Recovery Paper

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Written by: Pip Stuart

When I was a child growing up in Southern California during the 1980's, it started to become increasingly apparent to our whole family that my dad was struggling to manage his own severe form of mental illness. He demanded absolute obedience, while reckoning himself to be G-d, the Father, from Christianity. He focused the majority of his attention and punishments on me, often to the exclusion of my younger siblings. He drilled into my head that I was the firstborn Son of G-d, the Christ and Savior of the world. He militantly cultivated me for that role as my destiny. Our whole family was subjected to dogmatic psychological and spiritual abuse at his hand. We weathered his numerous psychotic episodes, which were mostly just frightening until he also started becoming violent against my mom. He was diagnosed as suffering from Paranoid Delusional Schizophrenia, but he also evidenced the commonly associated Anosognosia as well, because he adamantly refused any form of treatment and all potential medications, insisting that he remained perfectly fine. My parents divorced when I was 11. My dad rather pitifully represented himself in the custody trial and my mom hired a skilled lawyer to eviscerate him. The judge ruled that my dad would be required to take prescribed medications before he could be awarded any visitation rights. My dad remained characteristically recalcitrant and unwilling to comply with that precondition, so he essentially vanished from our lives at that point.

Over the next few years, I developed into a seriously troubled teenager. I became forlorn, melancholy, defiant, destructive, impulsive, mischievous, and cruel. I had skipped the first and third grades before my mom made me repeat the fourth, but I remained younger than almost all of my classmates and I was already quite small for my age. This meant that I was thoroughly accustomed to being bullied, humiliated, beaten up, locked in lockers, and forced into trashcans at school. I in turn would come home to bully and attack my siblings. I tortured insects and small animals. I started shoplifting compulsively. I was a skateboard punk. I began pulling fire alarms and lighting fires recklessly, almost everywhere I went. I was often suspended in junior high school and once was expelled for lighting fire to the Principal's conference desk. The school district required me to start visiting a Psychiatrist regularly before they would permit me to attend a different junior high. I begrudgingly fulfilled the obligation, but I did not trust the doctor. We both got used to me saying very little, if anything, throughout most sessions. If that doctor ever diagnosed me as already having a mental illness back then, I probably wasn't made aware of it or I simply didn't care.

I matured and my destructive tendencies mellowed substantially when I got into high school. I learned to play tennis competitively and made the varsity team. I started working, driving, and having steady girlfriends. I got my own computer and learned more about coding. I bought myself video game systems and played them a lot. Even though most other things were generally stabilizing for me at this time, driving was a conspicuous exception. It became an immediate and intense challenge to see what new extremes I could reach. I raced around dangerously fast and would weave through traffic with every vehicle I drove. I pushed each car to its top speed on the freeway. I would go triple the posted speed limit to jump my cars high over the railroad tracks. I broke both axles of my mom's car after much midnight racing at 130 miles-per-hour.