

Who am I? Not a writer.

By : Jesse D.

The lines I've been carving in my face with hard living and bad choices form a roadmap of wisdom. I didn't realize that 40 can look like 60 if you don't treat yourself right. I say I don't feel as old as I am; I still feel 23 most days. There's probably some truth baked in there. However, my body feels 107 some mornings. I get aching pains in my hands and shoulders, to the point where my hands are not long from being useless. It's ironic that I find a passion in writing after I developed old lady hands.

Ah, the timekeeper keeps counting. Nearing the edge of forty, I've reluctantly slowed my kamikaze pace towards self-destruction. Gone are the reckless nights of my youth when I could guzzle a fifth of Jack Daniels with ease and then perform the mystifying trick of falling asleep while standing—an act that would baffle even the most jaded of circus clowns.

In my thirties, life threw a cruel curveball, revealing that my love affair with tequila was more toxic than I'd ever imagined. Every time I indulged in that Mexican nectar, I didn't just break out in hives; no, I broke out in handcuffs. It was like clockwork—one sip, two sips, three sips, and I'd find myself in the back of a police cruiser, my wrists adorned with the cold metal bracelets of the law.

Now, in the shadow of forty, the relentless pursuit of self-crippling has decelerated. The mind, once razor-sharp under the influence, now clouds with the fog of middle age. Yes, the wild days are dwindling, but the stories remain—etched in the madness of my memory.

These days, I've simplified my medications to nicotine, which I consume in a weird food-grade salt form or so it says, caffeine, and THC. There's no need for all the other substances anymore. Of course, I make up for the variety in dosages. I consume an ungodly amount of caffeine, including three to four cups of Cuban Espresso as soon as I wake up, two Red Bulls (the 12oz ones, not the smaller bitch ones). This is all done by 7:30 in the morning. My morning routine isn't complete without at least one joint, sometimes two if Gucci Mane, my beautiful dog, and I go on longer walks. Then one or two Zyn pouches, the strange form of nicotine I've changed my addiction to from cigarettes and vapes. Now I mostly take the 3mg, after cutting back from 6mg. I fucked around and overdosed once or twice a week when I first started using them. A nicotine overdose just feels like your stomach is trying to liberate its self from your body. It's been a hard-living, man! I've never been one to figure it out first. Trial and error, that's the only way, especially if you've never done it before. Usually by 9-9:30, my body lets me know I haven't eaten anything. The twisting of my stomach and dizziness should be alarming, had I not already consumed 900mg of caffeine, the equivalent of six cigarettes, and enough weed to satisfy most smokers for the entire day on an empty stomach. A protein shake and Welch's Fruit gummies typically suffice. Calories will just slow ya down. What do I

sound crazy? I feel like a goddamn animal - lean, strong, and quick on my feet. I think I'm onto something profound, the secret formula for peak male performance. It's the combination of those chemicals and a stiff work ethic. You have to stay on your feet - if you sit too much, your ass will sag, and your gut will grow. I haven't worked out or been to a gym in years. I'm about to turn 40 looking like I'm training for the Olympics. Nah, not even push-ups or sit-ups to have a body like most 20-year-olds. Just hard work, lots of it, I'm talking every day. I wouldn't recommend all that caffeine; I just like a good swift kick to the balls in the morning to get a good buzz and get the ideas flowing. Nicotine has its well-known side effects, while THC, though often deemed harmless, tends to induce laziness in most people. For me, however, it has the opposite effect: it calms my mind and sharpens my focus.

Writing, a new vice that I've developed a deep passion for. I wake up around 3 am and get my first cup of cubano espresso. I drop three ice cubes in the mug so it cools to a temperature I can drink rapidly without burning my tongue. I need the speed! I either write parts of a story I'm working on or an article for my blog. Some mornings, I oversleep and don't get much done besides the IG death scroll. However, 99% of the time, I am awoken with the impulse to write. Since I've been writing, the second cup of coffee always seems to get cold. I don't need that Café Bustelo rush anymore; I already feel electrified. My fingers have developed their own personalities, and sometimes the words flow out effortlessly. Sure, there's some trash, but most of it is fucking fire! When I read back over what I've written, I'm often stunned that I'm responsible for the words on the page.

I have realistically read only three or four entire books front to back in my life. Thanks to my cousin, I read "The Road", I was able to finish it in just one day. Cormac McCarthy's cold world where a man must protect his son was sad, exciting, and scary. It's a post-apocalyptic story with no chapters, focusing on the relationship between a father and son. During my high school days I would either copy someone's report or I'd skim through books. I was captivated right away, and couldn't put one in particular down. "Of Mice and Men." I'm not exaggerating when I say I'd skim through, typically only read the first and last few chapters of books, plus the back cover. Yet, I managed to get a couple of classics under my belt. I was always too busy, too jacked up on caffeine to sit still.

Over the last eight years, I've listened to a library of audiobooks, really only related to sales and marketing. I got into audiobooks when I was trying to learn sales, I went fucking hard. Jim Rohn, Tony Robbins, Zig Ziglar, Brian Tracy, and that loud-ass hillbilly Grant Cardone - I devoured their words like they were my lifeblood. I did t even listen to music at that point in my life. I didn't have a life. I'd go to work hours early to study products, stay late to learn from my manager, and chugged the company Kool-Aid, drunk on the allure of money.

Money is what I'm after. Fame holds no affection for this uncompromising soul. I crave greenbacks, the raw power of cash flow. In the race against life - one we're all destined to lose - every sunrise has to be a war, a declaration of intent to conquer

new frontiers and stake claim of undeniable prosperity. I've gained a new sense of direction and a wealth of knowledge without paying outrageous tuition fees. Unfortunately, literary influence isn't something I'm likely to get from Grant Cardone. But that's okay. I've found my rhythm, my voice, and the fire in my words.

Movies, I've watched a fuck ton of movies. According to Urban Dictionary:

"Fuck-ton" is used to express an outrageous amount of something, quite a bit more than a "Shit Load" or a "Shit-ton."

I genuinely have. Ever since I was a small child, I have been obsessed with movies. When I was three or four, I could recite lines from He-Man. When I was about five or six, I could recite entire movies, word for word. Sounds crazy, but it's true. You can ask my mom. We moved from Kentucky to Ohio when I was five years old, and I recited the entire "Harry and the Hendersons" movie. My sister was there, too. I was captivated by film. I was entertained.

I would bet my house that I watched "Monster Squad" 500 times before I was 10. I still watch it to this day, and it still chokes me up. I'm an emotional person. "Teen Wolf" would play continuously at my dad's house. That song, "Win in the end, you've got to win in the end..." I could sit and focus on a movie, something I was rarely able to do for long periods of time especially as a child. I really fell in love with horror movies. My mom tries to say that my dad let me watch horror movies, but it was 100% her. My dad was too firm in his Christian beliefs. He was not going to show a 5-year-old "Psycho" or "The Birds." That was my mom, the one who also introduced me to Jason, Freddy, and Michael. Among them, Jason held the first place trophy in my fucked up imagination; he was my favorite. Each of these iconic horror figures had their own unique appeal and badass qualities that intrigued me. Freddy, with his dark humor and gruesome scenes, was both entertaining and disturbing. I vividly remember the unsettling image of the little Freddy heads on the pizza, a scene that never failed to gross me out. The way he would extract pus and goo or tear out ligaments in his nightmarish world was undeniably cringeworthy.

Then there's Michael, the ultimate boogeyman. The emotionless Shatner mask concealing his real face, his determined and slow-paced walk, the unsettling way he would stalk his prey before suddenly emerging with his signature butcher knife in hand. Michael Myers embodied the essence of slasher horror, striking fear into the hearts of many with his silent and relentless pursuit of his victims. He was the embodiment of terror, the very definition of the slasher villain. Jason remained my favorite character, even though in the first movie, he isn't really in the movie. It's confusing how his appearance changes throughout each installment. The initial movies may have lacked compelling storylines and solid acting, but everything changed when he finally acquired the iconic hockey mask. At that moment, he transformed into a truly terrifying entity, a zombie emerging from the murky depths of Crystal Lake, his menacing figure wearing the goalie mask, often wielding a menacing machete. The mere thought of encountering such a monstrous being is

enough to make anyone check under their bed before sleeping; if that doesn't give you chills, you might be a true psychopath.

There's something almost mythological about Jason's strength. His kills, though gruesome, are undeniably captivating in their own way. Watching his relentless pursuit and unfathomable power unfold on screen was both thrilling and chilling. I could easily binge-watch all the Friday the 13th movies one after the other, drawn not just to Jason himself, but to the entire atmosphere and lore surrounding the films.. I loved all the horror movies. Not just Jason, Freddy and Michael, but all of em. During my elementary days, Fridays after school were scheduled to visit Moovies, our neighborhood movie rental store, couple years before Blockbuster took over the scene. It's a nostalgic memory now, considering it's probably been transformed into a Chinese restaurant. Those were the days when I would pick out 5-6 movies to rent, creating my personal film festival to enjoy over the weekend.

My sister had a strong hand in my taste for scary movies. While she may not recall it now, one film that left me with chocolate stains in my tightly whiteys was, "The People Under the Stairs." The eerie storyline and suspenseful atmosphere of that movie fucking freaked me out, leaving me with an unforgettable sense of unease. "When a Stranger Calls Back" during that era. Though the exact version escapes my mind, it was one of those early to mid-'90s renditions that managed to keep me up at night. The stalker would paint himself black and hide in the shadows, only seeing his eyes open. It's sad that my son won't get to have the experience of going to the movie store. Now, it's just constantly in his face every 10 seconds. Everything is instant. My brother-in-law loved scary movies; he showed me 'In the Mouth of Madness' and 'Jacob's Ladder.' Shit, 'The Exorcist.' Aaron introduced me to mind-bending movies. I especially liked those. Demon stuff freaks me out because it feels so real. My mom, though, always got me with the horror shit. 'Pet Sematary.' That movie gave me nightmares that I still have to this day. "Raaaacchelllll." Now having a son, who looks eerily like Gage, it hits me in a whole new way. Pet Sematary is also further evidence my mother is responsible for my twisted imagination. As she remembers me acting out scenes as Gage. "First I played with Jude, then i played with Mommy, now i wanna play with yeeewww...." So as much as she wants to cast blame, it was all her and I do thank you momma.

So, movies. That's my claim to knowing what the fuck I'm talking about when it comes to storytelling. I don't consider myself a self-proclaimed 'writer.' I'm really not a writer. I'm just an emotional movie enthusiast from a broken family who took the right combination of drugs. That probably contains a grain of truth in the mix as well. To be honest, I have been trying to write movie scripts since I was a kid. My cousin and I would invent storylines and select the actors to portray them. Damn, how I wish I could find one of those. I remember writing an x-men story and Sylvester Stallone was Wolverine. I wish I could temper better ones, Cody always had the best drawings and stories though.

My cousin Cody stands as the biggest influence on my deep-rooted passion for

movies. Cody's film tastes veer me away from horror. Instead, he opened the door to the brilliance of the Coen brothers, the masterminds behind my two favorite films "No Country for Old Men" and "The Big Lebowski." He also introduced me to Tarantino, and Scorsese at a very young age. Cody, on the other hand, is a wordsmith in his own right. Armed with multiple degrees, he peddles his wisdom as an English teacher. Despite his literary profession, I have yet to persuade the elusive cocksucker to read any of my written works. Just kidding, cuzo. He's also the cousin who convinced me dive into "The Road."

I love books, and it would be dishonest to claim I never attempted to read thousands of them. In reality, I simply couldn't sit still. Reading was a prelude to sleep, a sedative for my restless mind.

I just can't label myself a writer. However, I can make up a pen name and be any character my imagination wants to create. This freedom allows me to articulate my innermost thoughts without any inhibition, to give a voice to my imagination. I can reminisce about the diverse array of wild mother fuckers who have crossed my path during a crazy 40 years on this planet. I am convinced that my narratives would hold a certain allure for at least a few people.

A long-time friend, whom I've been sharing my writing with, recently asked why I was using a pen name. I shrugged. I thought that's what writers did. Shows how much I know about the craft. To be honest, my last name doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. I came up with a name and just sounded good. When it comes to concocting aliases, nothing is permanent. It matters little to me what you want to call me; I'm entertained.

I've lived a crazy life thus far, though not every moment has been spectacular. The leathery, weathered roadmap does hold some wisdom. I know this because it's been tested through failures, silent lessons, and, eventually, achieving what I set out for.

Life has a way of teaching you what no classroom ever could. The victory's feel better with scars, knowing it took some fucking pain and blood to get it. That's the shit that hits, those fleeting moments of clarity amidst chaos—those are the true educators. Each failure a silent lesson to rethink what you thought you knew. And yet, here I am, still entertained by the absurdity of it all.

Whether I'm called by my birth name or a pseudonym, it doesn't change the essence of who I am or the stories I have to tell.