

"Tale of a Nobody" (Introduction)

My pulse throbs loudly in my head, my heart beating so hard and fast it feels as though it may burst from my chest at any moment. As I race frantically along the ever changing yet eerily familiar landscape of this re-occurring dream, I am in one instant lost and running through dense forests, barreling past trees and leaping scattered underbrush. The next I find myself dodging traffic on busy city streets, or scurrying among the garbage heaps of dark, narrow alley-ways. Unrelenting fear prickles my skin while my lungs heave, desperately trying to force oxygen to my brain. I know not what I am running from, or where I am running to, yet somehow I can sense that lurking in the shadows of every building, or just beyond the next bend in the path, some sinister fate awaits me. My limbs quiver with apprehension as I am relentlessly propelled toward an inevitable confrontation. With every nerve aware and every muscle tensed to face the unknown enemy, this one question remains: am I the predator or am I the prey? The very moment the answer is to be revealed, a primal scream erupts from my throat and I bolt upright, awakening once again from this serial nightmare...

This nightmare, however, never truly ends. Sitting on the edge of my bed, heart still racing, breath still ragged-shouts, shirt and skin soaked with sweat - it takes a few seconds for my eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room. When at last I can see with some clarity, I stand on shaking legs and shuffle the few feet to the toilet. Leaning against the tiny porcelain sink for support, I empty my aching bladder. As I do so the tattered remnants of the dream begin to break apart and drift away like a fog in the early morning sun. Recognition slowly dawns on me and, although I know it shouldn't, especially after all these years, it always comes as somewhat of a shock to me when I realize just where I am...

As I pen these words, I do so from the confines of a federal prison that few people have ever heard of and fewer still will even care about - unless, of course, you or someone you know has had the misfortune of being incarcerated in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

My name is not important and while the specific details of my instant offense are irrelevant to the telling of this tale, it is enough to know that I am currently serving a twenty-five year sentence after having committed multiple child pornography offenses.

Being a repeat offender, many are likely to conclude that my actions are irredeemable, my behavior unchangeable and no matter how long of a sentence I received, the punishment for my crimes could never be harsh enough.

I know from personal experience that the mere mention of these types of offenses invokes in many people an anger and animosity with which they

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regard few others. I am also acutely aware of the fact that the crimes for which I have been convicted are considered by the majority in our society to be among the most heinous and despicable crimes one could possibly commit. I have been labeled a monster, a predator, a pedophile and a pervert. Many believe that I am sick, or evil or both, and that I am far too dangerous to return to society. Some are convinced that the only cure for my condition is death. At one point in my life, I would have agreed with them.

It is no national secret that sexual offenders are neither looked upon with fondness nor treated kindly in the prison system. Indeed, it is a commonly held notion that we will get what we deserve in prison. Somehow the concept of "jailhouse vigilantism" is perfectly acceptable in our case. Personally I have been ostracized, antagonized; interrogated and intimidated. I have been repeatedly threatened with violence and on one occasion, physically assaulted to the extent that I needed to be hospitalized. Others of my "kind" have been extorted, robbed, beaten or otherwise accosted, up to and including having feces placed in, or on, their personal belongings.

Before I continue, I wish it to be clearly understood that what I have written thus far is in no way an attempt to garner sympathy for my plight. Nor is it my intention to portray myself as the victim of undeserved consequences, or blame anyone but myself for a lifetime of poor choices and bad decisions. Regardless of any hardships I may have endured in the past, or whatever tribulations await me in the future, to accept anything less than full responsibility for my selfish actions and destructive behaviors would only serve to propagate the abuse I have already inflicted upon the most innocent, most vulnerable members of our society.

During my incarceration I have had ample opportunity in which to contemplate my life and try, albeit feebly, to make some sense of it all - the past, present and whatever remains of my future. While I am not certain that I will ever find all the answers I seek, I have come to realize that there are several deep-seated emotional/psychological issues which I have either failed to properly address, or have allowed to remain unresolved for far too long.

It shames me beyond description to write these next words but during my past history of abusive behavior I have preyed upon the innocent; I have betrayed the trust of others; I have manipulated relationships; I have taken advantage of, or for granted acts of kindness and I have squandered countless opportunities to make the right and honorable choice. For most of my life, either by choice, or by some imagined epile, I have existed on the fringes of society, only coming close long enough to take what I wanted from whomever I wanted

with little to no regard to whom or what was harmed in the process. Time and time again I have lied, cheated, and stolen in order to get what at the time I thought I needed.

My thoughtless actions and careless behavior have so negatively impacted the lives of so many individuals that the full scope of the damage I have caused may never be known.

Many are the nights when I lie awake in bed with the gravity of my situation bearing upon me with such intensity that I begin to wonder if this is all my life will ever be, then what is the point in living? If for one second I truly believed that it could possibly change the course of past events and somehow make things right in the lives of those I have offended against, I would not hesitate to forfeit this life.

At fifty plus years of age, and many years of incarceration to look forward to, I may never see freedom again. My achievements thus far have been less than stellar. Whatever potential I may have once possessed remains unfulfilled. Those goals I had previously aspired to are now unattainable. I have reared no children, both of my parents, to the best of my knowledge, are now deceased, and my siblings have all but disowned me. My legacy thus far is less than memorable. My dreams are fading, my hope is waning, my life has become insignificant. I have become a nobody.

Having written all of that, what in my right mind could possibly convince me that anyone would be even remotely interested in anything else I might write. To be perfectly honest, I have no earthly idea. Yet, for several years now I have been possessed by an irrational and inexplicable compulsion to write this memoir; to record an intensely personal history of the thoughts, deeds, fears, faults and failures which have defined my life to this point and to reveal the deepest, darkest secrets I have so desperately tried to keep hidden for so many years.

I suppose there will be those individuals who will question the logic of such an endeavor. They will ask why anyone would willingly expose themselves to the potential for further scorn and ridicule. I once read a magazine article in which the writer interviewed a psychiatrist who said we cannot fix what we cannot talk about. That statement had a profound impact on me and made me realize that it may be entirely possible that I am not writing this for myself.

Perhaps this memoir will somehow find its way into the hands of a person who, like myself, is struggling with some of the same issues that have seemingly plagued me for much of my life. Maybe that individual

is on the verge of making the very same choices and decisions as I have. And maybe, just maybe, that some person, after reading about the mistakes I have made and the mess I have made of my life, will be motivated to seek out and obtain the appropriate help which could prevent them from victimizing others.

It is my sincerest hope that by sharing this memoir with the world, it may somehow bring something positive into a situation of such profound negativity and thereby convey how truly sorry I am for the harm I have caused and how desperately willing I am to do everything within my power to prevent that harm from happening again.