

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

A Tribute to Four Beautiful People

By VINCENT D. FAINI

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Forward

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Dear Jan, Chris, Cheryl and Trudy,

I am writing this letter to the four of you because certain events in my life made me realize that I should not avoid or put off telling people what they mean to me.

Though I have had more than my share joy in life, these past 15 years have been a whirlwind of loss, pain and heartache and this year my life has proved to be even more daunting.

In the last twelve months I have lost 14 close friends and family members to various incidences such as accidents, long term disease and sudden death. In addition to the loss of many of my loved ones, I have also been dealing with the added stress of nearly losing a handful of other people I care about and the frustration I feel watching the people I cherish suffer from hardships of which I have been unable to help alleviate.

We are all aware of the tired old saying, “When it rains it pours” and this has certainly been true for me this past year; plagued with puzzling health issues and these issues had amplified in the last few months - eventually sending me to the hospital.

As I laid in the hospital disorientated, lucidity just out of reach as I was carted from the CAT-SCAN to the electro-cardio gram – after which a nurse drew blood from my feverish body as a doctor rattled off a battery of questions fretting for my heart and my over-all health – I had plenty of time to ponder my life.

Several hours spent on a gurney afforded me plenty of time to take an inventory of my life – after which I was not entirely pleased with how it all has turned out.

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I could not help but think of the friends and family I had lost. - mourning the fact that I had not told them what they had meant to me; or in the case of a few – that I was bitter I had not confronted them on certain issues, nor resolved how I felt them and so forth.

It was on that night – more than ever that I realized that I was living in the ‘Red Zone’ – meaning that there is no guarantee that I would wake up tomorrow or any day for that matter. The past year had shown me that this fact is true for all of us and it is more likely with each passing year. It was then and there that I decided that I need to live my life differently and I need to reach closure on other issues and I mean soon.

I made a few vows to myself that night. From then on I vowed to live each day as if there is no tomorrow – as I balance this oath by promising to invest as if I will live forever; at least for the sake of people I care about. I desire very much to leave these people a nice financial cushion. Needless to say, it was on this night I also felt an over-powering urge to share with people I know what they mean to me. I also gave much thought and consideration to all the bitterness and hate that I have held on to for so many years and I decided that I would call a long list of people - many of whom I had not spoken to for decades. I made a promise to take the soonest opportunity to forgive all who have trespassed against me – (and I did just this)

Later that night, as I laid alone in the darkness I was afraid that I would die. I didn’t fear death per se – I have faced death on a few occasions. I resented the fact that I had squandered more of my life than I am comfortable admitting and bitter that I had not lived fully enough.

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I did not dread the big unknown, but I feared that I may miss my chance to live fully as I have always wanted to live. I wondered if I would survive long enough to achieve my vows.

I felt torment that I would never get a chance to tell the four of you what each of you have meant to me - individually and as a group – how each of you have been instrumental in changing my life.

It is odd to realize that if the constellation of events had not happen in a specific way - this change would have likely not occurred. If I had not gotten sick, it is unlikely, or if one of you had not been in the equation, or if so many of my friends and relatives had not passed away – I could go on forever with various permutations, but I won't.

Initially I had planned to write each of you separate one page letters or perhaps an identical three page letter. However, I am reminded of the movie **'Sleepless in Seattle'** when the radio psychologist ask Tom Hanks what he could share about his wife and he says, How long is your show? This is the dilemma I face when trying to share with anyone what each of you – what all of you have meant to me. So instead of a three page letter – in its place is this small book and I am still left feeling that all of what I share in this small book is still too damn inadequate.

As inadequate as it may be it will have to suffice.

I hope this story accomplishes sharing with you what I have experienced, what I feel – what each of you means to me.

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Prologue

This is a story about one beat up old outcast who unexpectedly meets and is thrown in with four seemingly ordinary women; each woman as different from the others as one could imagine.

The recluse had once been a vibrant high functioning optimist who took great joy in evolving and growing in every area of his life. He once possessed an almost boundless compassion and love for humanity, and many of his youthful dreams revolved around helping and protecting other people and encouraging everyone to be all that they could be. His desire to see everyone strive to become healthy, happy, successful and fully actualized was forged into his heart and mind from a life of adversity.

The old fart was lucky enough to have a mother who was loving and strong and loyal to all her friends.

He observed how she handled hardship and adversity throughout his childhood. He often hurt and felt guilty for not being able to lighten her load, and could not help but be inspired by the examples his mother always set of how one should conduct them selves as they go through life.

It was because of her and the inner fire that she imbued within him that he discovered he had the ability to reinvent himself, to become whatever he wanted to be. No longer did the lackluster performance of his father and most of the people he observed as a child discouraged him. There were other high-functioning and fully actualized people that walked the planet.

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Admittedly they were rare creatures in his sphere of existence, but the library provided volumes of such people alive in the present and throughout history. Because of his mother and these other high achievers he understood that if one man or woman could achieve something - no matter how superhuman - then so could another.
So could he

His joy was boundless when he realized that his potential was open-ended, practically limitless. His joy grew exponentially as his competency and mastery over his own life grew. His hope for mankind was also optimistic since he knew that whatever he could accomplish, so could others. This he knew was the key to a better world. He was confident that once everyone realized this opportunity that God has given them they would flock to this gift of choice like moths to a flame and they also would become the creators of their lives.

Over the years however, this world weary curmudgeon has time and again been forced to realize the sad fact that this is not the case. He has met many people that have high I.Q.s, people who possess various degrees, and even an area or two in which they enjoy some measure of competence. He realized that many of these people were nonetheless devoid of joy, and also of the desire or belief that they could develop competency in every area of their lives. It was apparent that their skills was due to a freakish talent or two combined with mindlessly being slotted into one school or another where they simply memorized the material given and regurgitated only what their teacher wanted to hear. It was sadly apparent to him that these people lacked the ability or the willingness to work with anyone for a cause greater than themselves.

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Worst of all, he learned that most people resent the fact that other people have more than them or enjoy successes that they themselves are too lazy to strive for.

This naïve cheerleader finally found a career where he worked with people who had many things going for them. They had high I.Q.'s, college educations, and lots of reasons to protect their self interests. These include protecting their health and defending their jobs and their families. He spent years conversing with these people as they shared many of their political views - of helping their fellow man and the importance of sacrifice and being standup for the greater good.

He felt as if he had finally come home. Finally he was among friends and coworkers who got what was important in life.

It was at this place of employ that he spent two decades preparing to be financially and emotionally ready to take on a wife and have kids. Twenty years to find a woman that had all the attributes that he desired in a mate.

He thought he had found her.

She was intelligent, funny, spontaneous passionate, sexy, educated, and she possessed many skills that would make her an asset to any man. After years of self-sacrifice, of working long and hard, investing in real estate, after years of going through a turnstile of women who wanted to simply exist without growth he thought he had found a woman that fit all of his criteria: he found someone he felt would be the best role model for the passel of kids he wanted to have.

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After all his years of saying no to himself - he was ready to settle down.

The old salt was about to learn a terrible lesson; Judge not what people say, but judge them by the fruits that they bear. The problem with the people that he trusted and loved – was despite all their talk – life had never really tested them. Unbeknownst to him at the time a storm was coming that would nearly destroy him and most the people he loved and trusted.

Some of these people that he felt were his friends refused to be tested and bailed, many of two who had been tested failed to even stand up in the name of their own self-interest. Because of this storm, his life would change forever. **And so his story of four ordinary women begins....**

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End of a Season

It is the end of the season and our time as a team has come to an end... and sadly, for me layoff is a reality.

Before working with each of you individually and as a group I had enjoyed working for **Henri' & Desmond** in the call center - doing a little of inbound, a little customer service, but mostly I worked in outbound which was my favorite because of the challenge of the hunt; It didn't hurt that I have a face for telemarketing.

During my time at **Henri' & Desmond**, I have rubbed shoulders with many of my fellow coworkers – too many of whom hate their job or feel diminished over the fact that they are merely telemarketers – that somehow they had failed in life – that they had lowered themselves to a career they do not consider stimulating or socially respected. They are hurt by the fact that the general public thinks of them as bothersome bottom feeders and in the back of their minds, many of them have bought into this public image. I do not feel this way. I think that it is a great thing to have a vocation, any honest vocation where a person has the opportunity to pull their own weight in life – to carry their own water.

The reason I came to **Henri' & Desmond** a few years ago was to lay low while I licked my wounds, to heal my hurt – much like an ex-gunslinger that had been bush whacked and shot-up pretty bad by the Federales -broken... left for dead

I needed this place to hide – to be somewhat back in the real world without really having to be engaged fully.

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Prior to coming to Medford, prior to my self imposed exile, the Federales had come for me with a vengeance. I had been after all the head sobduster who had dared to say no. I had dared to step up for his friends – refusing to be bought off, or to sell out. In the mind of the Feds I was the pesky ringleader because I was insistent that my coworkers be allowed to protect their health and thereby protect their jobs of which they and their families depended so heavily on; secure gravy government jobs that allowed each of us to earn \$60,000 plus a year and top benefits to boot.

I was filled with supreme confidence that we would secure our rights – the law of the land was after all on our side; I had no doubts that my coworkers and friends would see the wisdom to stand up as a team. They would I was certain act in their own self-interest to protect their selves, their jobs, their health and ultimately their families well being. For all these reasons I felt we would prevail.

I was wrong; and I have paid dearly for my hubris. I have lost what I valued the most in my life: my ability to be there for my mother – diminished; my fiancé' who never stopped promising - for better or worse - could not take the pressure; so she left, and with her my dream of starting my own family; I lost my health, most of my wealth, my friends whose interest I wanted to protect – behaved like rats deserting a plague ship The biggest loss was my trust in people. My love of humanity had been snuffed out.

So I came to Medford get away from my past, from my bitterness and my hate. I wanted to be where I would only have to relate to people in a limited way. I wanted a place where I could go to the mattresses away from the enemy – devising plans, seeking to force accountability on the evil low level bureaucrats who set out purposely to destroy us.

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Medford became a place where I resigned to live with my losses; it is a place I chose to suffer a solitary existence, to never again share love with a woman, never to have children, never to have a family and outings with friends and their families. I holed up in Medford lamenting it all until the day came I knew I needed to get back out in the real world. No matter how bad life has been – I am not a victim. I am not one to marinate in misery for very long and there is something in me that wants to live and to laugh despite life's disappointments. That is something given to me from God and from my mother and from my own will to power.

It was nice at H & D. It was safe; safe and away from people who had betrayed both me a few of my friends, a few of whom are now dead; dead from the betrayal. For me H & D was not unlike the typical sundry store or black smith forge where an ex-gunslinger in hiding takes on a new identity working his new craft to heal and relate to people that do not know him with friendly formality; A place where he hopes he can keep people at arm's length without offending or incurring suspicion and unwanted questions.

It was just the place to live the simple life; and make a little extra cash for my projects and money for charities as my form of therapy – giving to people in need while keeping them at arms length all the while as I dreamed of judgment day.

I was happy as one could expect considering the shit I had gone through; actually, sadly, happier than most people without an axe to grind

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My life was to take a dramatic change in ways that I never would have expected. In the beginning of November I was offered the opportunity to work in a new venture put together by H & D.

Ladonna – a wonderful woman and my boss from Outbound approached me with an offer to work more hours and with higher pay. Two months prior I had told her that I wanted to work more hours because I needed extra cash. I needed extra funds with which to help a few friends back east and extra cash to feed the infrastructure I had been building for the goal of raising more money for various charities. Ladonna had told me that she wasn't sure if she could help; but she assured me that she would keep a lookout for me if anything came up.

While I waited for more work from H & D – I picked up a day job working 40 hours a week in addition to the 25 hours in Inbound.

After a month and a half – Ladonna tells me that a manager in another division had heard that I was hardworking and reliable and wanted me in her department for the holiday season. I promptly agreed, but with the understanding that I would have to give my day job a week or two lead time on my resignation. I also made it clear that I would not be able to sit in on most of the training for the new job, but I assured her that I would make up the training on my own time. Ladonna said she would check to see if that was okay and that she would get back with me. She did and it was and she sent me over to introduce myself to the woman who was to become my new boss.

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Introductions

My new boss was a friendly woman with quiet allure, ash blonde hair and direct soft blue eyes. She had taken me into her department - even though conflicts from another job caused me to receive only minimal training – this she was willing to overlook.

A week later this nice woman told me that I might want to take advantage of a new opportunity opening in a new division that **Henri’ & Desmond** wanted to create.

Never in my wildest dreams could I have guessed that this opportunity would dramatically change my life. It was in this new department set up by H & D to generate more business in an economy still reeling from the Wall St. debacle where I have had the good fortune to work with four seemingly ordinary women.

(Despite the crap I had gone through in the past ten years – these four women were instrumental for the flood of feelings and a reawakening of dreams that I never suspected would ever feel or aspire to think of again).

To my surprise - I fell in love with these four women. I fell in love with them individually and as a group. I fell in love with them for the qualities they possess – some of which are unique to them as individuals and some of which they share in common (- and me – a guy who life has taught to detest the “**L**” word.)

How did this happen you may ask?

I will explain, but first allow me to digress.

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The first person I was assigned to meet was a young woman who was to be my new boss.

Her name is Jan.

As soon as I entered her office she got up to greet me with a handshake. Her hand was soft, warm and welcoming. I was startled that someone so young and attractive had been assigned such a huge undertaking; never would I have guessed that she was in fact ten years older than she appeared. She has dark luminous eyes in which one could lose themselves, eyes so compelling I found I had trouble tearing my gaze from hers and I was somewhat embarrassed that I was guilty of holding her gaze longer than social convention allows – and this was something that did not diminish overtime, something I could not control and would have been reticent to do so if I could.

I could not help but notice that she was also cheerful, intelligent, animated and perhaps even passionate about life – and with oodles of sexual charisma to boot. She appeared an unusual combination of full-bodied woman and girlish sprite. Nietzsche may have called her *über-feminine* (Over-the-top feminine)

(She seemed to be honest and direct and to my pleasure and surprise she was so honest and so direct she even told me as much – assuring me that she was the type of person that would be direct and honest with me if ever there was any confusion or miscommunication between us or if I happened on the off chance to make her angry or offended her). She let me know that she would be quick to call me on the carpet if ever I got out of line.

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She said it was nothing personal, it was simply how she has always been with her family, friends, coworkers and the employees in her charge. She expected this in return from the people around her.

Although I liked what I saw and what I heard, I was troubled. She seemed too good to be true.

Why, you may ask?

Because I have been through the mill my friends and I have heard it all before. In fact the last person too good to be true was none other than my ex-fiancé. Ironically, my new boss and my ex looked so much alike and presented themselves so much alike, they could have been fraternal twins. Their similarity was a bit mind jarring and to be honest a little painful.

Life and my problems with my former employer had put my fiancé to the test and she failed. In my mind I would not be convinced that my new boss fit the bill until she had been tested. However, as jaded and as skeptical as I was, I still could not help but hope that she was what she presented. Regardless, until such opportunity occurred, I knew I would happily follow wherever she would lead – it was after all what I signed up to do.

My next introduction was with two women – Trudy and Chris. They had started three weeks prior to my coming on board.

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Trudy is short, strongly built and butch – with short thick steel grey hair and broad handsome features. Right away I was struck by the fact that she was in-your-face direct kind of person – letting every one she meets know that she is gay and proud of it and she has a wife and by-the-way, “What are ya going to do about it?!”

I noticed right off the bat that Trudy was also loud, smart, kind, gregarious, helpful and brassy and she seemingly took every opportunity to laugh and laugh loud. Rosie O’Donnell has nothing on Trudy.

Chris is a tall and the word stately – even regal came to my mind during our introduction. She was dressed less casual than most of the people at H & D with the exception of the ‘suits’ that prowl the mahogany halls of management. Her manner though friendly was also brisk and no nonsense – like an English nanny ready to keep in line each child put in her charge for the lady of the manor – Jan. I could tell that despite her neat and formal appearance Chris probably was a woman so frugal she’d squeeze a dime hard enough to make Eisenhower squeak.

Last but certainly not least was Cheryl. She came on board a week after me and I was promptly introduced to her by both Trudy and Chris both of whom have worked with her in Mail Order Entry and Inbound – though Chris and Cheryl had known each other for years prior to meeting Trudy.

Cheryl is a woman about my age; she has calm friendly features and always looks at people with a simple openness of spirit which I found both disarming and comforting.

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She seemed compassionate, loving and lets people know that she has strong Christian beliefs without being pretentious or pushy about it. She also is very fond of cooking for everyone she knows and is not shy about encouraging them to eat. My resolve to maintain my eating regimen for weight loss was often sorely put to the test whenever she brought in her tasty snacks.

So there I was, with four women whose presence(s) would dominate my every waking moment for the next three months - situated in a little alcove which was to become our own private universe from where we would work together as the A-Team.

Each one of these women, though seemingly ordinary appeared to be straightforward, and each in their own way asserted that they were honest, had integrity, strong work ethic and were standup.

There was no way I could be sure that they were what they presented. After all, it is rare for anyone at first introduction to come out and say “Hi, my name is (so and so) and I want you to know straight off that I am selfish and lazy, backbiting and a two-faced liar. I cheat on my taxes, steal from the register, and run I around on my husband without compunction. I am inappropriate with barnyard animals and I habitually fart in church.

Admissions such as these are rare and in fact too many people speak as if they are either a Mother Theresa or Gandhi in training.

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My skepticism of these women was nothing personal – it was something that had been forged by a lifetime of distasteful experiences. Life taught me that people need to be tested and to my way of thinking these ladies had not been.

At least not that I have ever witnessed – I had not known them prior to the formation of the team there was no evidence for me to examine. Unlike me, there were no glaring public documents that would point to them of possessing good or bad characters. No scuttlebutt was available to me of with which I could use to evaluate or pass judgment.

I would have to wait and see how things played out.



I remember the first time Jan called us all into a conference to plan our strategy as to how we would assault new terrain never before entered by the company. Jan reminded me of a friend I

have who was once a team leader for Seal Team Six as she laid out her plans for the team; she cautioned us that the corporate waters we would enter were unknown, murky with unpredictable currents and riptides; she warned us that there were hidden dangers and unfriendly forces that did not want to see her or her team to succeed; she told us that we would be forced to create new procedures and protocols and constantly learn new things on the fly.

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She said that our venture would get tough. She warned us that we may even – God forbid – see the '**Dark-Side of Jan**'.

She predicted that our trek into the unknown may even become hellish. We heard the words Jan was saying and like any good sailor fond of their skipper we just laughed and giggled – “Yeah, right, as if such a pretty, amicable young lady could have a dark side. As if she really knew what hellish really was.



She had no idea – and neither did we.

In a venture such as this – *none* of us had ever been tested.

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Preparing for the Onslaught & Airing Our Scars

For the next two weeks as we dug in, we prepared at a fast and furious pace getting geared up for D-Day. It was during this pre-phase that I learned that I was not the only one shot up by life. Each of my new coworkers also had scars that they usually kept hidden, scars that would now and then itch – demanding to be scratched – needing to be aired.

They bared their scars to each other individually and to the group as a whole. I was reminded of a scene from the movie ‘Lethal Weapon’ when Mel Gibson and Renee Russo; showing off all of the scars they had both incurred as a result of myriad gun battles, fist fights, and the innumerable times they had spent apprehending and subduing a variety of recreant and dangerous members of society.

“Hey look at this doozy of a scar, I got it....”

“That’s nothing, check out this one....”

“I got this when....”

“Yeah, but you should have seen what I did to the other three guys....”

One of these fine women – my first teammate - aired scars of her two previous marriages to husbands who did not listen, husbands who lied, assholes who ran around or simply did not pull their weight and appreciated her as she deserved.

Her injuries were not only products of the rough and tumble world of adulthood.

No.

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Sadly, instead of the love and care that should have been her due, her life from the earliest of childhood had been riddled with wounds inflicted by those who should have protected and cared for her.

It was from them that she routinely received abuse. Disregard habitually handed out by a negligent, mostly absent father; a man who tended to drink too much and tend to his friends more than his family. (Her father sounded like my father to a T). Another scar was a mother who was negative, always telling her and her siblings that they were not smart enough, pretty enough or adequate in anyway... as physical abuse was chronically administered.

In between displaying her scars this woman would talk about the joy and gifts that life has given her. She would talk about the achievements she has earned and earned the hard way. Her most obvious joy was her daughter, her Grandson, and her best friend – her Grandmother.

She described her daughter as this wonderful being with such pure loving energy, full of heart and joy, with sweetness and humor. As she spoke of her daughter I was astounded over how her entire demeanor had changed. Her eyes glowed brighter, became more luminous, and her face glowed with such love and pride. She literally emanated love – radiating with such force, it was as though I could feel it hit my chest and sink deep into my heart. It was like the rumbling of a rocket lifting off at NASA.

Every time she talked about her Grandmother and Grandson, the force of love that radiated from her each time hammered my heart with unrelenting intensity.

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Like my mother I am empathetic by nature, and on rare occasions I can experience deeply what another is feeling if I allow myself to go in deep and willingly join with them. Rarely is a person able to evoke such empathic feelings within me when I have not voluntarily submitted my heart.

The force of her personality was such as she described her daughter it was as if for that few minutes in time my nervous system merged with hers. I could feel a joy and love so powerful that I was too choked up to speak, and I could see how easy it would be to weep from the joy and exaltation of being around a person such as she described.

The second woman showed where she had been battered and bloodied. She also suffered in her childhood from a habitually drunk father who never tired of telling her how she wasn't good enough. Her husband had cheated on, misused, neglected, and lied to her. She also felt disappointment for her offspring who did not flower and flourish in life in the manner all loving mothers would want their children to succeed.

She was sad that he was not happy as he seemed to drift aimlessly through life like inert flotsam. Another injury to her soul was the distance she felt from other people. Most people could not get that she was not an odd bird – but merely a woman of a different flavor. The backbiting, sniping and callousness of others hurt her to the bone, though she puts up a brave front that it was no big deal.

The third woman was also scarred from a lackluster marriage, disappointing children, and a medley of wrongs that life had thrown her.

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Her one real pleasure is her grandchildren, her faith in God, and her desire to love and serve others.

My fourth and final teammate was not without her share of scars. She suffered from a dysfunctional family, from poverty, from long hard years of substance abuse. She shared her heartache of disappointing relationships and her struggle to live with her sexual orientation without being hassled.

Last but not least was her torment over her mercurial relationship with her spouse.

Each of these women showed their scars and talked about what makes their pain bearable, and what gives their life meaning and joy.

And though I witnessed each of their scars - their hurts and their subsequent consolations - I did my best to keep things muted and at arms length. It is often hard being empathic - especially in my latter years ever since the betrayals. I simply don't want to put in the emotional investment or to open up to being vulnerable to others. This is why it surprised me when one of their stories hit me so deeply, and I can only surmise that it is due to the strength of her personality. She is very much what many would call a charismatic.

The years have taught me to guard myself with skepticism, because I have learned the hard way that everyone has got a bitch. I have learned that no matter how big your bitch, someone's got a bigger bitch.

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I have found that practically everyone has a ‘somebody has done somebody wrong song’ as if Neil Diamond had written the song specifically for them. Invariably whenever called upon they can sing it with a cry in their voice – a cry sometimes warranted, but sometimes pulled out like a weapon or tool - to manipulate the perception of people around them.

We all know people who never tire of telling anyone and everyone the various injustices flung their way by lovers, friends, coworkers – the list is endless - only to find out after getting the true skinny of the other’s side of the story – after collecting the evidence – the person bitching was the main source of trouble – they had it coming.

Even when people share what brings them joy or show off the stellar facets of their personalities it can be slanted or used to manipulate the perception of those within their sphere of influence.

I have learned that although most people may not fall into either category, their assertions are still suspect; because they are hampered by their perceptions – perceptions sometimes skewed.

I am no different.

I was on guard; and as I said, they had not been put to the test.

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D-Day!

Two weeks had passed and D-Day was upon us.

Many things that Jan had set in motion to go well – didn't.



It wasn't her fault; it just was what it was.

Other people and departments that were suppose to perform and deliver for her – didn't

As I said, although it wasn't her fault - It became as we say in the Marines – a cluster

fuck, (or should I say cluster flip? Na, the nasty word replacement does not really work in this situation – sorry Jan.)

To compensate for the cluster we all started working more intensely and putting in longer hours and Jan – always one to lead by the front did the same

We all started getting less sleep and eating lunch at our computers became common; no one talked about it, but we all were doing it – and happily doing it – we were after all Jan's A Team.

Then things started to get really surreal – an infection I had been carrying around for a few months probably did not help.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

No longer were we just phone jockeys acting as liaisons for our field sales reps and the businesses they visited; now were swept away by a tornado of activity, a maelstrom of non-stop responsibilities and everyone and everything needing our attention –NOW!

Life became a whirlwind causing a perceptual shift within me. As I looked out into the world I was no longer simply me experiencing our mission in the first person, but instead I became a disassociated spectator standing outside of it all. I observed my teammates and myself in the second person as we interacted and dealt with each other as the turbulence of responsibilities that kept piling up around us.

Within the interior of my mind a vaguely familiar voice whispered, “*You’re not in flipping Kansas anymore Bucko!*”

We're Not In Kansas Anymore Toto!

On the heels of my last thought, I began to see Jan and my teammates in a different light and I thought of all their past experiences that they had shared with each other and all their scars that they showed with a different spin.

Suddenly, Jan was no longer simply our attractive boss and high-powered corporate sales executive; instead she was like Dorothy from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. She had been languishing for years in CS, Kansas and had been miserable. In the tiny hamlet of CS - to her everything appeared grey scale and sepia. Jan had always dreamed of the day she would be able to escape – dreaming of the time she would finally get to see the world; hopefully someplace strange and exciting; and to be immersed in experiences that would finally stimulate her mind, challenge her abilities and allow here to grow and to breathe. She is after all a self-actualizer who discovered since earliest childhood and all through her time in Kansas that she has the ability to recreate herself into anything she desires.

No doubt she thrilled just as I had years previous that she was open-ended, limitless – that she could accomplish anything that is her heart's desire (providing of course that others do not undermine her efforts). She had learned that her environment and past did not dictate her present or her future. All this I'm sure is why she is filled with the power of love – wanting everyone to understand and share her secret.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Sadly she was to learn that very few people understand what has liberated her. Tragically, very few people cared. The worst is that many people have actually resented her because she is a woman that does what she says and is not ashamed to take pride in her achievements.

For years she had been startled that many of the citizens of CS, Kansas had been backbiting and running her down. Many of them had sunk so low because they were jealous of her intelligence, her abilities and her beauty.

Most disheartening to her is the fact that some people actually resented or hated her. Because despite all of the adversities life has thrown at her - she still is filled with laughter and love. Jan still possesses a joy for life. Now despite her loving



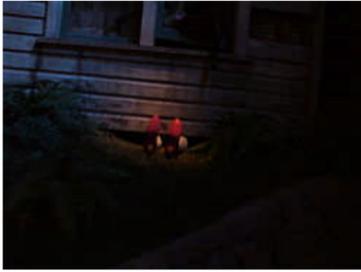
nature, Jan was unhappily doing time in CS, Kansas – like a felon doing time in Sing-Sing – unjustly convicted for crimes of which she was innocent.

Then the shit had hit the proverbial fan and she incurred the displeasure and wrath of a few local high level snoots. Because of these unpleasant people, she wanted more than ever to escape Kansas and to parts unknown, to challenges that would both surprise and delight her.



FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Unbeknownst to Jan – her house in CS Kansas was to be



ripped up and transported to a place unimagined – landing squarely on top of the Wicked Bitch (I mean Witch) of the East (who will remain unnamed) and much to the dismay of this frightful bitch.

Jan had inadvertently put a world of hurt on her – putting the kibosh on the flattened witch's plans of greater corporate power, a bigger salary – thereby denying her a way to get out from underneath another house that weighed heavily on her. A house with up-sided down mortgage and lets not forget the mean bitch was burdened with three snotty kids in college and a cross-dressing husband with a nasty drug habit doing time in rehab.

To say that the Wicked Witch of the East was pissed would be putting it mildly - vengeance would be hers she vowed.

Suddenly, the Wicked Witch of the West (who will also remain unnamed) flies in - eager to snatch off the ruby slippers that her fallen compatriot is still wearing. She wasted no time and nor did she bother to ask her former friend if she needed help or could she call 911 or by the way – could I relieve you of those tacky shoes and perhaps massage your tired feet? No, instead she went in quickly for the slippers – she coveted the slippers that would allow her to walked the hallow halls of corporate power.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN



Her lust for the slippers had nothing to do with financial problems. She was simply a nasty ole' bitch and hated to see others succeed – especially Jan from Kansas. This was no doubt due to the fact that the bitch of the West was frigid and had never experienced an orgasm – something she never let her whipped husband ever forget.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

The Good Man from The North

Before the frigid witch could accomplish lifting the Ruby Slippers, Stevo - the Good Warlock from the North arrives on the scene and with the wave of his wand he magically transports the ruby slippers off the flattened witch and suddenly they appear on Jan's tiny feet.



The Wicked Witch from the West was pissed, her fury was boundless – in her mind it just wasn't fair that the young upstart was chosen for bigger things and in parting the witch indulges in one mother-flipping hissy-fit and screeches at Jan, **“I'll get you my little**

pretty!” and she flies off on her broom in a huff.

Jan formally from the flat lands is dazed by it all as she surveyed her new surroundings – noting that she is no longer in Kansas, and now she was told by the good Warlock Stevo that she was now in Munchkinland - a rustic suburb located in The Land of OZ. Suddenly, out of the woodwork some familiar faces are dancing around her – little people; often known by other names such as; suck-ups, sycophants, toadies, ass kissers, boot lickers, stoolies, stooges and finally just your run of the mill company sheep. All of these people were collectively known by psych-profilers as **munchkins** – a polite name for people who shamelessly, indiscriminately munched on all of the truffles, moose munch and various snacks littered about Muchkinland – taking every opportunity to stuff as much as they could into their carping maws.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Most of the Munchkins she is certain she had known from a past life. Some of them she was sure liked her; some she seemed to recall that perhaps they had mixed feelings about her; a few she was almost certain talked trash about her behind her back. All of them however were now dancing around her in joy. Jan was their new heroine. She was the one that had flattened the bitch they had not liked and it was she that had thwarted the desires of the other bitch they also did not like.

Even the little people who had talked trash about the innocent girl from Kansas and had habitually sucked up to the Bitches knew which side their bread was buttered; and therefore they also joined in and danced around Jan singing praises and oaths of fidelity; “Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead!” was the first simple minded nursery rhyme that they chanted endlessly with autistic devotion.

Once the festivities had died down, Stevo the Good Warlock pulled her aside so that they could talk strategy. This Good Warlock possessed a quirky humor and talked in clipped staccato manner. One moment he would look at Jan or whoever he was addressing straight on and Jan could see that The Good Warlock seemed to have a mischievous glint in his eyes. Sometimes the good Warlock of the North would stand sideways and look at her askance with a silly grin just like a child working for a cookie or trying to hide the fact that it was *his* baseball that broke the neighbor’s window or that it was he that lit the bag of shit on the neighbors porch on mischief night. .

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Jan from Kansas noticed that the Good Warlock from the North talked in very fast clipped sentences forcing this young slip of a girl to weed out which statements or questions were pearls of wisdom, or simply quips, or pearls of wisdom disguised as quips!

For her it was hard to tell as he also had a way of instructing by interrogating with a whole list of questions interspersed occasionally with bold assertions. Jan was an innocent, looking at the Warlock Stevo with eyes large with wonder. Her attitude was of reverence – even a bit of affection as she put her full attention on the mission he was sending her on. Sometimes Stevo from the North talked so fast and in low tones that his words were barely more than a mumble - making him sound much like Hilly Billy Bear, Because of this Jan was often forced to wonder what in the flipping hell was this nice quirky man talking about.

After The Good Warlock finishes with his instructions, Jan suddenly feels overpowered with a need to find home, though she admits that she is not certain if it is back in CS, Kansas or some place she has never known or been to before.

No sooner did she voice these concerns the wonderful Warlock pulls out his wallet – displaying pictures of a good-looking wife and a few kids in grade school. His eyes takes on a faraway look and he starts going off on a tangent about his days in some Teutonic country where he and a handful of other Warlocks, Witches and Fairies had been involved in a startup company; and he would have continued to talk for God knows how long, until Jan – always polite – lets loose a dainty fart to gently bring him back to focus on her current dilemma.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

The Good Warlock wrinkles his nose and looks a bit sheepish and does an ‘all-shucks’ although he still had his invincible mischievous glint in his eyes. Jan is amused and is delighted by this Warlock is non-pretentiousness and she loves the fact the he has an ‘I’m really just one-of-the-guys’ manner about him.

Even his Warlock outfit – though spiffy – is, with the exception of a few articles, mostly laid back. She notices that he is wearing what appears to be brand name apparel. She is not certain how she knows - perhaps she was familiar with them back in Kansas. Stevo wore Lands End clothes, and Top-Sider shoes and he was trim – like a Warlock who religiously attends Pilates’ class. There are two things that the Warlock is wearing that looks out of place on him however; draped over his Lands End shirt he has a cape glittering with sequins – like something Elvis would wear and situated on his head a jeweled crown that looks suspiciously like a *Rhinestone Tiara*.

“I’m not saying a word” Jan thought. *“I’m keeping my trap shut; I’m keeping my trap shut; after all who am I to judge? For all I know the cape and Tiara have magical powers that he depends on”* _

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN



Despite the Warlock's incongruent attire, Stevo had power and I mean a shit-load of power. He dazzled the courageous girl from Kansas with all the magical tools of his trade. Besides the Tiara and the cape and the wand, he showed her Excel spreadsheets and power point presentations and he instructed her how to use the magical power of Sales Force. After arming her with these amulets of power for her protection and use - he had kindly instructed Jan to follow the Golden Corporate Road (known by the local yokels as the 'Yellow Brick Road'). It's to be expected, most of the little people barely passed their G.E.D. and only an arrogant few managed to parrot just enough info in college to get a degree fit only for the bottom of a bird cage.

Anyway, it was on this road that Stevo told Jan that she must follow all the way to the Emerald City – where the big bucks are. It was where she could procure all of the commerce to fill up the mythical H & D corporate pipeline - and to fill it long and deep – to make it fat!

He assured his young charge that this part of her mission was vital for two reasons; the first reason is only by doing that would she be able to protect herself from the fearful unimaginative denizens who resided in a bleak and desolate land called 'The Other Side of The Tracks.'



FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

It was in this dismal seventh level of Hades where the two Bad Bitches that the fresh faced girl from Kansas had pissed off often frequented. It was there that the two-faced Broom Hilda's had powerful allies – inept and unimaginative some of them may have been perhaps – but powerful and vengeful they could be.

Stevo from the North pauses, he looks forgetful, like he does not remember that there were two reasons for Jan to go to the Emerald city, but Jan is certain he is just *flipping* with her.

The dainty girl from the Midwest belches politely to get Stevo back on track. He is shifting from one Top Sider to the other and gives her an impish sideways glance. “What?” She laughs her musical laugh, “The second reason? Please?”

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Creatures of the Bottom Line

Jan laughs harder, louder and once again repeats her question, “The second reason please?”

“Oh, right, the second reason.”

The good man from the North is back on track and he tells her that only by going to the Emerald City and making the H & D pipeline fat will she build enough power – both personal and corporate – only then will she be able to come and go when and where she pleases. The Warlock tells Jan that to accomplish this mission she will need the help of a powerful ally who resides in the Emerald City. It is there he tells her that she must seek an audience with the elusive Wizard Willy of Oz – better known by others as Slick Willy.

He tells her that only then will she be able to find home wherever that may be for her – whether it is back in CS, Kansas or the Emerald City, or Munchkinland or Timbuktu or Kalamazoo or even - God forbid – Detroit.

“Now why in the world would that be?” She asked with wonder.

“Because, The Sage from the North said, even though many of the inhabitants of ‘The Other Side of The Tracks’ can be unimaginative, vengeful, petty, lazy, fearful, they are after all still ‘Creatures of the Bottom-Line.’ Take care of their bottom-line and they will leave you alone and they will very likely protect you from your enemies. When you achieve this, then everything will be possible for you.

For the first time in her life the little sunflower from the Kansas territory is afraid and she likes it!

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

She likes it because with the fear comes for the first time excitement and adventure – something she has always dreamed of.

“When do I go? How do I start?” she eagerly asked the imp with the wondrous tools.

“Stevo laughed loud, and his eyes shone real pleasure and he thinks, “*Ah, the blessed profits will be ours.*”

“Well when you take the first step and as for how, you must gather people who will be your allies to travel with you - after all the trip is fraught with perils and it is best to have people with different talents and who like you can multi-task.”

A few of the little people had been standing in the periphery most of the while she and he had been conferencing. Some were there because they were spies, others were there because they were mostly nosey pricks and many were there because they were eager for some form of novel entertainment and since Jan had arrived on the scene – things looked pretty promising in that department.

“Well, go ahead, pick out some folks and get your cute little behind to The Emerald City!” said Stevo (Evidently Stevo was also a flirtatious Warlock).

Suddenly, a mob of people surrounded Jan and volunteered to travel with her. To hear them talk each of them were her most loyal friend – with all of them competing for her attention – each trying to out do the others claiming that they would be her most loyal ally.

After all, Big Stevo was looking on – he was the celeb they were trying to impress and she was the ride they wanted to glom onto.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Each one was kissing her pretty bottom.

“Hey girl friend, you’re the bombe!”

“Me and you girl – all the way!”

“You’re my BFGF!”

“For better or worse!”

“Semper Fi!”

“Till death do us part!”

“Friends forever!”

She is astounded that so many of them are pushing forward to be part of her mission. She is overwhelmed with gratitude and affection for these little



people. She had not expected such enthusiasm, nor would she have ever guessed that all of them would volunteer their time.

The pretty corn fed lass was so filled with joy that she started skipping and dancing on the Golden Corporate Road towards the direction of the Emerald City. She marvels that her life is no longer grayscale and sepia.

Finally everything around her had become vibrant Technicolor and high definition and she noticed that the birds sang sweeter and the air was cleaner and despite previous knee injuries there was more spring in her step.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

She was exhilarated at the thought of adventures to come – not to mention profits and a nice healthy salary

Stevo from the North was pleased and as he waved goodbye and good luck to his precocious protégé the bubble that brought him to Munchkinland enveloped him and carried him away.

Many of the little people who had joined in with the skipping with Jan were disappointed that the Good Man from the North had left. They had assumed that he was going to travel with them up the road all the way to the Emerald City. Many of them had joined up because they wanted to get close to him and get on his good side; they literally were willing to kiss his magical ass with the hope of currying favor with him. Suddenly they felt that all they had was this untried girl formerly from the open plains of some far off land and now they were secretly more than just a little put out.

Make no mistake, this group of little people were not die hard loyalist to the Good Warlock; they were the type of little people that would just as readily suck up to the Bad Witches or any of the fearful and mysterious creatures from ‘The Other Side of The Tracks’. These suck-ups had been known to change affiliations as often as a germ-a-phobic changes his socks and they would happily eviscerate the character of the competition of whomever they happened to be kissing up to. It was this first group of little Munchkins that were to drop off from the trek – the first eager to desert Jan.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Follow The Golden Corporate Road

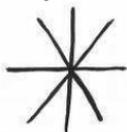
This first group of traitors did not make their disenchantment obvious; they continued skipping and singing with her and the other Munchkins as she is happily in the lead. They all follow her singing a Rap song, “Follow the yellow brick road yo, follow the yellow brick road yo, follow, follow, follow the yellow brick road yo, yo, yo. Yo snappy book babe, yo; that’s, church yo, - (and so forth until they got tired).

They had various excuses of course:

“I got the sniffles.”

“My in-laws are coming to dinner.”

“My sciatica is acting up.”



“My sphincter is killing me.”

One by one Munchkins dropped off. The next group had been the little people that Jan had thought felt ambivalent about her in some past life and the last group of little people that lingered on were the ones that had actually cared for her – at least in their own little way.

Each group of Munchkins had their own list of excuses; the last group’s lists of reasons for begging off were the most pathetic. Some of them were fearful of repercussions from the Witches – most however just had fears that were undefined.

Their excuses came fast and furious and only after ten miles.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

“Perhaps you should call ahead.”

“There’s no use, the systems against us.”

“Why bother – Bush and Cheney have ruined everything.”

“Why even bother? Obama is ruining everything.”

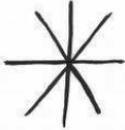
“Nobody can walk that far.”

“Why should the Wizard of Oz listen to you?

You’re just a girl.”

“What makes you so special?”

“My flipping sphincter is killing me!”



The list of excuses and questions was endless, each one pathetic or filled with self recrimination and willful impotence.

Yes, they had their excuses for begging out and no shortages of mindless advice or criticisms either.

Mainly however, the biggest reason why most of the Munchkins bowed out was because most of them wanted desperately to do what they usually did every night – which was go back to their government subsidized housing, to crack open a few six-packs of PBR and get shit-faced while they’d sit in front of their big screen TV and watched Re-runs of The Dukes of Hazard, or ‘The Jerry Springer Show’ or as they contented themselves with watching a scripted ‘Reality Show’ or some other such crap - instead of living any significant reality of their own.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

As they lived vicariously through their boob tubes, more than a few of these besotted little men would with monotonous regularity hit up their women for sex - and most of their women as per usual begging off with a headache or a shrill reminder that sex is only scheduled the third weekend each month damn it!

After each heartless rejection the little shrews went back to the task of jamming truffles and Moose Munch as fast at their desperate fingers can manage.

Their rejections though heartless was understandable - since these little men were lousy lovers who thought that sex was a land speed event and records always needed to be broken.

Despite their typical distractions – Jan and her mission dominated their conversations. In between bites of truffles and sucking down their brewski and watching Daisy Mae sauntering about Hazard County they would talk about her.

Even the couples who had their third weekend of the month scheduled for sex that night could do nothing but talk about her folly as they made clumsy half-hearted attempts at foreplay followed by 10 minutes of dreary sex begrudgingly administered by their wives; after which all they could talk about was Jan – the mysterious girl from Corp Sales, Kansas.

The first group of Munchkins that had deserted her – the ass-kissers that had ran her down – demeaning her efforts, her dreams, demeaning her very character.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

The second group that had left her didn't exactly cut her down so directly, they acted as if they cared about her successes – they would have never stooped to run down her character, their talk was mostly running down her strategy – they had different ideas on how she should get to the Emerald City.

They felt she should have held a press conference before heading off or some other such shit. Their lists of second guesses were endless.

The last group of Munchkins that had deserted the walk actually cared for the brave girl from Kansas in their own little way... but they had their list of concerns as they got shit-faced. They were concerned and fearful that perhaps her ambitions had overstepped her abilities. Why did Jan have to reach so high and so far?

Why did she want to be more than she was? Why couldn't she be just like them? Why couldn't she just be happy living an ordinary life?

“Why couldn't she learn to be humble?”

Eventually the ranks of Munchkins had left and finally dwindled to zero – leaving Jan to face her perilous mission alone. The brave girl felt dismayed and a little hurt that these little people would not join her on an adventure of a lifetime. Could they not see, she wondered, that they would all benefit if her mission was successful? “Could they not see that they would all profit if they worked together as a team?” “Could they not understand that their very survival and the welfare of their families depended *on* her mission being a success?”

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Unfortunately, the high achiever from Corp Sales did not understand that their idea of high adventure was taking a week off to see the 'Stumps of Mystery.'

The big hearted girl from a previous life thought of all this and though she was disappointed and even a bit sad, she realized that all of the Munchkins were after all just little people – with little minds, little characters, little vision – essentially, little lives. She remembers sadly the people she left behind in Corp Sales, Kansas – some of whom she loved also were content to have little lives.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

The Fresh Face Girl From CS Unfolds Her Plans

Yes, the fact that most of whom she knew had been contented to live little or second hand lives disappointed the little sunflower to no end.

Reflexively Jan from C.S. takes a mental foray into the past – remembering how she had so often tried to pull her friends, family and neighbors out of their chronic apathy with her enthusiasm. She had possessed the enthusiasm that comes with youth and intelligence and the fresh face girl had tried to inspire others with her dreams.

She had shared with her loved ones that she wanted to be an Archeologist and travel the world.

Instead of encouragement – they would sigh and tell her that she had to go to college to achieve such dreams - and besides where would a young girl like her get enough Benjamin Bread to pull it off? Pretending as if they cared about her, they told her it would be best if she just forget her dreams. Always the consummate problem solver she asserts with excitement that she could most likely qualify for an athletic scholarship – after all she had become the Terror of Kansas in all three of her favorite sports – Basketball, Softball and Volleyball; she had earned the moniker of ‘**Jan The Hammer**’. She told everyone that she had aspirations of becoming a Beaver at OSU.

Never shy about trying to crush the young optimist’s dreams, her friends and family told her that her plan is too fantastical. “After-all, they tell her, one should think about the reality of sports injuries or fiscal cutbacks that any school is likely to face.”

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Jan was quick to point out that she had done her homework – literally. She has throughout her years in school taken advanced classes and carried a 4.0 grade point average – any college would be lucky to have her. In condescending tones they told her that she would face unforeseen expenses and how in the world would she solve that problem.

The dreamer from Kansas - tenacious as a Pitbull gnawing on a bone was not deterred – with great pride she unfolds her backup plans.

When she presented the idea that they should all invest in Real Estate – they laughed at her.

When this entrepreneurial lass told everyone she knew that television, antibiotics and Insulin and nylon and jet engines, ballpoint pens and fiberglass and helicopters were the wave of the future and that they should all work together to come up with money and buy stocks in the companies that had recently invented these wonderful products - inventions that would improve the quality of life for mankind – they rolled their eyes at each other.

When this visionary talked about how one day, people would be able to communicate with each other and with anyone around the world through a Television screen hooked to a phone and that they will have access to all information - they ridiculed her.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Unbeknownst to her, on more than a few occasions they held town hall meetings to discuss the feasibility of having her committed to an institution. Instead, true to their lazy nature, they simply contented themselves to talking trash about her behind her back and to her face they simply treated her as a silly child. Practically ever sentence out of their mouths was that she should quit dreaming

Most of them never tired of telling her that she should just find herself a man who would take care of her and that the only career aspirations she should focus on was to perhaps become a door greeter at Walmart. They never tired of telling her that her only goal in life should be to support the goals of whoever she married.

It dismayed her that most people are merely content to live second-hand lives.

Nothing ever changes, she sadly laments.

She remembered all of this and once again is confronted with the apathy of others – her frustration was epic. Her eyes misted, she set her jaw and she looks down at Toto who had been traveling with her almost unnoticed with her till now. “You and me Toto... it looks like it will be just you and me.” “Ruff, ruff!” The little terrier barks in agreement.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

The A-Team



Jan the indomitable girl from the Midwest marches forward towards the Emerald City – as resolute as Hannibal marching his regiment of elephants through the Alps.

As Jan trekked towards her goals, she collected a small band of travelers who had goals of their own; they decided to throw in with her believing that they could help each other to get what they wanted, but mainly they were inspired to help this visionary from Kansas and so an unlikely alliance was formed between five people who could not have been more different – and yet there was a sort of harmony that had been created within the team.

Jan's A-Team was made up of three women and Vincent – the only man in the group – each one of them given many gifts from 'The Man behind the Heavenly Curtin.' All within the group shared in common many gifts and talents and even a few flaws of which Vincent the Scarecrow possessed more than his share.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

However, it was specific gifts that each of them possessed as individuals that was most interesting. Specific gifts of which each of them had placed emphasis on or an aspect their selves that they found most important or they may have felt was not quite as developed as they would have liked;

or an aspect of their character that may actually be muted; or they are most afraid of losing – in the Scarecrow’s case his fear of losing his cognitive abilities.



The first A-Team member was Chris the Tin Woman who was given the biggest heart – hidden from many behind a tough and stiff exterior – a heart which she chooses to show mostly to those who earn her trust. She is warm, smart, organized, and

has a quirky sense of humor.



The second A- Team member was Cheryl the Lion, courageous and gentle, patient, spiritual, compassionate and persistent to any job she takes on – she embodied persistence under-fire – despite her fears or doubts.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN



The third A-Team member was Vincent the Scarecrow who had been given a big brain – although he was not entirely satisfied his brain or certain with how long he would get to keep it. However, despite his penchant for self-deprecation he knows that he is smart, possesses strong drives and high ambitions. He possessed a strong work ethic and had a love for worthy causes and missions – and in his mind this one certainly fit the bill.



The final but not the least of Jan's A-Team was Trudy - affectionately known as Toto. She had always been around Jan in one capacity or another and whether it was in the forefront or the background – Toto always made her presence known by her friendly, loud and raucous behavior. Toto was assertive, plucky and loud – always running off to areas where Jan would rather she didn't run to – sometimes calling attention to her or to Jan and her merry band

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

'The Other Side of The Tracks' – Oh My!

Finally, Jan has her A-team.

She gathers them all together and as a team they marched towards the Emerald City with the mission of making the corporate pipeline long and fat via the magical power of Sales Force.

The confident girl from Kansas tells them that all of their talents and abilities and their will to power is going to be challenged to the Nth degree. Her warning is what appeals to each of them. To a person they are hoping to stimulate and challenge the attributes most important to them individually and as a team.

Along the way the sweet girl warns them that there are creatures that reside in a strange place called 'The Other Side of the Tracks'. Each of her of them had heard of these creatures and they had heard these entities were called by different names.

Eager to show Jan that they knew of these creatures and knew them by name – one after the other they blurted out the names of various creatures from this dismal territory:

Chris the Tin Woman yells out, "Bean Counters!"

Cheryl the Lion growls, "Snitches!"

Eager not to be left out, Vincent the Scarecrow sagely mentions, "Naysayers!"

Jan who is surprised and pleased that her pupils are apt and that they know of whom they need to be careful of says, "Oh my!"

Toto joins in, "Ruff!"

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Suddenly we get caught up in a ditty.

The Tin Woman: “Bean Counters!”

The Lion: “Snitches!”

The Scarecrow: “Naysayers!”

Jan: “Oh my!”

Toto: “Ruff!”

The Tin Woman: “Bean Counters!”

The Lion: “Snitches!”

The Scarecrow: “Naysayers!”

Jan: “Oh my!”

Toto: “Ruff!”

The Tin Woman: “Bean Counters!”

The Lion: “Snitches!”

The Scarecrow: “Naysayers!”

Jan: “Oh my!”

Toto: “Ruff!”



Then as if on cue they all sung this ditty in unison as they merrily skipped through their various tasks over-n-over until they all tired and wandered off into the interior of their own thoughts.

It was during these moments when Vincent the Scarecrow could sometimes sense the thoughts of both his leader and his teammates.

As Vincent wandered off to take a break he often thought, *“My flipping head is killing me. I need a slice of turkey and find a quiet place to crash.”*

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

He could sense the Tin Woman thinking, “*I got to keep everyone in line – keep their noise level down.*”

Cheryl the Lion often thought, “*I need to make sure everyone is fed.*”

Jan would think, “*I have to lead by example and keep upbeat. I hope I don’t have to show my **Dark-Side.***”

Toto invariably thought, “*Ruff! Ruff! (How can I score more overtime?)*”.

Every now and then an evasive thought would enter his mind seemingly from outside his group and Vincent the Scarecrow imagined it came from some spy passing by, “*My exhausted Sphincter is killing me!*”



The day came when Jan from Kansas needed to chat with the Wizard Willy of Oz to get his support.

The gatekeeper to Wizard’s inner sanctorum was an ass and Jan from a previous life had to use all of her charm and feminine wiles on the letch so that they as a group were able to gain ‘Slick Willy’s’ time.

No sooner did they enter the elusive Wizards chamber they were overwhelmed with smoke and mirrors and a shit load of flipping hot air.

“I am Willy, the Great and Powerful! Who are you?”

The good girl - no stranger to being polite to her elders says, “If you please, I am Jan from CS Kansas and I want....”

But before the sweet young lady from the Midwest could finish – rude Willy of Oz interrupts, “The Great and Powerful Willy knows why you have come. (More hot air) Step forward!”

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

So the Tin Woman, the Lion, the Scarecrow and Toto approach tentatively with Jan boldly in the lead.

“Before you ask for a favor you must prove yourself worthy by performing a small task for me, bellows The Wizard!”

“What ever my merry band and I can do for you oh great Willy is fine with us.”

More smoke and hot air hits us.

“How can I say this nicely, Wizard Willy ponders out loud?”

“You and your merry band don’t know what you’re doing! Sad to say, I will tell you what you must do.”

“You and your crew must make the corporate pipeline of Oz long and fat with the power of Sales Force, only this will make me happy! Only then will I help you with your needs!”
The patient girl found her patience pushed to the limits.

It took every atom of will power not to blurt out her thoughts.

“Ohhh -- Jiminy flipping Crickets, the prick is telling me to do the very thing I have traveled all this way for his blessing and help.”

Instead she bit her tongue, “Thank you for humbling us oh great Willy! We shall do as you requests.”

So off the five of them went – doing everything to in their power to use the magic of Sales Force and pump up the corporate pipeline.

They all worked as hard as they could to gain enough intelligence, heart, courage and assertiveness – along with all of the skills that the pretty girl from another land was teaching them. They each did this with the hopes that they would find their niche by Jan’s side – wherever that may be. It was during the next phase of their adventure that Vincent was able to get a true measure of each of his team mats as individuals and as a group.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Each of his team mates we're finally going to be tested and he was going to be tested with them.

They were tested long and tested hard and the ordeal would try both their strengths and make their flaws painfully apparent.

As they spent weeks talking to the disembodied voices of agents of the bottom line and to gatekeepers who decided whether they would enter or stay out - the stressors increased and the stress pushed everyone to their limits.

Finally, Vincent would get to see what each of his teammates we're really like at their core. Vincent had learned the hard way that people revert back to their core when they are put under great stress, when their fondest wishes and temptations are waved in front of them – like a life-saver offered to a drowning person.

Vincent had learned that when people are filled with fear, overwhelmed with fatigue, and when what they hold most important is threatened with being stripped away – their carefully constructed personas are then most likely to wither away – until a quivering child is all that remains. People can become like animals when their livelihoods are threatened, when they have to endure discomfort, but mainly, humans are the only animals that will degenerate if their belief systems are put to the test, if their values are exposed as a sham or a façade.

Each of the Scarecrows teammates were pushed to their limits – all of their good qualities were taxed – even their most notable traits.

Chris the Tin Woman whose heart was guarded before coming onboard - her heart became expansive – open-ended.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

There were many times when a disembodied voice would try her patience and she would treat them with sensitivity and even more than a bit of tenderness.

Cheryl the Lion always known for her compassion, patience and courage – met the challenges with more of who she is. “Courage, courage... have something to eat”, she’d say as she heaped out a plate of food to calm our anxieties.

Trudy/Toto became louder, she laughed more often and she became more helpful – displaying more grit – and never one to be left behind she always showed her eagerness to put in her share of time and effort towards the mission.

“Ruff, ruff! (What time did you get here this morning?),

“Ruff, ruff! (My Team is the best!).

“Ruff, ruff! (What time did you stay till last night?). “Ruff, ruff (My boss is better than your boss!).

“Ruff, ruff! (How many hours did ya get?)

Jan from Kansas became even more high-powered and as her multi-tasking abilities shone more than ever. Always willing to coach and instruct – she became more enthusiastic and encouraging – even teaching the Scarecrow some finer points of Excel.

Vincent the Scarecrow felt like he was indeed learning new things and enjoyed the new knowledge – despite his brain cooking at a low heat - Jan and his teammates had a way of encouraging performance.

Vincent and all of his Teammates had temptations flaunted before them.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Each one of them wanted to stay on past the season. All of them hoped that if the mission survived – if all of them could not be kept on – to the person they wanted to be kept.

Most people in this situation would have been tempted to withhold helping their teammates for fear that they would be helping their competitors. This was not how Vincent the Scarecrow’s teammates operated.

Each of them wanted to bask in Jan’s light – but they also wanted everyone they knew to bask in her light as well –they never tired of bragging about their skipper in glowing terms to any and all willing to listen.

The Scarecrow’s wonderful teammates wanted a secure career with greater hourly wages – each one had personal responsibilities – and a desperate need to stay employed after the season ended. Yet they refused to withhold helping each other. None of his teammates were tempted to backbite or trash any of the other teammates to Jan or to each other with the intent to secure their future.

Each woman performed heroically, each of them maintained a stellar character. This was the first time in Vincent’s life that he had been with this many ordinary people in any given group acting with such integrity.

All of The Scarecrow’s Team mates would have gladly fell on a sword for their leader.

The length and breadth of how these women performed is not just a testament to Jan’s Olympian ability to inspire.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

No, like all great leaders, even Jan would often rage over the fact that competent soldiers are hard to find and that she felt blessed to have her A-Team. Vincent's teammates were special; they have within each of them a desire to work towards something greater than themselves.

This was something that the Scarecrow could understand.

Jan, Chris, Cheryl and Trudy each performed with integrity beyond what other's would have done under similar circumstances and under far greater stress and temptations to consider and each of them had more to lose.

Vincent was impressed.

Their trials did not end – little did Vincent realize that the stresses they would continue to face would make what they had so far experienced pale by comparison.

The workload per hour increased; as did the number of hours required to work; as did the number of days per week; as did the mistakes they made increased; as did the resistance from 'The Other Side of The Tracks'; as did the unfortunate cluster of events; as did their uncertainty that their department would even survive till the end of the season; as did Jan's disappointment that the little people she worked hard to be an asset to was working hard to screw her over.

Chris the Tin Woman worked even harder and literally gave her life blood to make the department a success and risked destroying her heart – literally for the cause – and yet her heart continued to open up more to the people around her.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Cheryl the Lion whose courage and persistence and kindness was also stressed to their limits – and yet she happily brought in more food for all of us and she gladly picked up Chris’s workload when as Chris laid in the hospital recovering.

Trudy Toto laughed and barked even louder and more often as she dug in. Although she worked harder and was even more protective of her teammates – Toto show a stubborn streak and was of the opinion that no one from ‘The Other Side of The Tracks’ was going to intimidate her by God! “Ruff, Ruff (I not going to let them keep me from barking loudly!). Ruff, ruff! (Hey Jan, any chance I can stick around for overtime?)!

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Stevo's Snow Job Fails to Stop The Mountain of Turds!



There were numerous occasions that the audacious lass from CS, Kansas was whisked away and dragged to The Other Side of The Tracks – forced to give an accounting of

what she and her team were doing - especially Toto whose joyous behavior always drew the attention of the joyless souls who hated happiness. In their mind happiness had nothing to do with productivity. Because of this, each of us deployed all of our brains, our heart, our courage and all the chutzpah that we could muster to keep our mistress from Kansas successful and safe.

Jan worked long hard hours as she attended to 101 tasks – some of which were also the responsibility of other departments. She did what she could to grease the political wheels as we marched up and down all along the Corporate Road and as she did her head felt as if it would explode.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Vincent the Scarecrow's brain had gone from low heat to high – his neurons were frying by the millions – like straw tossed into a flame - knocking all the stuffing out of him. Jan from the Midwest always had her stash of Nuprin of which she and the Scarecrow gobbled them like M & M's until they lost all benefit.

During all of this Jan's A-Team all tried to help keep each other fed and hydrated and the dozens of soda cups littered about Jan's office and their alcove by the end of each day gave testimony to their obsession to keep things cool.

It was during this portion of the trek that Stevo the good Warlock from the North had to use some of his magic - to perform a snow job to cool the creatures from The Other Side of The Tracks.



Eventually, the unfortunate day came when one or more of the malevolent flying monkeys from 'The Other Side of The Tracks' had been skittering about the periphery of their universe; it was on one such occasion when they were alerted by Toto's loud and raucous noises. In short order the entities surrounded Jan and her plucky

Toto and screeched, "We're going to get you my little pretty, and your dog Toto to!"

It was then that the shit flowed downhill on us - and flowed hard – like a mountain of turds.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Jan and her team were told that their journey may not survive the season – They were pissed that the pipeline was not fat enough for the Wizard and his Bean Counters, Snitches and Naysayers who threatened Jan and her team with exile and the threat of never to finding home.

It has been the Scarecrow's experience that when people are told that they have failed and no rewards for their efforts will be coming – most people give up and start to perform badly.

This did not occur within Vincent's teammates. Each of these wonderful women kept up the good fight. Each of them stayed professional to the people they served and to each other. There was no throat cutting, no trash talking. Vincent was chocked with admiration and the wonder that he had never in his life worked with people in a group that showed such integrity, strength of character, such honesty and love and grit.

It occurred to Vincent that these women had been tested – Navy Seals could not have been prouder.

These four women were legit – they were the real deal.

The scars they carried were real – this Vincent had never doubted.

Nevertheless, life had taught him to doubt the perspectives that people share – after-all as has been previously mentioned - people tend to bullshit and color themselves in the best light.

Vincent's time with these four women made him realized what rare birds they are – most people do not take the high road when dealing with life or when dealing with people in their lives.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

These four women traveled nowhere but the high-road.

Throughout their mission, after they were tested – whenever scars were aired – Vincent’s heart went out to them.

It was during these sessions that Vincent the Scarecrow wished he could go back in time and shake one woman’s negligent father and abusive mother.

He wanted to yell at them, “Will you look at your daughter for God’s sake?!”

She has grown up to be successful; she has grown into a woman who loving to her friends and to her family. She has grown into a woman that inspires the people around her.

Your daughter has become a person that gladly helps the people in her life. You should be proud of her. She is pretty enough, she is smart enough... she is good enough!

Vincent wanted to go back into time and say to her ex’s, “You stupid selfish turds, what is wrong with you? Why don’t you listen to her? Why aren’t you pulling your weight? Why don’t you help lighten her load? Why are you such a insufferable ass?!”

Vincent the Scarecrow wanted to tell the girl from C.S. that there was no doubt as to why her daughter is such a wonderful being with such pure and loving energy and heart and joy and sweetness and humor; he knew that it was simply a fact that her daughter was merely mirroring what has been demonstrated to her everyday since her birth. How could she not be this way with a mother such as Jan.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Vincent wished he could go back in time and confront all of the husbands and lovers and coworkers and parents and tell them how wonderful each of my team mates are. He wished he could go back and convince them to treat their daughters like the worthy women they have become. The Scarecrow wished he could tell each of their ex's that they had screwed up in a major way by not giving their women their due and treat them like the most valued treasure.

Last but not least Vincent the Scarecrow wished he could go to the far off land where people reside that could make the decision to allow them to continue their journey towards the Emerald City and fatten up the pipeline for H & D. Sadly, this was not to be so.

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Five Million Reasons To Free Willy!

The big hearted girl from a former life gathered her crew and told them the dismal news. The Good Man from the North came back on the scene and he is also disappointed that Wizard Willy of Oz and many of the creatures from ‘The Other Side of The Tracks’ did not share *his* confidence in the bright gal from Corp Sales, Kansas and the Team she collected.



Slick Willy had bailed out. He had promised to bring the conscientious girl from Kansas back with him on his corporate Balloon (actually the balloon was a Zeppelin titled LZ Wasserstein Hindenburg Airship powered by hot air) – a commodity in ample supply that day.

It is said, that the former Whiz had five million reasons for cutting the rope holding the Zeppelin earth bound to make his escape; and in the process breaking his promise to take the loyal girl with him, leaving her and her loyal team to fend for them selves.

Stevo told her all of this as he vents – his disappointment supreme. She felt bad for *his* disappointment and mentioned that all she wanted to do was to find home... a place where she can perform unfettered, a place where people appreciate others that possess high abilities. A place devoid of pettiness, dishonesty, jealousy and backbiting; a place where people like her and her team could be left alone to perform big things

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN



“Where would that be, she wondered?”

“How can I find home, she asked the Man the North?”

“I want to go home, she says once again.”

The Great Warlock tells her that she has always had the power to find home - she just needed to find this out for herself.

He told her that it was up to her to figure out what she wanted in life and where she needs to go

He told us that this was true for each of us as well.

He said that this was true for him.

Hopefully one day we will each find out where home is.

All I know is that “There is no place like home.”

So ends my story of Four Ordinary Women - four women who turned out to be anything but ordinary.

Jan, Chris, Cheryl and Trudy are indeed Four Extraordinary Women!

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

Epilogue



I do not exaggerate when I say that what I have experienced with these women was truly remarkable. Nevertheless many people have stressed that this was nothing more than an anomaly. I disagree.

I will say that most of us do not put out the same effort in every area of our life; also we do not always act in such an all out and noble manner.

Not even people such as Jan, and my coworkers or the dozens of remarkable people I list as my inspirations. We are after all flawed.

I will say that each of us should strive to be has high functioning as the people I list and as my coworkers had performed during this past holiday season.

Imagine a world where all of us realize our potential an make a run for it regarding every area of our lives. If one man or woman can achieve something – no matter how super human – so can another – so can I. If I can – so can anyone.

Let us never forget this experience!

Let us embrace what is possible!

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN

If you have enjoyed this story of **FOUR ORDINARY WOMEN** then I recommend: **DIZZY D: The System is Against Him.** This is a book that describes a pathetic man who is typical of too many pathetic people. This man is the antithesis of the four remarkable women in this book.

ZEN & THE ART OF RESISTANCE TRAINING:

A Yogic & Scientific Approach To Weight Lifting

ZEN & THE BIOLOGY OF TRANSCENDENCE:

The First Matrix of Psychic Phenomena

ZEN & THE ART OF KINESIOLOGY:

The Yogic & Scientific Approach To Movement

ZEN & YOUR ENERGY SYSTEMS

ZEN & VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TRAINING

MOST PEOPLE TALK BULLSHIT:

One Primate's Search For Intelligent Life (GENESIS)

MOST PEOPLE TALK BULLSHIT:

One Primate's Search For Intelligent Life (EXODUS)

MOST PEOPLE TALK BULLSHIT:

One Primate's Search For Intelligent Life (JUDGES)

MOST PEOPLE TALK BULLSHIT:

One Primate's Search For Intelligent Life (REVELATIONS)

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THE MARINES: GOD'S CHOSEN WARRIORS

VINCE'S GYM

CONVERSATIONS WITH NEO:
The True Nature of the Matrix

NEO INTRODUCES ME TO THE ART of PEACE
& THE ART of WAR:

MEMORIES OF MY FATHERS

A soon to be released book:

PEOPLE ARE NO DAMN GOOD:
Living with the Enemy!

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A FEW SHORT STORIES FROM THE AUTHOR

ECHOES IN THE DARKNESS!

(The Dark Side of My High School Principal)

I GET A WITH THE POSTAL SERVICE –

11/15/1983:

(I Help Neo Move)

I HATED TO MEET KATHY’S FATHER – MR.

GRANITE.

**ONE DEGREE FROM KEVIN BACON SETS ME
UP WITH A GOOD-FELLOW’S DAUGHTER**

**WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A NAKED
CONGRESSMAN?**

**MR. SMITH ISN’T THE ONLY ONE TO GO
WASHINGTON!**

(The Halls of Senate & Congress Tremble)!

**RACISM A SHAMEFUL WASTE:
Beauty Really is in the Eye of the Beholder**

Marine Corp Boot Camp - No Rose Garden

**JUAREZ – UNAUTHORIZED ADULT THEME
PARK**

What Makes Me Such An Expert Everything?

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**The Best Thing For Our Children Is Lying To Them;
Right?**

A Look At Cognitive Dissonance

**The Challenge To See if My Middle-Age Broken Ole'
Body Can Get Back Into Top Shape**

Why Steroids are overly regarded!

SWIMMING WITH THE SALMON

THE RED ZONE

FALLING FOR YOUR BOSS

**All of these books and stories have been written in
sixteen different languages.**

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Recommend Books of Other Authors

Requiem of a Midlife Crisis by Phoenix Michaels

Touch of the Beast by Brent Fletcher

Lajilo's Gate by Brent Fletcher

The Lucifer Effect – By Dr. Phillip Zimbardo

Keys to the Inner Universe by Bill Pearl

The Encyclopedia of Bodybuilding by Arnold Schwarzenegger

Atomic Fitness: Intensity Insanity by Steve Michalik

Books by Frank Zane

The Zane Way to a Beautiful Body

Super Bodies in 12 Weeks

Zane Nutrition

Fabulously Fit Forever Expanded

Frank Zane: Mind, Body, Spirit

Fabulously Fit Forever

Frank Zane Training Manual

The Poliquin Principles by Charles Poliquin

The Scientific Approach to Powerlifting by Dr. Fred Hatfield

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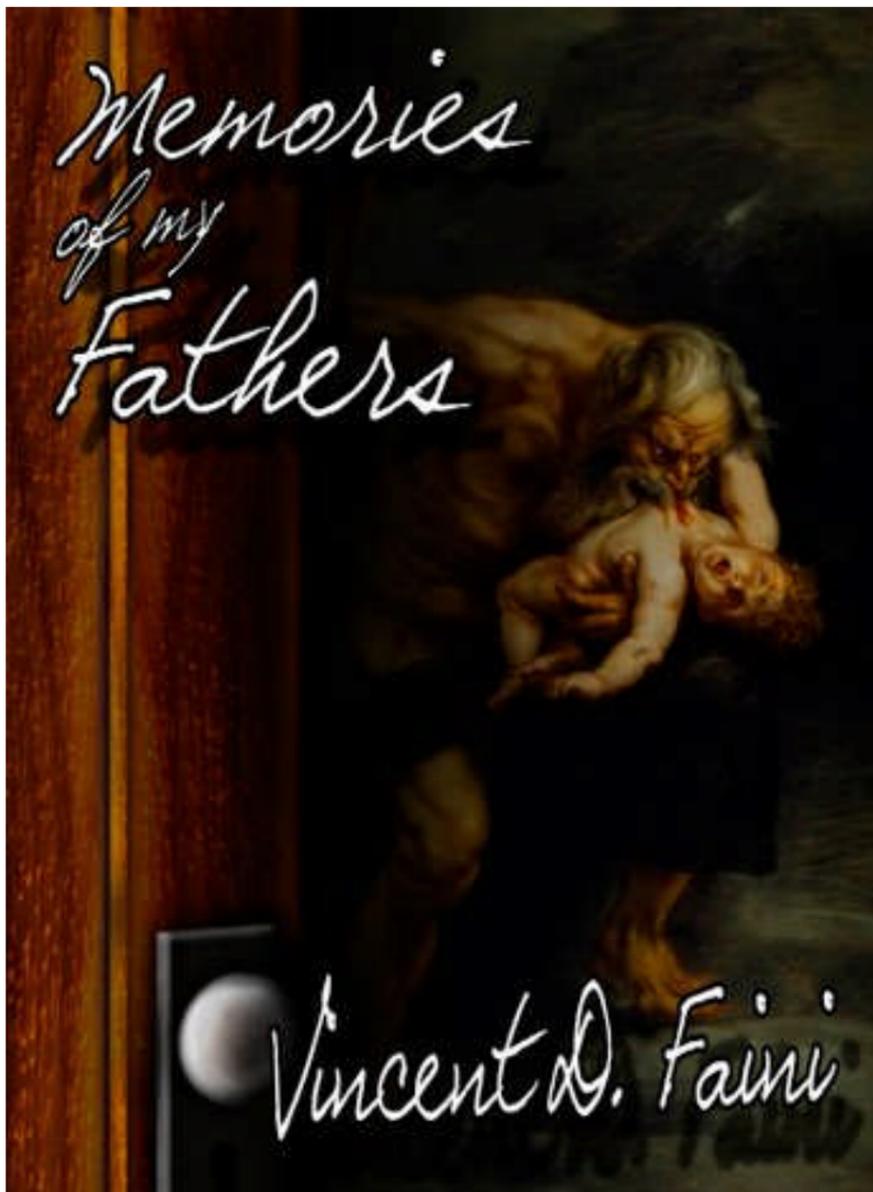
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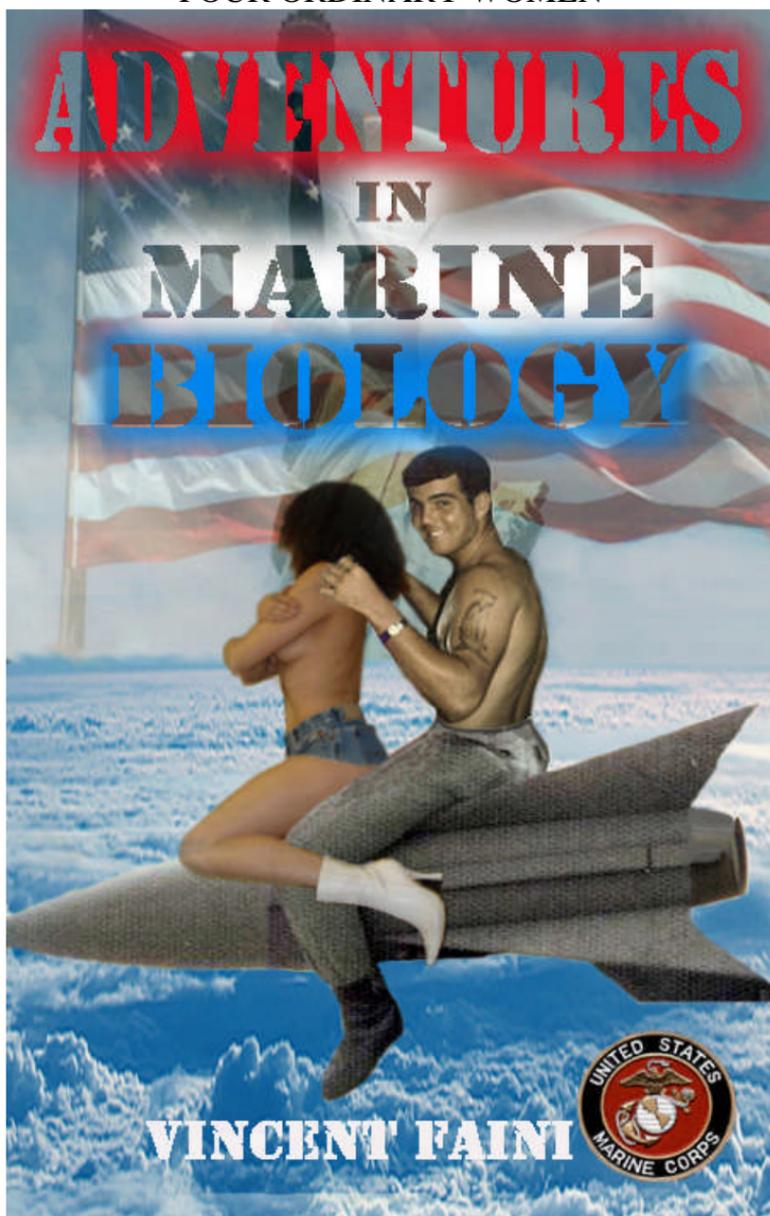
Magical Child by Joseph Chilton Pearce

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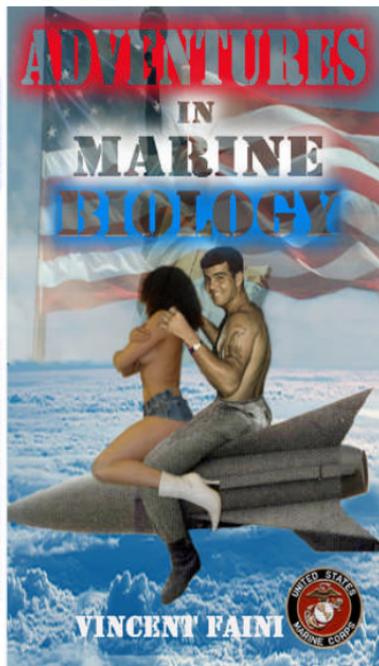
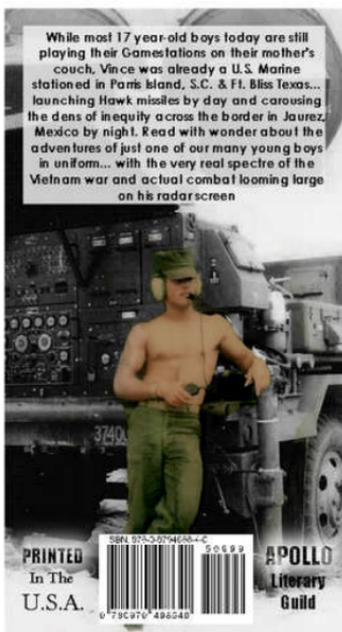
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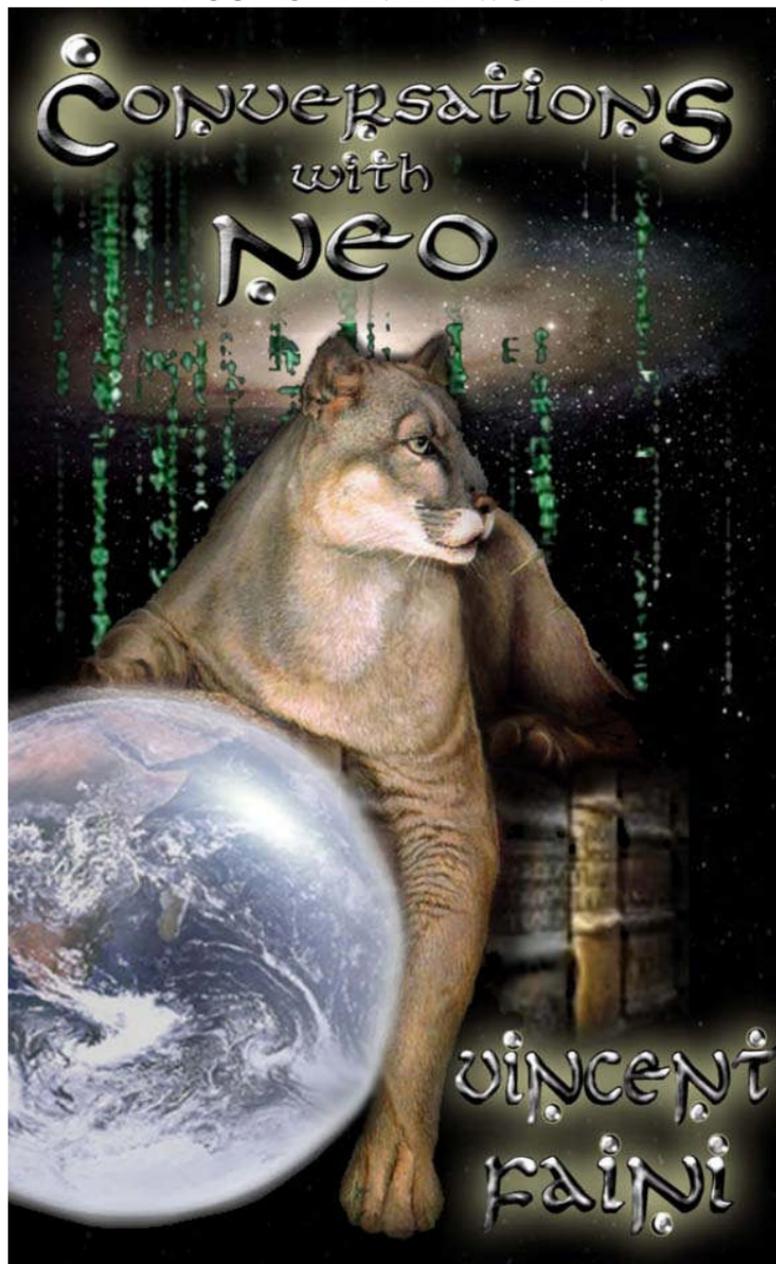
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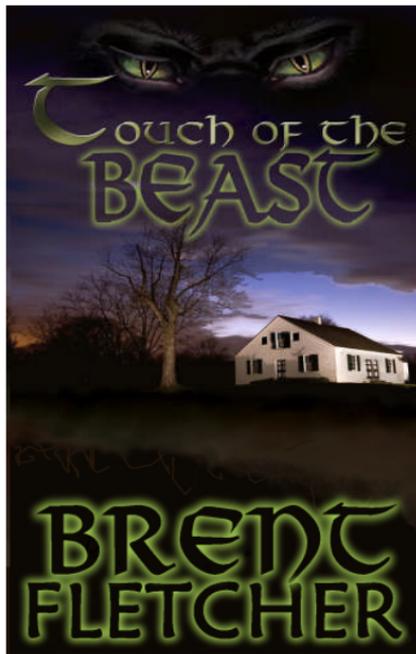
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Most People Talk

Bullshit

One Primate's
Search For
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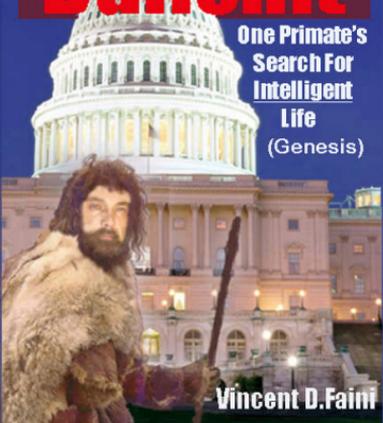
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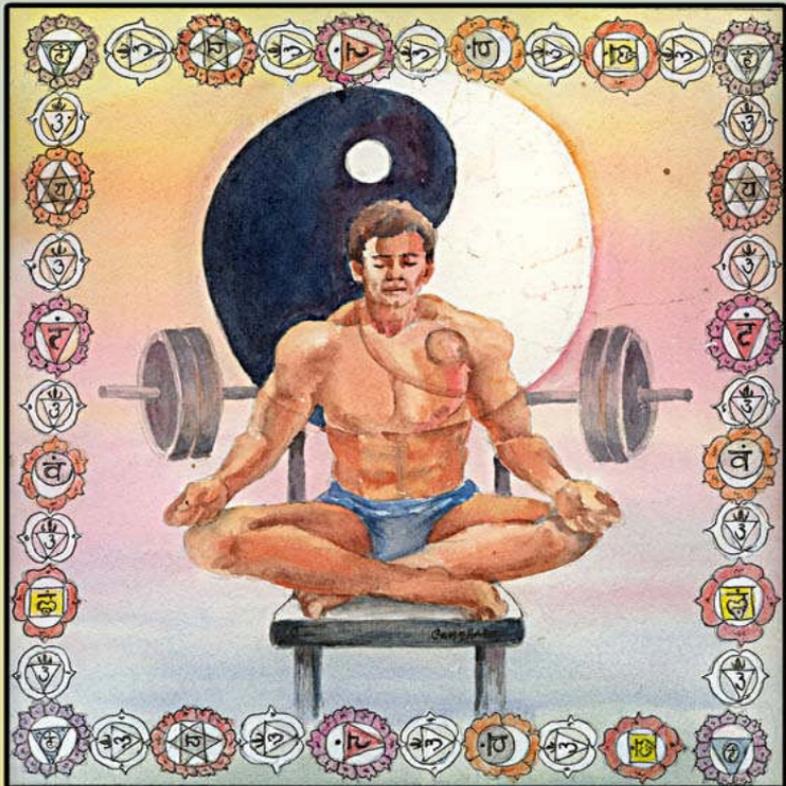


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ZEN & THE ART OF RESISTANCE TRAINING

(A Yogic & Scientific Approach to Weight Training)

Written By: Vincent Darrell Faini



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REQUIEM FOR A MIDLIFE CRISIS



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