his trauma, those memories festered into demons, and before he even knew it had happened, the victim became the abuser.

Whenever he got drunk and the party died down, he self-soothed by picking on people weaker than him. He beat them up. He ran them down. Sometimes, he threatened to kill them. But as soon as an abusive episode was over, he would erase it from history. The beatings we took never happened. He liked to think of himself as a big man but never accepted responsibility for anything he did that went wrong, which didn't make him any kind of a man at all. I suppose I was in that Denny's booth with him because part of me was hoping Trunnis would apologize, but he didn't think he had anything to be sorry for. He was straight-up delusional, and his delusions demoralized all of us. They were also contagious.

For years, he made me bleed, and he made me doubt myself. He transferred his demons to me through the lashes of his leather belt and the open palm of his hand, and like him, I grew up believing in delusions. I hadn't become an evil sociopath, but like him, I never took responsibility for my own shortcomings or my failures.

Sitting there listening to him rave made my blood run hot. Sweat beaded on my forehead and all I could think about was payback. It was his turn to suffer at my hands. I wanted to make him bleed for my pain. I wanted to beat that motherfucker down right there in Denny's. I was hair-trigger close to allowing my father to turn me into a violent maniac just like I remembered him to be!

He recognized the fire in my eyes because it was as if he were looking into a mirror, and it scared the shit out of him. The weather changed in our booth. He stopped ranting mid-sentence. His eyes went glassy and wide, and in the fluorescent light of the diner, he

looked meek and small. I nodded as I recognized, in that very moment, the lie that inspired my trip to Buffalo.

I hadn't driven all the way from Indianapolis as some first step toward self-improvement. No, I was there looking for a free pass. I went to collect more evidence that all my many failures and disappointments stemmed from the same root cause: my father, Trunnis Goggins. I'd been hoping that everything I'd believed all those years was true because if Trunnis was indeed the Devil in disguise, that gave me someone to blame, and I was looking for a cop-out. I needed Trunnis to be the flaw in my existence in order to claim the lifetime warranty on my get-out-of-jail-free card.

Trunnis was flawed alright. He showed me that all over again. But he wasn't my flaw. The second voice was right. Unless I took responsibility for my demons, the ones he put on me, I had no shot at becoming anything other than a perpetual loser or another miserable hustler like him.

When the food arrived, Trunnis stuffed his face while I reflected on how much power I'd given him over the years. It wasn't his fault I experienced racism or barely graduated high school. Yes, he beat me and my brother up and tortured my mother. He was a fucked-up man, but I hadn't lived with him since I was eight years old. When was I going to take my soul back from him? When was I going to own my own choices, my failures, my future? When would I finally accept responsibility for my life, take action, and wipe the slate clean?

Nobody said a word while I drove us back to Paradise Road. Trunnis watched me with a mix of drunken sadness, loss, and anger as I grabbed my car keys from the kitchen counter and walked straight out the door. I'd planned on spending the weekend, but I couldn't stand to be in his presence for one minute longer. While the words were never spoken, I believe we both knew that would be the last time we would ever see each other.

The funny thing was, I didn't even hate Trunnis anymore because I finally understood him. On the drive back home, I turned the volume way down on the nurturing voice in my head and tuned into reality. In place of excuses, it was time for ownership of exactly who I'd become in all of its ugliness, and that meant acknowledging that my thin skin was definitely part of the problem.

All of us are dealt circumstances in life we don't have any power to control. Sometimes, those things are painful; occasionally, they are tragic or inhuman. While the Accountability Mirror—which I tagged with sticky notes filled with real talk, daily tasks, and a few bigger goals—had helped me get to a certain point, those fixes were surface-level. I'd never attempted to dive down and solve the root cause of my problems, so I crumbled whenever life asked me to dig deeper and persevere in order to achieve something that could lead toward sustained success.

I'd spent my entire life in surface waters hoping that my luck would change and everything I'd dreamed of would fall into place for me. That night, on my drive home to Indiana, I accepted the hard truth that hoping and wishing are like gambling on long shots, and if I wanted to be better, I had to start living every day with a sense of urgency. Because that is the only way to turn the odds in your favor.

Reality can be a motherfucker when all of your excuses are stripped away and you are exposed for exactly who and what you have become, but the truth can also be liberating. That night, I accepted the truth about myself. I finally swallowed reality, and now that I had, my future was undetermined. Anything was possible as long as I adopted a new mindset. I needed to become someone who refused to give in, who simply finds a way no matter what. I needed to become bulletproof, a living example of resilience.

Think of a packet of seeds scattered in a garden. Some seeds get more sunlight, more water, and are planted in nourishing topsoil, and because they are put in the right place at the right time, they can rise from seed to seedling to a thriving tree. Seeds planted in too much shade or that don't get enough water may never become anything at all unless someone transplants them—saves them—before it's too late.

Then there are those seedlings that look for the light on their own. They creep from the shade into the sunshine without being transplanted. They find it without anybody digging them up and placing them in the light. They find strength where there is none.

That is resilience.

Once we're born, our natural instinct is to look for ways to thrive. But not everybody does, and sometimes, there's a damn good reason

for it. I was brought up in darkness. My roots were flimsy. I was barely tethered to rock-hard ground. My spirit, soul, and determination weren't nourished in the light, but on that ride home, I realized that only I have the power to determine my future, and I had a choice to make. I could continue living in the Haven of Low Expectations, where it was comfortable and safe to believe that my life was not my fault or my responsibility and that my dreams were just that—fantasies that would never be because time and opportunity were not and would never be on my side. Or I could leave all that behind for a world of possibility, much more pain, unfathomably hard work, and zero guarantees of success. I could choose resilience.

At twenty-four years old, a powerful force was gathering within me, waiting to be unleashed. I would soon call upon it to complete two Hell Weeks, become a member of the Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Teams, and complete Army Ranger School. I'd compete in ultra races and break the world pull-up record. Thanks to that one night in Buffalo, New York, when I accepted my fate and became determined to tap into my resilience, I found the will to transform myself into the grittiest motherfucker ever to find light where there was none.

I had never been a POW like John McCain and countless others, but I lived like a prisoner in my own mind for the first twenty-four years of my life. Once I'd liberated myself and begun to evolve, I learned that it is the rare warrior who embraces the adversity of being born into hell and then, with their own free will, chooses to add as much suck as they can find to turn each day into a boot camp of resiliency. Those are the ones who don't stop at good enough. They aren't satisfied with just being better than they used to be. They are forever evolving and striving for the highest level of self. Eventually, I became one of them, which is why I was honored at the VFW Convention.

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"I'd like to thank my mom, who..." The audience gave me another round of applause as my sobs ebbed, and I returned to the present

moment. "Who never picked me up when I fell. She let me pick myself up when I was knocked down."

By the time I was done speaking, all the emotion had drained clear. Honored and humbled to have received an award that most people would consider the crowning achievement of their career, I walked off that stage into the unknown. They say, "Iron sharpens iron," but I had left the military behind, and there was no one pushing me on a day-to-day basis any longer. *Fuck it.* I was always destined to be that one warrior. Content to be the motherfucker who sharpens his sword alone.

EVOLUTION NO. 1

I'VE WORKED IN EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS), ON AND OFF, for fifteen years. When an ambulance arrives on the scene of a severe trauma situation, we are immediately shotgunned into what's known as the "golden hour." In the vast majority of cases, sixty minutes is all the time we have to save a critically injured victim. The clock starts the moment the accident happens and doesn't stop until the patient arrives at a hospital trauma center. By the time we get to the scene of the accident, we are already behind, which means it is vital that our assessment of each patient is rapid and on point.

Some are identified as "Load and Go" because they need specific, time-sensitive interventions that we can't do ourselves. Others are identified as "Stay and Play." Though their condition may be dire, they have issues our skills are built to address to ensure they survive the trip to the hospital. One of the first things we do when we get to a patient is check their ABCs: airway, breathing, and circulation. We need to make sure their airway is unobstructed, their lungs are inflating, and they aren't bleeding profusely. Usually, ABC issues are obvious, but every once in a while, we come across a distracting injury.

Picture a shattered leg twisted way up over the victim's head. When you see a limb in a place it does not belong, it's easy to become fixated. It looks so gruesome that human instinct is to address that problem first and block everything else out. I've seen a lot of EMS personnel get sucked down that rabbit hole, but a badly broken and dislocated leg typically won't kill anyone, unless it distracts us from realizing that their airway is also blocked or that they are gurgling because their lungs are filled with fluid and they are in danger of bleeding out internally. A distracting injury, in the EMS

universe, is anything that entices a medical professional to forget their procedures. It can happen to anyone, which is why we are trained to remain alert to those distractions. It truly is a matter of life or death.

The same can be said of the distracting injuries I carried. By the time I turned twenty-four, I was too distracted by child abuse, neglect, and racist taunts to see all of the fucked-up things in my life over which I had direct influence. Nothing that happened to me could be considered a fatal condition on its own, yet I spent so much time worrying about what my father did to us, and felt so alone, I was refusing to live. And when you spend your life regretting what was or asking, "Why me?" you eventually die having accomplished nothing at all.

The trip to Buffalo was pure distraction. I wasn't ready to put in the work to change my life, so I went on an evidence-collecting mission. In fact, by the time I figured it out, it was almost impossible for me to become a SEAL. I was so heavy that if I had been even a few pounds heavier, I would not have been able to lose the necessary weight in the allotted time. I had to take extreme measures—like eating two tiny meals while working out six to eight hours a day for ten weeks—but when I started to shed weight and shift my mindset, I realized I had never been as alone as I'd thought. I'd always told myself that nobody could possibly understand me or what I went through, but as I looked around, I noticed that there were a lot of motherfuckers out there with distracting injuries stuck neck-deep in their past. These days, I hear from them all the time.

Some suffered child abuse or lost a parent very young. Others grew up feeling ugly or stupid. They were bullied and beaten down or had no friends in school at all. It's not always the childhood minefield that fucks us up. There is no shortage of psychological and emotional snags in adult life. Every day, people suffer bankruptcy, foreclosure, divorce, and catastrophic injury. They get cheated or robbed by their so-called loved ones. They get sexually assaulted. They lose everything they own in a fire or flood. Their children die.

It's so easy to get lost in the fog of life. Tragedy hunts us all, and any event that causes suffering will linger longer than it should if you let it. Because our sad stories enable us to grade ourselves on a

forgiving curve. They give us latitude and justification to stay lazy, weak-minded motherfuckers, and the longer it takes for us to process that pain, the harder it is to reclaim our lives.

Sometimes, weakness and laziness are rooted in hate and anger, and until we receive the confession, apology, or compensation we believe we are owed, we stay stuck in our shit as a form of self-righteous rebellion against our tormentors or even against life itself. Some of us become entitled. We think our pain entitles us to feel sorry for ourselves or that we are entitled to good fortune because we've survived hell. Of course, feeling entitled doesn't make it so. Understand, the clock is always ticking, and at some point, your golden hour will expire unless you take action.

People who get lost in their past, the ones who bore their friends and family with the same tragic story over and over without showing a hint of progress, remind me of a skydiver who becomes too fixated on their tangled parachute. They know they have a backup ready to go but burn so much time trying to fix the primary chute that they forget to track their altimeter, and by the time they cut the first chute away and pull the second ripcord, it's too late. Part of the problem is that they have become terrified of pulling that second cord because if it's also fucked up, then they truly will be helpless. That is a mental trap set by fear. We cannot afford to remain afraid of cutting away dead weight to save ourselves.

I was that skydiver for far too long. My father was violent. My mom was broken. I was bullied, laughed at, and misunderstood. Check, check, and checkmate. And yet, I was breathing free, and I was not bleeding. Physically, I was alive and well and perfectly capable of cutting all of that bullshit away. I'd wasted way too much of my life telling myself the same sad story. I needed to move forward. It was time to write something new.

If an act of God or nature tore your life apart, the good news is that you really have nobody to blame. Yet, the randomness of it all can feel so personal, as if you've been marked for doom by the fates. If you feel wronged by somebody else, you may be waiting on a confession or an apology in order to move forward, but I'm sorry to say the apology—that tearful confession you've been dreaming of—

will never come. The good news is you don't need anybody else to free you from your trauma. You can do it on your own.

My father never apologized to me. Nobody ever said sorry for anything I went through. I had to come to the conclusion that while I didn't deserve any of it, I was my main problem and primary obstacle. I'd given Trunnis Goggins all of my power. I had to take it back. I had to diffuse my demon. I had to shrink him down to the lowly, pathetic figure he was by humanizing him. Just as there was no other way to come out of the gauntlet that was my childhood except fucked up, I had to see that he was a mortally fucked-up piece of shit because of what he went through. Once I understood that, it was up to me to either do the hard work to break that cycle or stay cursed.

Like medics on the scene of a car accident, we all must act with a sense of urgency and tune into that ticking clock in the back of our minds. Because there is a drop-dead time on everything we do in life. All our dreams and visions come with expiration dates etched in invisible ink. Windows of opportunity can and do close, so it is imperative that we do not waste time on bullshit. None of us have any clue what's coming for us or when our time might run out, which is why I do my best to ignore anything that is counterproductive. I'm not suggesting we act like robots, but we need to understand that forward motion gives our lives momentum. We need to remember that sometimes chaos will descend and a clear highway can be wiped out by a flash flood in the blink of an eye.

When that happens, a lot of motherfuckers look for a cozy place to hunker down and hide out until the storm passes. "I'm only human," they say. When holy hell rains down upon them and they feel drained and powerless, they cannot conceive of a way to keep going. I understand that impulse, but if I had succumbed to the "I'm only human" mentality, I never would have dug myself out of the deep hole I was in at twenty-four years old. Because the second you utter those words, the white towel is fluttering in the air, and your mind stops looking for more fuel. I didn't know for sure if I'd ever find my way out of the darkness. I just knew that I could not throw in the towel, and neither can you. Because there is no towel in our corner. There is only water and a cut man. And if those are your only

options, you have no choice but to keep fighting until you overcome every last thing that once held you the fuck back.

You have been preoccupied by bullshit for way too long. It's time to switch your focus to the things that will slingshot you forward. #DistractingInjuries
#NeverFinished