

My childhood was a series of heartaches, physical and sexual abuse, and mental torture. The only light in the darkness was the love I received from the people God sent into my life. That love helped me escape from my brutal, painful life.

If Not for The Love of Others...

By Antaeus

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If Not for The Love of Others

An Autobiography of
Abuse, Survival, and Salvation



by Antaeus

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Warning

This book is not for young children.

I am writing about my life, which was a bit violent, and I am not a person who sugarcoats anything.

There is violence, sexual and mental abuse, child abuse, and many other things in this book that some people may find disturbing.

Some things I experienced or did may seem like I made them up. Some stories may shock you, and others may make you angry or sad. Whatever the case, everything in the autobiography is genuine and has been told as I remember it happening.

#

Disclaimer

Writing an autobiography is a messy process. The word alone is problematic, stemming from the French word "mémoire" meaning "memory" or "reminiscence." At its core, an autobiography is just that—a recollection of past events by someone who lived them.

This book is my autobiography, and this book of remembrance and memory has its own story to tell.

Sometimes, what we recall is not entirely accurate because memories are not always perfect recollections of events. However, I have done my best to make these life stories as truthful as my memory allows.

This work reflects my present recollections of experiences over time. I've changed the names and characteristics of people and places, compressed some events, and recreated some dialogue from memory.

Since some memories described herein are over seventy years old, and things were different back then. I apologize for nothing because that's the way it was back then. It wouldn't be right to pretend that things and people were different than they were when I was growing up. My parents taught me not to lie, so I told it like it was.

I do not intend to offend ethnic, religious, or cultural groups or individuals by how they are portrayed in this book's characters or events. The views and opinions expressed in this book are my own and do not necessarily reflect anyone else's official policy or position.

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1945: A Time of Innocence

I was born in the Margaret Hague Maternity Hospital in Jersey City, New Jersey, in April. According to Wikipedia, 1945 marked the end of World War II, along with the fall of Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan. It was also the only year nuclear weapons were used in combat.

Also of note is that Jackie Robinson signed a contract with the Montreal Royals in October of that year. He was the first black man to enter baseball.

The United States was a hugely different country in 1945 than it is today in 2024. Back then, almost one-third of Americans lived in poverty, and the same amount of U.S. homes had no hot water or central heating. We were one of those families.

Living The Hard Life

To fully appreciate why I did some of the things you will read about later in this book, you must first understand how we lived.

Growing up, we were considered inferior by some because we were poor. Although we qualified, my father was too proud to accept aid from the government. I don't blame him for it. Back then, accepting welfare or food stamps branded you as too lazy to work. I'm not judging. Just telling you like it was in those days.

Consequently, all eight of us lived in a three-room cold-water flat. I ate rice and milk, butter, mayonnaise, and ketchup sandwiches as a child. Once in a while, I was given peanut butter and jelly. I savored those rare times.

The apartment we lived in was on the top floor of a three-story brownstone walkup. My father, who was disabled, had to make his way up and down two flights of stairs a minimum of twice a day, seven days a week. To this day, I don't know how he managed those steps after being on his feet for twelve hours tending the bar and preparing food in the bar's kitchen.

Our apartment had three rooms, including the kitchen, where the entrance was located. The kitchen was at the back of the building and had one window. My mother would lean halfway out that window to hang our clothes out to dry on a clothesline. A small sink and a deep washtub were on the same wall as the window. The washtub doubled as our bathtub.

To the left, on the same outside wall, was a three-by-three-foot room where the toilet was. So, two of its four walls were uninsulated outside walls. I still remember that in the winter, it was freezing in the "toilet room," as we kids called it. In fact, it was so cold you could see your breath, and there would be a thin layer of ice on the water in the bowl on colder winter days.

A large cast iron coal stove that had been converted to gas dominated the kitchen. There was no central heating, so that stove was all there was to heat all three rooms during the winter months.

My siblings and I slept on a fold-out "Castro Convertible" couch in the middle room with no windows. My parents slept in the front room where the windows were. During the winter months, my siblings and I were glad for the heat our bodies threw off as we huddled together. Conversely, we tried to sleep as far apart as possible in summer since the room had no fans or windows.

I remember waking up soaked in sweat every day during the summer months. And huddling beneath the covers for warmth with my brothers in the winter.

1951: A Brush with Death.

My story begins on April 17,1950, two days after my fifth birthday.

Because of the trauma I suffered that day, I only remember bits and pieces of my life before then. So, this is my first memory, and I remember what happened like it was yesterday.

It's also the first time I could have died.

#

We lived about a block away from the bar where my father worked. My next youngest brother was three years old at the time.

My godmother gave me a new set of clothes for my birthday. I remember the colors because of the pictures my mother had. It was a brown pair of shorts with a matching brown and white striped tee shirt.

My mother dressed me in my new clothes and sent me to the bar where my father worked to surprise him. At that time, it was located two blocks from our apartment in the middle of the block. Later, a few of my father's brothers built a new one closer to a corner location. My mother stayed home with my brother Salvatore. I was excited about going to the bar, so I ran the whole way.

After I reached the corner, I had to cross a local one-way street, which ended on a downhill slope at a cross street. I remember looking up the hill before I started to cross. No cars were coming, so I began to cross. When I was halfway across the street, a car came barreling over the hill. I panicked and froze. The last thing I remember was a big bullet-nosed Chevrolet with massive chrome fenders filling my vision. Then everything went black.

When I awoke, I was sitting on a hospital table. A nurse was swabbing my legs and the scrapes on my arms, face, and knees with alcohol. Fortunately for me, nothing was broken. I had only sustained cuts, scratches, and bruises.

The odd thing about the incident was that my mother later told me that I was already standing and crying when my father got to the accident scene. When he drove my mother and me to the hospital, I was awake the whole time.

She also said that the person who hit me managed to swerve at the last second. He told her he didn't see a child but an elderly woman as he crested the hill.

Since I was conscious the entire time, no X-rays were taken. However, I do not remember doing and saying what my mother told me I'd said and did. I only remember the car bearing down on me and "waking up" in the emergency room.

When I was older, my mother told me that before the accident, I was extremely outgoing with the people around me and outspoken when I learned to talk. After the accident, she said, I was more detached from people and preferred to be left alone.

But as you will find out, my mother was an opium-addicted, physically and mentally abusive, sociopathic liar. So how can I believe anything she told me?

#

After the hospital discharged me, my mother and I boarded a bus outside the hospital. The bus left us off at the Jersey City Journal Square bus terminal. Then we walked the mile and a half down Sip Avenue to the old bar on Logan Avenue. I assume it was so my mother could tell my father I was okay. However, instead of taking me inside the bar, she told me to wait outside until she returned. I remember hiding behind a large tree in front of the bar. I intended to jump out at my mother and scare her when she came back out.

While hiding, I heard one of my uncles (My father had eight brothers and two sisters.) talking to his friend about my father. My uncle wanted to go to the racetrack in New York. His friend reminded him that he was supposed to be tending the bar while my father prepared for the lunch crowd in the kitchen. My uncle told his buddy that since my father was a cripple, he was lucky to have a job. Then they got into his friend's car and drove away.

I didn't know what a cripple was, so when my mother returned, I asked her. She told me it was a bad word and not to repeat it.

Later in life, I asked my psychiatrist why I remembered so many details of the terrible things that happened to me and hardly any of the good stuff. He said that trauma imprints on the brain more profoundly than any other emotional situation, and memory and emotion are intimately linked in the human brain. Because of this intimacy, people can easily remember tragic events and the insignificant details associated with them. Still, when asked, they are hard-pressed to recall the minutia of happier times.

Molested by Ariella

It was late summer in 1951, and I was six. This is one of the things that came back to me when I reached puberty, and I have been unable to forget it since. Not that I think of it all the time, but sometimes a whiff of her brand of perfume, a word spoken a certain way, or her type of laughter will trigger the memory.

My parents were out for the night and hired Ariella, the seventeen-year-old girl next door, to babysit my younger brother and me.

I don't clearly remember what Ariella looked like, whether she was beautiful or not. I remember she looked pretty to my six-year-old eyes, though. The woman had the black hair and the midnight-black eyes of an olive-skinned Sicilian woman.

I have no idea what time it was. I don't even know if I could tell the time when I was six years old, but Ariella woke me up and said we would play a game. I remember she was naked, but to a six-year-old, a nude woman meant nothing. I had never seen anyone but my brother naked, and I remember asking her where her "pee-pee" was and why there was hair around where it was supposed to be. She said girls had different pee-pees than boys, that theirs was inside, and she would show me hers. She told me I would grow hair around my pee-pee when I grew up.

As children, we slept in our underwear, and Ariella removed mine. Then we sat on the kitchen floor, where she spread her legs and had

me touch her with my fingers on what I later learned was her clitoris. She lay back and encouraged me to keep touching her there.

That's where the memory ends. I don't recall if anything else took place or if anything else happened that night.

#

The next day, as I was dressing for school, I remember asking my mother why God made girls with inside pee-pees and when would I have hair around my pee-pee?

I remember my mother suddenly stopping what she was doing, squatting down next to me, and asking me what I meant by inside pee-pees. I must have told her about the game Ariella and I had played the night before because my mother ran out of the kitchen. I remember watching her run down the stairs and out the front door of the apartment building. I finished getting dressed and started off for school.

When I reached our front "stoop"(porch), I saw Ariella's father yelling at her in Italian. Her father was a terrifying person to me. I didn't understand what he was saying at the time, but I later learned that the word "*Puttana*" meant whore. My mother was also there yelling at Ariella. I thought it was none of my business and went off to school.

When I returned from school, my mother told me I could never tell anyone, especially my father, about the game we played. As a six-year-old, I had already moved on to other things anyway, and the memory faded until years later when I reached puberty.

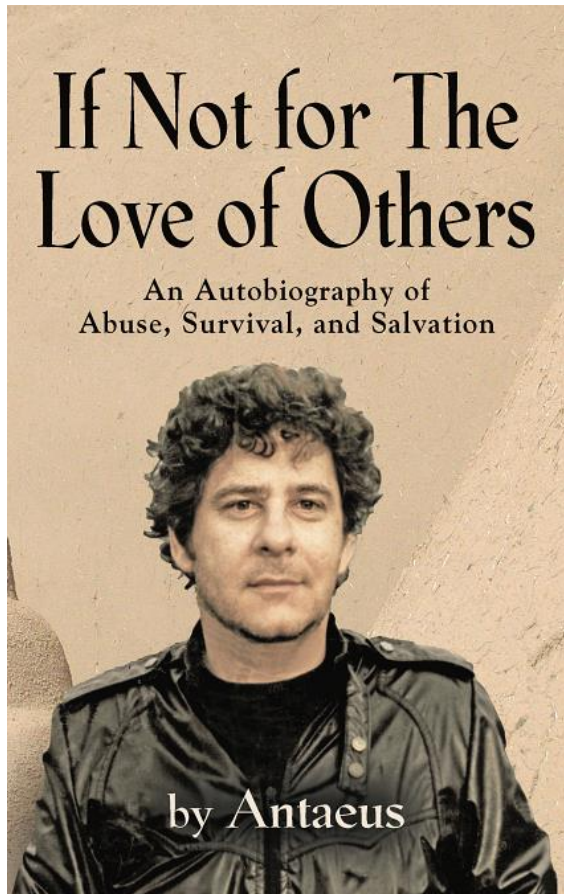
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I was a teen with raging hormones when Ariella returned to the neighborhood, and the memory of that night rushed back so quickly that it almost knocked me off my feet. I remember Ariella was dressed in a pink miniskirt outfit with a pink jacket, pink hat, and pink spiked heels. She had a pink poodle on a leash, and, as they said back then, she was "strutting her stuff" around the neighborhood.

If Not for The Love of Others...

Later that day, I learned at the bar that Ariella's parents had kicked her out of the house the day I saw them arguing. Since no one in the neighborhood would take her in, Ariella moved to New York and became a prostitute.

Although it had happened six years prior, I remember feeling guilty about what happened to Ariella. The poor woman had lost her home and family because I told my mother what happened between us.



My childhood was a series of heartaches, physical and sexual abuse, and mental torture. The only light in the darkness was the love I received from the people God sent into my life. That love helped me escape from my brutal, painful life.

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