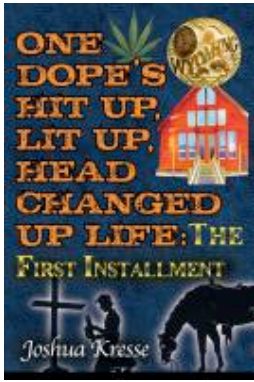


**ONE  
DOPE'S  
HIT UP,  
LIT UP,  
HEAD  
CHANGED  
UP LIFE: THE  
FIRST INSTALLMENT**



*Joshua Kresse*



*A few things this refreshingly upbeat book describes are the author's boyhood, drug use, juvenile detention center time, residential youth ranch experience, and religious transformation. Even though the author has transformed, he doesn't sugarcoat anything. This book is for teens, parents, and anyone who needs to transform their life. It's also for people who have already transformed, and could use an inspirational story to help them keep fighting the good fight.*

# **One Dope's Hit Up, Lit Up, Head Changed Up Life**

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*One Dope's Hit Up, Lit Up, Head Changed Up  
Life: The First Installment*

Joshua Kresse

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## *Spilling My Guts*

**W**here should I even begin? Don't worry y'all. I don't expect you to know. I was happy and full of energy as a youngin'. Everyone goes through phases, but I was a little bit different. I was an outsider at my grade school for being an adopted only child. My adoptive mother's genes prevent her from bearing normal healthy children and/or children at all. She underwent several miscarriages. My sister Erin died before I was born. My adoptive mother, who I always call "mom," heard angel wings descend upon her as her daughter Erin died in her arms. I felt really distraught when I was told that my sister died. I cried hysterically. Some say it's not possible to grieve for people they never really saw in the flesh. Those people are cold-hearted. Many parents won't tell their child about the death of a sibling if their living child doesn't know, but my mom and dad respected me enough to tell me that I was adopted when I asked them why I was the only child in their family. Some adoptive parents never tell their child that they were adopted. I'm glad that my adoptive parents told me I was adopted. My life is all the more precious to my adoptive parents because their daughter died, but that puts pressure on me because I don't want to let my adoptive parents down. It's a blessing and a curse, but only a small curse. It also makes my calling to the priesthood or marriage to a woman that much harder to discern because I would love to give my parents grandchildren to make up for the fact that my mom doesn't bear children properly. I'm also treasured by my parents because four hours after my mom had lit a candle in a Church asking God for a child, she received a phone call asking if she wanted to adopt me. I'm really fortunate that I feel destined by God to be adopted instead of feeling torn away from my birthmother. Nobody really knows why or how God forms our destiny, but maybe I would've been adopted by somebody even if my birthmother had all of the resources to take care of me. It sounds weird that God wouldn't

want a child to stay with its mother, but God can see the bigger picture. After all, belonging to two nuclear families is better than only one. Some of my relatives were adopted. That's a source of comfort for me. Some people told my mom that if you're adopted you're not a real member of the family that adopts you. My mom will respond by telling them that if that is true, it also must be true that a husband really isn't a true family member to his wife because he isn't related to her by blood. I believe it's an honor to be adopted because each of us is an adopted son or daughter of God. My birthfather abandoned both my birthmother and me, but I've forgiven him because he had a part in my creation, and his bad example shows me how not to be a father to a child and how to be a husband to a wife. It's unlikely that I'll ever meet my birthfather, but that doesn't make forgiving him any easier. In a sense, everything that I know is because of my birthmother and birthfather. After patiently waiting for 23 life-sapping years, my birthmother made that life-changing decision to reach out to me. She got permission from my adoptive parents before proceeding. She wrote me an extra-long letter shortly after she had me, and I finally got to read it about one year ago. My birthmother recently told me about the new brothers and sisters that she gave me to call my own. This makes up for all the times I was picked on for being an adopted only child. My birthmother and I are hoping to meet in person one day.

When I was about five years old, I collected images of women in underwear ads. My mom found me looking at the images one day and took them away. I was attracted to these pictures all on my own. It's not like I had accidentally stumbled upon my dad's stack of *Playboy* magazines because he's never owned any. I hit puberty early. I was hairier than most of my peers. However, my eyelashes were longer than most girls' eyelashes and most girls seemed to like that. When I was in preschool there was a group of girls who were obsessed with me. They worshiped the ground I walked on. My mom told me that my teachers even had to talk to these girls and ask them all to give me some space. One day, these girls and I gathered in a playhouse during recess. I pulled my pants down, and they did too. I guess I knew the ways of the

world at quite an early age. Who knows what I was thinking? Maybe I thought the girls had to see me buck-naked in order to know me better. I know I know. Excuses excuses. I did one more thing when I was young that was a little racy. Little kids are like sponges. So while my family was out grocery shopping one day, I started singing the lyrics of a song I'd heard on the radio. Part of the song went, "I want a lover with a slow hand." I was only four at the time, and my mom was shocked. She switched the radio station in the car to classical music after that. It's strange that I sang this song because I recall that I didn't care about the lyrics in songs when I was young. I just liked the way that the lyrics sounded. I guess I was more aware than I remember.

I had acquaintances all my life, but not really any friends. I threw a classmate of mine onto the ground at my grade school because he made fun of a girl who supposedly stuffed her bra. Another guy had pushed me into the lockers for a couple years. He pushed me one day, but I pushed back hard enough to make him hit the ground even though there was a teacher there. The teacher probably didn't do anything because I was acting in self-defense. I was recently told by my mom that this guy is now in the Marines. I guess any person can transform, not just me. The punishments I got in grade school were so numerous that they lost their ability to discipline me and help me. Everybody knows that "The bigger they are the harder they fall." People talk about being "too big to fail," but they forget that some people, like the one I was, were "too tiny to succeed." Little did I know that I was receiving a small foretaste of a juvenile detention center (juvie) at my Catholic grade school. In both places we would form orderly lines when we walked up and down the halls. Let's flash forward to Arizona (AZ) right before I was sent to Mount Carmel Youth Ranch (MTCYR). Some people exclusively follow the money, but I just followed the drugs. I didn't care who had them. As a result, I hung around some pretty scary people. One of the gang leaders decided to punch me several times in the gut. He was way bigger than I was. One of the other guys stood up for me and slammed my assaulter to the ground. What few moral traits that remained in me were probably encroaching on this dude's space. Since he

was a gang leader, he didn't want anyone else to think they were cooler than he was. I was a bad dude, but not gang material. It might have actually been a form of respect when the gang leader punched me. I feel respect because my breed just doesn't belong with his breed. Even though I was quite different than this thug, we were actually similar to each other. We were both weak, only he was a weak person who looked tough on the outside, while I couldn't help but expose my outer weaknesses to everybody who looked at me. Besides the fight where I got punched in the gut, I experienced a fight in high school before I was sent to MTCYR. I was the closest I could've been to that fight because I was sitting across from the victim. The last fights that I experienced were at MTCYR. One of them I saw, and the others I started on my own. However, I didn't finish the ones I started. I discuss these events later in *Chapter -6- Round 2 of Mishaps*.

So before continuing our journey, I think that we better take a couple of deep breaths. Let's repeat a mantra that will calm us down. Why on earth, you ask, should I be calmed down? Simply because I'm going along with you on the journey we are about to embark on. I hope that's ok with you since this is my book and all. In the movie *Anger Management*, the special word they say is "Goosfraba!" If you haven't seen that movie, I advise that you see it to understand my reference. Join me as I journey from not so humble beginnings, to eventually reaching higher ground. When I recall the many events from my life in this book, I'll try to avoid repeatedly saying, "This one time at juvie..." or "This one time at MTCYR..." For your information (FYI), I'm referring to the movie *American Pie* known for the line, "This one time at band camp..." This expression has sexual overtones. Believe it or not, the only MTCYR boy who wanted to be a priest when I was there quoted that line from *American Pie*? Most people have heard it. At first, I didn't get the *American Pie* reference and thought the boys were joking about how they planned to reminisce about their MTCYR experiences. I discourage anybody who hasn't seen *American Pie* from watching it.



Let me start by explaining myself. New Jersey is where I lived before Ohio. When I was near eight years old, I fell on my bike one day. The couple who were smoking cigs on their front porch thought I was hilarious and asked me to fall some more. I thought, "Hey I can get attention this way." This is a metaphor for how I fit in with my world as I grew up. I started becoming a class clown. So it's weird that I was an introvert and not a social butterfly. I was like Johnny Carson or David Letterman because both are exceptionally shy people even though you'd never guess that from their television talk shows. I was a sheltered child, so it's puzzling how I got myself into all sorts of trouble. We don't suspect the quiet ones, do we? My mom told me that when I was learning how to talk, I'd point at various objects in the room and ask in a baby-like fashion, "What is?" That's the only thing that I knew how to say at the time. I did this for a couple weeks, and then I stopped. Then I started to talk in complete sentences. The extraordinary part is when I'd ask my parents the name of each object in the room because I would never ask for the name of an object more than once. It's ironic that what I did to learn how to talk, I also did to transform my life at MTCYR. In both instances, I bided my time and observed my environment. Moreover, when I was learning how to talk, I broke my silence one day and finally had something worthwhile to say. I also broke my silence when I wrote this book about my transformation. I was a quick learner for being such a young buck. This became very apparent when I finally learned how to walk at just ten months and five days old. I then started running seven days later. I also had a knack as a child for memorizing numerous lines for the plays I acted in. My mom told me that when I was a really young boy, I'd just get up and walk out of the room when *Sesame Street* came on our TV. Most kids liked this show a lot, but I didn't. Did you know that *Sesame Street* is a bad teaching method for kids? Studies report that the information on this show is taught way too fast and way too randomly. Typical parents would be astonished that I didn't like, of all things, *Sesame Street*. Well I'm just as astonished as they'd be that I didn't cherish *Sesame Street*. I must've been way ahead of my time. I was an old soul, and I still am. I was always artistically inclined. One day, my mom went over to one of her

*Joshua Kresse*

friend's house. I frequently had playtime with this woman's son. We were both very young. So my friend and I had decided to use our artistic proficiencies to cover nearly the entire upstairs walls with our drawings. As aspiring artists, we had to make a lasting work of art, so we used permanent markers. Even if we hadn't, it would've still been really difficult to clean up. I'm very surprised and thankful that my skill of drawing on walls as a very young boy didn't transfer into a graffiti artist later in life. LOL.

Two more events that show that I was a "gifted" child are as follows. When my family and I went to Washington, DC for our vacation, we traveled to the Washington Monument. There were a couple pigeons that had landed on a grassy area nearby. So as casual as ever, I went near a pigeon and simply picked it up. My mom got her camera out to take a photo, but I put it down too soon. I told my mom not to worry, and I picked the pigeon back up again. You can see the photo of me holding a pigeon up on <http://www.adopechanginglives.wordpress.com>. I'm betting that some people think that those pigeons were picked up frequently, but I've personally never seen somebody pick up a pigeon. So it's possible I'm an honest-to-goodness pigeon whisperer. The other event I recall was when I gave \$75 bucks to the Operation Smile organization that my grade school was trying to raise money for. I'd saved up this money to buy a brand new bike. I told my mom that I was deeply moved by the children who were in dire need of teeth and/or facial structure repair. The images of children with teeth and/or facial deformities just got to me. I'm almost positive that I would've given my money to any organization that showed images of people with deformities. The reason I'm almost positive I would've done this is because my mom had a photo of my baby sister Erin, and Erin had a facial deformity. My baby sister died because her heart had a hole in it. My adoptive mom had genetic problems that affected her children. Many of her children died in miscarriages.

While I was very young and living in New Jersey, my dad told me he favored one NFL team over another. I totally flipped out. I think I actually started to cry. I know why I did this even

though it doesn't make sense. I thought it was very unjust for my dad to only favor a single team, and I thought that everyone should like all of God's creatures equally. It makes me chuckle to myself when I think of how outlandish my idea of justice was, especially since we were talking about beastly football players in the NFL who didn't need a puny kid trying to protect them. That previous account allows me to nicely segue into my next account which also took place in New Jersey when I was very young. So one day, I actually spoke to the Devil as if he was standing next to me. I was trying to talk him into switching back over to God's team. I didn't realize that if you go to hell, you can never cross over to heaven, and if you go to heaven, there isn't any point in leaving because of how magnificent heaven is. Kids aren't really aware of what they do when they're young, but I think that my attempt to talk the Devil into switching back over to God's team shows a sense of compassion and justice for the Devil, strange as this might be. I also thought that the Devil (Lucifer) was the only reason hell existed in the first place. The truth is that hell existed before Lucifer decided to reject God. I also didn't think a loving God would create a hell. Now I know that God created hell out of compassion because He doesn't want anyone who doesn't love Him to have to suffer in His presence. I also thought that if I could just get the Devil to switch back over to God's team, that I could simply make hell vanish. After all, what youngster doesn't want to save the entire world from going to hell? LOL. I also did something exceptionally weird to my cat after I moved from New Jersey to Ohio. I poured milk on my cat and flung her across the room. It's not true that I'd never hurt a fly because I have killed many of them, but flinging my cat like that was highly atypical of me. That's why I'm mentioning this account. My cat wasn't injured when I did this. I had been having some downright awful depression in my life at that time and hadn't discovered the joy of burning off extra energy by exercising regularly. This account makes me see how bullies pick on people who are weaker than they are. I might've lashed out and flung my cat because I felt as if I couldn't stick up for myself when I was bullied at school.

If I didn't get my way, I'd have outbursts, conniptions, fits, tantrums, and pity parties. I didn't have many ways to blow off steam, except sports. As a boy, I had such great footwork on my soccer team that I made the father of one of my teammates cry. Hey, sports make us emotional. This dad worked for Budweiser Brewery, so my ability must've been something else alright. This dad had a son named Josh. My name is Josh as well. This might explain why he was partial to my ball handling. I'm trying to be humble. I tried quitting my school basketball team once, but my coach and his son dropped by my house and changed my mind. Our coach would work us so hard that all of my teammates and I were crying after practice one time. No joke. Crying I tell you! I needed more of his discipline, and I'd get more of it at MTCYR. Adults and parents at my grade school didn't like outsiders, and I was an outsider because I wasn't born in their area. It makes a lot of sense that *The Outsiders* was required reading at my grade school. A few *Harry Potter* books were also read to students by a teacher. Many moms spoke out against *Harry Potter* books being read at my Catholic school because they endorse witchcraft. One mom wouldn't let her sons read the *Goosebumps* books that my book club was reading. The mom of a school buddy of mine told her sons to stay away from me. She had a point. I was unstable. However, what she did wasn't Christlike, especially since she's a Catholic Christian. FYI, Catholics are the first Christians. There is no question that I rebelled at my grade school, but my mom and several other moms had some huge problems with how the principal and teachers ran things. Case in point, the school tried to force the boys and girls to watch a couple sex ed videos in the same room. They wouldn't even let the students opt out if they preferred that. I liked how honest my biology teacher was at my grade school. She didn't teach us sex ed. However, she did teach us that even though sexual exploration is typical of kids our age, masturbation is still a grave sin. She explicitly laid it on the line. She didn't even need to explain to all the boys in detail how not to masturbate because boys that age already knew how to do it. So if they knew how to do it, they also knew full well how not to masturbate, however contrary to belief that actually is. Then our teacher went on to address the girls. She explained to each girl

that there should never be anything put in their vagina except their husband's penis. Now that I'm older I appreciate what she said because guys are stereotyped as the ones who have trouble keeping their sexual appetites in check. My teacher also told her students and me to stop saying the word "tight." Tight is a slang word, meaning "cool," but it can also mean "drunk" or be meant in a sexual way. A couple weeks after I finished the sex ed class, I said the word "pubic," and I got in big trouble. My mom knew if I was taught about sex that there was a risk I would say sexual things. I should've gotten off with a warning instead of getting in trouble. Plus, the word "pubic" can refer to the pubic bone, but I used it in reference to pubic hair.

Several of the teachers quit because they disagreed with the teaching model enforced by the principal. They even sent me to a counselor at that school. I felt pushed aside. It's a school's job to teach, and teaching can frequently be a thankless job. I get all that; but in order to teach students properly, they need the very best atmosphere to be taught in, right? The only reason that I was stuck with this principal, and she was stuck with me, was because the prior one had recently passed on. That was a really sad day because everyone loved this man. I don't know if it's just a coincidence, but I didn't have "quality bonding time" with our old principal like I did with the one who took his place. I almost never had to walk down to the principal's office when the other principal was in charge. One time, I brought a voice recorder to my grade school and tried to capture my teacher's voice on tape. She had said some downright mean and nasty things to both the students and me in the past, and I was going to catch her this time. However, it's not as if I could've gotten her in any trouble because the only people who would listen to me were the other students, and they knew full well this teacher was mean. Being the dexterous spy operative that I was, I managed to get caught with my voice recorder. That's pitiful because I was the furthest away from my teacher. She made me bring my tape recorder up to her in front of the whole class. I was given a punishment and had my recorder taken away from me. I could reclaim it later if I never brought it to school again. Quite frankly, all the students

would do much better if they could voice record their teachers' lectures. I was interrupting my teacher's class when I tried voice recording her. The school didn't need to give me a single reason for why they didn't want voice recorders in their classrooms, and it might've only been that teacher who had any problems with it. However, if the school gave me a reason for why they took my recorder, I know what they would say. They would say that I was disrupting everybody and that the school didn't want any type of electronics in the classroom. Those are all valid points, but I still find it suspicious that she was so furious with me when I was caught. The fact that I was given a punishment right away also suggests that she assumed I was scheming to catch her saying something she didn't want taped. Why would she assume that I had evil intentions against her? Probably because she knew that she had crossed the line with some of my classmates and me. I have a hunch that I was the first student to ever bring a voice recorder to class.

I was bullied by some of the kids at that school. I was told to meet one of the other kids out by the playground one day. He threatened me and looked like he was going to beat me up, but didn't. To my credit, I was probably the only guy who was brave enough to go out and meet the bully. However, now I realize that every student was probably tough as nails at my school, making it hard to compare my heroic act with any of the other kids who got bullied. In other words, there might not have been any other kids who were bullied. Some tough guys think they can look into people's eyes, scope them out, and know if they're dangerous or not. Some may possess this ability, but I think most of it is just hype. Here is an aside about judging by appearances. Recently, I attended Maricopa Workforce Connections. This facility is one of the very top job placement programs in the U.S. There was a guy there who was studying to be a welder and formerly worked as a bar tender. He would swear during some of the classes. He also told me that he'd done many drugs, but was trying to stay clean. He had many tattoos. I told him, as well as my group, that I was thinking about becoming an addiction recovery coach for a local Arizona company even though I didn't have an official degree in

counseling. Then with all-knowing wisdom he informed me that I couldn't do that. So as nicely as I could, I told him I'd also been an addict to drugs and vice, but had gotten clean. A few seconds later, he said he just doesn't like when therapists tell him not to abuse drugs, when he finds out that those therapists have never been addicts and gone through recovery. At first, I was offended by what he said, but then I realized that it was quite reassuring that my presence and demeanor didn't resemble a drug addict to him. He probably wasn't even trying to compliment me, so that's what makes it all the more complimentary. This reminded me of *The Prince and the Pauper* because I was focusing on this guy's tattoos and forgetting how I must have looked to him.

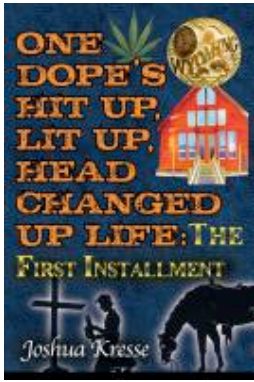
I was your all-American kid. In Ohio, my parents let me do piano, swimming, basketball, soccer, volleyball, and wrestling. I had also wrestled when I was much younger. FYI, my uncle also loves to wrestle. He was the state and district champion of Ohio, received a wrestling scholarship from Kent University, and even coached at my wrestling classes. I made a really nifty zip line in my backyard. I was really into climbing and even got a welder to build a stainless steel grappling hook for me which I still have. Our backyard was a large sloping hill that had a "crick" at the bottom. The neighborhood hoodlums and I would oftentimes go a huntin' for crawdads in my "crick." We'd creep around and spy on all the neighbors, but there comes a certain age when spying isn't appropriate anymore. One evening, my cousin got to sleep over at our house. I convinced him to climb out of my window with me and use my grappling hook and rope to rappel down the side of our house. We both weighed a lot less back then, but our weight was still too much for us to climb back up that rope. We woke my parents when we were trying to climb back up and got in big trouble. I've done some pretty stupid stuff, all in the name of fun of course, but these next accounts really take the cake. I wanted to create a sword that was identical to a Samurai sword. We had found a couple rods of rebar (long reinforcing bars used in construction) at a construction site near our houses. Then my friend and I got a big fire going in my backyard grill. We left the rebar in the hottest part of the flames for a while. We eventually

took the rebar out. It was glowing with a bright orange color. I was eager to complete my noble task of banging the rebar with a hammer. So eager in fact that I grabbed the red-hot rebar. I got 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns. At first, I didn't feel any pain because my body was in shock. I had a massive crisscrossing pattern seared along my entire palm for the next two months or so. Then there was the time when I tied my skateboard to the back of my bike. I let my friends ride it as it trailed about ten feet behind my bike. I then rode my bike while no one was on the skateboard. I went full speed toward my mailbox to catch some air on the curb. The skateboard wrapped around the mailbox. I got jolted off my bike, flew about ten feet, and then hit the pavement face first. At least I knew our mailbox was structurally sound. As soon as my bike pulled the rope snug, my bike came to a complete stand still. My chin took the most impact. Like the time I got 2<sup>nd</sup> degree burns on my hand, I also didn't feel pain at first with my bike accident. My next epic fail was the time when I decided to take one of my AA batteries and make it explode. Yeah, I was a bit scared that it would blow up in my face, figuratively and literally, but I still did it anyway. So I took a hammer and banged the AA battery right in the middle. Nothing happened. So I banged a little bit harder until the battery finally gave way. It wasn't loud, but I got lots of battery acid on my hands and face. I washed the acid off as fast as I could. My grandpa is a Marine. He did something crazy that had striking similarity to what I did, only deadlier. He took a .22 bullet and banged on it with a hammer until it finally went off. My grandpa is far from being a dumb individual, but we have all experimented with danger at times in our life. Like Marine, like grandson. My final near-death injury is as follows. I can't exactly remember where I was, but I know I was with my parents as a child. I tried to run full speed between a freshly planted tree and the wooden stakes on either side of it. I thought the stakes were decorations. I'd pretty much break the sound barrier when I ran back then because I ran a lot on my soccer team, and I weighed less. So I got clotheslined by a metal wire that held the wooden stakes and the tree together. That wire prevented freshly planted trees from falling. It did that very well because I didn't make the tree fall down. Yep, the wires supporting that tree were working



just fine, thank you very much. I floundered on the ground. The wind was knocked out of me, and some good sense was knocked into me. Some skills don't require repetition to master, namely, not running into a metal wire that clotheslines you. You bet that was the last time I was clotheslined by a metal wire.

My video game addiction didn't last a long time. Luckily, my addiction wasn't as bad as the boy seen in the news who killed his parents. He killed them because his father told him to stop playing video games non-stop. Maybe it's not just the violence in video games that make people become violent in reality, but the amount of time that people spend escaping reality as well. I was never a violent person, but my mom was scared for me when I was a very young boy. Here's a quick account of this event. So it was Christmas day, and all of my family members were gathered around for festivities. I didn't want to play with any of my toys. Instead, I improvised with some things that were lying around. I took two Barbie dolls and pretended one was a gun to shoot the other in the head. I sat there doing that for about ten minutes. That's a little bit, or should I say a lot, disturbing. My mom had a fear that buying me a cap gun would make me violent, but she then realized that buying me a cap gun would be far better than if I associated women with violence. My mom bought me my first cap gun after my heinous act of Barbie violence. Later that day, my grandpa approached my mom and proudly proclaimed, "Son of peacenik (an activist who opposes war), grandson of Marine." My grandpa called my mom a peacenik because she opposed the Vietnam War.



*A few things this refreshingly upbeat book describes are the author's boyhood, drug use, juvenile detention center time, residential youth ranch experience, and religious transformation. Even though the author has transformed, he doesn't sugarcoat anything. This book is for teens, parents, and anyone who needs to transform their life. It's also for people who have already transformed, and could use an inspirational story to help them keep fighting the good fight.*

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