

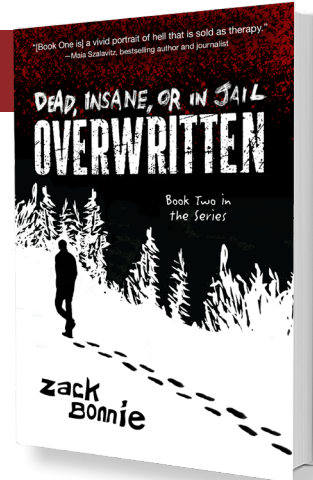
# Dead, Insane, or In Jail Book Series Media Kit

writethewriter@deadinsaneorinjail.com | DeadInsaneOrInJail.com

## OVERWRITTEN

Paperback and Ebook formats launching March 2018

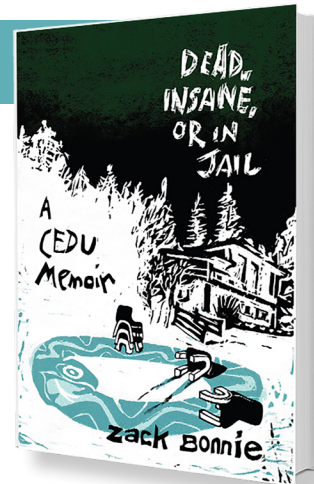
Book Two, *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: OVERWRITTEN*, begins when armed guards return 14-year-old Zack to the facility in Northern Idaho where he'll spend the next two-plus years of his life.



## A CEDU Memoir

In Paperback, Ebook, and Audiobook formats

Zack Bonnie's memoir, *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: A CEDU Memoir*, tells his own story of two and a half years in a Troubled Teen facility. Using coercion, peer pressure, and sleep deprivation, the school changed the lives of its students. See how it was done in this plot-driven, dialog-filled memoir series. Book One is available in Ebook, Paperback, and Audiobook.



## Media Kit Contents:

- Story Ideas, Connections, Events, and Advocacy Groups
- Author Bios & High-Res Photo
- Praise for Books
- *Dead, Insane, or In Jail* Excerpt
- *Overwritten* Excerpt
- Speaker One-Sheet



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Zack Bonnie / Not With The Program Productions • Dyke, VA 22935

Skype zack.bonnie • writethewriter@deadinsaneorinjail.com • [DeadInsaneOrInJail.com](http://DeadInsaneOrInJail.com)

# Story Ideas for Journalists

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- Children's rights / human rights
- Social isolation during adolescence
- Decisions for institutional placement
- Healthy attachment and trauma bonding
- Institutionalized persuasion (coercion)
- Milieu control (brainwashing)
- Making art from trauma
- Art as the antidote to abuse

## Connections, Events, and Advocacy Groups:

### Virginia Festival of the Book

MARCH 2018, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: Overwritten* is featured on the panel discussion, "Seeking Wellness: We Are Not Alone," about memoir and understanding.

### International Cultic Studies Association

JULY 2016, DALLAS, TX • After attending the ICSA conference in Stockholm in 2015, Zack was invited to present the following year in Dallas, with his session, "The Lack of Research in Adolescent Group Settings: Psychological Pressures as Part of the Milieu in Controlling Institutions and Systems - Making Art out of the Inexpressible."

While there, at a **Phoenix Project** session on the role of the arts in resistance and recovery, Zack read from Book One and made the case that art is the antidote to authoritarianism. ([icsahome.com](http://icsahome.com))

### Virginia Festival of the Book

MARCH 2016, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • Book One in the series, *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: A CEDU Memoir*, was selected for the 2016 Virginia Festival of the Book, and was featured in the local paper. To a packed house, Zack engaged in a public discussion with other experts about consent and coercion in mental health treatment policy. ([VaBook.org](http://VaBook.org))

### Daedalus Books Debut Event

NOVEMBER 2015, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • Iconic used-bookseller Daedalus Books introduced *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: A CEDU Memoir* to local friends, fans, and supporters in Zack's inaugural book event. Zack's book was the first newly published book ever sold at Daedalus.

### Stockholm

JUNE 2015, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN • While attending the annual conference of the **International Cultic Studies Association** ([icsahome.com](http://icsahome.com)), Zack met with attorney, children's rights advocate, and ICSA past President **Phil Elberg**, cult recovery expert **Steven Hassan**, and many other leaders in the field. By now, Zack had become aware of the scope and impact of institutionalized persuasion worldwide, and the many voices now being raised to advocate for change.

### Dallas

MAY 2015, DALLAS, TX • With author-scholar **Marcus M. Chatfield IV** and documentarian **Paul Yanez**, Zack met with **Prof. Rick Halperin**, Director of the Embrey Human Rights Program at Southern Methodist University's Dedman College of Human Rights to discuss rights deprivations at US-based residential teen programs

### Survivors of Institutional Abuse

MARCH 2015, LOS ANGELES, CA • Met with SIA leader **Jodi Hobbs** ([sia-now.org](http://sia-now.org)), and featured speaker, the author and attorney **Paul Morantz**. Independent filmmaker **Adam Forgash** conducted documentary interviews of Morantz on the history of Synanon and its founder, Charles Dederich. Also met with **Nick Gaglia**, director of *Over the GW*, and **Kate Logan** (director) and **David Wernsman** (subject) of the documentary, *Kidnapped for Christ*.



## Author Bios

writethewriter@deadinsaneorinjail.com

Right-click to download high-res author photos, or visit [DeadInsaneOrInJail.com](http://DeadInsaneOrInJail.com)

*“I had a choice. I could do nothing, trying to ‘move on and get over’ the theft of my personal autonomy and self-determination when I was a kid. Or I could tell a wild true story, with a message that can effect change for troubled teens and their families.”*

—Author Zack Bonnie

### Bios for Zack Bonnie

#### **Tweetable Bio** – 137 characters

Zack Bonnie was taken to a facility in Northern Idaho at age 14. 2.5 yrs of #OITNB in remote Rockies. With teenagers. #DeadInsaneOrInJail

#### **Short Bio** – 40 words

Zack Bonnie, author of the **Dead, Insane, or in Jail** series, lives in the mountains of Central Virginia. He speaks, writes, and advocates for solutions for troubled families and their teenagers. He frequently acts, hikes, and plays poker. Visit [deadinsaneorinjail.com](http://deadinsaneorinjail.com).

#### **Medium Bio** – 92 words

Zack Bonnie, author of the **Dead, Insane, or in Jail** series, lives in Central Virginia. As a child, he was a daredevil who loved soccer. By age fourteen, life had become tumultuous at home and at school; his sudden entrance to a behavior modification facility in Idaho changed the trajectory of his life forever. With his first book series, Zack takes readers into the inner workings of the facility, and their impact on his hyperstimulated young mind. He speaks, writes, and advocates for solutions for troubled families and their teenagers. Visit [deadinsaneorinjail.com](http://deadinsaneorinjail.com).



...continued

## Long Bio – 625 words

Zack Bonnie, author of the Dead, Insane, or in Jail series, lives in Central Virginia. As a child in Charlottesville, VA, he was a daredevil who loved soccer. By age fourteen, life had become tumultuous at home and at school; his sudden entrance to a behavior modification facility in Idaho changed the trajectory of his life forever. After “graduating” from Rocky Mountain Academy, Zack returned to high school, and eventually made his way into Bard College on the strength of his writing abilities and Bard’s generous entrance standards. Although the classroom environment had never called to him, the nearby Bard Theater beckoned Zack to a future in the theater.

He earned a BA in Drama at Bard, attended the Young Writers Workshop at the University of Virginia, then studied at the Universitat de Barcelona, and earned a Certificate of Completion at the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art (LAMDA), the oldest drama school in the UK.

After graduation, Zack moved to Spain temporarily, continuing informal studies in the theater community there, even meeting the playwright Edward Albee and his English counterpart, Harold Pinter.

Zack spent most of his 20s in New York, pursuing his dream to become a stage actor. His first theatrical role in New York, in Joanna Chan’s The Story of Yu-Huan, was delivered entirely in Ancient Mandarin at the Theater for the New City. He also performed in productions at the Flea Theater, La Mama ETC, and the Bank Street Theatre. He also appeared in film (directors include Whit Stillman and Penny Marshall), television (in Spain and the US, including Law & Order and Law & Order SVU), and theater in Barcelona, and Charlottesville, VA).

Zack produced and directed plays in Off-Off-Broadway theaters in New York, including The Family Productions and the Williamsburg Film Festival, and served as the Live Arts Director for an international artists collective cooperative in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. To support his life in New York, he worked at restaurants, security firms, and legal offices, and took side jobs as costumed characters at conventions and children’s parties. He then began traveling with his longtime companion, Rebecca Danis, and became an Appalachian Trail long-distance section hiker (LASH).

In late 2002, he headed back to his home state of Virginia to begin a new chapter of life. Eight years later, an accident interrupted everything when a vehicle hit Zack in a crosswalk, and landed him in the hospital. A court ruled in his favor – despite his dreadlocks – and while Zack recovered from head-to-toe injuries he drafted a book about his time in Idaho as a young teen. Now all healed, Zack is taking on the world of the Troubled Teen Industry.

In this series, Zack takes readers into the inner workings of the facility where he lived, and the impact the school had on his hyperstimulated young mind. Incarcerated at age fourteen at a school for troubled teens in Northern Idaho, Zack has crafted a fast-moving, plot-driven memoir, with vivid characters and telling details, where even simple English words take on sinister meanings.

With the publication of his books, Zack Bonnie has become an advocate for change in the Troubled Teen industry. He has presented at the Survivors of Institutional Abuse annual conference (March 2015), the Virginia Festival of the Book (March 2016 and 2018), and the International Cult Studies Association annual conference (July 2016), and has been interviewed for radio, independent podcasts, and film documentaries by experts including the late Liam Scheff, Jodi Hobbs, Director of Survivors of Institutional Abuse (SIA), and the independent documentarians Adam Forgash and Paul Yanez.

Through his writing, speaking, and advocacy work he works to help troubled families and create alternatives to facilities like the one he describes in his memoir.

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# Praise for *Dead, Insane, or In Jail: A CEDU Memoir*

“A vivid portrait of hell that is sold as therapy.”

—Maia Szalavitz, Author, *Unbroken Brain*, and *Help At Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids*

“Zack’s story must become a call to action. The continued existence of programs like CEDU should be considered a **national disgrace**. We must address the false premises behind these approaches to defiant youth that Zack so **eloquently describes in this challenging and heartfelt memoir.**”

—Christopher Bellonci, MD, Board-Certified Child/Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist, Past President of the American Association of Children’s Residential Centers

“It is sad the abuse of teenagers to tough love programs by mis-informed parents and politicians did not end with the revelations concerning the concept originator Synanon. But to be stopped eventually, **stories like this memoir by Mr. Zack Bonnie must keep being told.**”

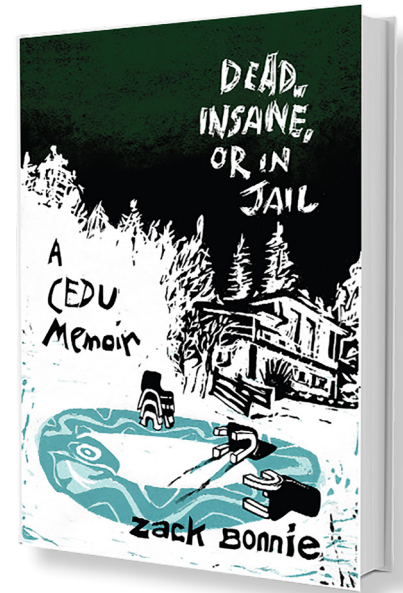
—Paul Morantz, Esq., Author, *Escape: My Life Long War Against Cults*

“Zack Bonnie has **attempted a formidable task and pulled it off impressively**. His well-written tale does a remarkable job of recalling his thinking and his feelings as he gradually internalizes the madness of his everyday life and the hopelessness of his situation. **In the tradition of *Darkness At Noon***, Zack’s history puts the reader into the life that too many “survivors” experienced, and he does this in a **finely crafted page-turner**.

—Philip Elberg, Esq., litigator and member of ASTART  
(Alliance for the Safe, Therapeutic & Appropriate Use of Residential Treatment)

“Zack Bonnie’s memoir is **generous and deeply insightful**. With gut-level **insight, humor and frankness**, he describes the inner experience of a precocious 14 year-old who was engulfed and overwhelmed by these **bizarre, yet legal, forms of psychological abuse.**”

—Marcus Chatfield, Author, *Institutionalized Persuasion*



After a childhood in Charlottesville, VA, and two and a half years at Rocky Mountain Academy in Idaho, Zack Bonnie earned a BA in drama from Bard College. His public speaking focuses on topics of human rights and social psychology. He has hiked over 5,000 miles. With his longtime companion, Rebecca Danis, he makes his home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Central Virginia.

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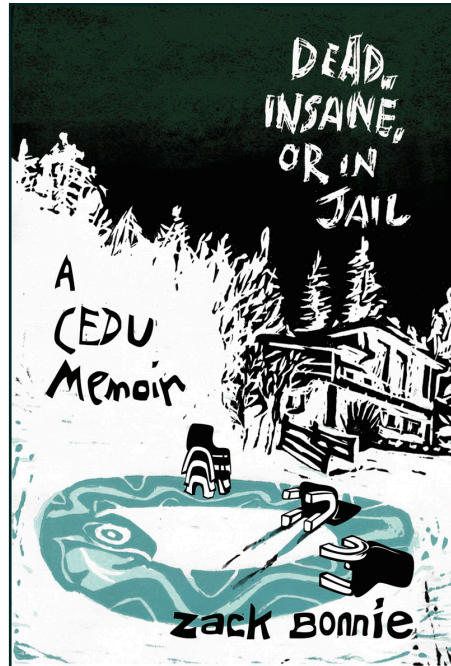


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# Dead, Insane, or in Jail: A CEDU Memoir – Excerpt

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## Chapter 2

Andrew Oswald had been inside, waiting.

He grabbed me and pulled me up the single step, across the high threshold, and into the dark room with him. The quickness with which he pulled me to his large, hairy, body scared the shit out of me.

Keeping his weighty hand on my shoulder, he veered me past him through the massive doorframe. The darkness inside, and the noise of people upstairs, muffled and distorted my focus, like when I tried on Dad's thick eyeglasses as a child. Then my eyes began to adjust, although the sounds kept fading like the boot clunks upstairs. The room was sparsely furnished. I noticed a desk and a stack of black chairs.

Andrew Oswald's head breached the doorway as he reached out to take the metal stirrup door handle. He had to stoop to get back into the tiny room. His balding head was flecked with black and white wisps of hair. These peppered hairs seemed to be sweating, as they clung to his shiny scalp. The head rose back to a human position atop Andrew's neck and my world darkened as his fleshy body stood between me and the thick door that shut behind him. The latch clanked into place.



“Did you have a good tour?”

His voice was nasally and smaller than it should have been, emanating from that big sweaty, hairy body.

“This is an interesting school, hunh? Did Tim and Paul take you to see the sauna?”

“Yeah, that was alright.”

I wanted to talk to my father.

“Where is he?” I repeated, in part because of the muffle, “Where is my father?”

There was a woman in the room too. I observed a small, country-looking woman with falsely curled, streaky, stringy blonde hair. Her diminished presence was perfectly invisible to me until after the door closed. She stood meekly in the corner, her hands behind her back.

*Creepy.*

With her eyeballs directed into the bridge of my nose, the woman whipped her hands forward. She had been hiding something. My eyes were stuck on her serene face.

*Wait. Was that.... Something sharp?*

Some sunlight glinted through the window in the heavy door. A magical slow-motion moment elongated exponentially. I turned into Andrew’s body, which blocked my escape. Andrew was still looking at the woman with a sense of mysterious urgency. I’d have bet the moments were flying by rapidly from their perspective.

“This is Kelly Grainger. Kelly.”

I looked back at Kelly. *Who is this woman and why do I need to know who she is?*

Kelly’s hands hugged the shiny object to her abdomen. She turned and willed me to follow her gaze through the window.

“Where’s my dad?” I demanded.

Something was happening and I didn’t see it coming. Through that dingy little window in that closed wooden door I could see the rental car driving away. A wake of wind flicked gravel and dust from the bouncing back wheels of the white Mercury. The car I had been snoozing in an hour before was leaving without any ceremony. Down a long driveway, it left a bumping trail, dry as bones. It was still very early.

The word “Dad” went dry in my mouth. It all snapped together in my mind. I began to turn decisively toward a new threatening sound, but I was too late. I tried to prevent the attack.

*Raise your hand! Dammit!*

The silvery beast had my wrists. They were immobilized! Long graying mustache hairs reached up and out triumphantly from Andrew Oswald’s nostrils above me. Andrew wore circular shaped spectacles. The red frames had little horns on them, and set off his iron gray eyebrows. With bushy eyebrow-hairs peeking out from above the red frames, he appeared like an overgrown and deranged lemur.

What he was wearing in between his scraggly head and furry toes wasn’t formal. He didn’t even have shoes on. Instead, he wore enormous sandals. His toes were huge. I was mesmerized by Andrew’s feet. Those stately dogs – that big toe was as big as my whole foot! I began to get very scared as the threatening words and sounds came into focus behind my lagging vision.

Andrew Oswald’s peculiarly nasal and rounded words floated around in my light head. “Program,” “processing,” “clothes off.”

*Whoa. Back up. Clothes off?*

I know I didn’t hear that right.

I couldn’t move.

*I’m trying to, but my wrists are bound to this stranger. I’m trying to back away. Simultaneously, he is demanding that I take off all of my clothes. And there’s this woman. From out of the shadows with something sharp!*

I wish I had woken up.

I wish I was running, and was being chased and THEN woke up!

But I didn’t.

I won’t exaggerate. I will be as plain as I am able about my “processing.”

About my “orientation” and my admittance into Rocky Mountain Academy on July 11th, 1988.

I was fourteen-and-a-half years old.

†

Dear Zack,

This is going to be a hard letter for me to write, and, I suspect it might be a hard letter for you to read. During the past two years, I’ve written you a lot of notes but some of them, you didn’t read – or at least you read part and once you got the drift, you didn’t finish them.

I asked you on Saturday when we were playing gin, if you doubted that your parents loved you. You thought about it and said, “Well, I doubt it, sure. But I know you do.” Zack, that’s one thing – one condition of your life that you don’t ever have to doubt. Daddy and I love you more than you can ever know.

—Letter from author’s mother 11 July 1988

†

Website: [www.deadinsaneorinjail.com](http://www.deadinsaneorinjail.com)

Facebook DIJ community: <https://www.facebook.com/deadinsaneorinjail>



# Praise for *Dead, Insane, or In Jail: OVERWRITTEN*

“In *Overwritten*, Zack Bonnie explains some of the standard methods of mind control used to break down people’s identities, to force them to dissociate, and to overwhelm them. Institutions like the one Zack endured, Rocky Mountain Academy, seem to behave the opposite of what a therapeutic environment should be. I applaud Zack’s bold, honest description of his journey through abuse. I commend him for wanting to understand it, dissect it, and digest it – and integrate it in a way that will help others.”

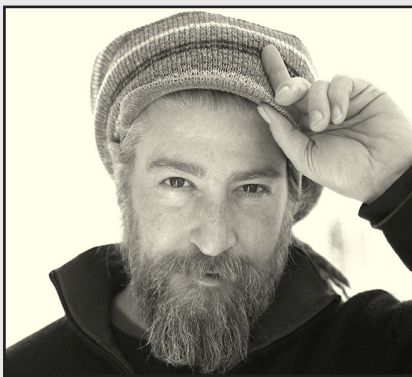
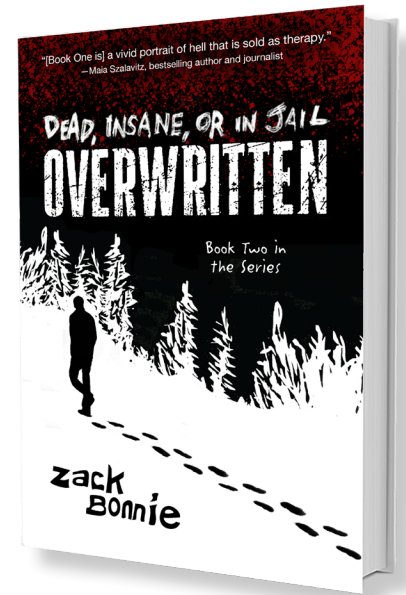
—Steven Hassan, Author, *Combating Cult Mind Control and Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People Cults and Beliefs*

“Zack Bonnie recounts the well-intentioned, but ill-informed, ways that we attempt to deal with attachment issues, impulsivity, and substance abuse, which are so often the repercussions of sexual assault and developmental trauma in teens. His book, *Dead, Insane, or in Jail: Overwritten*, serves as a reminder that healing trauma must begin with targeting the underlying brain state, a concept still largely misunderstood in treatment facilities.”

—Sebern Fisher, Author, *Neurofeedback in the Treatment of Developmental Trauma: Calming the Fear-Driven Brain*

“Zack Bonnie has provided us with a book which is well written and engaging, edgy and humorous, in his continuing memoir of doing time in the troubled teen industry. Zack invites us into the daily routine, depicting what one must do, how one must adapt and conform, in order to survive. And survive Zack did, long enough to be able to bring his story into the light of day, and provide for his former classmates, and other similarly disenfranchised voices, a chance to be heard. If speaking out, like art, can be an antidote to the impacts of abuse, then I think Zack’s book will be a helpful tonic for those who were in teen re-education camps, and for those who want to understand.”

—Diana Pletts, Director, The Phoenix Project



After a childhood in Charlottesville, VA, and two and a half years at Rocky Mountain Academy in Idaho, Zack Bonnie earned a BA in drama from Bard College. His public speaking focuses on topics of human rights and social psychology. He has hiked over 5,000 miles. With his longtime companion, Rebecca Danis, he makes his home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Central Virginia.

**Learn about coming of age in the remote Rockies of Northern Idaho, within the confines of an intensive “emotional growth program.” Follow the relationships that develop, in spite of the school’s strict rules. Think *Orange Is the New Black*, in Idaho. With teenagers.**

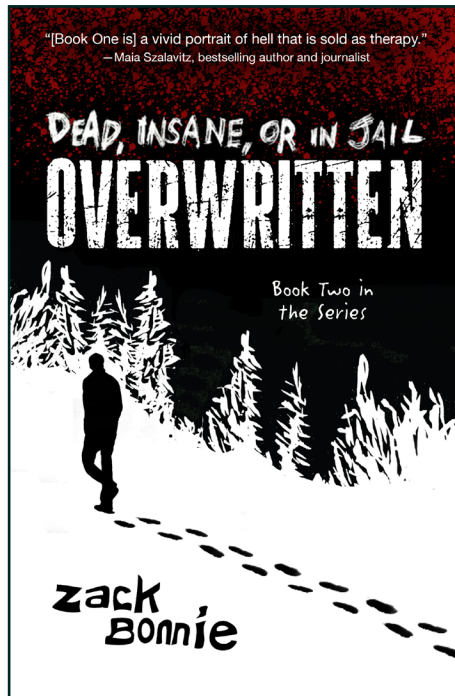


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# Dead, Insane, or in Jail: OVERWRITTEN – Excerpt

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## Chapter 1

Survival called its closing ceremony at the end of month-long ordeal, “Trail’s End.” Over a memorable hour at the Oxbow Truck Stop and Restaurant, we ate luxurious, greasy, diner food from plastic plates, and drank soda that I felt seep into my spongy teeth. I ate cooked food with abandon, followed by a shower in a dank stall. Clean clothes! One kid in our group tossed his cookies n’ yogurt and got to shower twice.

*So, I survived Survival. That wasn’t a sure thing.*

I reviewed my situation.

*The only way I’ll ever see ol’ Mom and Dad again is to return to RMA; the only way I’m going home again is to make my parents love me so much they don’t ever want to have me so far away.*

*That’s unlikely.*

*I could be in Idaho forever.*

Kids I’d never see again got to meet their parents and go home with them. Not me. I got into Sheriff Darren Snipe’s cruiser for the long drive up along Idaho’s spine, almost to Canada. Hardly anybody had spoken with me on Solo the last four days; come to think of it, hardly anybody had spoken to me the last four weeks on Survival.



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When we left Trail's End to begin the voyage north to my ill-regarded destination, I got my first good up-close glimpse at the sheriff's traveling companion, the infamous Albert Guerre. I'd seen him before, but I doubted he remembered. According to rumor, the former Army Green Beret – with a face so scarred it could have been etched by quartz, and a permanent grimace under eyes shiny like a crow – had made a full-time career out of nabbing kids in the middle of the night and taking them to places made for kids “like me.”

Alternating driving duties, the two men kept the sheriff's cruiser in motion all night. I didn't sleep much due to the intestinal cramping and watery leakage of my active case of Survival-acquired giardiasis. Sheriff Snipes and the bounty hunter jabbered about winter sports and hunting for hours. When they talked to me, the conversation inevitably began, as so many would, with the question of what had nutritionally sustained me during the month-long forced march in the desert. At first, I felt like a hero talking about primitive fire-making, setting traps, and eating hand-caught fry and rattlesnake. But I quickly tired of my own anecdotes. I knew why I was in the car – my certain captivity was just hours away. From what I overheard in the back seat, my parents had made contingency plans. In case RMA had not permitted my reintegration, it appeared that Mom and Dad had also looked at sending me to CEDU – the California flagship of Sol Turnwell's business model, and sister school to RMA – among a host of other options recommended by their educational consultant back home in Virginia.



Cold darkness and familiar stars greeted me when Sheriff Snipes and his companion released me from the car. They had successfully delivered me to the door of my Rocky Mountain Academy dorm. My final moments under those stars didn't forebode anything, although they should have.

Albert Guerre followed me inside.

La Mancha, the dorm, had been named for a villa, which I thought of like a town park, not quite knowing the story of Don Quixote, although I had several times heard references in Idaho to Cervantes' epic. My dorm head, an older kid named Jasper Browning, flipped on a light and pointed up. Just like on day one, back in July, I spotted a rolled-up comforter on an empty bunk space above his. Jasper's clock told the awake people in the room that it was 3:30 AM. Guerre departed, saying, “See you in the morning.”

I'd spent the whole drive up here imagining the worst about coming back, in intestinal agony, wondering if I'd ever again see my little sister, brother, or parents.

*Or friends. I used to have friends, too.*

Anyway, I was happy the ten-hour drive was done. I climbed up the bunk. The mattress under my body was as foreign as my first French kiss.

*Nothing in nature is this soft.*

I sank in to sleep.

Around 6 AM, thirty minutes before our regular time to rise, my dorm support Jasper Browning made the bed under me creak. Returning from the commode he mixed a tremendous yawn with a disgruntled moan when he saw me nestled into the comforter above his bunk.

“Shit. That’s right! Well, get up in five. Take a shit. I gotta take you up to the house so George can move you in. We’ll get a shower after. Do they already know you’re back? Dude! Your feet fuckin’ reek!”

I shrugged from his eye level, knowing all that he suggested to be true. None of the other four dorm mates seemed to care that they were awakened thirty minutes early. One familiar face even smiled and waved. They’d all be heading for the house, too, in a little while, at breakfast time.

*How different from yesterday will today be? I don’t have to make a fire in order to eat? Wow! And, there will be breakfast and lunch!*

Jasper ushered me to the house, RMA’s central building. My armed and protective escorts from the desert must have napped in the car before signing over my custodial paperwork. They both waved to-go coffee cups happily from the vehicle when they saw me with Jasper. All they’d needed were a few signatures to reassign me to this wooden world of “unacceptable” music, clothes, and hair; mandatory touchy guilty feelings; absolute conformity under the guise of universal intervention therapy – all enforced by a system of creepy staff and nuttier older-school students who wanted me to smoosh together with them in body-piles on the house floor at night, or hug and cry after especially hairball raps where girls shrieked and everyone sobbed or screamed.

George Daughtry said good morning to Jasper, and then smiled eagerly at me. My return “interview” was gentle compared to the first time in July. That interview had been conducted by the oversized animal named Andrew Oswald, another RMA staffer, who demanded my clothes.

My hair had grown unacceptably long in the five weeks since I had split RMA. After mowing brown hair down with a crackling set of clippers in a cramped bathroom, George led us into the adjacent office. Prescott Freshwater, the head of Brave Family, was waiting for us with a couple of paper grocery bags full of work jeans and flannels, and the other few belongings that I abandoned when I split.

*Oh, shit! I see my journal. Did they read it?*

Time to be strip searched. This wasn’t because Prescott or George thought I had contraband; it was just CEDU policy to do this every time a kid left campus without permission. I wondered if the older kids that visit Bonners Ferry – the nearest town – were searched after every trip to the movies, every five-dollar-budgeted trip into a grocery for Mentos and Folger’s instant coffee. Or if even the Warrior kids get searched after home visits?

*This guy George who’s searching me has got the juice to make those decisions.*

For the fourth of four times this summer – and of all time – my strip search was unnecessary. Prescott and George, heads of Brave and Warrior families respectively, wouldn’t have allowed me into the dorm to sleep if there had been any doubt I had smuggled contraband onto campus.

Glad to put on clean socks a third time in 24 hours, I also looked forward to my third warm shower in a month – well, as long as I made sure it lasted less than five minutes. Because that’s the Agreement.

This entire routine to get a kid started at RMA is called orientation, but it should be called “disorientation.”

The smell of wood in my nostrils, George Daughtry’s mangled face, the boxy, rugged work-jeans, T-shirt, and blue flannel I pulled on, all had undesired familiarity. George’s face was sliced all down one side, an injury sustained in an act of violence before he worked for CEDU. He wedged himself into a creaking wood seat. Prescott Freshwater and his puffy face lingered next to me while we watched George sign papers. Prescott’s early-morning eyes were extremely red, the albino red of some of the ground dwelling creatures I’d seen in the Owyhee Desert.

George squared the papers and put down his pen. From over the modest pine desk he smiled with intensity, trying to make sparkles dance from his bright blue eyes into my bland browns. One of his eyelids was always only half-open, because of the big scar down the side of his face. How was I supposed to look back at him without staring at his permanently bulging, pale-blue orb?

*I already know my way around campus. This interview is to make sure I’m remorseful for splitting.*

“OK. Well firstly, welcome back. Bright and early. Your parents and I are hoping that you’ve got this out of your system, alright? Splitting didn’t solve your problems, did it?”

“Hmm.” I did not feel like answering George.

The running away from here, and the problem of being here for my problems were, in themselves, problems.

Splitting from here that August day felt like it happened long ago.

*Oh, his question is not rhetorical.*

“Um, no, I guess not. Sir.” I was aware of my sunburned flaking lips. They felt shriveled, like dehydrated black caterpillars on southern asphalt following a steamy Virginia rainstorm.

George Daughtry wet his shiny lips under a feeble mustache before continuing. I was anxious to get upstairs, but paid attention. I could smell toast and coffee, and hear kids banging around in the over-sized wooden rooms.

“You know, Bonnie, it doesn’t have to be as bad as you think. There’s no chains or locks here. We don’t even lock the dorms. Remember? Choose to be here...to believe what this special place can offer you. It’s your choice, you see.”

The Warrior family head paused to see if I’d rebut this assertion.

George’s argument about the lack of locks on the RMA campus was void. The school surrounded itself with a no-man’s land of impassible rivers and mountains.

I didn't take George's semantic word-bait about "choice," either. I knew that game well, from home, and from raps here.

*Rocky Mountain Academy people play unfair word games.*

We all knew I was acquainted with the up-sized threats of worse places than this, with locks, fences, no food, and cells for dorms. And, worse than any military school, there were long-term deprivation scenarios like the Survival program – where I had just spent four weeks in the desert – that kept kids outdoors living in tipis all year long, struggling against the elements. These places had also been mentioned among my parents, the educational consultant, and the parent communicator who worked in the basement of the academic building here.

*Choice? Not really.*

Prescott's turn for my attention arrived. Insinuations of breakfast between his sentences flavored the air between words. I smelled apples and brown sugar, a remnant of the oatmeal the power staff had been slurping up.

"So you probably understand a little more about consequences. About responsibility now, don't you? Taking responsibility for your own actions is one of the most important lessons a young man can learn. You're responsible for what you say, and do, and what you feel. Right? Like right this minute for example! Your parents don't make you feel angry, sad, happy, hurt, or whatever you're feeling; you choose to be angry as a consequence of your actions. That's on you. Right? That'd be a choice to be angry or feel whatever you're feeling. In your gut, right now. You'll see. Consequence and awareness."

I detected slurs and a mild lisp in Prescott's voice. I didn't know what he was talking about, either. That, along with my desire to get upstairs, was making me antsy.

*Is he drunk?*

It was early and they were still wearing comfortable sweatpants. Prescott hadn't made it into his customary suspenders – formal for night-time, and wide, red ones for the laborious forest-thinning occasions I would share with him in the months to come.

Prescott's last word bathed in the pine-incensed space between us. A nose whistle indicated more would be said:

"This place is expensive, Zack, and it cost you a lot splitting, didn't it? But it was worth it. Maybe you're the boy who's gone into the outhouse and come back smelling like roses."

George signed another document.

"OK, let's get you moved back in. Er, Bonnie, we found your journal in your belongings. I'm returning it to you. Here. Be careful though – making a habit of thinking negative brings negativity, son. Can't you see that? It's the eternal struggle in the I Want To Live. Well, heh, hopefully we'll see you make it to Warrior, and I'm going to put in a special request that you be one of my kids when you get there? With me. Alright?"

"Oh, good."

*George is talking about next summer!*

*A peer group goes into the I Want To Live propheet normally around the anniversary of starting here. George thinks I'll still be around in July or August of next year. I'll have to finish Papoose with Tess, get through Brave with Prescott, and get to Warrior before that.*

*Will I be here? Maybe so. What other option do I have but to perhaps plead my case at Christmas visits when I see Mom and Dad? Of course, that possibility is still three full months away – twice the amount of time I found unendurable here before.*



# Zack Bonnie

**DeadInsaneOrInJail.com**

Author Zack Bonnie works with advocacy organizations to educate the public and promote reform and regulation in the Troubled Teen Industry. His book series, DEAD, INSANE, OR IN JAIL, tells his own story. Now he's mobilizing to help kids and their families.

## Contact Information for Zack Bonnie

**Zack Bonnie • Not With The Program Productions** Dyke, VA 22935

**Skype:** zack.bonnie

**Email:** writethewriter@deadinsaneorinjail.com

**Author website:** www.zackbonnie.com

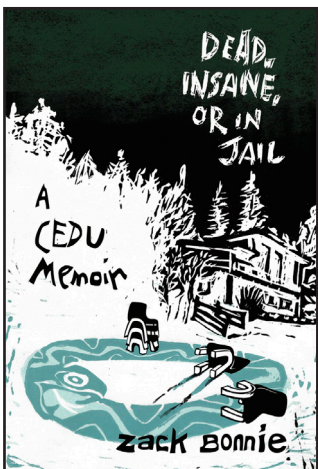
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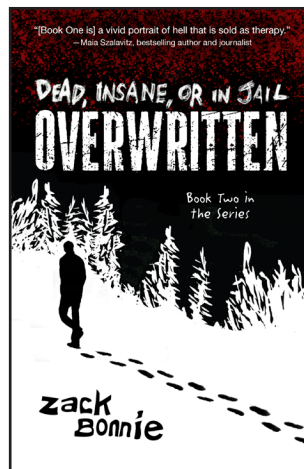
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