

TREATMENT

BY

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*For my children,
You give me the strength to carry-on.*

This book is a work of fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008 and 2009, the unemployment rate averaged at around ten percent, and the country was in a Great Recession. California was one of the states hit very hard by this recession, and all of its funds were depleted. In an effort to increase the state revenue, the governor of the state issued a base sales tax increase from 7.25 percent to 8.25 percent, and some cities and counties added additional taxes, which raised sales tax rates to above ten percent. Personal state income taxes were increased by 0.25 percent, dependent tax credits were *reduced* by \$210 for each dependent, and registration and annual vehicle licensing fees doubled.¹ Some say there was another private meeting held with state law enforcement officials, and discussions in this meeting were then pushed down to local law enforcement agencies. Local agencies explained that police officers needed to crack down and write more tickets and issue more arrests so that the state and local counties could collect additional revenue and state employees could keep their current jobs. Some of these tickets and arrests may not have been warranted.

¹ (State of California)

State of California. (n.d.). *State of California Franchise Tax Board*. Retrieved 2009, from CA.gov: www.ftb.ca.gov

CHAPTER ONE

IT IS a dark, rainy night, with thunder roaring in the distance. A man holds a gun to the temple of another man as the man's family looks on. The cathedral-size windows in the house rattle with each thunderstrike. As the gunman looks around the room, he sees happy pictures of the victim and his family, including his son's baseball photo and several family holiday photos all along the wall. The wielding gunman also notices an officer's badge and an award for outstanding police service. He looks back at the man, who is now on his knees sweating and begging for his family's life and his own. As the thunder strikes again,

the gunman's mind drifts back as he considers how he got here and why he is doing this.

FEBRUARY 2008

It is a sunny morning in Miami, Florida, as Richard takes a shower in his house. As the water shoots down on his head, he hears his wife Mary yelling out to him in the background.

"Richard, are you listening to me?" she asks. "You need to make sure you are home early today to pick the kids up at school before you leave for California."

Richard smiles, opens the glass door, and leaps out of the shower soaking wet. He has a huge smile on his face as he agrees to Mary's request and gives her a kiss on the forehead.

He is just about dressed as two adorable kids come running in, an eleven-year-old boy and his six-year-old sister. "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" the girl yells. "Are you going to pick us up after school today before you go to California?"

"Of course," Richard says as he hugs her and gives a fist bump to his son. "Umm, little Richie and Jenny, I think someone left toys in daddy's bedroom last night when we were playing superheroes. Let's go guys. Pick up the capes and guns before the evil bank robber comes looking for you little superheroes. Ha ha ha!"

"Daddy," Jenny says, "do you think mommy will play with us next time?"

"Yeah, she never plays," says little Richie.

Richard is a loving father, maybe because his parents have been dead for over nine years and he misses their time together.

His parents died as a result of a car accident while they were on vacation in North Carolina. Richard, who was extremely close to both of them, still harbors some pain over the matter. His parents were driving in icy weather, and the local county employees never got around to de-icing the road, so their 2000 Honda Accord spun out on the ice, slamming into an SUV that was stalled on the highway and killing both of them instantaneously.

While still getting ready for work, Richard clicks on the flat-screen television mounted on the bedroom wall. The local news station reports record layoffs. The news mentions the collapse of AIG and the American auto industry before going into detail about the Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme and some of Madoff's victims like Richard's boss, Mr. Smothers.

The anchor reports, "...and one of Miami's very own, local millionaire ad tycoon Alan Smothers. Smothers's loss is unreported, but we estimate it to be no less than three million dollars. Smothers's Ad Group has been hurting as well and just had a record

layoff of about three hundred employees, including some top executives. More layoffs are expected here in Miami at Smothers's Ad Group and at their other locations across the United States. In other news, the state of California is out of money. In a speech by Governor Schwarzenegger, the governor says that he will do whatever it takes to get the state back on track. Up next, will the housing and auto industry ever bounce back?"

Mary comes in and turns off the television. "Stop watching all this bad news. You're lucky you still have your job," she says.

Richard answers with a sexy grin. "Baby, Smothers needs me. I'll be fine."

"Well, don't give them any reason."

Richard stops her mid-sentence. "Stop worrying. I'll be fine. I *own* these guys. Besides, at the rate you're spending our money I'll have to get a second job or refinance the house again to pay off the credit card debit you're racking up. The one damn job you had, you spent more money working there than your customers did. I mean, really, Jenny is now six years old and you had promised that you would go back to work fulltime and help pay off our enormous debt

you helped create. It seems like we are always arguing about this and nothing changes"

"Listen Rich, I'll go back soon, but you know I have the girls' weekend coming up, and Jenny gets out of school at two o'clock, so I can really only work for a few hours. It really doesn't make much sense to go back yet," whines Mary.

Richard replies a little more stern, "I'm not sure if you understand what is happening right now with the economy, even though I tried explaining to you hundred times. But we are in for some tough times. Are you really listening to the news? Record lay-offs, banks are taking huge loses, and the housing market is going to shit. It's getting tough out there. And I have been telling you for almost a year now to stop spending. But no, you still go to the fucking salon every week with your girlfriends and get hair, nails, and god knows what else done."

"But I like to look good for you. Do you like the way I look?" asks Mary.

"Yeah, you look great, but you would still look great even if you didn't go with those girls to the salon once a week and throw money around like it was free. Then, to top it off, did you listen to me about not spending at the mall? Noooo, you didn't. You still buy something

in the mall every day. It's like shopping is your job," argues Rich.

At a higher volume Mary says, "You travel all the time and leave me here stuck by myself. All I have are those girls, our shopping trips together, and our salon days. I'm neglected Rich," says Mary, now almost in tears.

"Oh stop, you have a big house, fancy cars, a personal trainer, a spare bedroom that is your personal closet," states Rich. Now with a smile on his face, "Also, when I'm in town, don't you get a chance to go out twice a week with your girlfriends to clubs and bars?"

Mary, with her head hanging low, nods and with a whisper so low Rich can't hear says, "It's not the money. It's the time."

As he leaves for work, Richard kisses Mary and his children good-bye. They live in a nice-size home, and Richard brings in an above average living. Little Richy plays sports, and Jenny attends dance school. They are also prominent members of their local church congregation.

However, as soon as the kids go to school and Richard leaves for work, which is often out of state, Mary meets her lover, who is also her personal trainer. Despite her perfect, white picket fence suburbia life

and the fact that she is still in love with her husband, Mary believes her lover gives her the excitement that she feels her marriage is missing. Much younger than she is, Mary's trainer makes her feel youthful again. *If only Richard knew*, she thought, *he wouldn't be paying for these personal training sessions anymore.*