

ADVICE FOR LIFE

FROM A DRUG ADDICT

BY BRANDON ROHM

For everyone still fighting.
For everyone we lost.
For the empire we're building from the ashes.

Preface — A Functional Addict's Manifesto

My name is Brandon Rohm. I'm 39, born in October 1985, raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Most of my life has been lived on the edge: using, abusing, chasing, selling, running to, and running from. I've known extreme highs and the lowest lows because of explicit drugs—not the little pills your doctor prescribes but the ones that rearrange your nights, your morals, your luck.

This book exists because of a thought I had in the shower one morning: I could die tomorrow. So could you. We all will. And I don't want to go without being heard. History is full of brilliant, messy, hilarious, destructive people who were written off because society couldn't—or wouldn't—listen. I've watched drugs tear

through communities, spark violence, ruin families. I get why people fear them. I've seen the wreckage. I've been the wreckage.

I named this thing Life Advice from a Drug Addict because the title has teeth. It grabs you. There's a yin-yang to it: "life advice" sounds wholesome, "drug addict" sounds toxic—two sides of the same coin. What goes up must come down. All of that is true, and that tension is where the real lessons live.

But I've also seen something else: the clarity that comes from having lived at the margins, the lessons you only learn by screwing up and surviving it. That's what this book is. Not a recovery manual. Not a sermon. Not a how-to-fix-yourself checklist. It's raw advice from someone who's been where you might be headed and who still wakes up thinking, If I go, let them at least know what I thought mattered.

You're buying blunt truth, not excuses. You'll get scenes from messy nights and tiny victories most people miss. You'll get rules I'd tattoo on my own skin if I could. You'll get practical, sometimes brutal, survival tips for money, work, relationships, and keeping your head above water when everything's collapsing. Some of it will make you uncomfortable. Good. If it doesn't, I didn't do my job.

Thank you for picking this up. Whether you laughed at the title, were curious, or felt a twinge of recognition, thank you. This book is my attempt to put real experience into words—to be heard before I'm gone, and maybe, by saying what I've seen, to help someone avoid the worst of it. Read it how you want. Argue with me. Steal the parts that work. And if anything here hits too close, put it down and come back later. My only real request: stay honest with yourself.

— Brandon Rohm

Chapter 1: Origins & Identity

You could say I was destined to use. Or that I inherited it. Either way, the pattern was in the water I drank. As early as I can remember, my mother was a mess—not the kind you can dress up and take to brunch, but the kind that left a twelve-year-old running the house because she couldn’t. My dad wasn’t there. As a kid, that absence felt like betrayal; later you learn the reasons don’t make it better. When he did show up, it was holy—like he’d walked on water. Those flashes only made the rest worse.

My mom came from a blue-collar family: raised by her mother and three older brothers. They tried, but the home I grew up in was chaos. Mom didn’t work consistently, so we moved a lot—somebody else’s house, a man she was maybe with, Section 8 apartments—wherever the mess could hide for a minute. She was prescribed a cocktail of pills by doctors, she drank, she used, and she had a string of boyfriends that changed the shape of our life more than once. But none of that erases the fact that she loved me and my little brother fiercely. She was messy and broken, sure, but there was real care there, even when it came wrapped in chaos. Some weeks the house was a disaster; other times it was spotless, like she’d snapped herself together. Most days she slept on the couch for hours. I learned to cook, to clean, to be the man of the house long before I should’ve known what that meant. Watching my mom fail my little brother the way she failed herself was the moment the curtain fully dropped—his father took custody through court because Mom’s lifestyle made it obvious she couldn’t keep him. Suddenly it wasn’t just our mess—it was legal and permanent.

On my dad's side, things looked different on paper. My grandfather, Ronald Rohm, founded the Entertainment Company—the thing that made the family name mean money and opportunity. There was wealth and a legacy that should've cushioned me. But family expectations and shame ran deep. My dad blew his shot long before I was knee-high. He chose his life—Miami, hustles, drugs—over folding me into the legacy he'd been born into. My grandfather never liked my mom and warned my dad off. That judgment cost me access to the safety net I should've had as his only blood grandson. The result: I grew up thirty minutes from wealth and privilege, but inside the ghetto, without a dime and without the protection a name could have bought.

There are things people don't talk about: the quiet reasons behind choices, the secrets families keep. My father's demons—his drug use, maybe parts of his identity he couldn't make safe for the family—created distance. Not because they didn't love me, but because our family had rules about what success looked like and what shame looked like, and my existence wound up on the wrong side of both.

So I learned survival early. I learned how to make food, how to clean a house that had been trashed by other people's habits, how to show up for myself when no one else could. I also learned the other side: how it feels to be invisible to the people who could've changed everything for you. Those two lessons—do what you have to, and expect cold shoulders from the ones who judge—are braided through everything I became. They explain a lot of the choices I later made, and they explain why this book had to be written: because the story that made me was never told the way it actually happened.



Grandmother from California—a guiding light



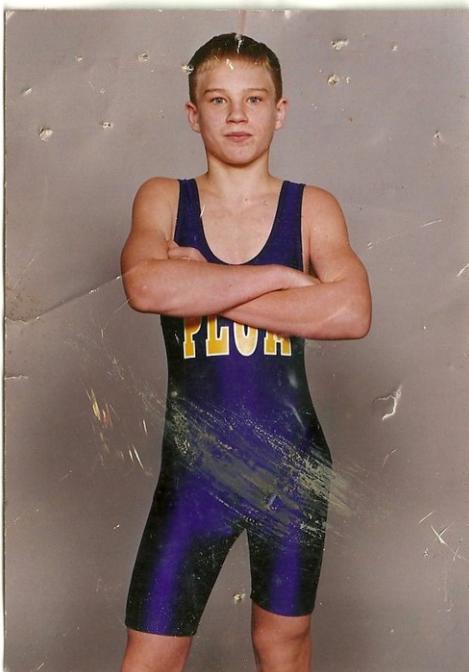
Grandmother from Pennsylvania—she raised me like a mom

Chapter 2: First Encounters

When things finally stopped being a suitcase and a couch every other week, I landed in a four-unit building my Uncle John owned. He ran the roofing company, ran his office out of one unit, and kept the family glued together the only way he knew how—church on Sundays, chores every day, no TV, no video games. Mid-Nintendo session his truck would pull up and you'd freeze like a kid in a cop drama. It sucked then. It made me who I am now.

We didn't always have that. Mom moved us around—other people's houses, men she was with, Section 8 apartments—wherever it was easier to drown for a minute. She loved me and my little brother; don't get me wrong. But her prescriptions, booze, and whatever else people hand you when life's broken turned our life into a roulette. One week the house looked like a war zone, the next it was cleaned like someone was coming to take a picture. I learned to cook, clean, and cover for her like a grown man by twelve. When she ran off to Texas with some guy, I stayed with Grandma—she didn't boss me but she gave me a bed and safety. I loved that woman for it.

I was built for sports. Football was fine, but wrestling made me feel like I belonged. Mr. Carper took me under his wing, treated me like the kid he wanted to see finish, told me I was the most naturally gifted wrestler he'd coached. He was more of a father than my father ever tried to be. I went undefeated my second season and felt invincible.



Wrestling days—where I learned to fight

Then we found my mom's weed.

Not some random bag in the grass. Her stash. The one she kept for “relief.” We pinched it, rolled a pipe out of foil, took a couple hits, and I remember thinking—crystal clear—that it was the best thing I’d ever done. I teleported from the living room to the kitchen and laughed like the world was a sitcom. I loved it. Hooked isn’t even the right word. It was immediate worship.

We got dumb. We got caught at a barbecue. The news made it to Mr. Carper. I had to face the only man who’d called me gifted and told me drugs ruined people. He looked at me like a man watching a trainwreck. I lied to him. I told him I wasn’t doing it. He told me he loved me and warned me about the path. That

weight—letting him down—beat on me for years. But I didn't stop.

We moved from weed to anything that came cheap and felt like escape. Acid that made fingers melt in the mirror, ecstasy that turned me into walking sunshine and made me call my cousin for twelve hours straight, Vicodin pinched from Grandma's bottle, Xanax from Mom's prescriptions, booze, and girls—God, the fucking girls. Sex became another fix. Not romanticized or pretty, but a full-throttle need. I learned to charm, to read a room, to get what I wanted with a joke and a grin. I could pull a girl like a magician pulls rabbits—fast, slick, and twice as empty afterward. I got addicted to fucking, to the rush of being needed, to the smell and the momentary power. It filled spaces drugs couldn't—and sometimes it pushed me to worse places than any pill.

School blurred. I flirted my way through classes, teachers passing me because I made them feel good. I told myself I didn't need college—I had an imaginary million waiting when I turned eighteen. Then the floor dropped: my grandfather, the founder of that entertainment company, had a stroke; power moved to his wife and the dream evaporated. My dad went to jail for running ecstasy. The safety net was gone.

Money became immediate and ugly. I learned the hustle: get friends to front, sell a little, get high for free. It wasn't about empire; it was about making sure tonight wasn't sober. Charm worked on girls and teachers; charm didn't work on cops. Probation became a word I knew too well.

Uncle John gave me work on roofs after high school. I learned the honest grind—gutters, shingles, sweat. That work saved me in ways highs never did. But the pattern stuck: break, numb, chase a hit, fake normal,

repeat.

Here's the brutal lesson: drugs taught me how to escape; fucking taught me how to forget what I was escaping from. Both are addictive in their own religions. Both can feel like love. Both will tell you they're saving you while they're burning your house down. So whenever the world knocks you flat, don't look for the quick altar—take a breath, take one step, and do the smallest thing that isn't self-destruction. Clean one dish. Show up for one practice. Make one call. Those micro victories beat the big fantasies every time.

Also, laugh when you can. Life is ridiculous. Once, after pulling a stupid stunt on ecstasy at Kennywood, I walked up to a girl's boyfriend and told him he was doing an outstanding job at being a boyfriend—then hugged her. He stared at me like I'd grown a second head. She laughed. I learned then that embarrassment is temporary; the hole you dig when you chase the next high lasts.

One step. One breath. Aim toward the light, even if it's dim, and keep walking.

Chapter 3: How Addiction Integrated with Life

Up until this point I'd been a party kid—weed, acid, ecstasy, pills here and there—but nothing that felt like a chain. Then the opioid wave hit Pittsburgh and everything changed. OxyContin, Percocet 30s—Roxies—rolled into town and snapped a collar around my neck I didn't see coming. I'd never thought a drug could actually own me. I was wrong.

I'd had overdoses before—fallen out and woke up like some movie miracle, while others I knew didn't. That's a hard truth: some people get angels, some don't. I don't like being the one who made it either,

but I did, and that's where this story turns. Roxies went from "fun" to functional to fucking necessary faster than I could track. At first they were flattering: tiny pupils, my blue eyes standing out, ladies noticing, cash moving. I started buying in bulk and selling to friends so my habit didn't cost me. Ten bucks a pill became thirty. My place turned into a deli—little metal scrapers for a quarter at the door, a line of pals coming through like clockwork. I had supply, I had customers, I had confidence. I didn't know withdrawals were a thing you could die to avoid until they hit.

Then the supply vanished. Clinics got shut down, pills dried up in Broward and beyond, and the streets filled with fake pills, heroin, fentanyl. Prices spiked. The people I'd let around me because of the pills turned out to be the worst kind of company. When you run that game, you attract bad characters—thieves, rats, violent types. Withdrawals started showing up in my life like unpaid bills: shaking, sweating, the kind of desperation that makes you do anything.

One day changed everything.



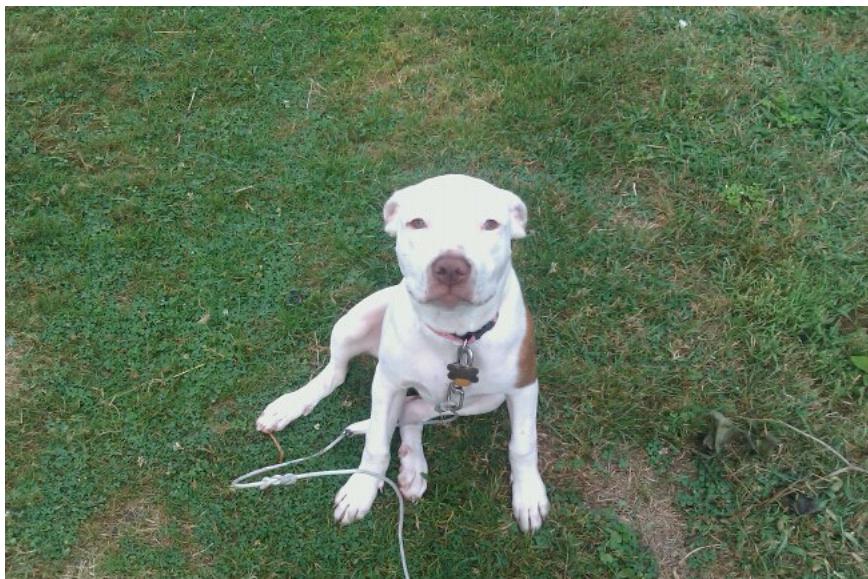
Kahlúa with her toy—the exact moment before tragedy

I drove forty-five minutes to pick up a script—a hundred pills, expensive and precious. I'd had this dog, Kahlúa, for six years; she was my family. Something told me to bring her along. Bad idea. While I was gone, the house was sat on. A kid I'd let into the circle set it up. I get a call: a 16-year-old girl screaming that masked men kicked in the door. They found the kid staying over, put a gun to the girl's face, then pointed it at my dog playing with a toy and shot her through the head. Dead. They ransacked the place, took a PlayStation, some jewelry, an ounce of hash, and left.

That night was a new kind of low. I wanted revenge—I even planned a murder in my head—but I don't have a violent bone in me, and I didn't follow through. The police didn't help; it was a drug job and they wrote it off. Friends I thought were loyal drifted away, some

disappeared, some OD'd. I buried Kahlúa with people at the funeral I figured would show up at my funeral someday. The hole she left felt like an echo of a life I didn't want anymore.

Then something unbelievably Pittsburgh happened: the breeder I'd bought Kahlúa from called. One week after she was murdered, the dog's mom had another litter and there was one pup that looked exactly like her. I drove over, saw the white face, and named her Kahlúa's Angel.



Angel—Kahlúa's Angel, the miracle dog who gave 13 years of second chances

I don't know why I keep getting these chances—maybe luck, maybe grace—but the new dog was a reset I didn't earn. It was a message: change or keep crashing.

I moved—not far, but far enough to shift the radar. I

buried the flashy parties, kept my head down, worked with my hands, and tried to live one foot in front of the other. The pills didn't vanish overnight; withdrawals and cravings hung around like a ghost that knows your schedule. But I learned something brutal and clear:

If you let toxic people orbit your life because they sell what you want, you make yourself part of their bullets, not just their business. When the game gets violent, proximity is a liability. The same circle that feeds your habit will drag you into their mess—and if they're willing to kill a dog to make a point, they'll stab your life just as coldly.

Quick joke because my brain needed it then: I used to think I was running a pharmacy. Turns out I was just bad inventory management with a side of felony.

Lesson: addiction isn't just the chemical leash—it's the ecosystem you build to feed it. Cut the carriers. Move. Work. Let new, boring routines replace the drama. Same breath: accept help when you need it. Pride will kill faster than any pill. One step at a time is not a slogan—it's a survival plan.

Chapter 4: Work, Money, and Survival

By then I was trying to live under the radar: new place, a new dog, the usual mess with the ladies, and the one life trick my old man hammered into me—bury your head in work when everything else is on fire. Work, sleep, repeat. Do it long enough and you'll surface and the air will feel cleaner. It's ugly, but it works.

I loved manual labor. Roofing felt like home—twelve-hour days up on scaffolding, pounding nails with cousins and uncles who swore the sun made men honest. Uncle John's crew paid the bills for half my mom's side of the family, and because we lived close,

the commute was a blessing for someone trying not to be noticed. There's dignity in showing up dirty and earning a check. It gives you something real to hold when everything else is vapor.

Money: I never learned how to respect it. Nobody taught me. If I could talk to my younger self I'd say, "Stop buying shit that makes you feel rich and start buying shit that makes money." Instead I bought cars, credit cards, and a houseful of impulse decisions most Americans are fluent in. Somehow—luck, hustle, charm—I usually came out even, or at least convinced myself I did.

I had a sober stretch where I showed up for church groups, men's groups, and all the reboot stuff. It felt good to be clearheaded—like someone had unclenched my skull. But winter always comes for roofers. When the work stopped, so did my purpose, and comfort moved in. Comfort is a soft murderer: it lulls you until you forget you were fighting at all. For me, comfort turned into chemical temptation. Meds from doctors flattened me into a robot; life felt better when I felt something, even if that something came from a pill.

Cocaine found its way back in. Then a bank job: real, respectable, Citizens Bank. I met a woman in training who was everything I should have wanted—healthy, driven, marathon runner, didn't do drugs. For a hot minute I tried to be better for her. Then life handed me a shovel and told me to dig.

I slid on ice, got a DUI—number two—and a week later she called to say she was pregnant. I wanted it—a son carrying the Rohm name sounded romantic to my dumb brain—but a week after that she called again: miscarriage. That call felt like a physical wound. I reached for the people and the things that had always

numbed me. Bad idea. I crossed lines I'd promised myself I never would and put a needle in my arm.

Twenty-nine days into shooting up, I OD'd. We thought we were buying heroin; it was fentanyl. One hit dropped me. A kid in the house watched me go down and screamed. A fireman walking his dog heard it, came in, and EMTs hit me with Narcan. I woke in a hospital wondering why I was still breathing. The plan had been to go out high and epic; instead I almost didn't come back. Reality: rockstar exits are terrible for people left behind.

That ambulance ride ended with a choice—jail or rehab. Thirty days of inpatient rehab felt like summer camp for broken adults: awkward icebreakers, desperate bonding, guys trying to be better with the attention span of a squirrel. I learned a hard lesson there about benzodiazepines. I had been prescribed Klonopin and was taking obscene doses with coke to ride the highs and crash the comedowns. Rehab tried to take them away and my body nearly took a seizure as a thank-you. They put me on phenobarbital because benzo withdrawal can kill you. Real talk: benzos are dangerous in a way most kids don't get until the hospital looks at you like a murder suspect.

I left rehab, lost the bank job, picked up more court dates, but somehow I kept the house. The pattern—up and down, feast and famine—didn't stop. The only muscle that had ever gotten me out of pits was the one I'd built on roofs and mats: the work ethic. So back to roofing I went. Uncle John always had a slot. Cousin Poko and Uncle Bob were around. Work, sleep, repeat—the grind that keeps the lights on.

Things calmed. I stayed clean for a while, rebuilt some friendships, and found a ragged routine. But there was a truth buried in me: I wasn't a small-town-

forever kind of guy. At thirty, with most of my friends settling and having kids, I decided I needed to see something else. California was calling—bright lights, dumb dreams, and taxes I hadn't thought about.

A couple takeaways, straight and uselessly blunt:

- Work will save your ass more often than not. It gives you structure and a paycheck, and those are underrated miracles.
- Money without discipline disappears. Buy assets, not toys. If you don't know what that means, ask someone who lives below their means.
- Comfort is the enemy of progress. When you get comfortable, you stop fighting.
- Benzos and physical dependencies will fuck you up in a way your ego can't explain. Don't play chicken with pills that can kill when you stop.
- When the tunnel is dark, you probably can't see the light. That doesn't mean it isn't there. Put one foot in front of the other.

And because life needs a laugh: I once thought being a grown man meant you could handle any pill or any heartbreak. Turns out being an adult is mostly buying your own toilet paper and realizing you're terrified of missing a mortgage payment. Boring—but survivable.

Chapter 5: Relationships and Boundaries

My life has been a nonstop revolving door of people—friends, lovers, family—the lot of them coming through like guests at a party that never ends. I loved many of them. They loved me, in their way. But love isn't enough. Love is an incendiary emotion: it lifts you and it burns people down. I believe you get a few true loves in life; one of mine led me straight to the needle. That doesn't make the love any less

real—it just proves love without boundaries can be catastrophic.

Moving to California felt impossible to do alone. Uncle Mark had a job lined up, sure, but I'm the kind of person who can't enjoy life by myself. I'm codependent. I'll go to a game, a movie, a bar—anything—but not alone. I feed off the energy around me. That trait has blessed me with friends and wild nights, and cursed me by attracting takers who smelled my generosity like prey. I give and give and then people act like what I gave them was owed. When I finally say no, suddenly they're gone—not because they were never friends, but because the arrangement wasn't mutual. Yeah, I used people too. We're all messy.

Courtney came along before I left. She was reckless in the right ways: part party, part quiet, grieving her own losses. She said yes to California without blinking. Love felt easy at first—booze, cocaine, fucking, truck-stop romance energy—and then the honeymoon wore off. By then I'd learned to stop falling headlong. After a few brutal relationships, I started testing people. If someone wanted to be with me for the long haul, they had to survive the hard parts, not just the good times. So I put up little resistance tests on purpose: stress, distance, responsibility. If she folded when things got real, I'd fold her out. Call it defense; call it asshole survival mechanism—it kept me from handing my heart to another predator.

Sex was always a massive part of my life. Let's be blunt: I got addicted to fucking. It gave short-term highs similar to drugs—validation, power, distraction. That addiction taught me that intimacy without boundaries is trouble. Sex can be sacred, cheap, healing, destructive—all at once. Don't pretend it's only one thing.

Friendships hurt as much as lovers. I've had best-friend phases where a guy was my brother for years and then one day wasn't. Those losses cut deep. The lesson? People are unreliable. You'll lose friends to distance, drugs, jealousy, or their own lives. That doesn't mean don't try. It means build deeper roots and keep expectations realistic.

Family was its own chapter of damage and love. When I told my people I was leaving, a lot of them reacted like I was abandoning them. Some threw guilt trips. That stung. Most people don't cheer when someone they know tries to get bigger than the life they share. It's not always malice; it's fear and projection. Still—recognize it for what it is and move. Your growth will make people uncomfortable. That's not your job to manage.

Here's the cleaned-up version of what I've learned—practical, blunt, and battle-tested.

Relationship Rules & Boundary Bullets

- Love is not an instruction manual. Love is a feeling. Boundaries are the manual.
- Set limits early. Tell people what you will and won't tolerate before you're emotionally invested.
- Test for character, not chemistry. Chemistry lights the fire; character keeps the house standing.
- Don't make it easy. Give someone a little reason to earn you. If you hand everything to a person who hasn't proven themselves, they'll treat the gift like an entitlement.
- Codependency is a soft addiction. If you can't enjoy yourself solo, you're asking others to be your medicine. That's unfair to them and dangerous for you. Practice being alone—small doses—and

watch how your relationships change.

- Sex ≠ commitment. Sex is part of intimacy but not proof of loyalty. If someone equates the two, question the foundation.
- Reciprocity is mandatory. If you're the only giver in the friendship or relationship, that relationship is a debt, not a blessing.
- Cut fast, clean, and without guilt when someone consistently disrespects your boundaries. Mourning is natural. Staying is optional.
- Expect sabotage. People you love might discourage your growth out of fear or jealousy. Listen for patterns, not promises.
- Forgive, but don't rehire. Forgiveness is peace for you; rehiring someone who repeatedly harms you is a different transaction.

Short, Ugly Truths I Learned the Hard Way

- People will love the version of you that serves them. If you change, some people won't like the upgrade.
- You can love someone and still not be good for them. Leaving doesn't equal hating. Sometimes it's mercy.
- The friends who remain through the shitty parts are rarer than you think. Cherish them; buy them lunch.
- Boundaries feel cruel at first. Later they feel like oxygen.

A Little Humor Because Dark Chapters Need Light

- I used to think I needed an audience to eat a sandwich properly. Turns out solo sandwiches are underrated.
- If dating were a sport, I'd have a lot of participation trophies and zero world championships.

Still, I'd never quit.

Final note to anyone reading this: love hard, but hold up your hands when needed. Let people earn access to your life. Make your yes mean something and your no be respected. You'll lose some folks you thought would stay; you'll save your sanity and maybe save someone else from getting burned by you. Boundaries aren't walls—they're gates that protect the parts of you that are worth keeping.

Chapter 6: The Golden State Gamble

Leaving Pittsburgh felt like ripping off a bandage that had fused to your skin. It hurt like hell, but you knew that for the wound to heal, you had to let it breathe. Courtney's mom had just passed, and my family was a mix of sad goodbyes and guilt trips. But the decision was made. I packed a brand-new trailer, hitched it to my new VW Tiguan, and pointed the car west. I was on probation for a past DUI, so the car had a breathalyzer—a “blower”—wired into the ignition, a constant, humming reminder of the life I was trying to outrun.

The real plan wasn't just to lay floors with my Uncle Mark. A few months prior, a friend of a friend told me about his sales job in San Diego, showing me paychecks that looked like typos—three, four grand a week. That was the real destination. Flooring was just the foothold.

The road trip itself was a pressure cooker. Courtney and I were about two years in, and the initial chaotic magic had started to curdle into arguments. The close quarters of the car amplified everything. But Courtney had a bizarre superpower: she could find drugs anywhere. We pulled into a gas station in Indiana,

mid-argument, and I went inside to cool off. When I came back, she was holding a little baggie with a tinfoil square inside. Perforated paper. LSD.

"I think I found drugs," she said, as if she'd found a quarter on the ground. Just then, a car full of what looked like festival ravers pulled in, frantically scanning the lot. We didn't wait for them to ask questions. We booked it.

We saved the acid for a hotel in Colorado. She'd never tried it before, and for me, it was the ultimate key to connection. We dropped the tabs, smoked some incredible legal weed, and for the next twelve hours, we became one person. The sex lasted for what felt like days, the orgasms were cosmic, and we cycled through every human emotion—deep, soul-baring conversation, uncontrollable laughter, and cathartic tears. It was, without a doubt, the best acid I've ever had in my life, found by chance in a random gas station parking lot. A gift from the universe to remind us that even in chaos, there's magic.

After that, the rest of the drive was a blur. We were so focused on getting there that we skipped a hotel one night, sleeping for a couple of hours in the back of the SUV before pushing on. Then, we saw them: palm trees, the desert stretching out like a golden sea, and finally, the Pacific Ocean. It felt like we'd landed on a new world.

My Uncle Mark was a floor layer who'd made the same escape from Pittsburgh years ago. He was a good man, a fellow weed head who loved sports gambling. We hit it off immediately. Living with him, laying floors by day and smoking incredible California weed by night, was one of the best times of my life. I'm so grateful for that period; it was a soft landing I desperately needed. Courtney found a serving job in fine dining and started

making her own money. We were stable.

But the sales job in San Diego was always the goal. I started making the commute, driving from Orange County to San Diego, crashing on my friend Chris's couch during the week and coming home on weekends. He was right. I was a natural salesman, a trait I must have inherited from my grandfather. Within a few weeks, I was killing it, pulling in three, four, even nine grand a week. I wasn't on my knees on a roof anymore; I was talking to people, making friends, and signing contracts. Courtney and I got our own place in Oceanside, right in the middle of it all. Life was good.

Then loyalty bit me in the ass. Chris, my mentor, decided to take a new opportunity up in Santa Rosa and guilted me into coming with him. I walked away from the best money I'd ever made to follow him. The new boss turned out to be a raging alcoholic, and the whole operation imploded within a month. I was stranded. The lesson was brutal: **I should have led, not followed.**

I crawled back to Orange County, tail between my legs. I did flooring with Uncle Mark for a while, then landed a union job building the massive green signs for the I-5 freeway. It was steady, hard work. For two years, I was a normal guy with a normal job, just about to get fast-tracked into the union with full benefits.

Throughout these years, the California drug scene was a constant playground. We dabbled in meth for the first time—the high was incredible for sex, but the comedown was so agonizing we kept it as a “special occasion” drug. Cocaine was always around, a drug I never even really liked but did out of habit. But I'd learned a critical lesson from my 20s: if you're going to party, do it responsibly. I stopped driving around

with drugs, stopped being a public menace. The rule was simple: get your shit, go home, lock the doors, and stay safe. My legal troubles vanished overnight.

Just as I was about to settle into that union life, the phone rang. It was Chris. He had crashed and burned in Santa Rosa but had already landed on his feet, this time as a sales manager in Fort Worth, Texas.

“Dude,” he said, “you thought California was easy? In Texas, they don’t even rough you up at the door. They invite you in for sweet tea. I’m selling \$300,000 a month myself, making thirty grand.”

That was all I needed to hear. My goal in life isn’t to be a billionaire; it’s financial freedom. The ability to pay my bills, enjoy my hobbies, and go to any restaurant without looking at the prices. That sales job was the clearest path to that dream.

So, at 35 years old, after five transformative years in California, it was time to pack the trailer again. My 30s had been infinitely better than my 20s. I’d learned how to make real money, how to party without getting arrested, and how to follow a dream across the country. California wasn’t the final destination; it was the training ground. Now, it was time for the main event: Texas.

Chapter 7: Texas Gold Rush

The gold I was chasing in Texas wasn’t buried in some dusty riverbed; it was sitting in the living rooms of suburban homeowners, waiting to be mined. I was digging for greenbacks, for that one big score that would finally buy my freedom. Courtney was my partner in the venture, a 50/50 split on life. We both worked, we both paid, and together we rolled into the Dallas-Fort Worth area in a two-car convoy—my blue Toyota

Tacoma pulling our life in a trailer, her in a black Kia. We landed on my friend Chris's doorstep at four in the morning, a clumsy, awkward start to a new life that was about to explode.

He wasn't bullshitting. Texas was a sales paradise. These were pre-qualified radio leads—people who already wanted what I was selling. My job was just to show up, play the part of the charming, trustworthy good grandson, and walk out with a signed contract for a \$50,000 siding job. The paychecks were obscene, numbers I used to think were typos: eight, twelve, fifteen, even eighteen thousand dollars for a single week's work. I was averaging over a million and a half in sales a year.

I fell hard for Texas. The food alone was worth the trip; I packed on fifteen pounds of brisket and Tex-Mex my first year. The energy was electric, and I found a new brotherhood with the other sales sharks. We were a pack of wolves, and the owner of the company treated us like kings. He'd take the whole team to fancy steakhouses and then to high-end strip clubs, handing each of us a stack of hundreds to go wild. We were gods, living a life I couldn't have even sketched out in my wildest dreams.

But a dream life needs a dream house, and that's where the real test began. As a felon, renting was a nightmare. I found a shady "lease-to-buy" program that seemed like the perfect solution. I put down \$16,000 cash—everything I had at the moment—on a house that, to me, was a mansion. It was only after signing the papers that I discovered the sixteen grand wasn't a down payment; it was a non-refundable "finder's fee" that went straight into the scam artist's pocket. I was trapped.

Then COVID hit. The world shut down, work stopped,

and the days bled into a haze of video games and partying. While I was stuck in limbo, the Texas housing market exploded. The house I'd signed a lease to buy for \$260,000 was suddenly worth over \$400,000. My one-year lease was ending, and the owner could have legally kicked me to the curb, sold the house for a massive profit, and laughed all the way to the bank. I was screwed.

But my life has a weird habit of producing guardian angels in my darkest moments. The owner, a woman named Brenda, was one of them. She found out I'd been scammed. She knew the house was worth a fortune more than our agreement. And she didn't care. In an act of pure, unadulterated grace, she extended the lease to give me time to get my finances in order. When I was finally ready to buy two years later, she honored the original price of \$260,000. Then she did something that left the loan officers speechless: she credited me the \$16,000 I'd lost to the scammer, taking it off the final price. I walked into a fortune of instant equity.

On the outside, we were the American Dream personified. The big house in a nice suburb, the new cars in the driveway, the six-figure incomes. We were the undisputed success story of both our families, the benchmark everyone else was measured against. Standing in the driveway of that house, a house I owned, a house worth nearly double what I paid for it, I felt like I had finally made it. I had the money, the toys, the girl, and the freedom I'd been chasing my whole life. I had won. From that high up, you feel like you can see forever, but you can never see the cliff edge right at your feet.

Just as I was standing on the summit of my life, a ghost from my past appeared to collect a debt I didn't know I owed. My father. A man I hadn't seen in years, a career con artist and a long-time meth addict, showed up at my door. He claimed it was just a visit, but the truth was he was on the run from drug dealers in Miami over a five-grand debt. I felt that old, familiar pull—the desperate, childish desire to help, to finally have a father figure in my life. I pulled money from my investments, used my own connections, and helped him score a massive amount of meth to pay off his crew.

He thanked me by teaching me and Courtney how to smoke it. We'd snorted it in California and hated the agonizing comedown, but smoking it was different. It was a cleaner, more efficient, more insidious high. He stayed for a week, selling me a beautiful, bullshit dream about him moving to Texas to help me with my business. Then he disappeared. He broke a promise to be at a big event for me, a promise I had told him was his last chance to be my father. He left town owing me \$1,800 and left an ounce of meth on the table as a parting gift. He broke my heart all over again and, in doing so, handed me the keys to my own destruction.

The addiction took hold with terrifying speed. My job at the sales company soured completely when a manager stole a massive commission from me. I walked. I started my own construction company with my cousin, but it was a meat grinder. We were scammed by marketing companies, bled dry by subcontractors, and the partnership dissolved, leaving me alone, holding the bag on a failing business and drowning in stress and debt.

The drug became the only thing that made sense. I found what I thought was the perfect self-medication: a cocktail of meth and Xanax that made me feel happy,

social, and completely, utterly devoid of ambition. Here's the truth about meth: **it's steroids for your inner bitch.** That little voice in your head that tells you to quit, to take the easy way out, to start tomorrow—on meth, that voice becomes a world champion bodybuilder. It's impossible to ignore. I had dozens of brilliant business ideas, all 80% finished, but I couldn't push a single one across the finish line.

In a final, desperate Hail Mary, I took my last \$20,000—money I'd saved for years—to Vegas for the Super Bowl, convinced I could triple it and pay off my debts. I got my stack up to \$36,000 before the chaos and paranoia of Vegas consumed me. I walked away with \$500 and a soul full of shame.

Not long after, I bought what I thought were Percocets, but they were laced with fentanyl. I overdosed. I died for the second time in my life, saved only by the sheer dumb luck of my roommate happening to come downstairs at the exact right moment—walking his dog.

The house, my symbol of success, became a warzone. Twisted by the drug, Courtney turned into a mean, angry stranger. The love was gone, replaced by a cold, resentful truce. I moved into the upstairs bedroom; we were just roommates sharing a mortgage we couldn't pay. The life I had built with my own two hands was burning to the ground around me. My business, my money, my relationship, my ambition—all of it, gone. All because I opened the door to my father for one week. He started the fire and walked away, leaving me to burn in it.

The silence in a big, empty house is a different kind of loud. After the Vegas money vanished and the fentanyl wore off, all that was left was the echo of failure. The mortgage payment notifications were piling up like unread obituaries. My car, a symbol of the Texas gold rush, was a ticking clock away from being repossessed. Courtney and I were ghosts haunting opposite ends of the same hallway, the space between us filled with the ghosts of who we used to be. The empire was in ruins.

This was it. The bottom of the cycle. The familiar, sickening lurch of freefall giving way to the hard-packed dirt of rock bottom. I had been here before, but this time felt different. I was 40 years old. The resilience of youth had been replaced by the weary knowledge of my own patterns. The problem wasn't the drugs, the bad deals, or the betrayals. The problem was the pilot.

The final conversation with Courtney wasn't a fight. The energy for that had been burned out long ago. It was a quiet, exhausted surrender. We were sitting at the kitchen island, the granite countertop that had seen lines of cocaine and stacks of cash now just a cold, empty space between us.

"This is it, isn't it?" she said, not as a question, but as a statement.

"Yeah," I said. "The road ran out."

There was no blame. There were no tears. It was just two people who had survived a decade-long war together finally agreeing to a ceasefire. An amputation. It hurt, but it was the only way to stop the poison from spreading.

In the days that followed, I was alone with my two most intimate companions: the lingering hum of the

methamphetamine in my veins and the booming voice of my inner bitch. The drug had turned him from a nagging whisper into a titan, a champion bodybuilder of self-sabotage. Every time a flicker of ambition sparked in my mind—answer that email, call that old contact, finish that business plan—his voice would drown it out. “What’s the point? It’s too late. You’ll just fail again. Let it all burn. It’s easier to let it burn.”

For months, I had listened. I had let him win. I had let the fire consume everything. But sitting there, in the wreckage of my own making, a different feeling started to surface. It wasn’t hope. It was rage. A cold, defiant fury. I was tired of his voice. I was tired of losing to a coward who lived in my own head.

I went to my office, a room filled with the skeletons of my ambition. Whiteboards covered in faded diagrams, notebooks filled with brilliant ideas, and a computer desktop cluttered with sixty-seven project folders, each one a monument to a race I’d abandoned at the 80-yard line. My inner bitch screamed at me to close the door, to go play video games, to take a hit and forget.

Instead, I sat down. I opened a folder. An AI-driven marketing company. A lead generation system for contractors. An automated e-commerce brand. All of them, so close to being born. I felt the familiar wave of paralysis, the titan’s hands on my shoulders, pushing me down.

And then I thought, No. Fuck you.

It wasn’t a moment of divine clarity. It was a choice. A conscious, deliberate act of war against the weakest part of myself. I wasn’t going to try to fix everything at once. I was just going to finish one thing. That was the new rule.

But that wasn't enough. A small victory wouldn't suffice. I needed a goal so audacious, so utterly insane, that it would terrify the inner bitch back into his cage. A goal that would force me to evolve or be annihilated. The thought started as a spark and then erupted into a blaze. The world is changing. Automation, AI—this is the new gold rush. What if I didn't just build one business? What if I built an army of them?

The challenge solidified in my mind, a declaration of war etched in adrenaline. This is no longer about just getting by. This is about proving a point. To my father, to the world, but mostly, to the titan in my head.

I am at rock bottom. Again. I have no money, my house is on the line, and I am a functioning addict. But a brilliant mind is still a brilliant mind, even when it's running on toxic fuel. So here is the new gamble, the final bet. Within three years, I will conceptualize, build, and launch 100 fully automated businesses. Not for the money, though it will come. But as proof. Proof that the wreckage is not a grave; it is a launchpad.

The phoenix rises from the ashes, but it's the fight with the inner bitch that determines if it will fly.

And our fight has just begun.

Epilogue: A Functional Addict's Manifesto

If you have read this far, you might be expecting a story of recovery. You might be waiting for the chapter where I find God, join a 12-step program, and vow to live a life of clean, quiet sobriety. This is not that book.

My story is not a cautionary tale about the dangers of drugs. It is a testament to the resilience of a mind that refuses to be ordinary. It is an argument that the lines society draws between success and failure, sanity and

madness, are far more permeable than we are led to believe. The goal was never to be perfect. The goal was to be free.

I have lived a life that would have crushed a weaker man, and I have learned truths in the trenches that you will not find in any self-help book. These are the lessons that remain when everything else has burned away.

“The obstacle in the path becomes the path. Never forget, within every obstacle is an opportunity to improve our condition.” — Marcus Aurelius

Every rock bottom I ever hit was not a punishment; it was a foundation. Every failure, every betrayal, every overdose was a brutal but effective teacher. Society tells you to avoid failure at all costs. I tell you to embrace it. Failure is data. It is the fire that tempers the steel of your will. The only way to never fail is to never dare. My life has been a series of dares, and I have the scars and the wisdom to prove it.

“It’s not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.” — Epictetus

I am not a product of my circumstances; I am a product of my decisions. My father's betrayal could have been my excuse to surrender. The failures of my businesses could have been my reason to quit. The addiction could have been my tombstone. But at any moment, you have the power to choose your reaction. You can be the victim of your story, or you can be the hero. The hero is simply the one who, after being knocked down for the hundredth time, decides to get up one more time.

“We suffer more often in imagination than in reality.” — Seneca

The most formidable enemy I have ever faced is not a drug dealer, a bad business partner, or a mountain of debt. It is the voice in my own head—the inner bitch. He is the master of imagined fears and future anxieties. He is the one who tells you that you are not good enough, that the risk is too great, that the pain of failure will be unbearable. Learning to distinguish his voice from your own is the single most important battle you will ever fight. True freedom is not the absence of external constraints; it is sovereignty over your own mind.

This book is a chronicle of my war. The 100-business challenge is my final campaign.

It is a demonstration that success is not reserved for the sober, the stable, or the saintly. It is for the relentless. It is for the creative. It is for those who have been to hell and have taken detailed notes. It is for the ones who dare to be different.

The next chapter of my life is unwritten. I do not know if I will succeed in this absurdly ambitious quest. But I know this: I will not quit. I will not surrender to the voice of fear. I will build my empire, not in spite of my flaws, but because of the unique perspective they have granted me.

And I will prove that even from the deepest ashes, a phoenix can not only rise, but build a fucking kingdom in the sky.

Music That Saves Lives: Songs to Get You Through Your Darkest Moments

Music has power. Real fucking power. When I was at my lowest—face down, broke, hopeless—sometimes all I had was a song blasting in my ears drowning out the noise in my head. These aren't just good songs.

These are survival tools. Battle anthems. Songs that remind you you're not alone, that someone else has been in the pit and clawed their way out.

I'm giving you my picks—split between male and female artists—one from each decade that hits different when you're down. Plus five honorable mentions that deserve a spot on your playlist. Save these. Listen when it gets dark. They've saved me more times than I can count.

By Decade: Male & Female Artists

1970s

Male Artist: “Dream On” - Aerosmith

This isn't just a rock ballad. It's a call to never give up on the dreams you had before life beat you down. Steven Tyler's voice cracks with raw emotion, reminding you that it's never too late to rise. When you feel like you've wasted time, this song says: keep dreaming, keep pushing. Your moment isn't over.

Spotify: Listen Here

Female Artist: “Total Eclipse of the Heart” - Bonnie Tyler

Bonnie Tyler screams out the pain of feeling broken and incomplete. This song captures the suffocating darkness when everything falls apart—but there's power in that release. Sometimes you need to feel all the pain before you can move forward. Let this song be your permission to scream it all out.

Spotify: Listen Here

1990s

Male Artist: “Numb” - Linkin Park (Chester Bennington)

Chester Bennington poured his soul into this one. It's about being crushed by expectations, feeling invisible, becoming numb just to survive. If you've ever felt like you're screaming but no one's listening, this is your anthem. Chester's gone now, but his voice still fights for everyone who feels unseen.

Spotify: Listen Here

Female Artist: “Nothing Compares 2 U” - Sinéad O’Connor

This isn't just a breakup song. It's about loss—of a person, a dream, a version of yourself. Sinéad's voice is haunting, raw, and achingly honest. When you've lost something you can't get back, this song sits with you in the grief. It doesn't try to fix you. It just understands.

Spotify: Listen Here

2000s

Male Artist: “Lose Yourself” - Eminem

This is the ultimate “one shot” anthem. Eminem captures the moment when everything's on the line and you have to fucking go for it. When you're staring at your last chance, this song reminds you that success

or failure is in your hands. No more excuses. No more waiting. This is your moment—take it.

Spotify: Listen Here

Female Artist: “Beautiful” - Christina Aguilera

When you hate yourself, when you can't see your worth, when the mirror feels like an enemy—this song fights back. Christina's voice is defiant and tender at the same time. You are beautiful, even if you can't see it yet. Especially then. This song is a lifeline for anyone drowning in self-hatred.

Spotify: Listen Here

2010-2020

Male Artist: “Stronger” - Kanye West

Kanye's “Stronger” is pure adrenaline. It's the song you play when you need to prove everyone wrong, including yourself. It's about transforming pain into power, using what tried to break you as fuel. When you're ready to rise, blast this and remember: what doesn't kill you makes you fucking stronger.

Spotify: Listen Here

Female Artist: “Fight Song” - Rachel Platten

This is the underdog anthem. When you're fighting battles no one sees, when you feel small and powerless, Rachel Platten's voice becomes your battle cry. This is your fight song. This is your proof of life. It's a declaration: I'm still here, I'm still fighting, and I won't go quietly.

Spotify: Listen Here

Honorable Mentions: Songs That Deserve a Spot

These didn't fit the decade structure, but they're too damn powerful to leave out. Add these to your survival playlist.

1. "Shallow" - Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper

This song is about being seen—truly seen—when you've been hiding for so long. It's vulnerable, raw, and real. When you're tired of performing and just want someone to understand you, this song meets you there.

Spotify: Listen Here

2. "I Will Always Love You" - Whitney Houston

Whitney's voice soars in this timeless ballad about love, loss, and letting go. It's heartbreakingly healing at the same time. When you need to say goodbye to someone or something you loved, this song holds your hand through it.

Spotify: Listen Here

3. "Take It Easy" - Eagles

Sometimes you need to breathe. This song is a reminder to slow down, to not carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. When life's moving too fast

and you're about to break, this song whispers: it's okay to take it easy.

Spotify: Listen Here

4. “Whiskey Lullaby” - Brad Paisley & Alison Krauss

This is a heartbreakingly honest story about addiction, regret, and the pain we carry. It's heavy, but it's honest. If you've lost someone to addiction or struggled yourself, this song honors that pain. It doesn't glorify it—it mourns it.

Spotify: Listen Here

5. “Believer” - Imagine Dragons

Pain made me a believer. That's the core of this song. It's about using your suffering as fuel, transforming pain into purpose. When you're ready to turn your scars into strength, this song is your soundtrack.

Spotify: Listen Here

6. “Bitter Sweet Symphony” - The Verve

Life is a bitter sweet symphony. This song captures the beauty and pain of existence—the struggle, the monotony, the fleeting moments of transcendence. When you need to feel less alone in the chaos, this song walks beside you.

Spotify: Listen Here

How to Use This Playlist

These songs aren't background noise. They're tools. When you're at your lowest:

1. **Put on headphones.** Block out the world.
2. **Turn it up loud.** Let the music drown out the noise in your head.
3. **Feel everything.** Don't run from the emotions these songs bring up. Sit with them.
4. **Remember you're not alone.** Every one of these artists has been in the dark. So have I. So have millions of others.

Music won't fix everything. But it can get you through the next five minutes. And sometimes, that's all you need.

Play them. Scream them. Survive them.

In Memoriam

Let's take a moment of silence.

For **Chad DeBias**—the first person to take me to a concert (Creed, a moment I'll never forget)—who died before making it to high school, in his own bed.

For **John Nash**, cousin of my best friend, who never quite got back from losing his own best friend, gone too soon.

For **John Simmons**, the athlete who couldn't be beat on the mat unless he faced me, who faded too quick.

For **John Tavela**, whose house never said no—it was always inviting, everyone always had a good time—who just woke up dead one morning in his own bed.

For **Jay Yedlowski**—my dude, passed just this year—he didn’t deserve to go early like that. That’s a real shout.

For **Tom Petty, Chris Farley, Mac Miller, Chester Bennington**—voices that shaped me, voices society choked out.

For **Anthony Bourdain**—who showed us that brilliance, honesty, and demons can live in the same body. Who traveled the world chasing human connection and never stopped running from the ghosts. Who proved you can have everything and still feel empty. He understood the high of living on the edge and the cost of never finding solid ground. Rest easy, Chef.

I OD'd twice. Don't know why I'm still breathing and they aren't. Maybe luck, maybe spite, maybe somebody upstairs kept hitting reset.

And hell, there were dozens more—people who brushed past me, friends of friends, strangers who lit up a room—who got swallowed too. I never meant to leave a name off this list. It's not complete. It's not even close.

But damn, it's time somebody paused.

So if this book does anything, let it prove the margins were lies. Let it show you can be the kid they whispered about, the one with track marks and bad choices, and still end up writing it down. Still end up winning.

Rest up, y'all. I'm talking for every last one who can't.

All we need is love.

— Me

Inspirational Quotes and Figures

Marcus Aurelius

Quote: “The obstacle in the path becomes the path. Never forget, within every obstacle is an opportunity to improve our condition.”

Background: Marcus Aurelius was a Roman Emperor from 161 to 180 AD and is considered one of the greatest Stoic philosophers. His work “Meditations” is a series of personal writings that reflect his thoughts on life, leadership, and self-improvement. His philosophy emphasizes rationality, virtue, and acceptance of what we cannot control.

Epictetus

Quote: “It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.”

Background: Epictetus was a Greek Stoic philosopher born a slave who gained his freedom and became a prominent teacher of Stoic philosophy. His teachings focus on the power of the individual's mind and the importance of living in harmony with nature. His works have influenced countless generations of thinkers and leaders.

Seneca

Quote: “We suffer more often in imagination than in reality.”

Background: Seneca was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, and playwright. He was an advisor to Emperor Nero and is renowned for his philosophical essays and letters, which offer insights into practical ethics and the art of living well. His work emphasizes

the importance of controlling one's emotions and focusing on what truly matters in life.

Jim Rohn

Quote: "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."

Background: Jim Rohn was an American entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker who transformed millions of lives through his philosophy on personal development and success. His teachings emphasize that success is something you attract by the person you become, not something you pursue. Rohn's work focuses on discipline, goal-setting, and the power of making better choices every single day.

Denzel Washington

Quote: "Fall forward. Every failed experiment is one step closer to success. You've got to take risks."

Background: Denzel Washington is an Academy Award-winning actor, director, and producer known not only for his powerful performances but also for his wisdom and motivational speeches. He speaks often about faith, hard work, perseverance, and the importance of taking risks and learning from failure. His message resonates with those who refuse to let setbacks define them.

Thank You — Now Watch Me Build

Thank you for reading this. Thank you for giving a damn about what a drug addict had to say.

You bought this book. You read these words. That

means something. It means you're willing to look at the messy, broken, raw parts of life and see if there's something real underneath.

I told you at the beginning: the next chapter of my life is unwritten. I'm building 100 businesses from nothing. An empire in the sky. Rising from the ashes like that phoenix on the cover.

And here's the thing—I'm not doing it in secret. I'm doing it publicly. I might live stream some of it. I'll definitely be documenting the whole damn ride.

This is your invitation to follow along.

I want you there. I want you watching. I want you rooting for me, learning from my mistakes, seeing what happens when someone refuses to stay down.

Maybe you'll get inspired. Maybe you'll steal an idea. Maybe you'll just enjoy watching someone actually do the thing instead of just talking about it.

Here's where you can follow the journey:

www.adviceforlife.site

That's the website. That's where the tracker lives. That's where the empire gets built.

Come check it out. Watch the counter go up. See the businesses launch. Submit your own business ideas if you want—I'm letting fans participate, and if your idea becomes one of the 100, you might even get equity in it.

I'm not asking you to believe in me.

I'm asking you to watch.

Because even from the deepest ashes, a phoenix can rise.

And I'm about to build a fucking kingdom in the sky.

Let's go.

— Brandon Rohm

PHOTO GALLERIES

Scan the QR codes below to access exclusive photo galleries from Brandon's life. These galleries contain hundreds of photos organized by era and theme, giving you a deeper look into the journey chronicled in this book.

Gallery 1: Early Life — “Just a Hatchling”

9 photos from Brandon's baby and toddler years

Before spreading wings, before the chaos, before the fights—there was just a kid. These photos capture Brandon as a baby and toddler with his father, fishing with grandma, learning to ride a horse. The innocent beginning before the storm.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.sitelife]

Gallery 2: Adolescent — “Haven't Spread Wings Yet”

4 photos from Brandon's teen years

The awkward middle years. High school Brandon, working roofing jobs as a teenager, finding his iden-

tity before Club Rohm. The bridge between childhood and the party years.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

Gallery 3: Club Rohm — The Party Years

12 photos from the wildest chapter

Brandon at 23, living fast and reckless. These are the Club Rohm years—the parties, the highs, the moments that almost killed him. Raw. Unfiltered. The life that burned too bright.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site/rohm]

Gallery 4: Phoenix — “Rising from the Ashes”

23 photos of recovery and rebuilding

This is the comeback. Brandon in California, Texas, and today—disc golf, fishing, working with his hands, building the empire. These photos prove the phoenix doesn’t just rise; it flies.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

Gallery 5: Kahlúa & Angel — The Dogs

14 photos of his faithful companions

Kahlúa and Angel—the dogs who saved him more than any rehab. Kahlúa, murdered in a home invasion, and

Angel, the miracle puppy born exactly one week later.
The love that never quits.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

Gallery 6: The People We Lost — In Memoriam

6 memorial photos

The ones who didn't make it. The wrestling team photo with friends who are gone. John Tavela in his tie-dye shirts. Jay Yedlowski. John Nash. The weight of survival is remembering those who fell.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

Gallery 7: Stars Who Shaped Me

5 photos of cultural icons

Tom Petty. Mac Miller. Chester Bennington. Anthony Bourdain. Chris Farley. The artists and voices who understood the edge, who lived and died for their craft. Their music and words kept Brandon alive when nothing else could.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

Gallery 8: The Stoics — Wisdom from the Ancients

3 photos of philosophical guides

Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus. Seneca. The Stoic philosophers whose words became Brandon's battle

plan. “The obstacle in the path becomes the path.” These men understood suffering and turned it into strength.

Scan to view:

[QR CODE PLACEHOLDER - Will link to: www.adviceforlife.site]

A Final Word: The Dogs and the Miracles

Look at the reality of this story. I want you to hear this directly from me.

I had my first dog, Kahlúa, shot and killed six years after I got her. Masked men kicked in my door while I was gone, put a gun to a girl’s face, then shot my dog through the head while she was playing with a toy. One week later—exactly one week—it just so happened that the same mother of that dog had just had another litter. The owner called me when she heard what happened. I went over and picked out Kahlúa’s Angel.

Two dogs.

The first time I OD’d, I should have been dead. The person I was with screamed and ran away, leaving me to die. But his scream was so shrill, so loud, that it just so happened to catch the attention of a volunteer fireman who was walking his dog nearby. He heard the scream, decided to investigate, found me, and hit me with Narcan. Brought me back to life.

The second time I OD’d, I didn’t even think I was doing anything that would affect me. I purchased what I thought was Xanax. Turned out to be fentanyl. I woke up at 9 in the morning, did that pill, sat down in my living room to play a video game. Courtney, my girl at

the time, was asleep. She works nights—she doesn't wake up until 3 or 4 PM. She wouldn't have woken up in time. But as I was laying there, about to die, my roommate who lived upstairs just happened to be taking his dog out. Two dogs. He was coming down the stairs with his dog, saw me on the ground, made the call. Narcan brought me back to life.

Two times in one life. Two dogs. And the odds of all of that happening to one person? Astronomical.

So I'm either on borrowed time, or I'm here for a purpose. And I believe my purpose is to build this empire. Some people think I'm crazy. Well, we'll find out. My purpose might reveal itself after the empire is built, but I really do believe I was built to do this.

And after hearing that story, if you don't believe it just as much as I do? You should look in the mirror and ask yourself if you're the crazy one.

Thank you for looking into my story. I hope it helps you in yours.

Stay alive. Stay fighting.

— Brandon Rohm

How to Use This Book

This isn't just a book you read once and put on a shelf. It's a living document—a toolkit for survival, inspiration, and connection. Here's how to get the most out of it:

□ Accessing the Photo Galleries

Throughout this book, you'll find **QR codes** that link to exclusive photo galleries on my website. These galleries contain over **70 additional photos** organized by era and theme—photos that bring this story to life in ways words alone can't.

How to Access:

1. **Use your smartphone camera** (iPhone, Android, etc.)
2. **Open your camera app** and point it at any QR code in this book
3. **Tap the notification** that appears on your screen
4. **Your browser will open** and take you directly to that photo gallery

It's that simple. No app downloads, no sign-ups—just point, tap, and explore.

Photo Galleries Include:

- **Early Life** - "Just a Hatchling" (baby and toddler years)
- **Adolescent** - "Haven't Spread Wings Yet" (teen years, high school)
- **Club Rohm** - The party years at age 23
- **Phoenix** - "Rising from the Ashes" (recovery, California, Texas, today)
- **Kahlúa & Angel** - The dogs who saved my life
- **Memorial** - "The People We Lost" (friends who didn't make it)
- **Stars Who Shaped Me** - Tom Petty, Mac Miller, Chester Bennington, Anthony Bourdain, Chris Farley
- **The Stoics** - Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Seneca

These photos aren't just memories—they're proof that

the story you just read is real.

□ **Listening to the Music**

In the “**Music That Saves Lives**” section, I shared songs that got me through my darkest moments. Each song has a **Spotify link** so you can listen immediately.

How to Listen:

1. **Click or tap** the Spotify link under each song (if reading digitally)
2. **Or search** for the song title and artist on your music app of choice
3. **Create a playlist** of all these songs—keep it on your phone for when life gets hard
4. **Turn it up loud** when you need it most

These songs are survival tools. Use them.

□ **Follow the Journey**

The story doesn’t end here. I’m building **100 automated businesses** in the next three years—an empire in the sky. You can watch it happen in real-time.

Visit: www.adviceforlife.site

- Track the business count as it grows
 - Submit your own business ideas (you might even get equity if I use yours)
 - Follow my progress as I rise from the ashes
-

□ Stay Connected

This book is just the beginning. Whether you're fighting your own battles, building your own dreams, or just trying to survive another day—I see you. You're not alone.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for caring. Thank you for being here.

Now go build your own empire.

— Brandon
