

SURVIVING SCHIZOPHRENIA

My Story of Paranoid Schizophrenia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Depression, Anosognosia, Suicide, and Treatment and Recovery from Severe Mental Illness



Richard Carlson Jr.

Surviving Schizophrenia

My Story of Paranoid Schizophrenia, Obsessive-
Compulsive Disorder, Depression, Anosognosia,
Suicide, and Treatment and Recovery from
Severe Mental Illness

By Richard Carlson Jr.

Order online today!

www.survivingschizophrenia.com

Copyright © 2017 Richard Carlson Jr. All rights reserved.

Cover photograph credit: Copyright Richard Carlson Sr.

Back cover photograph credit: Copyright PictureMe
Portrait Studios.

The author would like to thank the editor for her help.

Disclaimer: The information in this book should not be considered medical advice. The author is not a medical professional. Mental health consumers should always consult with medical professionals for advice.

Surviving Schizophrenia is a work of non-fiction, however certain facts and other details have been changed.

Chapter 1

Be Honest

Please listen, because this is important.

The most important thing I've learned from dealing with my severe mental illness is that you have to be truthful to yourself and others. Honesty is not only the cornerstone of a successful and fulfilling life—you cannot receive the treatment you need or experience true recovery without it.

Do not waste years of your life by telling lies.

Because I was not honest with my psychiatrists and family, I did not receive adequate treatment for over ten years. That's ten years of my life that I cannot get back.

Do not hesitate to begin being truthful immediately. Your life might depend on it.

Chapter 2

Born in New York City

The stork put me into Mom's arms in the early 1970s. My parents were middle class and Catholic, and we lived on a nice street close by a Jewish neighborhood. Did you know that people who have schizophrenia are more likely to have been born and live in an urban environment? I spent much of my childhood in New York City, so I often wonder how much difference that made.

Mom was a hardworking woman who stayed at home to take care of me, as well as my younger brothers, Mike and Steve. My dad was a great father, who provided a good example for me to follow. Once, he took me to his work at the wastewater treatment facility. He and Mom were both caring toward us. Life seemed perfect.

My earliest memories are of my grandparents, who lived on the first floor of our house. My parents, brothers, and I lived upstairs. I would run downstairs in my pajamas to see my grandparents every morning. Grandpa emigrated from Poland when he was seventeen. Grandma was born in America, but grew up in Poland. I loved her so much. One of my most vivid memories is of her making pierogis for dinner. My Polish heritage is so important to me because of my grandparents.

My grandfather was an excellent role model—I couldn't wait to grow up to be just like him. I looked up to my father, who was a great dad, but I remember Grandpa best. He was a nice man, and we would take long walks in the city together.

Once when I was four, I made tire tracks with my toy Batmobile car in the fresh cement that our neighbor, Teddy, had put down in his front yard, and Grandpa smoothed the cement for me afterward.

Grandpa was bald, wore thick glasses, and smelled of the cigars he smoked.

“Don’t do that!” Grandpa exclaimed as he saw me from the window, “No!” However, I continued to drive my new Batmobile through the fresh cement. The Batmobile’s wheels and my small hands were splashed in drying cement. As grandpa hurried out, the sunlight showed through the clouds.

“Vroom, vrooom, vroooooom!” I grumbled as I drove the Batmobile even faster. Batman and Robin had to catch the evil Joker!

Grandpa grabbed my wrist and pulled my toy car out of the muck. I cried out in defiance, “Grandpa, no!” arching my back and clinging tight to the car, trying not to move a muscle. He walked me down the steep steps to our basement for a thorough hand washing.

But the Joker! Batman and Robin need my help!

“Do not play in the cement, Richard,” he scolded. When he was angry, his Slavic accent was even more pronounced.

“Mobile,” I said, wanting to play more even as he rolled up my sleeves. Instead of giving back my toy, he scrubbed it, and then washed my hands.

I still needed to help Batman, so I asked if I could play in the backyard. When he let me go, I darted to the dirt where a row of behemoth rosebushes grew. My chest began to tingle as I raced to the rescue through the moist soil.

“Vrooom, vrooom, vroooooom!” The Batmobile sped to Gotham Bank.

I stopped the Joker! I am the hero!

I was loved by my parents and grandparents very much.

Chapter 3

My Boyhood in Upstate New York

Before I was old enough to start kindergarten, my parents had a house built in Stormville, which was a small town in Upstate New York. My parents didn't want me to grow up in the city, because they believed the city was too rough for children. They also wanted to make sure I had a good education. It was 1975, and our house had yellow siding with white trim.

Dad put in a small pond in our backyard, replete with lily pads, fish, and crayfish. One day, Dad brought home a huge frog from his work and put it in the pond.

To me, Stormville was the greatest place in the entire world for a boy to grow up. I had a blast catching frogs, tadpoles, toads, turtles, snakes, newts, salamanders, and a myriad of other creatures not only from the pond in our backyard, but from creeks and

ponds all over the neighborhood. I played that I was in the vanguard of the army, I managed a construction site with toy trucks, and I had fun in many other ways at our Stormville house. Wild raspberries and blackberries grew in our front yard, and they tasted so sweet.

Once, my dad hired a man with a bulldozer to remove a tree in our yard, and the man offered to let me drive his bulldozer. I was too shy, so I refused. I wish I hadn't. Growing up, I missed out on a lot of interesting experiences because I was shy.

“How would you like to drive my bulldozer across your yard?” the man asked, climbing down from the dozer. He wore a white t-shirt with holes, old workman's green overalls, and scuffed tan boots.

Dad looked back at me as I dashed behind him, silent. I didn't expect to be offered to do something today that was so much fun! Imagine me—a five-year-old!—driving a bulldozer, just like a real construction worker. The tingling in my chest quivered with uneasy nervousness. It had poured rain earlier that afternoon,

and the summer humidity caused my sweaty shirt to cling to my chest.

Mom put her hands on her hips. “Come out and tell the man, ‘Yes,’ Richard!” she urged.

I looked at my shoes and Dad kneeled down, looking at me. “Don’t be shy. You can drive it and see what it’s like,” he said.

I very much wished that I could drive the bulldozer, but my lips were locked together.

“Tell the man, ‘Yes,’” Mom said again, and I turned my body away from the nice man.

“I’m shy,” I replied, glancing at Mom’s face for a second. If only she’d save me from this situation!

“It’ll be fun,” she encouraged. “Just try it.”

“I’ll sit right next to you,” the man promised, “so nothing will happen.”

I shook my head, looking down at my shoes, even though I really wanted to drive the bulldozer. A minute later, I walked away and found refuge in our backyard. There, I played with my toy bulldozer, pushing sewage

around at my wastewater treatment facility. I felt more comfortable being out of sight from the nice man. But I still wished and wished I could drive the man's bulldozer. If only the man wasn't here—then, my dad could ride it next to me.

My shyness as a child was related to my sensitivity. Approximately fifteen to twenty percent of men and women have sensitive personalities. According to the web site of sensitivity researcher and author Elaine Aron, at www.hsperson.com, sensitive people are often “more aware than others of subtleties,” “easily overwhelmed by such things as bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, or sirens nearby,” and tend to avoid “violent movies and TV shows” and “upsetting or overwhelming situations.” They are also often shy as children and adolescents.

I liked being sensitive, because my sensitivity made me care a lot about my family, my friends, our neighborhood, and my great life in Stormville. I just wished that I wasn't so shy. I also put up with a lot of

bullying because of my sensitivity—it made me different from many of the other boys.

Chapter 4

A Young Writer

The first time I remember being recognized for writing was in the second grade, when I won the Why My Teacher is My Valentine contest. The winners got to have lunch with their teacher at a restaurant, and have their pictures published in the local newspaper. I was even interviewed by a radio station. I figured that I must take after Grandma Carlson, because she liked to write poetry.

I was in Mrs. Daley's second grade class, just about to leave for lunch, when the announcement was made over the intercom.

"The winners of the Why My Teacher is My Valentine contest have been decided. Thank you to everyone who participated. Two winners were chosen, one from the second grade entries and one from the third grade," the female announcer said.

I listened intently. My stomach began to feel queasy and I had a tingling sensation inside my chest.

The announcer said the name of the third-grade winner first. I didn't recognize the name. Then, she said, "The second-grade winner is Richard Carlson, from Mrs. Daley's class. Congratulations to the both of you. The winners and their teachers are going to get lunch at a McDonald's restaurant. Thank you."

I jumped up and down at my desk as an intense, shooting feeling of happiness pulsed in my chest.

"Congratulations, Richard," Mrs. Daley exclaimed, "and thank you!" She beamed a nice smile at me.

"I won," I said to Tony, who sat next to me. "I won."

"Show-off," he said, and then the class walked to the cafeteria.

All through lunch, I felt such joy inside. *Someday, I'll be a world-famous writer*, I thought, and was proud.

Chapter 5

Rosco

Years later, my family moved to Tucson, Arizona, which is in the Sonoran Desert. In fifth grade, another boy at my school who was a year younger than me mimicked Rosco, a police officer character in the *Dukes of Hazzard* television series, which was popular at that time. I began to act like Rosco, too.

“You dipstick!” I giddily said to my buddies, Dave, Ron, and Steve, on the playground near the fence that bordered the school grounds. School was almost out and it was summer, and fiercely hot outside. We were dripping sweat like soldiers in a monsoon. The only relief we could hope for was an occasional breeze.

“I’m gonna give you a ticket. I’m going to arrest you,” I said to Megan and her two girlfriends, who were walking up to us, talking among themselves. Then I

pretended to write out a traffic ticket from my imaginary pad, and handed it to her.

“Chase after Daisy!” Ron said as the girls laughed. Daisy was the name of one of the characters from the show, and Megan was pretty, just like her. “Arrest Daisy,” Ron said, and the girls all giggled at me.

“All right, Cletus. I’m in hot pursuit. Arrest them Duke boys!” I said, and I started running around my friends. I did not want them to keep suggesting that I chase after a girl! What a terrifying thought.

I continued to act like Rosco all through the sixth grade, imitating the character’s unique characteristics and giving my classmates imaginary tickets. Sometimes, I would pretend to be driving a police car and make police siren sounds. A boy brought a CB radio receiver to school one day and let me borrow it. I walked around school, talking into the receiver with the cord wrapped around my belt loop. My classmates could only smile.

“Wew, wew, wew, wew, wew!” I screeched the sounds of a police car siren. “I’m in hot pursuit, you

dipstick! I've got a quiver in my liver. Gew, gew, gew," I said into the receiver, just like Rosco.

Dave was most likely to go along with my antics. Once, he acted like Boss Hogg, the town mayor and Rosco's boss.

"I'm your boss!" Dave said, patting his chest, "Arrest Daisy, Rosco!" He laughed.

"Wew, wew, wew! I'm Rosco P. Coltrane." I sped my squad car past him.

"I'm your deputy," Steve exclaimed, pointing at his chest and then folding his arms with a big grin that made me laugh.

"All right, Enos," I replied. Enos was another deputy. "Gew, gew, gew!" "Gew, gew, gew!"

Although it has been over thirty years, I remember feeling even back then that there was something inside my mind that I didn't quite fit in. But I didn't think that being different from everyone else meant that I should ask for help.

Chapter 6

Puberty

During puberty, I began to really like girls. I wanted a girlfriend very much. Already, I knew that I wanted to have a large family, like I'd had growing up, and that I wanted to wait until marriage to have sex. Unfortunately, there was something wrong with me. I literally did not know how to have a girlfriend because I was experiencing prodromal schizophrenia. Not knowing how frustrated me as a teenager. I tried and tried to get a girlfriend, and even asked my buddies to help me.

I didn't put much thought into wondering whether I might be mentally ill. I had no idea what prodromal schizophrenia and paranoid schizophrenia were. Maybe if there had been more awareness about schizophrenia and other mental disorders in school, I would have figured it out. But instead, my illness continued and I had no idea.

I asked Steve if he could help me get Dorothy as my girlfriend at junior high. Steve was dating Dorothy's friend.

"Why don't you chase after Dorothy," Steve said.

"Okay."

I knew nothing about her and had never spoken to her, but I really wanted to have a girlfriend. I wasn't sure if I should date her, but was dying to be in love.

He wrote a note that asked Dorothy if she'd be my girlfriend, and I signed it. Together, Steve and I gave the letter to Dorothy while she was confabbing with her friends during lunch at school.

She said yes, just loud enough for us to hear as Steve and I stood nearby. Steve cheered and Steve and I walked away.

Because I didn't know how to have a girlfriend, however, I never talked or even sat next to her. Plus, I was still shy. I wanted very much to sit next to her during lunch to get to know her better. I continually put off talking with her. Dorothy never attempted to talk

with me. She broke up with me over the phone, a while later. That was the most we ever talked. Steve and other friends had teased me about kissing Dorothy, however I was confused and didn't know what to say to a girlfriend, because of how ill I was.

"Kiss Dorothy. Kiss her," Steve tried his best to convince me, "Kiss your first love."

"I will," I promised, hoping I'd figure out how to get to know her better soon, hopefully. I just couldn't figure it out, so I continued to put off talking to her.

My freshman year in high school was when I really fell in love, however. Sandie was pretty and had a good personality. I hung around Sandie and several other of our friends. My friends even helped me try to date her. Early on, a friend of mine suggested to Sandie that she and I would be a good couple. I looked up when he said that, and Sandie gave me a mean face. Looking back, I think there were three possible reasons for that face. The first was that she liked me, but wouldn't admit to it. The second was that she didn't like me and didn't want

to be associated with me. The third was that she wasn't certain how she felt about me. She didn't know much about me, after all. She only did what any young girl might do if a guy was showing interest in dating her.

Of course, at the time, the second reason seemed most likely.

I was not able to figure out how a person might react to situations such as that, so I assumed that I was not attractive enough or good enough for Sandie, which hurt me and especially hurt my self-esteem. At first, I couldn't believe that she didn't love me. I was heartbroken, but eventually I got over it. She was a nice girl to be friends with. And, because I was ill, reasons one and three never entered my mind.

I assumed that I did not know how to have a girlfriend because I was shy and such a big nerd. My friends reinforced these ideas. They even tried to help me fit in. Steve suggested that I part my hair in the middle instead of off to the side, which I went along with. Keith and I looked through "cool" clothes in a small

department store in a mall, instead of the nerdy ones I usually wore.

One friend mentioned that I should find a girlfriend who was not so pretty. I was too submissive, and so I didn't say anything to that. I shouldn't have hung around someone who would say that kind of thing. It's possible that I didn't stand up for myself enough as a result of being mentally ill, because I didn't know whether or not I should speak up, or what I should say.

My sophomore year in high school, getting good grades became very important to me. At some point during that year, I began to sit in the library doing homework or studying during lunch. I earned A's in English and B's in Algebra I, and did well in my other classes, too. My freshman year, I had not done well. Now, I was thinking, "I can do this! I can go to college!" I got so much satisfaction from being dedicated to my studies. I would daydream about how dedicated I'd be until I reached my upper division business courses in college, at which time I'd start looking for a girlfriend. I

planned to wait until then, because I wanted to find a mate who would help me grow my father's small resin reproduction casting and mold-making business into a full-time endeavor.

Chapter 7

Dad's Part-Time Business

Dad became interested in resin casting using silicone molds. My father and I ran this business in our kitchen and at times, my brothers and Mom helped. One project was a full-scale model of an experiment that was going to take place on the space shuttle. I helped Dad sand and putty the sheet Plexiglas, and helped with the gluing and spray painting, too. We also cast reproductions of parts for a full-scale mockup of the interior of a passenger airplane being constructed by a firm in town. The final project was received very highly by the business executives who saw it.

Dad and I met Jerry, a nice man in town who designed custom scale model cars. Dad offered to make resin reproductions of his models, and Jerry agreed. Usually, Dad made the molds with thick, liquid silicone, which hardened but remained flexible enough when

cured to allow a casting to be removed. Often, Dad or I would cast the molds using a two-part liquid resin that hardened within twenty-four hours. I enjoyed helping with the business, as it was a lot of fun. I just loved the idea of making money while doing something that I actually looked forward to doing. I believed that building my father's business would be an ideal career for me.

Chapter 8

Rude to My Friend's Dad

My friend Keith is a very nice person and a loyal friend. Keith and I had fun swimming in his pool over the summer with his younger sister and other friends. We also did yard work together at a neighbor's house. Keith was a true comedian at times, and he could make anyone laugh. He never put me down, unless he was telling a joke. The rest of the time, he was very considerate of me. He was fun to be around, even though he could be mischievous at times. Keith was the epitome of what a best friend should be. If he would have known I was experiencing prodromal paranoid schizophrenia, he would have told my parents so I could get help.

One day when I was in junior high, I was at Keith's house talking to his father. He invited me inside and said that Keith would be home soon. We were together in

their living room, and then his father left the room. When Keith's father wasn't there with me, I left and rode my bicycle home without saying a word—I didn't know if I should say something to Keith's father and, if I was supposed to, I wasn't sure what I would say. At the time, I didn't even realize that was rude. The next time I was at their house, Keith's father explained to me nicely that he'd been worried about where I had gone. He said that I should tell him if I was going to leave their house. I should have been considerate of my friend's father. I didn't always know how to act or what to do in certain situations because of my illness.

It wasn't obvious to me that I was not well, however. It wasn't obvious to my friend's father that there was something very wrong with me, either.

"The other day, you left without telling me," Keith's father explained. "I was concerned about you. I went looking for you. Next time, please let me know if you are leaving."

“All right,” I replied. I wondered why I hadn’t told him.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were going to leave?” he asked.

“I guess ... I’m shy,” I replied. If he knew that it hadn’t even occurred to me to say something, what would he think of me?

This was one of those moments when I thought there was something unusual about me. I still didn’t fit in.

“Richard,” Keith said under his breath, and then he cracked up, shaking his head.

Chapter 9

Pet Roaches

My chest chimed as I leaned over and reached into my backpack, pulling out a glass peanut butter jar. As I set it on my desk, Steve—who was sitting next to me—laughed.

“I caught them from the sewer,” I explained, “Gene helped.”

Three roaches scurried about among strips of cardboard and pieces of bread within the jar.

“Keep those away.” Jennifer, whose desk was just past Steve’s, cringed. At the sound of her voice, Mr. Peckney looked over, and his eyes found the jar.

“Don’t let your roaches out,” he said with a smile, and then chuckled.

“I won’t,” I promised. Mr. Peckney’s desk was right next to mine, so I held up the jar and asked, “Don’t you want to see them?”

“Oh, no.” He smiled. “Some parents give their child a kitten or a puppy, but Richard prefers a roach.” He laughed at his own joke, and then walked to the front of the class.

“Gene and I caught the roaches by scooping them into the jar with a piece of cardboard. We removed a sewer cap on a street in our neighborhood,” I explained to Steve. “The roaches were right there on the side of the manhole.”

The bell rang. As Mr. Peckney began taking roll call, Jason got up from his seat, snagged the jar, and took it with him to his desk at the back of the room. I watched him all the way, hoping he would not accidentally break the jar.

“Give him back his roaches,” Mr. Peckney commanded. Jason returned the jar and I smirked, feeling my insides twinge with joy.

Chapter 10

Me for President!

In my business class in high school, I had to do an oral report. Each student had to describe a possible career choice. I chose being President of the United States. I believe that I chose being president because a vibe told me to; at the time, I thought it was intuition telling me.

That afternoon, after school, I sat next to my good friend Matt on the bus.

“I did an oral report in general business class today,” I explained. “I think it went well.”

“What was it about?” Matt glanced up from the book he had been reading on his lap.

“I did mine on being president. The project had to do with a possible career that we’d like to have. I’m going to become president someday,” I explained.

“Are you going to start a revolution and turn the country into a dictatorship, or try to get elected?” he asked, and his seriousness gave me a tingling, fun feeling inside. “I don’t know if the CIA will put up with you overthrowing the government.”

“Oh, I want to be elected, but I won’t turn the country into a dictatorship.”

“What are you going to do before you become President?” he asked. “What will you do to help get there?”

“I am going to turn my father’s business into a full-time career, with employees,” I explained. “And then, maybe I’ll run for Governor, and then President,” I said.

“I’ll vote for you,” he said. “I think you’d make a good president.”

“Thank you,” I replied as Matt went back to his book.

For a moment, I glanced down at the page he was reading. Then I looked out the window, calculating how

many years I'd have to wait until I met the age requirement for being president.

Twenty years.

It seemed a lifetime away.

Chapter 11

The Letter

In my junior year English class, I had to write a letter to the wife character in a story we had read, whose husband had committed suicide. The teacher said mine was “cold,” and I was confused. Later, I had my father read it, and he also disapproved. I was even more confused. I was not capable of interacting with people normally.

Mrs. Getner called each student to the podium to get his or her assignment. When, she called my name, I got out of my seat and walked to her. As she handed me the letter, she said, “Yours was very cold.”

I took the paper, looking at the C grade, feeling embarrassed in front of the class. My eyebrows furrowed as I walked back to my seat. What made mine cold? What should I have done differently?

At home, I decided to have my parents read it.

Dad laughed. "It's cold, like the teacher said."

Mom had no comment.

I grabbed the letter and went to my room to put it away.

I was still confused. I couldn't figure out why what I wrote was cold. Frustrated, I put the letter away and instead of figuring out what I had done wrong, I just forgot about it.

Chapter 12

College

When I attended Pima Community College, I lived with my parents and siblings. I was a general business major. Being a college student was very exciting for me. College life wasn't like high school—most people were in college because they wanted to be there. I studied hard, wanting to excel. Everything revolved around my studies and my father's part-time business. Now, I was an adult.

Early in college, in fact, I designed several of my own scale models, cast reproductions of them, and sold the reproductions via mail-order. One model was of a 1/43 scale 1959 Cadillac sedan. For that model, I had used an existing model made by another manufacturer as a base. Using modeling tools, I converted the two-door coupe to a four-door. I even made a rear window from scratch and cast reproductions in clear resin. I took great pride in designing, casting, painting, and

assembling the models. I made enough money to pay for most of my college tuition early on, although I didn't make nearly enough to cover room and board.

Two of my built scale models were featured on the cover of *Model Car Journal*, which was a well-known magazine in the model business at the time. These models and others received excellent reviews in the magazine.

I also designed and reproduced a scale model airplane stand with the jet's Israeli name on a base that held the model (which was made by another company) upright in a flight position. However, I sold very few of the stands, even though they were featured in a scale model airplane magazine.

Chapter 13

Anne

While I was sitting in the cafeteria one day my freshman year, a strange girl came by, looking happy to see me.

“How have you been?” Anne asked as she sat next to me in the school cafeteria. “Remember me? I’m Anne.” She was very pretty and had short, curly brown hair.

“No,” I stuttered. A person who wasn’t mentally ill might reply, “Oh, hi. Sorry, I don’t remember you.” But all I said was, “No.”

“We knew each other in fourth grade. We’d play on the monkey bars shaped like a car, remember?” she added.

“No,” I replied again.

“On the car, you’d act like you were stuck in a toilet.”

“No ... oh, yeah, I remember,” I replied feeling my chest tingle for a second. It made me happy to remember playing and goofing around with Anne.

“Do you date often?” she asked, showing a nice smile. For a moment, it felt like she had let the morning sunlight into a dark room.

“Oh, no. Not right now,” I said. I could tell that she felt insulted, but she kept a straight face.

“I’ll see you around,” she said, and left.

I was confused, and I didn’t understand why I felt confused about the conversation. I had handled the situation poorly because I just didn’t know what to say. I still regret that. If we had gone out, Anne might have become my girlfriend. If I had gone out on a date with her, perhaps I would have figured out that I was mentally ill. Then again, perhaps going on a date would have been a disaster for me. I wouldn’t have done anything right, and I would have been embarrassed. The whole time, I wouldn’t have had any idea of what to say or do.

I held onto my plan to wait until my upper division business classes to find a girlfriend. After two years at Pima Community College, I transferred to the University of Arizona for my upper division courses. I was still ill, but as time went by, it wasn't as obvious to me that I didn't fit in.

One day, I saw myself in the bathroom mirror when I stepped out of the shower and saw blood on my face. I thought I had been shot in the mouth. I immediately felt very weak and I struggled to walk to my bedroom, hoping that whatever was happening to me would soon pass. I almost collapsed in the hallway, because of how ill I felt. I lay on my bed face down, waiting for the sickening sensation to pass. Eventually, it did. I stood and dressed.

The next time I saw my mom, I told her about it. I don't remember what she said, but we decided not to do anything about it. Looking back, I believe that seeing that false reflection in the mirror was my first psychotic experience.

My first semester at the university was stressful because I had some trouble with one class in particular, and I wanted to earn good grades. Actually, I had been putting myself under a lot of stress with my studies for years. Still, I enjoyed the university and was pleased to be in the prime of my life. After that first semester, I was ready to begin taking upper division business courses at the university. I was on the path to success, and nothing could stand in my way.

But something dreadful was about to happen—something that would drastically alter the course of my future. It is common for people who get schizophrenia to experience stress before becoming psychotic. Researchers have determined that there is a genetic component to schizophrenia, but a stressful event in a person's life can trigger the worst symptoms of the illness.

Chapter 14

Full-Blown Paranoid Schizophrenia

In late December 1991, I became extremely mentally ill. I was almost twenty-one. I remember sitting at a folding table in my parents' house, building a scale model hearse replete with a scale casket, when I began to hallucinate. It was late, and my parents and siblings had gone to bed. In my mind's eye, I saw images of people from my past, and saw them explaining things to me. These images were crystal clear. The people told me that I was just experiencing a dream—that it was just my imagination. The dream lasted about three months.

I thought that what was happening in the dream had actually occurred in my past. If I didn't remember the things that the people in the dream told me, I "realized" that, back then, I had heard and seen things that weren't true. I convinced myself that I had lived in a world of my own, and I was only just now beginning to

see what had really happened in my past. When I had the dream, my pupils would dilate and my subconscious used my imagination to make me see something else.

I communicated with the people in the dream by nodding or shaking my head to yes or no questions. I also communicated by moving my hands and pointing at things. I invented a type of code using my hands. One of the signals was that I'd move my right hand behind the back of my head to communicate that something had been wiped from my mind. As I watched the dream and communicated, I remembered certain times when I had used that signal in the past, which confirmed to me that the dream was true.

One of the first things that the people in the dream explained to me was that my mind was giving me this dream to transform me and fix what was wrong with me. The problem with me, they explained, was that I was not a narcissist who lived by social Darwinism. They said that if I didn't appreciate the dream or if it didn't work, then I should immediately commit suicide.

In the dream, I saw me saying my thoughts all during elementary school, junior high, high school, and in college. I saw me making racist and anti-Semitic comments. I saw me saying that people were ugly, and a host of other inappropriate things. I realized that the people in my past thought I was racist, anti-Semitic, and cruel.

According to the hallucination and delusion, I had heard and seen things differently from how they had truly happened because my mind had evolved and was protecting itself. Now that I was having the dream, I had access to reality. Furthermore, because my mind had evolved, it had been able to rewrite the past in other peoples' minds, as well. Some people would remember me one way, and others in another.

I was told in the dream that my subconscious had created a war in the Middle East (Desert Storm), that I had been wanted by the mafia, and that I was the most fascinating person in recorded history. Fortunately, being so fascinating didn't prevent me from falling

asleep. When I woke up the next morning, the dream continued.

In the dream, I “realized” that I was “as sensitive as a girl.” I was told in the dream that I had not done what “intuition” told me to do in sixth grade. If I had figured out what was wrong with me back then, then I’d have realized my sensitivity. I would have been a well-rounded student as a teenager, and possibly been student body president. I might have been popular, would have been able to draw pretty pictures by looking upward at my eyebrows, and wouldn’t have had to put up with so much teasing and harassment in school.

As the dream continued, I lost my drive to make scale models. I was lethargic and afraid to do anything, because of what the people had told me in the dream. I was convinced that my mind had evolved and it wouldn’t allow me to live fully, because then people would kill me and the other people like me. I thought that there was a person in prison whose subconscious was a rapist and, if he were famous, people would kill us

both. This man, because his mind controlled the world, had a miserable life, and was often raped and tortured in myriad ways.

According to the dream, everyone in my past remembered me differently. Some people remembered me being a mafia boss or thought that my father was a boss and that my family was a crime family. They remembered me having a bodyguard at school because of a mafia war. They remembered my bodyguard telling them not to ever mess with me—some remembered the bodyguard pointing a gun at them while he said it.

Still others remembered me being extremely eccentric and dressing in costume as a Polish Jew. I would wear a yamaka that would fly off my head and in front of my eyes to shield from me certain things people would say. Some remembered that I would wear a costume with a cape, and under it a shirt with a silhouette of Poland and a Star of David upon it. I would tell people that I protected Polish Jews. My family

remembered me being a well-rounded, outgoing student.

Regardless of how people remembered me, they wouldn't want to harm me. Most people wouldn't want to ever see me again, except for a few who would be curious at our twenty-year class reunion. Each person remembered me a certain way so that he or she wouldn't be surprised by anything I did in life. According to the dream, that was why my subconscious had rewritten my past.

At about that time, I "realized" that I was as sensitive as a girl, as I was under the impression that most men were insensitive and most women were sensitive. I was told by the people in the dream that I was a freak of nature, and that the reason I did not know how to have a girlfriend in junior high, high school, and college was because I had not realized my sensitivity.

In the dream, all this made perfect sense. I had no doubt that what I saw in the dream had really happened.

Even before I had the dream, I had “realized” certain things, and one of those was that my father had yelled at me too much when I was three or four years old. In reality, Dad had at times raised his voice and yelled at my brothers and me when we were children, when we misbehaved. He was never abusive—he was just disciplining us. Although my father was strict with my siblings and me, he has been a dad to be proud of.

The people in the dream, including my father, explained to me that my father had yelled at me too much, and that I had threatened to kill myself and told my father that he should give me away. I had told my father that I no longer liked him and that Grandpa was better than him. I took it to heart that my grandfather should be my role model instead of my father. Doing that made my mind evolve, and that was when I became as sensitive as a girl. When I did this, according to the people in the dream, something inside my mind told me not to, but it was too late. Over a relatively short time,

bumps grew on my head and, through them, my subconscious began to control the world.

The people in the dream explained to me that I had been a victim of the “Indian Love Secret,” which had something to do with how much a male looked up to his grandfather or another elderly man, and that this made males sensitive. According to them, a number of Native American males were sensitive in this way, and that was what made them superior lovers. They told me that I was as sensitive as a girl, and an even better lover, and that Native Americans had learned the secret from people like me.

According to the dream, my subconscious controlled the world because it could give other people a feeling that they should do or say something (or not to do or say something). Humans and animals’ minds were connected over some type of medium that allowed my mind to give other people and animals this sense of “intuition,” the intensity of which could vary. According

to the people in the dream, this difference in my mind was scientific proof of evolution.

In the dream, I was told that I had wanted to grow up to become a brain surgeon in the sixth grade. The delusion was created when I drew a picture of a man I saw when I looked up at my eyebrows. When I looked upward, I didn't see my eyebrows, but rather saw the image of a man on a pitch-black background. The man was in the shape of a gingerbread man and made up of lines that were mostly red.

In the dream, I believed that the man could help me become a special and rare type of brain surgeon who would draw the human brain inside of his head and would be able to erase or move parts of that brain as he operated.

I believed that I was teased by my classmates because I told them about wanting to become a brain surgeon. I believed that my classmates in the sixth grade had teased me because I was "too nice." I was "too nice" because I was as sensitive as a girl and not aware of it.

That was why I wanted to have a career that helped people. People in the dream said that most people weren't like that. Most people who wanted a medical career were just in it for themselves, and not to help others.

In the dream, I believed that when I asked the girls if they wanted me to become a brain surgeon, they teased me. Because I was too sensitive and didn't realize it, my feelings were hurt extremely badly. When I was teased, I would think about killing myself. In the dream, I believed that I decided to "turn off" the man because the girls made fun of me.

However, the dream convinced me that, before I turned off the man, I had asked one of the girls if she wanted a rapist, and she replied, "Yes." I replied that I would not hurt her. I was worried that my subconscious could be a rapist, since I was delusional and hallucinating. In the dream, I believed that I quickly suppressed the memory of wanting to become a brain

surgeon after I turned off the man. The memory had left my conscious mind and I was no longer aware of it.

However, after turning off the man, my feelings had been hurt so badly because turning off the man meant that I could never become a brain surgeon. Turning off the man was like killing a part of myself.

It was explained to me that if I had realized my sensitivity in elementary school or very soon after, I would have been able to draw pretty pictures inside my head. When I'd look up at my eyebrows, on a pitch-black screen, I'd be able to draw different colored straight lines by concentrating on the color and path. Some people like me who had realized their sensitivity at a young age were able to draw stock market tables that tracked and recorded the values of stocks.

In the dream, I saw people at school fighting with my subconscious. They did damage to my brain by moving their hands into me and fighting with my subconscious until I wouldn't exist. Then my subconscious would move my hands to ward them off.

One reason I didn't draw pretty pictures was because people had been doing damage to my brain. My brain had recorded over these instances, but they had still happened. I was irate at the realization that people had hurt me on purpose in order to destroy part of my brain. Now, I would never draw pretty pictures and there was nothing I could do about it! Sometimes, I wanted to hurt the people who had taken that from me, but I never actually planned to do anything. I am very grateful that I never harmed an innocent person because of this delusion.

Since I didn't realize my sensitivity in elementary school, however, I'd had to learn the hard way to only think about myself. People were mean to me at school and I had to put up with a lot of grief.

People with the mafia went around showing my classmates and other people all around the world videos of me doing personal things. At school, the mafia carried around portable TV-VHS tape player combo units in order to show people video of me. They told people to

watch, and not to look away. They put people under hypnosis to make sure they watched me in the video.

The mafia and other people (including the CIA) took my civil rights away, which is why I would not be able to find someone to kill me if my subconscious was a rapist and I went to prison. Most people did not care about my civil rights and were only interested in gaining the benefits of the mafia taking over the world. I was told that I, my family, all the people in the world who were like me, and their families, would have to wear a patch at all times. The patch was to show people that everything I had in life was because my mind had evolved.

If my subconscious had been a rapist, the mafia would torture me for the rest of my life in prison. After raping me, they would put me in a replica Confederate uniform and saw off my leg, as had been done during the Civil War, with no anesthesia.

They thought I was unemployable, and that I could not have any material possessions. My

subconscious was the only thing that would allow me to have possessions. People were going to throw my family out of our house and we'd have to stand on a street corner and beg for food.

I was told in the dream that Jesus and other prophets and religious figures had been like me, and were people who had convinced themselves to never figure out what was wrong with them. Also, I was told that Hitler and certain other dictators in history were like me. Hitler and the others were megalomaniacs because their minds had evolved.

At school, my classmates and others were extremely jealous because I was a superior lover and great at sex.

I "realized" that, when people would talk with me during high school, it was obvious to them that I didn't know what was going on. People agreed that I must have no idea that I was wanted by the mafia, CIA, etc.

People told me in the dream to keep a low profile, because many people wanted me to move and change my name.

People at school blamed their problems on me, including their bad grades, laziness, and other bad things that had happened to them. Some people thought I wanted bad things to happen to them, and that my subconscious was making them happen.

While I saw the dream, people told me about the person in prison whose subconscious was a rapist. He was incarcerated at the prison in Florence, Arizona, which was not too far from Tucson, where I lived. He had been featured in a television documentary titled, *Rapists and the Excuses They Use*. He was innocent, but was in prison. The CIA knew he had been incarcerated in violation of his civil rights. No one would kill him, even though he wanted to die.

“Why are you in prison?” a guard asked the rapist as the guard and two other guards entered his cell. “What could you have done to be in prison?”

“My subconscious is a rapist. I’m as sensitive as a girl. I didn’t figure out what was wrong with myself. My subconscious became a rapist. I want you to kill me. Would you, please?” the rapist said, with tears running down his cheeks.

“Do you believe that people feel sorry for you? Huh?” the guard asked.

“Yes. It’s my subconscious—it isn’t really me that did it,” the rapist pleaded. “Please kill me.”

“Well, no, I don’t think I will. Why did you decide to become a rapist?”

“It wasn’t me—it was my subconscious. You see, I would have been a brain surgeon. I used to draw a picture of a man inside my head, which I could see by looking upward to where my eyebrows are. The man was on a black screen. I would have been able to draw the human brain and use what I drew when I was operating on a patient,” the rapist explained, still crying.

“But why are you a rapist?” the guard asked, scratching the side of his head. “Please explain why you made that decision.”

“The girls in elementary school teased me and spat on me when I told them about becoming a brain surgeon. I was as sensitive as a girl, and so I was too nice and never stood up for myself. The girls told me to turn off the man behind my eyes. My feelings were hurt, and I asked one of the girls if she wanted a rapist. She said yes, and,” the rapist broke down crying, “I said that I would hurt her. Then, in high school, my subconscious raped a girl who looked like the girl who had teased me when I was a kid.”

“You are as sensitive as a girl?” the guard asked, puzzled. “What does that mean?”

“It has to do with the Indian Love Secret, which makes people sensitive,” the rapist explained.

The guard sniggered. “Oh yeah? What is the Indian Love Secret?”

The rapist heard and felt his mouth say, “When a boy looks up to his grandfather very much, it makes him sensitive.”

The guards, however, saw and heard nothing. Then, the rapist’s subconscious possessed him.

“It’s a secret. Shhhush!” the rapist’s subconscious said, putting his finger over his mouth. Then, the man’s eyes flickered and he was back in control of the moment.

“Tell me the secret,” the guard insisted.

“I just told you, but my mouth won’t say it. My subconscious won’t let me tell you.”

“Oh, give me a break,” the guard said, crossing his arms.

The man’s subconscious possessed him again. “I’m a rapist,” it said. “I did it because of social Darwinism. A rapist should be raped, you know. Rape me, lard ass and your lard ass friends!” The rapist laughed loudly. Then, the man blinked his eyes back open again, just in time to

see the guard's fist crashing toward his nose. The man fell to the floor, his nose gushing blood.

"Please don't hurt me!" the rapist begged, but the guards kicked him until he could do no more than sob. Then they raped him, there on the floor.

"Awwww, you're a rapist because your feelings were hurt because of a girl spitting on you? That's not good enough! A rapist should be raped!" the guard sneered before he and the other guards left.

The rapist lay on the floor in a fetal position, crying.

But at least it was over, for now.

Chapter 15

Telling Dad about the Mafia

One night, sometime after the dream started, the dream stopped for a few days. I was confused and asked my father about the mafia. We sat across from each other in the family room. The lights were off and the television lit the room.

“The-the ... why is the mafia after me? What did I do, Dad?” I asked out of the blue. I was not expecting an answer, but it occurred to me that I might ask. I had seen images of my father telling me about being wanted by the mafia in the dream.

“You’re not playing with a full deck,” he said, uncrossing his feet.

“Did you yell too much at me? When I was a kid?” I asked, believing he had abused me.

“Maybe I did at times. I’m sorry for anything I’ve done to you or your brothers and Suzanne. Mom and I

care about you guys very much,” he said, and his face showed that he was concerned about me.

I was quiet, wondering if he would say anything that would help me.

“Mom wanted a girl, and I may have taken it out on you,” he said. “She would complain about it, and I might have yelled at you guys too much. I’m sorry if I did.”

“Who was grandpa to me, as a child?” I asked, still confused, “Was he a good person?”

“Your grandfather—your mom’s father—went senile in his early fifties. He had a strange relationship with your grandmother. He had affairs the entire time he was married, even up to when he died,” my dad explained.

Right then, my life changed. Grandpa wasn’t the great person I had believed him to be! I was dumbfounded and hurt for a second. Grandma hadn’t been happily married to a wonderful man, as I’d

thought. It seemed like my whole childhood had been a lie.

In fact, I was being tricked by my own mind.

“I’m going to go to bed,” I said.

Everything that I heard my father say confirmed what I had been told in the dream. When I saw my father say most of these things, his body had a white tint to it. Today, I know that means I was hallucinating. At the time, I believed his body had a white tint because the television screen was shining on him.

The next day, my mother brought me to my primary doctor, who referred me to a psychiatrist.

At Palo Verde Hospital, I was interviewed by a nice woman who listened and took notes about what I had explained to her. For the most part, I frantically explained about how everyone hated me and that I had no friends. I didn’t give her an explanation as to why people didn’t like me, because at that time I didn’t know. Or perhaps I just didn’t want to say. I had seen

people in the dream give me mean looks and heard them threaten me.

Afterward, I saw Dr. Jones, and he listened and took notes. I explained a lot, but I did not understand that what I had explained away as the “evolution of my mind” was the same thing that he called paranoid schizophrenia. I had no understanding of why I was really there. I was experiencing anosognosia, which is a condition wherein a patient is unaware of his affliction.

Dr. Jones asked me why I thought the mafia was after me, and I didn't give a reason. He proceeded to ask my parents if they believed there was any reason why I'd be wanted by the mafia, and they said no. He also looked into my eyes with a small flashlight and asked if I used any drugs, especially recently, and of course I told the truth and said no. He asked my parents if I had been to any parties recently, and my father replied that I hadn't. That was the truth—I had never gone to a party in college.

Dr. Jones asked me if I was worried about someone hurting me; I was honest and replied no.

Dr. Jones asked if I believed I was having a religious experience; I again told the truth and said no. In fact, I believed that, because my mind controlled the world, there could be no God or heaven. Religion had been made up to explain people like me, who had never figured out what was wrong with themselves and had gone crazy as a result. But I did not tell that to Dr. Jones.

Dr. Jones asked if I believed that people could read my mind, and I was truthful and said no. I believed that the people in my past could concentrate on me and hear me in the future, including hearing me in his office, but I didn't mention that. It didn't seem quite the same thing.

Dr. Jones asked if I believed I was mentally ill. I told the truth and said yes. I didn't truly understand that I had paranoid schizophrenia. Also, I had been told in the dream that males who are as sensitive as a girl are mentally ill. And, since I had also been told that I was

sensitive as a girl, I felt fairly confident that I was mentally ill as well.

Dr. Jones explained that he didn't want me to drop out of college. He prescribed Navane, an antipsychotic medication.

At other appointments with Dr. Jones, I continually put off explaining to him the whole of what I was experiencing. He was unaware of my state of mind, however he knew I was delusional because when I decided to drop out of college for the semester, he wrote a letter to the university that described my diagnosis, and the letter stated that I was delusional.

When Dr. Jones was my psychiatrist, my parents would notice me laughing and would see my lips moving, like I was talking to someone. I was communicating with the people in the dream, and some of what I saw was humorous.

I believed that there was a difference between a person being schizophrenic and being crazy. I thought that a person with schizophrenia could be cured by

medication. I did not think that a person who had schizophrenia was in danger of hurting someone because of their illness. I believed deep down not that I had schizophrenia, but that I had been crazy. I thought that being crazy was a state of mind for which there was no treatment, and that a crazy person does or says abnormal things because he is crazy. I thought that a crazy person couldn't be responsible for his actions unless he knew he was crazy and did nothing about it. I was under the belief that a "crazy" person should commit suicide, because he would be in danger of hurting himself or someone else. I was a firm believer in this myth, because I was told in the dream that a person who doesn't realize that he is as sensitive as a girl is crazy and that there is a chance that his subconscious could be a rapist without him even knowing it. I tried to recall if I ever knew I was "crazy," and I wasn't certain. My subconscious made me know I was crazy in certain situations, and then when I was going to ask for help, my subconscious would wipe the event from my mind.

When the dream began, I no longer enjoyed life as I had before. The good feeling in my chest went away. I felt my sensitivity in my chest and believed that I was sensitive like a girl.

It was explained to me that I had come to know better than to like life and that only crazy people enjoyed life. People told me in the dream that I should have asked or told someone that I enjoyed life; I should have been smart enough to realize that, because I liked life, there was something wrong with me.

I never told Dr. Jones about being depressed, because I had been told that people were not supposed to like life, and that only crazy people did. I believed that if I committed suicide, my family, friends, and psychiatrist would believe I had done so because I had paranoid schizophrenia, which I thought meant that my subconscious had screwed up and I didn't appreciate all that it had done.

Chapter 16

High School Biology in the Dream

“You’re ugly, you ugly hag!” I slouched at my desk and thought, glancing at Jennifer, who sat two chairs down from me.

What I didn’t know was that I had spoken this thought aloud, although I never heard or felt myself saying it.

She reached across the desk in between us and slapped me right across the face. “You’re not attractive!” she growled.

But when she slapped me, I didn’t exist as a person and my subconscious possessed me, so that I would not remember. As she spoke, my eyes dilated and I heard and saw something else.

I put my hand close to my cheek, wondering at the sting.

“Kill yourself before you go to prison,” Scott said, but I didn’t hear or see him say it. He sat at a lab station on my other side. “Figure out what’s wrong with yourself,” he said, and I heard and saw him say it. Scott was a good friend, like Keith.

I smirked for a second, assuming he was teasing me about being such a big nerd.

“Don’t get too close to him,” said John, a dark-haired mafia thug. He pointed his gun at Jennifer’s head. I didn’t see or hear that. When I did see John, I thought that he was just a security guard working for the school.

“Please, can I see the homework?” Scott asked me.

I handed Scott my answers to the lab.

“You are as sensitive as a girl,” he said, nodding, although I never heard that.

“Thank you,” I saw and heard him say.

The bell rang, and Mr. Smith walked in the door.

“If Richard gets friendly with a girl, let me know,” Mr. Smith said to the class. “If he gets too close to a girl

who's too pretty, stop him," he said, looking right at me. My subconscious protected me so that I did not hear that.

"Good morning, students. Does anyone have questions about the lab assignment?" I saw and heard him say.

Then, my subconscious possessed me and I didn't exist as a person again. My eyes dilated and my subconscious bragged, "I'm going to be a rapist, and Mr. Smith will teach the prisoners and guards his routine."

A routine for a person whose subconscious was a rapist, according to the dream, involved sexual humiliation. When I heard my subconscious say "routine" in the dream, I cringed, feeling a sickening feeling inside my stomach. I thought about committing suicide.

"Kill yourself!" the teacher and class shouted together.

My subconscious still possessed me, and I heard none of it. "Gi, gi, gi, gi, gi, gi, gi, gi, gi!" It moved my vocal

chords, laughing quickly with my mouth wide open. It sounded hideous.

“Just ignore it,” the teacher reminded the class. “Chances are he won’t go to prison.”

Then, I was back to me. I squinted against the migraine that pulsed in my brain. In the dream, I understood that every time my subconscious had possessed me, it had done damage to my brain.

“Please pass your homework to the person in front of you,” Mr. Smith said, which I heard and saw.

“You dumbass,” I thought, but didn’t hear myself say.

“Shut up!” Mr. Smith said as everyone passed their homework to the front row.

And that had been my life in high school, according to the dream.

Chapter 17

Anosognosia

When the dream ended, I remembered my past in terms of what I had learned in the dream. The dream was true and any other memory had been rewritten by my subconscious in order to protect me. Once I convinced myself that my remembered past was actually a dream, I would stop thinking about the dream. If I did not convince myself that the past was a dream, I would spend the rest of my life thinking about the people in the dream and what had happened when I was in the dream. Or so it seemed to me.

For over twelve and a half years, I did not manage to stop thinking about the dream. I was distracted by it as I carried on with my life. During that time, I wished I had never figured out what was wrong with me. I wished so much that I could have been a ruthless dictator who ruined peoples' lives. I wanted people to wish that I had

never been born, but it was not possible—I had realized my sensitivity, and that was the end of it.

After the dream, I knew my subconscious would never let anything seriously bad happen to me. I believed that I could have practically any girlfriend I wanted. I wanted to immediately end the world. I did not want life to continue, especially if it meant that people like me could go to prison. I didn't like recycling, and I was against protecting endangered species, as these did not seem to directly benefit me. I couldn't wait for the human race to wipe itself out. I very much hoped a huge meteorite would crash into the Earth. Everything was hopeless.

I never confessed these beliefs and thoughts to my family or psychiatrist. No one knew how I was feeling, except possibly my psychiatrist. I admitted to others that I had schizophrenia, because that was what my psychiatrist had told me, but I didn't really mean it. I still thought everything was happening because of my subconscious. Making my psychiatrist believe that I was

schizophrenic was part of how my evolved brain protected itself.

One year after I became noticeably ill to my parents, I became too old to remain on my dad's medical insurance. My parents helped me get on disability through the government, however. Unfortunately, I no longer saw Dr. Jones, and I was gaining weight. I felt depressed. It seemed to me that life wasn't that great.

I reenrolled at the university and attended for a few semesters before dropping out again. Going to college wasn't the same. I felt like all my enthusiasm had been burned out of me. I grew a goatee and a beard, because I hated my subconscious and had learned in the dream that subconsciences don't like beards. Sometimes, I looked into a mirror at my pupils and thought, "I hate you," to my subconscious.

After the dream, I cultivated an obsession-like interest in my own childhood, particularly between 1975 and 1980, which was the time my family lived in

Stormville. I had an obsession with the 1970s—the music, television shows, movies, events, cars, and the like. I had an abnormal interest in Stormville and what had occurred there during my childhood.

During the dream and after, I was also obsessed with Cadillacs. I would often read and look at the photographs in a Cadillac book my father had bought, and I was constantly thinking about what nice cars Cadillacs were. While taking a marketing class at the university, I had to come up with a simple business card design. I chose to make myself an employee at the Cadillac dealership. My business card included General Motors Cadillac advertising lingo. Dad saw this business card and was disturbed by it. He said that I was too obsessed with Cadillacs.

Once, I cut out a picture of a Cadillac from an advertisement letter we got in the mail. I told my father that I was going to keep it. Dad was concerned, because there was nothing very special about the small picture, and so I wound up throwing it away. Dad never told my

psychiatrists about my obsession with Cadillacs, however, because he didn't know it might be important. Today, I believe that this was an early indication that I was developing obsessive-compulsive disorder.

At this time, I suffered from lethargy and would lie on a sofa or in bed listening to music all day. When Dad came home, however, I had to get up. He said I wasn't allowed to lie down during the day. I would go to bed at seven and wake up late, because I liked sleeping and preferred not to be awake. When I was awake, I was depressed. Dad eventually told me that I couldn't go to bed so early.

I had planned to tell Dr. Jones about the things I had experienced, such as learning that I had wanted to be a brain surgeon when I was in elementary school, seeing the man, being as sensitive as a girl, my mind evolving, and all about the dream. I had kept putting it off, however. I'd assumed that if I told Dr. Jones what I was experiencing, he would contact "the experts," who would put me under hypnosis. If I had told him the truth,

maybe he could have explained to me that none of that was real. Maybe I would have truly understood that I had paranoid schizophrenia, and that my mind did not control the world.

However, I was no longer seeing Dr. Jones.

Soon after I went on disability, I began to see a series of other psychiatrists. I never explained what I was thinking about, however, and so they believed I was doing very well.

While I was at school and sometimes at home, I began to talk to myself. My lips would move a little, like I was saying something, but I did not know why they were moving or what I was supposed to be saying. Unfortunately, I never told my psychiatrist about this. My father might have mentioned it—I know that he noticed. I would also smile and laugh a little to myself, because I was thinking about what had occurred in the dream or imagining funny things about the dream.

About this time, I wrote and self-published a children's book called *Schizophrenia? Huh?* The entire

time I was writing and publishing the book, I had no idea that I had paranoid schizophrenia and was suffering from anosognosia. I wrote the book based on research I had done about schizophrenia. I had written *Schizophrenia? Huh?* because of a complaint I received about my first self-published children's book, which included language and wording about the mentally ill that many in the mental illness community find offensive and inappropriate, especially for children.

One evening after dinner, I stood in the kitchen, watching Dad as he rinsed the dishes and put them into the dishwasher.

"Dad," I spoke, and then hesitated. When he looked at me, I blurted, "I can get depressed at times." I felt uncomfortable talking about how I was feeling, but the feeling of depression had been going on for many years, and I had never told anyone until now. I thought that depression was something that men were probably expected to keep to themselves.

“In what way?” Dad asked, furrowing his eyebrows as he loaded a bowl on the top rack.

“I am depressed all the time. I just don’t feel my best,” I said.

“You should tell your doctor,” he suggested. “Maybe he can do something about it.”

“All right.”

“How long have you been this way?” he asked furrowing his eyebrows, concerned about me.

“Um, a long time,” I replied. I did not want to admit I had been depressed for almost ten years.

“We’ll see what the doctor says,” he said, and I felt better already. I hadn’t realized it before, but keeping my depression a secret had been weighing me down. And, now that I had explained it to Dad, it would be easier to talk about it with Dr. Rosario.

Dr. Rosario prescribed an anti-depressant, which I took for a while. My mood improved, but I still didn’t have the zest for life that I once had.

Because I was delusional, I believed that I could never come out with a unique product for my father's business. I never turned his business into a full-time endeavor. According to the dream, if I ever achieved too much success and there was another case of a person's mind rewriting the past, then people would know that my mind had evolved and would kill me and my family. If I had known I had paranoid schizophrenia, maybe I wouldn't have been afraid to put more time into my father's business. Maybe I'd be running the business full-time today.

Chapter 18

9/11

“Richard! Richard! Get out of bed. Richard! Richard! Go see the TV,” Mom cried, opening my bedroom door. It was the morning of September 11, 2001. I was thirty years old and weighed three hundred pounds. Mom went to her bedroom, while I wiped my tired eyes and yawned. *Should I go?* I debated whether I should bother getting out of bed. I dropped my feet to the floor from my upper bunk and shuffled into the family room, where I slouched on the sofa, still half asleep. Suzanne, my younger sister, sat on the love seat.

“Look,” Dad said, standing in the kitchen behind me. He was dressed and had already eaten breakfast. The car keys were jingling in his hand.

On the television, smoke poured out of one of the World Trade Center towers. A news reporter conjectured that an airliner had flown into the building.

“I think Eddie might work at the World Trade Center,” Mom said to Dad as she strode down the hallway. Her voice made a raspy sound as she spoke. Eddie was my uncle.

“Ro works at the Chrysler Building. At least she used to,” Mom said, her voice quivering.

Ro is my aunt and is married to Uncle Eddie. We had not seen them for many years.

“Don’t worry about it, Mom. Everything will be OK,” I said, believing that my mind protected the whole family, even Eddie. If he was hurt, it wouldn’t be too seriously. Still, I was wide awake now as I wondered whether my uncle had been in the building.

That’s it!

Wait a minute—this ain’t my fault. I’m not the one to blame!

In the dream, the people at school blamed me for all of their problems, including bad grades, laziness, and whatever bad things happened to them.

*I'm not the reason this happened. Not my fault!
Not my fault!*

Maybe this is happening again. Someone's mind is making bad things happen.

It didn't have to be my mind, after all. There were other people with minds that had evolved. Perhaps someone else's mind was responsible for this tragedy.

The CIA would have been here by now, if it was my fault.

If it was my fault, maybe they will kill me.

Another Vietnam. How 'bout that? I thought, for I believed that if the CIA killed me, there would follow a war that would be as devastating to America as the Vietnam War had been.

Not my fault! Not my fault! Not my fault!

I screamed this in my mind, believing that the people who had gone to high school with me could hear me, and that they were all wondering if my mind had done this.

My brain created Desert Storm, but not this.

Mom and Dad continued to get ready for work, and Suzanne and I watched the news.

What's best for me? What's in it for me? I wondered. In the dream, a lot of people had been mean to me, and I had learned that I had to always think about myself before others.

Don't worry about it. Not my fault. Not my fault.

As we watched, another airliner flew into the other World Trade Center tower. Everything was happening so fast!

“Holy mackerel, Rich!” Mom said, “Holy mackerel.”

“I think I know who's responsible for this and I think they've bitten off more than they can chew,” Dad said.

“I can't believe this is happening,” Suzanne said. She took a deep breath that sounded hollow in her throat.

What's in it for me? What's in it for me? my mind chanted, although I was trying not to pay attention.

It's not my fault. My brain didn't create that. Not my fault.

"This has got to be those lunatics in the Middle East," Dad said.

The news reported that an airliner had also crashed into the Pentagon, and the TV screen switched to show smoke pouring profusely out of the short, five-sided building.

"This has got to be those lunatics in the Middle East," Dad repeated. "This time, they bit off more than they can chew."

"Michael was working at the Pentagon," Mom said nervously, trotting down the hallway toward the front door.

"Mike lives near the Pentagon, doesn't he? He lives in Arlington. How close is that?" I asked.

"He'll be all right. Don't worry, honey," Dad said, giving Mom a big hug. Then he looked back up at the TV. "I had better leave. The barricades will be up." He put on

his wedding ring and grabbed his work bag and badge. He worked at Raytheon a defense contractor.

“Everything will be fine,” Dad said as he opened the kitchen door. “Don’t worry. I’ll call you later,” he told Mom. And then he left.

“I’m not going to be here anymore,” Mom said, hurrying to the door. She was going to be late for work at the furniture store.

“Don’t worry, Mom,” Suzanne said.

I’m going back to bed I decided.

Suzanne continued to watch, perching on the edge of the loveseat.

When we heard later that day that Uncle Eddie had survived the attack on the World Trade Center and that Mike didn’t work at the Pentagon, I was relieved but also troubled. This was more proof to me that my mind controlled the world, and had kept them safe.

Chapter 19

Dr. Nelson

Later on that year, I started to see Dr. Nelson. I continued to keep the secrets of my delusions to myself. Dr. Nelson wanted me to get blood work done to check my cholesterol, but I didn't take the test. I didn't believe it was possible for me to have a heart attack, because I was under the impression that a person whose mind had evolved would be safe from a heart attack. Dr. Nelson warned me that I had an increased risk of getting diabetes because of my weight and medication, but I didn't believe that my subconscious would allow me to have diabetes.

I continued on a low dose of my medication, thinking all the time about how I was going to stop seeing my psychiatrist and the experts would eventually put me under hypnosis. I also thought about finding a job.

It had been about twelve and a half years since I had started regularly seeing a psychiatrist. I was still hallucinating and under the grandiose delusion that my mind controlled the world. I wasn't feeling happy and still didn't enjoy life like I once had. Once, when Dr. Nelson went on vacation, I didn't take my medication as prescribed. When he came back, he asked me if I had been taking my medication, and I lied and said yes. Dr. Nelson was smart, though—he checked when had been the last time I had gotten a prescription from him and figured out that I hadn't gotten my prescription refilled at the time when I should have run out. He asked how long had it been since I stopped and why. I told him that I felt fine.

Dr. Nelson explained to my father, who usually went with me to my appointments, that he thought I might not have paranoid schizophrenia. He explained about a relative of his who experienced a psychotic episode, during which time he was a patient in a mental hospital. He had recovered from that and never had any

other issues since. Dr. Nelson said that I might have had a psychotic episode when I first became noticeably ill over twelve years ago, but that I seemed to be functioning fine without medication.

The three of us agreed that I probably didn't have schizophrenia. Dr. Nelson said I could try staying off the medication for a year and see him every few months. If I experienced no symptoms, then he would diagnose me as not having a mental illness. I would no longer have to see a psychiatrist.

I left that appointment relieved and happy. Soon, I would find a job, I thought.

Unfortunately, Dr. Nelson and I were terribly wrong.

One morning after taking a shower, I looked into the bathroom mirror and saw blood, as if I had shot myself in the mouth with a gun. I staggered to go lie down on my bed. I felt very weak. I could barely make it to my room. I lay in bed, face down, desperate for the episode to pass.

This might sound familiar to you, and it should. The same thing happened to me before I'd become noticeably psychotic and had the dream.

I finally felt better, and was very relieved to be so. I got dressed.

One afternoon soon after, I leaned against the house near the kitchen door, pressing the sole of my shoe back against the brick wall. The Arizona summer was hot, even in the shade under the awning.

My autistic brother, Kevin, was in the process of moving his things into an apartment, and he'd placed a drinking straw with a Disney movie character's head on top of it in the shelf of his headboard. In my mind's eye, I saw the character's face—like in a daydream, but much more vivid. Then the character's expression began to change. His eyebrows made a sharp V-shape and the muscles in his cheeks and forehead clenched until he appeared to become hideously evil. This was what a person's face would be like if that person's subconscious was a rapist, I realized. The image of the character's face

changed from its true self to the rapist's face, again and again.

I wondered why I was daydreaming about such a thing, and why it was more vivid than my usual daydreams. Feeling a little worried, afterward, I told Mom later that I thought that I might be having my mid-life crisis. She replied that I was too young for one.

I spent more time imagining things, such as how I'd get to meet the president and other world leaders after the experts put me under hypnosis. The experts, I surmised, would want me present when they did their presentation to the next president about how my subconscious controlled the world and had started a war.

Chapter 20

I Realized the Truth

I continued to have vivid thoughts. In my mind's eye, I could almost see Kuwaitis calmly telling me how they wished I had become a brain surgeon and had learned to draw pretty pictures in my mind.

A Kuwaiti woman shrieked, "Please forgive the people who did damage to your brain! I so much wish that you drew pretty pictures, because the Iraqis are going to torture me because of it, sorry." I felt the tingling in my chest grow sad.

Another Kuwaiti woman explained, with a quiver in her voice, "I'm sorry you don't draw pretty pictures. The Iraqis are going to saw my leg off without anesthesia because of it." I was revolted—my chest no longer felt any good. I tried to think of pleasant things.

I'm gonna become a millionaire online, I thought, and tried to ignore the vision of another Kuwaiti woman,

who said, “The Iraqis raped me because you aren’t a brain surgeon.”

I kept my mind active by thinking about becoming famous. *Megyn Kelly is going to announce that I am the most romantic man in the entire world*, I thought. I refused to think about the Kuwaitis being tortured, but I didn’t feel better inside.

One person was tortured for each time that someone had done damage to my brain by fighting with my subconscious, before I realized my sensitivity. They did damage to my brain by moving their hands into me and fighting with my subconscious until I wouldn’t exist. Then my subconscious would move my hands to ward them off. These people who had been tortured—some to death—had been told by the Iraqis that this was why they were being tortured.

The Iraqis tortured them because, if they concentrated, they could see “visions” that told them to. They thought the visions were from Allah, but they were in fact from my subconscious. A number of the Kuwaitis

had a limb sawed off. Some Kuwaiti children were blinded or made deaf. It was extremely disturbing. I believed that this had actually happened, and I was no longer so concerned about wishing I drew pretty pictures.

One day I sat at the kitchen counter, working on my writing. I kept getting distracted by thoughts about the dream.

That's when the dream became unstuck in my head.

Instead, I heard the voice.

"You're more sensitive than a girl," it explained, and my mouth dropped open.

It's my subconscious, I thought. I was simply astonished! My subconscious was finally speaking directly to me.

"When you realized it, the dream went away," it said, and this made complete sense to me.

Of course, I thought. *Once you realize that you're more sensitive than a girl, the dream goes away.*

“I’m going to expose you,” the voice said, “for everything you’ve ever done.”

I felt my stomach sink.

For what? I thought desperately. *Expose me for what!*

“The Mafia went around showing people videos of you all through high school, you know. I’m gonna expose, you.”

In my mind’s eye, I saw a cartoon character version of my subconscious holding a video camera. It looked like a small ghost.

I should have killed you, I thought.

It replied, “Sorry for how I treated you. You should have killed me. It was unfair to you.”

I realized that my subconscious still wished that I had committed suicide while I was having the dream.

I walked past my mother and lay down on the sofa in the living room. I took a deep breath and felt myself relax. Finally, my subconscious was apologizing for all that it had put me through.

“Life’s unfair,” it exclaimed.

I chanted: *Me, me, me, me, me* in my thoughts, trying not to hear it.

Now my chest tingled with good feelings. I felt as good as I’d felt before the dream came.

My mind told me many things at this time, and most of them I don’t recall. One thing that I remember clearly was that my mind was telling me to disappear—to simply walk out of my parents’ house and become a homeless person. It told me that there was a dead body somewhere in town that the police would find after I left, and my family would be convinced that the body was me and that I had died. They wouldn’t come looking for me, the voice insisted. It told me to go to New Mexico and live in an abandoned mobile home. There, I would go on the streets and beg people for money to buy things that I needed. I would always have to be truthful. If I had some money, then I wouldn’t lie and say that I had nothing.

One time in the shower, I put on cold water and ran my fingers under it. Then the voice said, "I will provide for you," and the water suddenly felt warm.

Once, while standing in my parents' house, I saw the room start to spin around me, but it quickly went back to normal.

At one point while I was lying in bed, I felt a sensation on my body as if someone was poking me. I also felt a sensation that a cockroach had landed on my body. I could feel its antenna whisking across my skin as the insect moved its head.

The voice told me to cheat my mother and father out of some rent money.

Because I didn't have my own car, I asked my father if I could drive his truck. Thank goodness, he said no! I might have caused an accident.

"I am going to rape," the voice threatened as I stood in my bedroom, listening to disco music. It was a warm late summer day in Arizona, and my parents and sister were in the family room, watching television.

I was aghast!

“I would kill you if that happened,” I thought to it.

“I’m going to be a rapist,” it said. “I will rape.”

My insides quivered with fear and anxiety.

I hurried to my parents’ bedroom and locked the door behind me, assuming that my subconscious wouldn’t be able to unlock the door if it possessed me.

“Kill yourself,” it said. “Do it. Before it’s too late.”

My heart raced and my breathing grew deeper. *I won’t*, I thought, sweating all over. The good tingling feeling inside my chest became more intense.

I won’t do it, I thought. Then, *I will do it*.

My stomach sank to the floor and my entire body felt limp and weak. There was a sickening feeling inside my stomach. My mind felt blank, for my entire being was focused on returning my stomach to calmness. I breathed deeply, trying to get more oxygen.

“Slit your wrists,” it said.

I suddenly felt completely elated. My chest tingled a thousand times as much as it had before. My insides

no longer felt weak. I was very strong. I felt more powerful than I had ever been in my entire life. I could do it. I could do anything! I had never felt this way. I wasn't the least bit scared of anything.

As I looked through the medicine cabinet for a razor, the voice continued to issue commands. "Kill yourself," it said again and again. "Slit your wrists, now," it demanded of me.

There was no razor blade in the cabinet, nor any in the drawers I rummaged through. Then, I gave up looking. There was nothing here for me to use to commit suicide. The mania quickly subsided, and the voice fell silent. I left my parents' bedroom quietly and sat in the family room as if nothing unusual was going on.

"Me, me, me, me, me, me," I thought to my subconscious, letting it know that what I cared about was me and my life, rather than what it wanted me to do. That was the only time in my life that I was

determined to commit suicide. I'm very grateful that I did not find a razor.

The voice eventually convinced me that my father had raped me when I was about two or three. I wondered why I didn't remember being raped. My mind said that I didn't remember because I was too young.

"Your father raped you," the voice said, jolting me.

He didn't, I thought back. *He yelled at me too much, abusing me*, I clarified.

"You were raped. You don't know it because it happened before you could remember," the voice explained. "He raped you."

Oh, I had no idea, I thought, and tears welled up in my mind. *I had no idea*. My stomach sank and my mouth dropped down so that I wondered if it would hit the floor. My chest felt dull as I cried.

Then, I noticed my left eyelid drooped as I looked into the mirror.

That's proof, I thought, that he abused me. Tears rolled down my cheeks.

The voice told me that other people weren't like me. It compared my family to spiders, saying that they had no feelings. It also convinced me that the reason I was more sensitive than a girl was because, after being raped, I wanted to be different from my father. I became sensitive and caring in order to be the opposite of my rapist.

I stopped showering regularly and would at times drink soda before bed and then not brush my teeth, because the voice told me to. I would go to bed at exactly ten o'clock and wake up refreshed and wide awake at about four.

I had one ink stamp made for two of my web addresses and one I didn't own (although I had e-mailed the owner asking if it was for sale). I was going to use the stamp to promote my web sites, including the web address I did not own yet. I would stamp things such as

the postage-paid product ordering cards that you find stuck in magazines. I mailed many of these.

Once I put a huge stack of stamped cards and credit card offer pamphlets rubber banded together into a post office box at a supermarket where my mother and I shopped regularly. Then, I left a box full of these cards in front of a house in our neighborhood, next to their mailbox. The box had a name and address label for my parent's house. The next day, someone dropped the box off at our front door. I got it before anyone else noticed.

However, the post office contacted my parents about the stamped labels and pamphlets I had mailed. My parents picked up the cards and my father took the stamp from me, disassembled it, and cut up the rubber part into very small pieces.

The voice would tell me on some evenings to walk to a nearby supermarket, convenience store, funeral home, supercenter, or fast-food restaurant. I would take our beagle, Cody, for long walks, during which I would

communicate with the voice. The voice kept gnawing at me to disappear. People wouldn't be convinced that the dead body was me for long—it was decomposing.

I'd had bookmarks printed promoting my writing a while back, before I began to hear the voice. The voice told me to give them out at stores and hand them out to people in our neighborhood. I also left bookmarks on the shelves and counters at bookstores and other stores. Once, I left a stack of these bookmarks on a counter at a convenience store. Later on, I was caught soliciting the bookmarks in a store, and the employees chased me around the store to stop me. At the entrance, I was stopped. An employee was talking to me, but I couldn't hear him. His body had a white tint to it.

I saw hallucinations during this time, as well. On a web site that wouldn't have anything to do with that kind of thing, I saw photographs of aborted fetuses.

I sat down at the computer desk and logged onto my writing web site.

Woah, I thought.

On the home page, there were pictures of aborted fetuses.

I squinted as I looked at their pupils, which were very dilated. They looked like my eyes, when my subconscious would possess me.

“This is what should have happened to me,” the voice said, and I agreed wholeheartedly. “I should have been aborted or stillborn,” it explained.

You should have been! I agreed, feeling my stomach fill with air, *for what you have put me through.*

I also saw things happening on television that, looking back, probably didn't happen.

At some point, I heard a famous actor's voice inside my mind in addition to the voice. I discussed with the actor's voice whether I should run for president someday.

At least once, the voice told me to walk to the convenience store and take advantage of a Jew by asking for money, even though I wasn't needy. I refused to do that.

I had taken a credit card application from a convenience store checkout stand, and the voice tried to convince me to commit credit card fraud and identity theft by filling in the application with phony information. I was scared about doing that, and so refused, thank goodness.

On an online web site designed to help people connect with people they went to school with, I lied and typed information into my profile about how I ran a business. The voice told me to lie.

During this time, I lied a lot to people, including my family. There was one time I lied to a nice employee at a supermarket. She asked if I forgot a twelve pack of soda, which she'd found on the bottom rack of a shopping cart in the vestibule. I lied and said that I had forgotten it, but in reality, it wasn't mine. I wish I could go back in time and do the right thing.

I did exactly what the voice said and went on a spending-spree at an online auction site. Fortunately, I didn't spend too much money.

One evening, I was just about to leave the bathroom when my father came to stand in the doorway. I thought I saw him winding up to hit me and I exploded.

“I can’t stand you!” I shouted as I moved toward him, wondering all the while why he would want to strike me. He moved backward into the kitchen. “I hate you! You raped me! You raped me!” I felt furious.

My mother and sister came into the kitchen, and both were shouting and crying. I felt confused, and didn’t know what to do. It was completely unlike me to raise my voice, especially at my father.

Dad hurried into the dining room and came back with my medication. My eyebrows furrowed as I watched him. Our beagle, Cody, barked and ran around my ankles.

“Please take your medication,” Dad pleaded calmly. He opened the bottle and placed a tablet on the counter.

“Tell him about how he raped you,” the voice ordered me.

“You raped me!” I shouted, pointing at him. Dad backed up to the sliding door.

“I did not. Please take your medication. Dr. Nelson wants you to. You can tell him about what’s troubling you,” Dad explained calmly.

Mom and Suzanne wiped their eyes, but the tears kept coming.

“Richard!” Mom sobbed.

Cody barked even more.

“Tell him he mutilated you. Do it now,” the voice said.

“You mutilated me!” I shouted at Dad.

“I did not. Take your medication and tomorrow we’ll see the doctor so you can tell him. We will go,” he explained, slowly bringing a cigarette to his lips. “Please take it.”

“We’ll bring Cody along t-to the appointment,” I said, feeling even more confused.

“Oh, yeah, well, bring him,” Dad agreed.

“Tell them you’re going to bed,” the voice said.

“I’m going to bed,” I blurted, and then hurried into my bedroom. There, I locked myself in—thinking that Dad might decide to rape me—before I fell asleep.

The next day, however, we didn’t go to see Dr. Nelson. Perhaps Dad wasn’t able to get an appointment at the last minute.

That evening, the voice was gnawing at me over and over again about disappearing, and I started an argument with my father. The fight escalated, and I ran as fast as I could out the kitchen door. As I ran down the street, I was screaming that my father had raped me, again and again. I shouted for someone to help me.

I ran until my father gave up chasing me, and then kept walking for a long time. Eventually, I calmed down. I was far from home, and the voice was telling me to go to a bus stop. I could get on a bus to the next town and disappear. It also told me to throw my wallet onto the side of the road, which I didn’t do. At some point, it said

I was going to have to get a tattoo of a swastika on my arm. This concerned and troubled me.

My father finally found me. He pulled over and sat on the curb in the parking lot I was walking beside. I was calmer by then, so I walked over to him. "Do not ever run away again!" he said angrily. I had caused so much grief for him and my family that he couldn't help but feel frustrated. He loves me very much, I know. I am grateful he tracked me down and took me home that night. At home, I went to bed right away.

My parents took me to an emergency room one evening soon after that. We waited for hours to see a doctor. The doctor prescribed medication to me after he talked with my father. I did not know that what was happening was very serious. I couldn't help but do what I did. The voice was practically in control. I usually did exactly what it explained to me.

I changed my web site that had content about my writing about love to include clearly inappropriate and offensive words and content. I wrote about an underage

teenager who worked at a supermarket where my mother and I shopped. I used graphic software and a photograph I took from a web site to create an advertisement for an inappropriate web site, and then added this advertisement to my site. This advertising banner did not link to the inappropriate web site, however.

Before I started to hear the voice, I had mailed my brother Mike some printed e-books I had published that contained notecards with my web site addresses stamped on them. However, Mike didn't go to my web site right away. When he finally did visit my web site, he saw the inappropriate content I had put on it and called my parents. They went to the web site, and my father asked very nicely for me to shut down my site. I told him that I wouldn't shut it down. The voice had told me not to, and I felt very strongly that I should do what the voice said. He reminded me that he had agreed to hand out notecards with the web site addresses stamped on them to his coworkers, to help promote my books. He

asked me, “What if one of my coworkers sees the site like this?” He could have gotten in trouble.

Because I had left bookmarks stamped with the web site addresses at the supermarket, someone there went to my site. They read the story I had included about an employee at a supermarket where my mother and I shopped who was in love with me. One evening, when my mother and I were standing in line at the supermarket checkout, a police officer came up to me and asked me to please step outside. There were three police officers who were all very kind to me. The female officer asked me about the underage employee whom I had written about on my web site.

“Your web site has a lot of inappropriate things, especially for children. Do you know that Paul, the employee you wrote about on your web site, is underage?” she asked nicely.

“Yes,” I answered. The voice had told me earlier to tell the truth, and it didn’t bother me that my web site was inappropriate, let alone inappropriate for children.

“Do you love him?” she asked.

“No,” I again told the truth. I was not the least bit concerned.

A male police officer read over a print-out of the web page in question.

“His psychiatrist took my son off of his medication,” I heard my mother plead with the officer.

Another male police officer asked me to wait where I was standing.

“My web site, HugsFeelGood.com has a lot of fun things for children,” I mentioned to the officer. “There are fun things to print out.”

“Ah-hum. Yes, sir,” the officer replied politely.

“There are free e-books to download,” I added with a smile. I hoped he’d visit my site after he got off his shift. I wished I had enough bookmarks to hand out some more to the officers.

Then, a representative of the store asked me if I had stolen from the store. I lied and said no (even though I had stolen the soda, that one time). The man

issued me a trespass warning, which I signed. The warning prohibits me from going to that store or any other of their stores in the state of Arizona, indefinitely. I walked away quickly, wanting to get away with my mother. She was very angry as she drove us home.

I had hit rock bottom!

When my father found out, he was furious. He demanded that I immediately shut down my web site. When I did, I also cancelled the domain name registration for the site.

After the incident with the police at the supermarket, I asked the voice, "All right. What's the plan?"

"Why do you see Dr. Nelson?" it asked nicely.

"My mind evolved," I replied.

"No," it explained, "You have schizophrenia, just like he said. You've been lying to everyone. You need to take your medication as prescribed." The voice was explaining this to me because it didn't like what had occurred recently.

“Then what are you?” I asked, puzzled. “You’re my subconscious, right?”

“I am just your ill mind. I do not know what I am. Ask Dr. Nelson,” it said, and I could tell that it was worried about what was going to happen to me. “Tell Dr. Nelson about hearing a voice.”

I was ecstatic to realize that I did not have a subconscious that controlled the world. I was relieved to discover that a person’s subconscious could not be a rapist. There was no innocent person in prison and there never were people tortured in prison who were just like me. The things I saw in the dream had never really happened. I was so happy! I was perhaps the most ecstatic a man had ever been upon realizing that he had paranoid schizophrenia.

It’s a little strange, isn’t it? When I believed that my mind controlled the world, that nothing seriously bad would happen to me, and that I could have any girlfriend I wanted, I was depressed and had thoughts of suicide. Once I realized that none of that was true, and

that I instead had a severe mental illness, I felt very happy and relieved.

I saw Dr. Nelson soon after that. I was squeezed into Dr. Nelson's already overbooked schedule. I sat with my parents in his tiny office. There were patient dossiers stacked as high as Mount Everest on his desk, on a chair, and on the floor.

Chapter 21

Apology About Lying

Dr. Nelson's office was small and cramped. Artwork done by Dr. Nelson hung on each wall nicely framed. Mom and Dad sat adjacent to me. There was barely enough room for anyone to take a breath.

"I have been lying to you and my previous psychiatrists," I admitted. "I didn't really believe that I had paranoid schizophrenia. Now, I hear a voice. It tells me things."

"What do you believe the voice is?" he asked.

"Just my mind," I replied.

"Some patients believe it is a guardian angel," he said.

"It tells me what to say and do, usually," I said.

"Why do you do what it tells you?"

"It often makes sense," I said.

“Some patients who hear a voice are completely submissive to it, and do whatever it tells them,” he mentioned. “Do you do everything it tells you?”

“Most of the time.”

“All right.”

“Should I do what it tells me?” I asked, hoping he’d say yes. It was usually easier to do what the voice said.

“You should do what you want to do.”

I nodded, pressing my lips together.

“If you didn’t believe you had schizophrenia, then what did you think was happening?” he asked.

“I thought that my mind controlled the world, and that I had been wanted by the Mafia,” I said. “I thought my brain could be a rapist, but it wouldn’t really be me. I wouldn’t exist when it would happen. And I’d be tortured in prison,” I explained.

“Now, you know that none of that is reality,” he said soothingly. “Do you believe these things are true?”

“No. They are not reality,” I said, feeling my chest tingle.

“How are things at home?” Dr. Nelson asked my parents.

“He is obsessive-compulsive—always washing his hands excessively and disinfecting the toilet seat after using it, even though we tell him that he doesn’t need to. We’ve tried telling him not to, but he doesn’t listen,” Dad explained.

“Pick up that hair and throw it in the trashcan,” the voice said.

I reached from my chair and picked up a long hair on the carpet with my hand, which was red from excessive hand washing.

“Please put that down—put it down,” Dr. Nelson insisted, and I did.

Dad continued, “He says that we must have a trashcan for every room in our house and that only the trash from that room can go into that trashcan.”

Dr. Nelson nodded. “Your ideas are too rigid,” he told me. “I’m going to prescribe paroxetine for the obsessive-compulsive behaviors, but I want you to try to stop them on your own before taking the medication,” he said. “You don’t need to disinfect the toilet every time you use it and it’s excessive to have a trashcan in every room of the house and to only put trash into the trashcan in that room. Can you try not to do those things?”

I nodded, hoping I would be able to do what he wanted and stop on my own, without medication.

I felt good inside to be seeing him again.

He also prescribed Abilify for my psychosis.

This all seemed rather serious, but I still had a good feeling inside my chest. I felt good to be alive. The difference I felt from when the dream was stuck inside my mind was like the difference between night and day. I was happy about that.

If I had been truthful with my psychiatrists, I would have received adequate and appropriate

treatment many years ago. Not only did I lose years of my life without receiving the right treatment, but I also lost time in my recovery. The longer someone has untreated psychosis, the longer it can take for them to recover once they begin treatment. I had untreated psychosis for almost thirteen years, and it would take over twelve years for me to recover. Over two decades of my life was wasted!

But, most importantly, my depression and the worst of my symptoms of schizophrenia were behind me. Thank goodness!

Chapter 22

Conclusion

One night, after we had just finished eating dinner, I put down my fork and looked at my father.

“Dad, I apologize for lying about eating all of the ice cream. I did. And, I’m sorry for short-changing Mom twenty dollars for the rent money. I’ll pay you back,” I explained.

“That’s all right,” he said. “There’s no need to apologize.” I could tell he was relieved that I was doing better.

“I apologize for lying—,” I began.

Dad interrupted, “Stop apologizing. It’s all right.”

“Stop apologizing,” Suzanne repeated.

“All right,” I replied. It felt so good to finally tell the truth.

After telling me that I was ill, the voice explained that I needed to take my medication. Very soon after,

however, I would refuse to take it because the voice told me not to. I would take it when and only when it told me to.

For example, one morning Suzanne knocked at my bedroom door, and I didn't respond.

"Can I come in?" she asked, and I said yes.

"It's time to take your medication," she said nicely, seeing that I was already awake. Then, she headed for the kitchen, where I kept my meds in an organizer.

"Stay in bed," the voice said. "There's a video camera in here."

Okay.

But I wanted to take my medication.

"It is a placebo," the voice explained.

"Come in here, Richard!" Suzanne exclaimed, losing her patience. "Come on."

I obeyed the voice and remained in bed, even though I would rather follow Suzanne to the kitchen.

“Richard! Come in here, now!” she said loudly, but I wouldn’t listen.

“Come in here!” she said again.

“Do not go,” the voice said just as I almost got out of bed. I obeyed and lay back down.

“Richard! Come in here, right now!” she shouted, even angrier than before.

“Okay. Go take your medication,” the voice ordered.

I leaped out of bed and hurried down the hallway. Suzanne held a glass of water and my meds.

“Listen to us,” she said. “You’ve got to do what we tell you,” she insisted, although I could tell she was calming down.

“Do what you want to do, not what others want,” the voice explained. “Don’t be submissive.”

I took my meds, and then asked the voice if I should take a shower.

“Don’t take a shower,” it said.

Day in and day out, I spent my time doing what the voice told me. I was submissive to it, even when it told me to rebel against the people who cared about me. I should have just ignored it and done what I wanted to do—end of story. I wish it could have been that simple.

Some days, I didn't come into the kitchen to eat dinner. Once, Dad had to bring me to the kitchen and feed me. This happened when he had made frozen pizza for dinner. I love pizza and I was hungry, but I stayed in my room until he brought me down.

Once, I remember, my beard had grown long and scraggly. I hadn't taken a shower in almost two days, and the skin under my beard itched. I scratched and scratched, wishing the voice would order me to trim my beard and take a shower.

Should I trim my beard? I asked the voice. *Should I shower? Maybe I should.* I was dying to feel refreshed and clean. I stood just outside the bathroom door, waiting to get permission from the voice.

From the kitchen, Dad saw me at the bathroom door. I watched him walk toward me.

“Why don’t you trim that scruff off of your face? When was the last time you took a shower?” Dad asked. “When, huh?” I could tell he was feeling impatient because I had been ignoring him and Suzanne, lately.

“Two days ago,” I replied, feeling hopeful that the voice would tell me to shower.

“Go trim your beard and go in the shower,” the voice said, and joy spilled through my chest.

In my bedroom that night, the voice told me, “Leave your belt in here on your bed.” When I asked why, it said, “Just do it. Listen to your mind.”

I left the belt on my bed, and then buzzed off my beard and finally took a shower.

It felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. Everything inside me tingled with pleasure. Finally, I had got what I wanted.

After my shower, I began to get dressed in the bathroom. The voice said, “You didn’t bring your belt.”

That was true.

“Ask your father to get it for you.”

Why? I asked.

“Just do it. You’ll see what will happen. He’ll get it.”

I cracked open the door and called, “Dad, could you please get me my belt?”

“All right. Where do you keep it?” he asked, coming to the door.

I replied, “It’s on my bed. Thank you.” Why had the voice wanted me to inconvenience my father?

“Here you go,” Dad chimed, handing the belt to me through the door.

“Thank you,” I replied, and finished getting dressed.

Why did I do that? I asked the voice, wanting a good answer. I wondered if I should tell my father that I had left the belt on my bed on purpose.

“People might do as you ask. Just like when you asked your mother if you and she could go to the U-Haul

store to buy some boxes,” it explained. I had wanted to pack some scale models in boxes and put them into storage, but I did not drive at the time. I did not bother asking my mother to take me to the store until the voice had told me to ask. “People like to help others,” it said. “Take advantage, but do not make other people feel bad.”

Understanding this made me feel less stressed.

“All right,” I replied. I did want people to help me when I needed help. I had not been seeking help when I needed it, like most people might do. I had been too submissive because I didn’t want to inconvenience others.

At this time, my ill mind explained to me that I must always tell the truth, no matter what. And I did, except for a few times. Even then, I apologized to the family member I had lied to and told them the truth afterward, because the voice told me to.

“Dad, I ate the French fries from yesterday,” I said, after he asked who ate them. But then, the voice told me to tell the truth.

“Be truthful. Tell him. Tell him the whole truth,” it commanded.

“I apologize for not being truthful. I ate the fries last night,” I explained, and kissed Dad’s cheek. I had not kissed his cheek in probably twenty-five years—not since I was a young boy.

“All right,” Dad said, and continued to read the TV guide.

I was proud to tell the truth.

My family lost their patience with my obsessive-compulsive disorder. It put a tremendous strain on our family and wore me out every day.

I had to write with a wax pen on the bathroom mirror each time I washed my hands. I put a tick mark on the mirror; some days, I wrote over twenty marks. I insisted on disinfecting the toilet seat after every time I used the toilet.

One day, after using the toilet, I left the seat in an upward position, washed my hands and went to the kitchen to get the bottle of disinfectant, even though I didn't really want to. Dr. Nelson had already told me my cleaning and hand-washing was too stringent, but I couldn't help it.

"Get the disinfectant," the voice said. As I did, I walked past Dad, who was sitting on the family room sofa.

"Stop!" Dad exclaimed. "What are you going to clean?"

I stopped at the bathroom door and said, "I need to clean the seat, to be polite."

"Is there a mess on it?" he asked. "Why do you want to clean it?"

"I'm just being polite," I replied.

"You do not need to clean the seat. Put that bottle away," he commanded, but I went inside the bathroom to clean the seat anyway.

I disinfected the seat and flushed the toilet with the toilet paper I had used to clean the seat. I watched to see if any spots of water splashed onto the seat.

There was a small drop.

“Clean it again,” the voice said. “People will respect you for being polite.”

I flushed again and watched for water drops on the seat.

“You are going to pay for a new bottle of cleaner. And the water bill!” Dad said angrily from the family room.

There was another drop. I disinfected the seat again and flushed.

This time, there were no drops.

I put the seat down and washed my hands, but accidentally left bubbles on the bar of soap. So I washed my hands again, and was careful to rinse the soap. It would be polite not to leave bubbles. I felt suddenly like a weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. I was so

glad that the toilet seat was clean and ready for the next person, and I didn't have to wash it any more this time.

"Come in here," Dad asked angrily, losing his patience. "Now."

I walked into the family room with the disinfectant in my hand.

"You do not need to disinfect the toilet after every time you use it, unless it is soiled," Dad explained. "And you don't need to wash your hands so much."

"But, I'm just being polite," I said. The voice had told me once that if Bob Parsons, the founder and CEO of GoDaddy, visited my house, he would see how polite I was.

"If you want, you can clean the bathroom once a week," Dad offered.

I didn't reply—I was tired of arguing with him. *Why aren't my family members polite, like me?* I wondered. I decided to tell them and Dr. Nelson about my feelings on this matter at my next appointment.

Then I put the bottle away and watched TV with Dad.

Sometimes, I would walk down the street, picking up pieces of broken glass and other litter, because my ill mind would tell me to. My family asked me nicely not to, but I did not listen. I was obedient to the voice and only the voice. However, once I stopped because the voice told me to. It mentioned that my picking up small pieces of glass might be interfering with a car accident investigation.

It got to the point that my irrational behavior made my father consider finding another place for me to live, where people could look after me properly and attend to my obsessive-compulsive disorder. Sadly, I had become a burden on my family.

My recovery was painfully slow, and I'd notice only a little improvement here and there. I rationalized my past the best I knew how. I realized that my father hadn't abused me or yelled at me too much, nor had he raped me. I was very happy. I realized that I had some

false memories, such as seeing the man above my eyelids.

My speech was adversely affected by my mental state. I had seizures sometimes when speaking. If I started to say something that the voice didn't want me to say, then I'd stutter what I was saying.

One afternoon, Dad was sitting at the kitchen counter to revise a report for work, while Suzanne and I were watching TV.

"Do either of you know where my pencil is?" Dad asked.

"I don't have it," Suzanne replied.

"I—I,—I, h—a—ve your pencil," I stuttered. What my ill mind wanted me to say was, "Over here," and for me to point at the computer desk in the corner.

"I—I,—I'll get it," I offered. My ill mind had not wanted me to get the pencil. It wanted me just to point. I stuttered because of my OCD, and because my ill mind didn't want me to get the pencil for my father. My ill mind did not want me to be submissive to him. It

wanted me to be in charge all of the time, and for people to do what it wanted.

It got to the point where I now waited every day to get “all better.” At times, when I noticed or believed I had improved, I would tell my family, but after a while I didn’t tell them every time, because telling them started to feel redundant.

I wanted to apologize to the store manager where the incident had occurred so that I could have the trespass warning removed, however that supermarket closed its doors about a year later. Even so, I planned to write the grocery chain a letter of apology as soon as I was all better, or at least well enough to write the letter.

I made a decision to follow my heart. I was going to make myself into a well-known author and planned to be on television to promote the books and writing I would create. I waited well over ten years to improve my mental state enough that I could begin on this endeavor. Later, I would write and publish a series of

children's and coming-of-age books and stories. These were much better than my first attempts.

I experienced paranoia, which wasn't pleasing. My biggest concern was about plagiarism. I also experienced paranoia about the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration.

One evening, after changing into my pajamas, I listened to music in my bedroom. Then, the voice became very worried.

"You've plagiarized," the voice exclaimed, and I leaped into bed. "Go to sleep," it commanded, but kept worrying.

"I didn't plagiarize," I replied, turning off the light and pulling the covers over me.

"You've plagiarized. We've got to do something about it. No more writing. We must get this resolved before you write any more. You have to cancel your self-published books," the voice said. "As soon as possible," it insisted.

I quivered in bed, worried about plagiarism. I couldn't help but be convinced that the voice was telling the truth.

“Go to sleep,” it said.

I hadn't brushed my teeth, but obeyed the voice anyway.

With a lot of help from my father, I cancelled the publication of my first series of self-published, print-on-demand books. In my opinion, they weren't my best work. Because I was worried about plagiarism, however, I hesitated to cancel them for a long time and debated what course of action to take. I considered hiring an attorney.

The paranoia went on for longer than a few months, which was troubling and stressful for me and my family. When I saw Dr. Nelson, I explained to him that I was worried I might have plagiarized my books, and he asked if I wanted him to write my concerns in my psychiatric chart. I said, “Yes.”

“I a—am con,—con,—con—vinced that I plagiarized my books,” I explained to Dr. Nelson during an appointment. “I need to tell you.”

“Did you believe that you plagiarized when you wrote them?” he asked.

“No,” I replied, “but I didn’t know then that I was plagiarizing.” I felt sick inside, but also felt as though a weight was lifted off of me. Now, if I was sued, Dr. Nelson would testify that I had admitted it to him and that I was not trying to hide the fact.

“Well, I suggest seeing an attorney if you’ve plagiarized,” he remarked, and I hoped he’d ask if I wanted him to write it down in my file. He did ask, and I conceded with relief. Now there was a record of me admitting to plagiarism.

Dr. Nelson asked, “Now, did you copy wording from another source, word for word?”

“Yes,” I said. This wasn’t true, but the voice told me to tell him so.

I would continue to see Dr. Nelson or whoever was filling in for him at the clinic, but nothing was ever resolved about my concerns. It bugged me sporadically, and each time I thought about it I became more and more concerned. Dad went so far as to contact a lawyer to get an estimate for legal advice in the matter, in order to ease my mind.

“Can we see a lawyer? Please?” I asked Dad, “About my plagiarism?”

“I already called a law firm to get an estimate,” Dad said. I froze in place with surprise. He was going to do what I wanted him to do!

“What did they say?”

“The man said that the cost would vary depending on how much work was involved, but it’s coming out of your money.”

“All right.”

“I haven’t decided if we’re going to see someone,” Dad explained, and I knew I wasn’t getting all that I wanted. I wasn’t being assertive enough.

“If we see an attorney and he or she says that you didn’t plagiarize, then what are we going to do?” Dad asked.

“I’d want to see another attorney,” I replied without thinking.

“So, no matter what the attorney says, you’re still going to be convinced that you plagiarized. Is that right?” Dad said with a small smirk.

“I guess so,” I replied, confused.

It turned out that I had not plagiarized the books. What happened, was that at times I'd be convinced that I had plagiarized, then I'd be convinced that I didn't plagiarize and go back and forth until I no longer was convinced I had plagiarized. I had thought that plagiarism meant writing about a subject that I had no right to address, but it turns out that there’s no law against that.

As the days passed and we increased my dosage, I began to realize that paranoia was making me feel

concerned about problems that were not actual problems. Eventually, the paranoia faded for good.

About three months since the incident with the police, I had three cavities that required dental work. These were probably from not brushing my teeth while I was in the throes of psychosis. My OCD mainly had to do with being polite rather than avoiding germs, which is what a lot of other people with OCD worry about. I worried too much about offending others. I was a pain to live with.

I also had a horrendous time with laundry. For example, Mom would put my laundry on my bed every week. I would select a sock and a tissue. I would lay the tissue flat on my bed and pull out each and every hair, piece of loose thread, and other debris from the sock and place each item onto the tissue. Then, I removed each pill with a pill remover.

One day, as I was selecting the next sock, Dad walked by. My door was open.

“What are you doing?” he asked. “That isn’t necessary,” he added.

“I am being polite to Suzanne,” I explained. “She doesn’t like hairs on my clothes.”

“Fold your socks and put them away,” Dad said, but I refused.

“Don’t be submissive to your father—do what you want to do. Clean out your clothes,” the voice commanded, and suddenly I wanted to stop.

But I continued to remove the hair and debris from my other socks.

Mom came in.

“You don’t have to do that,” she said. I wanted to follow her advice, but obeyed the voice instead.

“What is he doing?” I heard Suzanne ask from her bedroom.

“Put your clothes away neatly,” Mom asked. Then, she called to Suzanne, “He’s being obsessive-compulsive about his clothes!”

“I am being polite,” I argued.

“Tell the doctor. When’s your next appointment?”

Mom asked.

“In a week,” I said. I hoped the voice would tell me to stop, now, but it didn’t.

Suzanne left with Mom.

I was at my wits’ end, for I hated having to remove the small hairs from my clothes. I did not want to do what the voice said, but I still obeyed it because it was my mind, and I believed that it was going to help me become a world-famous author. One day, it had said to me, “You are going to become a world-famous writer, but you must always tell the truth and never break the law.”

I will. I am going to become a well-known writer, I thought.

Shortly after realizing I had paranoid schizophrenia, I would unlock the doors in our house, believing it was best for us. I thought that, if there was a fire, the fire department might have a more difficult time saving one or all of us if we locked the doors.

Finally, after insisting that I stop many times, my father took my house keys away.

I got into the habit of spinning in place occasionally when the voice would tell me to. It didn't seem necessary, but I obeyed the voice. My parents would insist that I stop when they saw me do it. My father said that I had heard or read something about people who have schizophrenia spinning in place, and that was why I was doing it. I have no memory of learning about that, though.

It was very nice of my father to put up with all my nonsense. He did what a caring and loving father would do. I am grateful today, as I don't know where I'd be if he hadn't taken such good care of me. Maybe I'd be homeless.

One evening, the voice told me to walk around one of my parents' cars in the driveway. I couldn't see a thing, so I asked my mind why it wanted me to do this. It replied that I would get bitten by a rattlesnake and die. Well, that was that! I went inside and argued with the

voice. I was going to get all better, or at least as well as possible! I did not want to go get bit by a rattlesnake for no good reason. However, the voice was insisting that I should end it all. It was trying to make me feel sorry for myself.

Eventually, the voice and I decided that we wanted me to be on television right away. It wanted me to become a world-famous author. I went along with this idea. I am an author, now, and will make a name for myself.

I became extremely uncooperative with regards to my government disability benefits. I cancelled them. My father got me back on them, and I refused to help myself get better. Eventually, my father volunteered to be my payee, which is the person who represents me in regards to social security. He was my payee until my disability expired in 2010.

I also rebelled against my parents and sister. Unfortunately, I obeyed the voice in this matter. I was creating drama in our house. I refused to go to bed at a

reasonable time and made life unbearable for them in other ways. I would argue with them when they asked nicely for me to do things that a normal person most likely would do. One evening, I said to Dad that I was going to stay up a little later, and he nicely asked me to be in bed by one. I stayed up much later than that on purpose, because the voice told me to.

“You can stay up later,” Dad explained nicely one evening, “But, I want you in bed by one,” he explained.

“Promise him that you will,” the voice ordered me.

“All right.” I said, thinking that I would go to bed at one, like Dad had said. Little did I know that the voice had other plans.

After everyone went to bed, I kept watching television and eating potato chips.

I flipped around the channels. The voice was quiet, for a while.

Then, it was almost one.

Should I brush my teeth and go to bed? I thought, wanting to be considerate of my father. I knew that he wasn't being unreasonable in asking me to go to bed at a reasonable time. Besides, I wanted to go to sleep. I was tired.

"Stay up until two," the voice said.

The next morning, I woke and went into the kitchen to eat breakfast. Dad was already eating cereal.

"What time did you go to bed?" he asked, and I told the truth.

"Two," I answered. I was frustrated because I had wanted to do what he asked of me. I didn't want friction between my family and me.

"Why didn't you go to bed at one?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

"Well? Why?"

"Because the voice told me to."

"Do not do what the voice tells you. Hopefully, the voice will go away soon," he said.

“Tell him that you agree,” the voice explained, and I told him.

“From now on, you are going to go to bed when I go to bed, at the latest,” Dad said.

One day while we were sitting on the sofa, I told Dad that I’d be all better within a year. However, over twelve years later, I was still recovering.

I also became psychosomatic, which made me feel things physically that weren’t there. For example, one day I went into a storage shed in my parents’ backyard looking for something. As I walked in, I heard a rattlesnake rattle its tail. I looked down and saw a small rattlesnake in an old crate. I felt a sensation on my wrist that I thought must be a rattlesnake bite. Fortunately, I hadn’t actually been bitten—my mind was playing tricks on me.

Another example is that I will feel a slight pain in a front tooth whenever I can or can’t get what I want in a situation, or am not or am getting what I want. The feeling only lasts a second.

One way my ill mind would communicate with me was through involuntary movement. When it wanted to indicate a yes to me, I'd have a vibe telling me to put my hand into a front pocket. It would also give me a vibe to do this when it wanted to communicate to me that I was going to get what I wanted.

At times, I'd have a vibe telling me to go somewhere or to type something on my computer, and I wouldn't know why I should. The vibes had to do with me thinking about things I had to do, such as type out an idea for a story or book I was writing, or to do one last thing before going to bed. Many of the vibes I experienced made much less sense, and at times it was just me joking with myself or inventing something silly.

I continued to gradually improve. In 2006, Mom helped me get a job where she worked, at a furniture store. My job was to prepare and inspect the next day's delivery in the warehouse. I also learned to make minor repairs on wood furniture.

In 2007, the warehouse owner decided to sell his franchise to the corporate office. I was laid off, as were all but one of the warehouse employees. This didn't bother me, although I hoped that the others would soon find other employment.

My younger brother Mike, who lived in the northeastern United States, would phone once a week during 2009 to pressure me into finding employment. He was only concerned about my future, since disability didn't pay very much. He was one-hundred percent right to do so. Unfortunately, I was still experiencing seizures that would make me stutter during conversations with people. I really wanted to find full-time employment, though. I did not want to stay on disability for the rest of my life.

I waited every day after taking my meds to see if I'd get "all better" that day, or at least well enough to get a job.

Anyway, Mike was persistent, and his encouragement compelled me to apply at a number of

businesses. I was finally hired for a part-time position as a janitor at a supercenter nearby. For about nine months, I swept the floor for the entire shift, with two other new hires. Keeping the floor clean was an important way to prevent slips and falls. Accidents were frequent and the store's insurance was expensive! Despite the seizures, I was able to manage, although I was not at my best. After about nine months of being a janitor-sweeper, my job was changed to being a regular janitor, which included maintaining the store's restrooms, emptying the trashcans, and so on. I was and am still grateful to be working there.

In an effort to give me more part-time hours, management scheduled me to work some days in additional positions, such as sporting goods department associate and shopping cart retrieval. I enjoyed doing carts more than being a janitor or an associate, so I put in for a transfer and got full-time employment doing carts. This was a milestone in my life.

At this time, I received medical benefits both through disability and my employer's medical insurance. I usually used my employer's insurance, even though it had copayments. I decided to seek my psychiatric treatment through my work insurance. Within a year, my disability ran out, which was another milestone. I was so excited!

My seizures continued to improve and, by June 2015, my communication had improved significantly. My OCD and paranoid schizophrenia had improved as well. After doing carts for five years, I put in a transfer to the produce department, which I received in August.

Since then, I have continued to gradually improve. My meds changed under Dr. Cohen, mainly because my work's medical insurance didn't cover Abilify. Now I was on Risperidone. I experienced some paranoia at times, but nothing too serious, and I recognized the paranoia for what it was soon after it set in.

Dr. Cohen said the seizures were related to the OCD, and so we gradually increased my OCD medication.

Although it was higher than that of any other patient he had, the medication helped tremendously.

As long as I could remember, I had an occasional stutter. Dad would encourage me to practice my speech so I could get rid of it. When I was in the dream, I thought I knew better, and that I stuttered because he had abused me. I thought that my stuttering would never go away, no matter how much I practiced. Dr. Nelson didn't have an explanation for my stuttering, but it was diagnosed by my next psychiatrist, Dr. Cohen. He said that the stuttering occurred whenever I was having a seizure. The seizure would happen when I wanted to say something, but the voice wanted me to say something else.

During an appointment with Dr. Cohen, I explained to him, "Sometimes I have issues with my communication—sometimes, I have trouble speaking correctly." I hoped he'd understand. "I stutter when I'm saying something and the v—v—voice wants me to say something else," I admitted.

“That is related to your OCD—it is a type of seizure. Your mind seizes when your mind is trying to get you to say something it wants you to say,” Dr. Cohen explained. “We can try to increase the paroxetine, and perhaps that will help.”

Still, communicating effectively and properly was a problem for me, as if I didn’t have my share of problems.

One day, I sat in our family room looking through my high school senior yearbook. I flipped through to the seniors’ photo section and looked at the people with whom I’d gone to high school. Suzanne sat across from me in the family room and Dad was at the kitchen counter.

“Did you know that I was mentally ill when I was a teenager, before I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia? Probably around twelve years old,” I said to Dad and Suzanne.

Suzanne said, “Well, don’t bother looking through your yearbook. Focus on getting better. Doing that will help you. You shouldn’t focus on your past.”

“Okay,” I said, and put the book away.

Shortly after that, it got to the point where the voice became something I more or less sensed, rather than heard.

Chapter 23

How I am Today

After taking my medication, I often ask my ill mind if I am recovered. I feel a sensation on my wrist that lets me know I am not. My mind has also given me a vibe to see out of the corner of my eye, which also lets me know that I'm not fully recovered.

I have had rough patches. During these, with permission from my psychiatrist, I increased my meds temporarily. In every case, this has helped.

Infrequently, my hearing will change slightly and I'll hear ringing, and then the ringing goes away. Right when I hear the ringing, it appears to me that I might be completely recovered.

I continue to gain more and more control over the OCD. Things that I used to do because of OCD include only reading a book in the employee breakroom with

the book flat on the table (I couldn't hold it upright to read, nor could I slouch or lean back).

In late February 2017, after my OCD medication Paroxetine was increased, I noticed yet another milestone. I no longer have the compulsion to drink liquids (particularly soda) nearly as much. I also usually now take smaller sips, which are not as frequent.

In early March, I noticed another significant improvement! Now, I don't scarf my food down. I eat slowly, like many other "normal" people. This was not a decision I made: I just changed. I tried on a number of occasions over the years to eat and drink like a "normal" person might, but it was difficult. I also noticed that, instead of always drinking soda or tea, now I drink more plain water, like I should.

I have several suggestions for people who take medication for any reason. You should always count your medication when you receive it, to ensure that the container holds the prescribed number of pills. Once, I

was accidentally short-changed by fourteen tablets, which was a week's worth of medicine.

I also recommend that people use a pill organizer, which can help you make sure not to miss a dose or take one twice.

Another strategy for mental wellness is to write down your concerns to show your psychiatrist at your next appointment. That way you won't forget. A nice woman who was my e-mail correspondent once suggested using a journal to record my progress and relapses. I didn't do that, but agree that it's a good idea.

I am now all better, I assume, or as good as I'm going to get with modern medicine. I recently turned forty-six. At my last appointment, my psychiatrist told me to not be so obsessed with making a one-hundred percent recovery; the best we can do, he said, is seventy percent. I want to be all better, though, and I want for the voice to go away. I still have vibes and sense the voice sometimes. My OCD is gone or almost gone, I think. I always try my best at what I do, but the seizures

still affect me at times. This discourages me, but I have to move on.

In the future, I will have to always be honest. I will take my meds as prescribed and let others know how I am feeling.

I hope that, soon, I will be able to move out of my parents' house and live on my own. I also plan to have the trespass warning removed from the supermarket chain.

Presently, I only write part-time. I plan to write full-time and support myself solely with my writing. I wish to be on television, radio, and other news media to promote my writing, and to also promote my younger brother Kevin's illustrations for our books.

I hope that readers learn from my book. Please do not hesitate to write me. Best wishes, and always follow your dreams.

—Rich.

About the Book:

Richard Carlson Jr. was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia when he was twenty-one years of age. His illness first manifested when he was an early adolescent. Modern psychiatry greatly failed Richard for over a decade. Then, after an incident involving the police, he truly understood that his diagnosis was real, and finally began the long process of recovery. Over ten years later, his life is greatly improved. In the course of his treatment, Richard also recovered from depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and lethargy.

Do not let what happened to Richard happen to you, a loved one, or a patient dealing with severe mental illness. Always be honest with each other, and with your psychiatrist. For patients, family members, caregivers, students, and medical professionals who would like to learn more, visit www.survivingschizophrenia.com.

About the Author:

Richard Carlson Jr. is an author of children's books and coming-of-age romances. He is a highly sensitive person, or HSP, and has paranoid schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. You can learn more about him at www.rich.center.

Cover photograph credit: Copyright Richard Carlson Sr.

Back cover photograph credit: Copyright PictureMe Portrait Studios.