

-Reflections in the Rearview Mirror

Forward

Five hundred gazillion years B.C. — before all this other crap happened — I remember writing home to my mom.

As far as letters go it was a well-meaning, well written chit-chat telling the funky bitch I thought so little of her hospitality she could drop dead for all I cared.

Of course I didn't have the nerve, or whatever gumption it takes, to call your own mother a cunt. I kept the letter about me.

Then she refused to talk to me.

I mean, can you believe it. And she didn't resume talking with me for another year.

The only thing that changed was my father unchained her from the bed. Oh yeah. My dad chains my mother to the bed. And he wears women's underwear. Grossly overweight, too. Probably, oh let's pick a number. My father is three hundred pounds overweight. He smokes big cigars until they're stinking bits of soggy, chewed tobacco, then gently sets the fetid mess in an ashtray close to you as he pretends he can't hear you and rambles on about stories without any point. He wears cowboy hats, has fists which would chip one of my teeth in later years, and he really doesn't take much shit from anyone. I like him. Oh. That part about him keeping my mom chained to the bed? I just made that up. It wasn't real, so I made it up.

My family life hasn't been such that anyone I know, or know of, would take it to a Ladies Tea Society as a gentle prompt for polite conversation. No, it's that people hate me outright. For good reason, for no reason, and for reasons of their own. If they remember me at all, which according to any calculations is an odds-on favorite for the dart that hits the bull's-eye.

Imagine being hit in the face by a beachball. Unless you're four weeks old, it's not going to hurt you. So, I'll be talking to you. You reading this. Hate is really, uh, this thing. It weighs just about what you can carry, but you ask someone else to carry it because it's just fun to watch people in agony doing the things you should be doing. So, shit on the beachball hitting you in the face. You deserve a baseball bat to the face, swung with as much force as I can.

Are you really someone who does all those things I wrote about?

Might be?

If so?

Yeah. I'd use the bat.

Most likely. But maybe not.

Probably, though.

Chapter One

I remember being a kid and sitting on the grass in front of the house where, inside, my parents cried, fought, and tried to keep their wits about them in the midst of a prevailing '50's Family Mentality, which meant Ladies wore aprons and fixed dinner, and Guys were pushing a lawnmower in front of the house, smiling and waving to the neighbors.

It was a scary time. Murders were being committed back then, and there were gangs. People wore their hair weird, and drugs were available. There was pregnancy (both wanted and unwanted), lots of sex going on, and I know this is true because I looked at The Census for that year and — Surprise! — the population didn't go down, it went up.

Being a kid back then meant being addicted to sugar with no consequences. Except the obvious, bad teeth, and "spoiling your supper". But no shrink evaluations, and none of that. No meds, etcetera. But there was a lot of baseball, and finding beer to drink, playing all day, or conversely working all day. The end result? You're tired. Either way, your body hurts. Playing or working.

The difference between then and now is the next day the body still hurts. And there's the evaluations. Mostly shrinks, but even worse? Evaluations from your family, who farm you out for evaluations from shrinks. I won't even get into it with you about evaluations from friends, and if you think I will you need help.

Chapter Two

In this chapter the author again tried to go into detail about significant items and events, while injecting his wry witticisms about events which were both real and true, and made up and false. Overall? A good chapter.

Chapter Three

I remember discoveries. Discoveries about sex, about recreational drugs and the consequences of all play and no work. Discoveries along the way. Homelessness, loneliness, despair, etcetera, yadda yadda. Have you ever eaten out of a garbage can surrounded by people you don't know walking about in the busyness and business of their day? How about stealing from convenience stores? Or breaking into houses and stealing as much as you can fit into a stolen car. Ever done that?

Being drunk, and staying drunk, before reaching the legal drinking age. Having had so much to drink that my liver shut down before I could reach that legal drinking age. You've done that, right? Alright. Thought so. I wanted this all to be a shared experience everyone could relate with.

Sex was so plentiful it began not mattering, because sex isn't love. And love? Well, let's just say if hate isn't real then neither is love. But. Let's just say love and hate are both real. Then, yeah I've known both of them.

I've known death row prisoners who have called me brother, and friend. Strippers, Bishops, Magicians, banjo players, cute little jewish college women bent on not changing the world just themselves, and having fun. Known all that shit.

I've eaten frog's legs and caviar, cracked crab and homemade bread with lots of salty butter, and warm from the kitchen. Ice water on a hot day, great coffee first thing in the morning. Homemade ice cream, preserves bottled by my grandmother, homemade liquor and wine. And I remember hearing rats in the wall scrambling and nesting, keeping warm as I fell asleep.

I remember an adult teaching me extortion and how to steal, when I was a kid. And how to get up, make my bed, and go to work. In the words of an ex, 'there's not much he's missed.'

Chapter Four

The thing about Santa Cruz, California is it's reputation. The locals hate it. The reputation, not the actual city. Here; watch. Local joke about tourist season in Santa Cruz:

"If it's legal to hunt, why isn't legal to shoot tourists?"

The tourists fuck up traffic, and mispronounce every city and street name. They get arrested and can't leave, which is infinitely worse than not being allowed to come back. And they all talk about "moving here." Until they get arrested.

Santa Cruz has the coast, The Boardwalk, and downtown. It has the beach flats, Mission Hill, Beach Hill, and a door on the back of a house high up on a cliff some say an insane father pushed his daughter out of to her death one night in the fog.

Speed traps, sunburns, panhandlers, over-pricing, overcrowding, drunks, drug addicts, murderers, thieves, and of course women in aprons fixing dinner, and men with peppermint chiclet smiles waving to you as they mow their lawn. Santa Cruz hasn't much changed really, and I don't know if that's good or bad. I don't much care, to be truthful with you.

My brother told me he was told, when he was released from prison, that they said to him: "If you don't like it here, don't come back." That's a perfect motto for Santa Cruz. And most people indeed make it back. For a while anyway. And there's even a saying that if you've ever lived in Santa Cruz, and if you were born there, you'll be back. In the right light that could be considered a threat.

Chapter Five

When my father died there, were a couple hundred people who showed up for his funeral. Included were one ex-wife, and two children from two different mothers. One of those kids were me. I was asked to say a few words and I simply noted the passing of a parent and sat down. It was hard enough seeing a reminder that this man, with all these friends, had a private family life. So not having to hear about it any longer than necessary gained me an honorable mention at my own father's funeral.

He bought himself some prime death cottage real estate to house his eternal remains. What he chose for himself was an above ground crypt. When I viewed his body I couldn't see any resemblance to the swarthy shit-kicker I knew to be my dad when I was a kid. Laid out in the coffin was a college kid, heading out to war with a big smile on his face because he was doing right for his country. Never mind the sports scholarship. Let's fight for Uncle Sam.

And the look of horror on his parent's face when he came home damaged.

His physical disfigurement was apparent at first. If you knew him, eventually you'd come to see he was splintered; things didn't make it all the way in his brain to comprehension. Instead thoughts and ideas were sort of waylaid indefinitely in the unescapable confusion, pain, and terror he knew as his life.

And that was my dad. A huge man, stuck in fear, with a brilliant mind of a genius, and a man who lived like that in various backdrops for probably seventy years. Robbed of a direct connection to his experience, he lived not understanding anything around himself, and not knowing he didn't know.

My mother.

My mother. Well, there's an old joke ...

Beauty Queen. The wholesome, big legged, Mid-West, kid of an immigrant, beauty we're talking. Drank, smoked, cursed.

Had a couple still born kids, which seemed to destroy her. That, and everything else. Like being the last surviving member of her Mom-Dad-Brothers-and-Sisters nuclear family. That. Also, having grandchildren who don't know and don't care that you're alive. Getting more affection from a pet than from your own children. She has those Brownie Merit Badges too, scattered among her rubble of simplicity.

Solid friend, I guess. Foodie, gourmet, Fine Dining Aficionado. Educator. Sole supporting parent of four growing boys (shoes, food, Doctor bills, more food, more doctors, more shoes) ...we're talking Pioneer Woman here. Except the only animal she ever felt bad about talking about having killed was a human.

Shame, shame.

Sex would be my shameful thing. Things I've seen, mostly. Things I've seen and wanted to try. Things I investigated, fantasized about, and masturbated to. That, and my violence.

You know that old joke about someone telling someone else to calm down, and quit shouting? The other person shouts: "I'm not shouting!" and looks like a fool. Yeah. That's my solution to frustration. Set up and laughed at because I have the good fortune to want fairness. And now I don't care. I repeat what you say until you completely give up and go away.

Some people persist in approaching me full face fucking forward with humanity, and they have the ability to reason. Those are my allies. My friends are the ones who do the same shit to me. Give me their best imitation of me without all the messy judgements. Just plain mockery, which in a certain light is the sincerest form of flattery.

I don't have much shame other than that, unless you can think of anything?

Next Chapter

Oh those ethnic, and eccentricities, grouping people gather with. You with me?

Ain't noby here like me. Noby. You don't like it? I thought so.

Chapper Eight (I think).

Goon, blaggah, goon bog, blag blerg.

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Number 6 fell upside down.

Chapter 10

Everything you've read is true because I made it up. Imagined it. Two or more thoughts gathered together in my brain and it was good. It was very good.