

Chapter I – Part VI.

I got married when I was forty-two years old.

My time spent confined by holy matrimony didn't last long because I was, and I quote, a "soulless, boring, lazy sonofabitch." Something like that anyway. That declaration was loudly delivered a little over two years after my wife Donna said, "I do" and I responded, "Absolutely!"

I tried, I really did, but she wanted more out of life, apparently. The page she was on had designs on being upwardly mobile. Donna, being thirty-five years old, wanted to do a little more world exploring before settling down with kids and a big, luxurious, five-bedroom single-family home in Anaheim Hills. I would bring home the bacon, give her credit cards to play with, and she'd pay nannies to raise our fantastic children.

Once they had left the nest, we'd both be back out on the world stage having adventures until our bodies told us to take it easy. Then we'd retire, spoil our grandkids rotten, and eventually die peacefully and pain-free surrounded by our super-successful, handsome family. Donna was very particular about the details and seemed very focused on her life goals.

How we were going to afford all this on my meager fifteen dollars an hour was beyond me. It definitely felt like we were on the clock. She'd always ask about my work and the prospects for advancement, and aggressively encourage me to do something, anything, with my script writing.

My page was mostly blank, and only had designs on staying at the call center. Climbing up the corporate ladder didn't interest me, and traveling the world? Shit, that would mean getting on a plane. Fuck. That.

The script writing was just a hobby, a silly pipe dream. A little creative outlet and never destined to be a career. If anyone wanted to pay me for one of my stories, I'd likely think they were joking or mad, and then have a panic attack.

We had discussed all this before marriage, and I guess I had halfheartedly agreed to all her demands, but why wouldn't I? She was attractive, and more critically, somehow interested in me. She said I "had a spark," whatever that meant. A hidden talent? A superpower? I was just glad she thought I had something worth exploring because entering my forties still unmarried was starting to depress me.

After our short honeymoon, the reality of everything I had signed up for hit me like an ACME anvil, and I found it hard to move onward and upward. The call center was my safe-space, and I found it easy to put all that Donna-life stuff on hold. It wasn't like I didn't like the idea of making more money and moving into a bigger place, I just couldn't make myself care about it. A horrible nervous energy would run through my body when I contemplated a change in career. And this would be followed by the feeling that if I did stick my neck out, everyone would find out I was an idiot. At the call center, I knew what was expected of me, and I was reliable and good with our customers.

Donna was big on going to the gym, something I was always impressed by and eternally grateful for. She'd come back to the apartment after a workout, rocking her leggings and tank top, with her long black hair tied back into a ponytail. She always looked fantastic after a workout. The woman glistened.

During the first few months of our marriage, she'd get back and I'd be greeted with a beautiful smile and a sweet sweaty kiss. As our marriage wore on—especially if she found me

with a twenty-five-ounce Bud Light can in my hand—her welcome would be more formal and eventually, she wouldn't say anything.

In an attempt to prove I wasn't a complete lost cause, I loudly announced I would sign up for a class at the local gym. I picked a yoga class. I mean really, why not, right? Lots of pose-striking and relaxing and stuff, it almost sounded bearable, and it seemed to impress Donna, a little. If "It's a start" was anything to feel good about.

For the first couple of weeks, everything went well. I'd spend an hour posing and relaxing and then go home and talk about it with Donna. I wouldn't say perfect marital bliss was restored, but I think she was happy that I seemed to be enjoying myself and was doing something outside of my comfort zone. I wasn't happy about it, but that wasn't the point. I was trying to take the easiest path away from appearing like a complete disappointment as a husband. My plan seemed to be working. Until week three.

Yoga was a breeze. With only an hour to work with, my class would strike a few simple poses, and then we'd spend the last twenty minutes relaxing. We'd be cats, cows, dogs, chairs, cobras, and even corpses. I mean seriously, I went to the gym and pretended to be a corpse. How perfect was this plan?

The one position I enjoyed the most was the legs-up-the-wall pose, which was exactly as named. Lay down, legs straight up, and hold for a few minutes. After that, we'd cross our legs and let the blood and muscles become properly reacquainted again. It felt fantastic!

If only all our positions were that invigorating.

Most of them made me feel stupid. Downward dog, cow, and cat should have been called, "Hey, look at my ass," "Do you see my ass?" and "That's no space station, that's an ASS!" It

was also hard not to stare, or avoid, some of the specimens on display in the room, never mind stress about what my gelatinous rear end looked like to the unlucky asshole behind me.

Things came to a head when a new pose, “Say hello to my big ass,” was introduced to the class. We were told to lay on our backs, and place our hands on the floor by our sides. Then, in one swift move, we would lift our legs and torso so that the tips of our toes were touching the floor behind our heads. Miss Bendy Instructor demonstrated, and of course, she made it look easy.

After watching the demonstration, I was suddenly very cognizant of the beef and bean burrito I ate before class, and the growing pressure looking to be relieved. I knew the whole point of this yoga class was to stretch and relax our muscles, but I had given strict instructions to certain areas of my body to do no such thing. They were to remain clenched, at all times, no matter what.

I couldn’t get into the position, and typically, I was the only one in class with this problem. While everyone else lifted and set, my legs would lift and then fall to the floor. I tried kicking my legs, but it looked like I was riding an invisible upside-down bike. I tucked my legs against my belly and then tried to flick my feet backward, hoping the momentum would carry me over. It didn’t work, and as I flailed about, I got more frustrated, and as I got more frustrated, I got embarrassed. I could feel my face getting redder, and I could hear other people in the room laughing at me. Fucking yoga elites.

My torso was the problem. It was too long. Girls in high school would frequently say, “He looks weird. The top half of his body is too long,” and Miss Bendy confirmed this as I rolled around trying to get into “Say hello to my big ass”: “You have a long torso. This position will be difficult.”

Really? No shit!

I hated my body, from its beer-fueled belly to its skinny arms and legs. I was weirdly kind of thin and kind of fat at the same time. Thank goodness for that “spark,” right?

I formulated a new plan to get into, “Say hello to my big ass.” I leaned forward and then quickly rolled my whole body backward. As my back hit the floor, I threw my legs toward my head, and it worked. The momentum in my legs dragged my torso into the air, and my feet touched the floor above my head. There was only one problem. I had forgotten all about my clenching responsibilities.

It was the strangest fart I had ever done. The gas didn’t just leak out in a steady stream, creating an embarrassing sound and smell. It just left. All of it, in one loud, massive bang. The force of it actually hurt my sphincter muscle. It was so surprising I suddenly sounded like a member of the English gentry and shouted, “Excuse me!” Then I lost my balance and crashed to the floor in a heap of methane scented failure.

Everyone in the class freaking lost it. Bodies collapsed all over the gym as everyone laughed. Tears streamed down faces, fingers pointed in my direction, and reenactments were performed. Even Miss Bendy had lost her composure.

I rapidly looked at each person in turn, willing them to stop. The sound of their laughter seemed to echo off the walls and double up in my ears. They kept laughing. Pointing.

I got to my feet and ran to the exit and, of course, pulled on the door that wanted to be pushed. I panicked and couldn’t figure out what to do. “Push.” Push what? Damn it! As I pulled harder, the little voice inside my head started to pick on me. *You fucked up again.* I know. *You should have never taken that stupid class.* I know. *Time for a beer.* I know.