

SUFFERING ENDS



When
AWAKENING
BEGINS

ROBERT CROWN

Suffering Ends When Awakening Begins

Copyright © 2017 by Robert Crown

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission of the author.

ISBN 978-0-9993639-2-8 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-0-9993639-0-4 (Hard Cover)

ISBN 978-0-9993639-1-1 (eBook)

DEDICATION

Lynn, my wife, you are the sun in my life, shining through the clouds even on those stormy days, filling my world with your love and beauty. You've always supported me, even when you thought better. You've helped me grow and become who I am today.

My children, I am so very grateful and honored for being your father. I can see a part of myself in each one of you. You are all very beautiful souls, and your hearts are so warm and kind. You have taught me so much about myself. Thank you for your love and understanding.

Mother, I'm grateful to you for being you and for overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds in your life. For taking care of me when I was sickly as a child. Due to our relationship, I was able to become the man I am today and gain the ability to teach so many other people many things to improve the quality of their lives. I also learned from you forgiveness and the importance of not just following the crowd, but questioning things.

Dad, thank you for your understanding and for doing your best in raising me. I didn't see it much, but when I did, your childlike heart was so kind, fun, and encouraging.

Grandpa, thank you for letting me spend so much time on your yacht. You have no idea what that meant to me. Thank you for just being you.

Stepmom Shirley, thank you for doing what you could with me when you had your chance, even though I was a handful at the time.

Me (why not?), thank you for overcoming all you did in your life so that you could share your story. It was a long time coming, but you did it. Yay!

Carol, you have been the driving force throughout my life to keep me moving forward. You kept me alive so many times so that I could accomplish what I was sent here to do.

Bob, thank you for your friendship, for being a good friend, someone who was always there if I wanted a hand.

Joy, I love your authenticity, which is what makes you so great. Thank you, “big sister,” for your love, understanding, and kindness. Thank you from the depth of the heart of my soul for sharing your universal knowledge and thoughts, which allowed me to reach new levels in awareness and empowered me to realize my own divinity within. Thank you for your love for me and your love for all of humanity.

Anna, you look past my words and journey into the spirit of my heart for the meaning. You saw something within me that was buried, and you unearthed it with your love and compassion. It is the essence of who I truly am. In the process, I also discovered the essence of who you truly are. Your thoughts and intentions have had an impact on my life and this book. You, my friend, are a remarkable woman and a beautiful soul.

Reader, thank you for your interest in my book. You were my motivation to write about my life. My intention from the first word I wrote in these pages was that it would have a positive impact on your life or the life of someone you know and, in some small way, make your life better.

CONTENTS

Prologue.....	vii
1 Lethal Ice Cream.....	1
2 Remain Silent.....	9
3 Family Dynamics.....	13
4 Innocent Friendship.....	19
5 Bullies and Angels.....	23
6 Impact of Parents' Behavior.....	25
7 The Divorce.....	27
8 Losing My Innocence.....	31
9 Runaway.....	37
10 Slide to Hell.....	41
11 Disconnection and Consequences.....	49
12 Leaving Hell.....	53
13 The Nuthouse.....	59
14 Dad and Lies.....	69
15 It Just Takes One.....	75
16 Adrenaline and Bad Decisions.....	79

17	Carol	85
18	Bob	89
19	Broken Promises	93
20	Mysterious Painful Sacrifice.....	99
21	Whirlpool to Blackness	105
22	Survivor's Guilt.....	111
23	One Brave Decision.....	115
24	Awareness of Destiny.....	121
25	Contact from Beyond.....	125
26	Who Saved Whom	131
27	Just One Look.....	137
28	The Heartbreaker.....	141
29	The Protector	143
30	Working Out Pays Off	149
31	Detour of Duty.....	153
32	Game of Love	155
33	Cool Bikes Hot Girls.....	163
34	Love of My Life	171
35	Final Decision.....	177
36	Lie of Magnitude	179
37	Trek of Passion	181
38	Trusting the Journey.....	191
39	Opportunities	195
40	A Different Path.....	197
41	Engagement	203
42	The Turning Point	205
43	The Flood.....	207

44	Wedding	211
45	The Power of Constructive Thoughts	213
46	The Power of Destructive Thoughts.....	217
47	Arranged Meeting.....	221
48	Firestorm Summoned for Surrender	225
49	Heat of the Fire.....	229
50	A Mirage	233
51	Dragonfly	237
52	Facing Timeless Truth.....	243
53	What Led Me Was Love	251
54	Giving Birth to a New Perspective.....	255
55	The Last Call for Doubt and the New Beginning.....	261
56	Phoenix Rising.....	267
	Afterword.....	275

PROLOGUE

This is the story of my journey through the valley of the shadow of death and my emergence into the light on the other side. This is my testament to the ability of humans to find their higher selves, even in times of terrible anguish. It is my life. I hope you'll find something in here that will help you in your own life—that you'll come to understand, as I have, that suffering ends when awakening begins.



CHAPTER 1

LETHAL ICE CREAM

Even now, more than forty years after the fact, I still have a hard time believing that my mother tried to murder my sisters and me. That event, obviously, changed my life forever. Initially, it put me on a downward path into the darkest place imaginable. Evil came into my world. Yes, I do believe evil exists, but it was only by passing through the darkness of evil that I was able to find the joy of being awakened in the light, and certainly, I also know love exists.

In April of 1973, I was a normal, eleven-year-old suburban kid. On the day it happened, even though it was the middle of spring, in Chicagoland it had only recently turned warm, and there were gray, slushy piles of snow on the roadsides. It was in the low fifties, and the dark sky promised rain.

The weather wasn't unusual for the Chicago area at that time of year, but this day was going to be special. At least that's what my mom said. We'd gotten up for school like on any other day, but much to my amazement, my mother had said we were going to see the Ice Capades at the old International Amphitheatre in Chicago.

Like any kid, I was over the moon with the thought that I didn't have to go to school. Even when we were sick, Mom insisted we go to school, so this was nothing short of amazing.

"Woo-hoo!" I shouted when she gave us the news. "No school today!"

"Really?" said my younger sister.

"You want to go see the show, don't you?" said Mom.

We all screamed with excitement and assured her that we did.

"I'm going to run out and get some gas so we don't have to stop on the way," said Mom. "Why don't you kids just relax and watch TV till I get back."

About an hour later, my mom pulled the car into the garage, and we heard the garage door close. I thought that was odd because we'd be leaving soon anyway. We lived in a split-level, and the garage was on the level above the family room.

We could hear her setting paper grocery bags on the counter, and then she came to the head of the stairs and called down to us. "Kids, you wait down there for a minute. I have a surprise for you."

I jumped up off the couch and headed for the stairs. "What is it?"

"Wait," she said. "I said you have to wait. If you come up too soon, you won't get the surprise. You hear?"

I went back to the couch, and my sisters and I giggled as we speculated about what the surprise could be.

"Okay, you three," Mom finally called down from the kitchen. "Today's going to be a special day. Who wants some ice cream before we leave?"

We were off the couch and up the stairs in a heartbeat. Mom had three bowls on the counter and was dishing up some ice cream. We squealed with excitement. But when I took a closer look at my bowl, I froze. It was covered with what looked like crushed up white candy.

"Wow!" I said. "What's this topping? One piece has an S on it."

Mom seemed disturbed somehow, and distant, but she continued to prepare the dishes of ice cream, so I thought little of it. Maybe she just had a lot on her mind. "The S means your special, and it's a special day today."

We all thanked her and went back downstairs to watch TV while we devoured the treat.

At first, my sisters didn't see any of the special bits in their bowls, but then they too found the pieces marked with an S.

A few minutes later, my mom came down the stairs with a blanket draped over her arm. In one hand she had a hammer, in the other a box of nails.

"What's that stuff for, Mom?" I asked.

She didn't respond. She just started nailing up the blanket across the entryway that lead into the family room. That shut out a lot of light, and the room immediately became stuffy. I thought I caught a faint whiff of car exhaust, but I didn't think anything of it.

"Mom why are you nailing up the blanket?"

She turned to me again. Her eyes were empty and almost lifeless. "It's a surprise for your daddy when he comes home from work."

I frowned. "What surprise?"

"Oh, you'll see."

I was bewildered at the time, but years later, when I looked back on the "surprise" she had in store for Dad, I realized the depth of her hatred for the man.

She went through the door from the family room to the garage, leaving the door open. I figured she must have left it open because we'd be leaving any moment. I hurried to finish my ice cream.

There was no sign of Mom for a while, and I started to wonder why we hadn't left yet. If we didn't hurry, we were going to be late for the start of the show. But now I was tired for no apparent reason.

Done with our ice cream, we just watched TV while we waited for Mom. My sisters lay on the floor with their pillows, and I stayed on the couch. I began to smell more exhaust fumes and thought I saw a faint bluish wisp drifting in from the garage. "I think the car is plenty warm now," I yelled toward the garage.

My mother didn't respond.

Now I began to feel more than tired. I was woozy, sleepy, and sick. The room was becoming foggy from the fumes billowing in from the garage, making it difficult for me to see the TV. My sisters seemed oblivious to the exhaust; they were sitting closer to the screen, but they did begin rubbing their sleepy eyes. The carbon monoxide burned my eyes, and I had to squint to get them into focus. I could taste the filthy exhaust as it coated the inside of my mouth and nose. My chest got tight, and I began to cough violently. I felt isolated—alone, and I wondered what was happening to me and hoping I wasn't going to have a full-blown asthma attack. I couldn't imagine why we were down here alone and why our mom wasn't here to help us.

On the floor, my sisters were gently rolling from side to side. They weren't saying anything, but each gave an occasional little whine or moan. Then they closed their eyes, and they seemed to be drifting in and out of sleep.

It was getting harder and harder for me to breathe, and I quickly realized an asthma attack was coming on. I didn't have my inhaler with me, but I didn't have the strength or alertness to get up and get it. Soon I was choking and coughing. I was gasping for air, but there was no clean air to be found.

Then a virgin thought entered my mind: This is what death feels like. I'm going to die. It wasn't some whimsical notion. I knew clearly that my time to die had arrived, and I surrendered to the fact.

Not only couldn't I breathe, I couldn't even manage to keep my eyes open. I was weak. My body was limp, and all I wanted to do was lie down and drift away. I felt like my whole body was wrapped in many heavy blankets, but through all those layers, I heard a voice. It shook the whole room, like rolling thunder. Not a pretend voice or some distant spirit voice. It was a real voice. I had no concept of such things at the time, but I know now that it was my higher self, speaking to me, guiding me. "Get up and go for the door. Go for the door!" The voice said. It was forceful but not angry or panicked. It was an encouraging voice, and I just did what it said. My response was automatic. I didn't think or question what I was

being told. It was like the voice flipped a switch in me, and I just did as I was told, like a robot following a command.

The encouragement of the voice didn't end the lethargy, but it was enough to get me to my feet. I turned to the garage door and started to move. The door seemed to be a hundred yards away, but one step after another, I made my way toward it. I felt like I was wearing lead shoes and walking up a steep hill through chest-high water.

I tried to call out to my sisters, but all I could do was just breathe. Over and over, I gasped, trying to take in huge gulps of air, but the air in the room was dirty, and my efforts to breathe didn't seem to amount to much. When I reach out toward the door, my arms felt like concrete. I staggered and almost fell. But I managed to right myself. I knew that if I did go down, I might never get up again.

My legs trembled and my knees were about to buckle. My eyes burned, and I had to fight the urge to squeeze them shut against the pain. Now I was in a race with my own failing body. If I could get to the door before I collapsed, maybe I'd live through this.

And then it seemed like someone or something much greater and more powerful than me began controlling my limbs.

I could barely see the garage door through the fumes. I glanced back at my sisters, still motionless on the floor, their limbs in awkward positions. I wanted to go back, to try to rouse them, get them to come with me, but I knew I didn't have much strength—much life—left in me. If I didn't make it to the door, my sisters would surely be dead. I could easily have settled to the floor with them and closed my eyes. But I knew I never would have opened them again.

So I turned and faced the garage door again. I had to command my legs to take each step. But it felt like something other than my own mind and will was driving me. Whatever that great power was, without it, I wouldn't have continued.

That trip across the floor to the garage seemed to take an hour, but finally, I made it, still on my feet, still conscious, barely. But once inside the

garage, I still had to climb four steps to get to the level the car was sitting on and then to the back door. The fumes in the garage were even thicker, a dark, dirty cloud. I could feel the oily exhaust on me like a heavy, filthy blanket. As I faced the steps, I grabbed hold of the wrought iron rail and steadied myself, but I realized to my horror that I didn't have the strength to climb the steps. My whole body was trembling. I would have burst into tears, but I didn't even have the strength to do that. I'd come all this way only to know that I could collapse here at the foot of the steps and die.

But something was pushing me, whether physically or just emotionally I can't say as I look back on that moment. With every tiny bit of strength that remained in my body, I lifted my left foot to the first step. I grabbed the railing with my left hand. Then I used my right hand to lift my right thigh, and I got my foot to the second step.

Now I was right next to the tailpipe of the car, the exhaust pouring onto me through the wrought iron railing like smoke from a raging fire.

I was choking and gagging. Two more steps to go. I slid my hand up the railing and pulled myself forward while lifting my leg to the third step. I stretched out with my arm, but the doorknob was out of my reach. Gasping for air and almost overcome by the toxic exhaust, I lifted my leg to the next step. Now I wrapped my fingers around the doorknob and used it to pull myself up.

My fingers, in fact my whole body was trembling as I reached for the latch and turned it. I pulled on the door, but that door always stuck. I had to pull with all my strength. For a moment I was afraid that if the door came open suddenly, I might fall backward down the steps I'd just climbed. I knew I couldn't make it up them a second time. But I had to get that door open. I felt like I was having a tug-of-war with the devil.

Finally, the door popped open. A wind gust of clean, fresh, cool air hit my face. I stood for a moment on the threshold between life and death, and then I staggered forward into the clean, crisp life.

But I realized the horror wasn't over. I was still dreadfully sick, and I needed someone to help me save my sisters. I tried to scream, but nothing

came out. And it was the middle of a school day and work day. Even if I could find the strength and breath to scream, I knew no one was going to hear me, let alone help me. We had a six-foot privacy fence in our backyard. As far as the world was concerned, I was invisible. I wasn't going to make it. I was going to die, and my sisters were going to die if they weren't dead already.

Then I felt something from within me again. Some force, energy, or power—the same thing that had gotten me up off the couch and helped me all along the way. Even though I could barely hold myself up and was laboring for every breath, something told me to try one last time to call out for help. I steadied myself against the wall of the house and tried to fill my lungs with as much air as I could. I lifted my face to the sky and yelled, “Help!” It still wasn't loud enough to wake a sleeping baby, but it drained me. I was on the edge of blacking out.

At that moment, I felt something squeezing both my arms so hard they hurt. At first I thought it was just a side effect of the carbon monoxide poisoning. Then someone started shaking me so violently my knees buckled, and I knew I wasn't standing on my own.

Someone screamed, “Robert! Robert!”

I looked up at the person, but I was so disoriented that I couldn't make out the face or the voice. I finally managed to focus my eyes and was surprised to see that the person shaking me was my mother.

With the violent shaking and the screaming, my first thought was that she was angry that her plan had failed. I was terrified that she intended to finish me off.

But after she got over the fact that her plan had failed, she seemed to snap out of it. She sprang into action. She ran into the house, and I later learned that once inside she'd called my father at work and told him there'd been a terrible accident, that she'd forgotten to turn the car off after parking it, and the house was full of fumes. He told her to open all the windows, and he raced home. I don't remember his reaction when he reached the house, but I'm sure he was freaked out. He called his parents, and they came over. My sisters went to the hospital in an ambulance.

Today a mother who tried to murder her children would be put in jail, and the father would be a suspect as well. But this was the early '70s. There was no police response, no investigation, no charges filed. And there was no therapy for my sisters and me. Not for my dad either. People just weren't as aware back then. Society wasn't as aware.