

*An excerpt from **Gladiator Skool**, by Landon Brock...*

Chapter One

I've Been to Hell

"If you're going through Hell keep going."

Winston Churchill

I once saw an interview with Barbara Walters and Johnny Cash after he had battled major addiction and acute withdrawal symptoms (also known as PAWS). For those who don't know, PAWS are symptoms that tend to happen two to four weeks after an addiction detoxification. Symptoms that include but are not limited to mood swings, irritability, sleep disturbances, and panic attacks.

During the interview, Barbara Walters inquires to Johnny Cash "Are you going to heaven or hell when you die?"

Cash replied, "I know I'm going to heaven because I've already been to hell."

I've been a full tornado in the lives of those I love for the past 33 years. To summarize, I messed up... a lot.

From an early age, I struggled with drug addiction, mental health concerns, homelessness, and a series of crimes, and I believed myself lost until a few years ago.

My whole life, I've never been a churchgoer or a prayer. I mean, I had the fundamentals that everyone else has at a young age that were programmed by our parents, but as you may soon discover, the more someone tries to press something on me, the more I recoil and rebel against the pressure. I am sure most of you understand and may have even done something similar yourself. But unlike some, when I rebel, I tend to rebel to the extreme. That doesn't necessarily mean that I don't acknowledge a greater force at work, whether you call it God or whatever; I lacked good judgment and was mentally weak.

Why am I still not living a criminal lifestyle? Because of one reckless night in 2022.

I was riding in my friend's Hellcat; let's call him Jerry Johnson. I wasn't there for any particular reason; I was just along for the ride while Jerry was selling dope. We both had quite a bit of dope on us, but that wasn't anything new. The issue was that Jerry was nodding off behind the wheel, and he ended up plowing into someone.

To this day, I am still not sure how I woke up in the grass 20 yards from the accident. Was I ejected on impact? Was I carried to the grass by an angel? Was I rescued by a good Samaritan? I don't know.

But how the car was wrecked tells me that there is no way I could have been pulled out by a passing stranger. So, you can come to your own conclusions.

I do recall the feeling of an intense need to get out of there. I knew I couldn't stick around for the cops because of the drugs I had on me. I needed to avoid the scene to avoid prosecution.

At the time, I was barely functioning. Even though I could hardly get away from the bent-up car, the adrenaline coursing through my veins kept the agony to a minimum.

I managed to call Longneck, an acquaintance at the time, and I asked him to come pick me up. When he eventually arrived, I contacted my mom to tell her that I had fucked up.

Most moms would automatically think I was hurt, but my mom simply assumed that I was going to jail or had gotten caught up in something. The idea that I could be calling because I was hurt, didn't even cross her mind.

My mom arrived, collected me, and brought me back to her house. She had set a mattress on the floor because not only was I unable to walk now that the adrenaline had worn off, but also because I refused to go to the hospital. I was a heroin addict who didn't want to go to jail.

It didn't help that I am extremely stubborn, so my mom had to bring me a container for me to literally shit in because of how excruciating the pain was. She would bring me water bottles and tupperware throughout the day because I couldn't get up and she had to go to work.

That accident was no joke. I should have gone to the hospital and listened to my mom, but instead I was down on my back for 26 weeks straight. There was so much nerve damage and lower lumbar issues that continued to cause me trouble. I sometimes even have to walk with a cane now because of my idiocy. This could have possibly been prevented, or at least minimized, if I wasn't so damn stubborn.

Anyhow, while I was confined to my back, there was nothing to do but watch Netflix and think. There was this one show, specifically, that I watched when I was bored out of my mind.

It was my one source of entertainment, mostly because it was supposedly depicting how prison "really was." The actors in the show were trying to shed some light on how terrible prison life was, but it was almost laughable to me. Because here I am watching these grown ass men crying about being locked away for thirty days for some shit, and they're in the softest camp in the world. All they did was sleep and eat three meals a day for a month. That's it.

It was almost comical what people assumed prison life was like. Half of what they were showing on the show had no validity.

So, while I am watching this idiotic portrayal of prison life through the eyes of these people who are telling their life stories, I get to thinking. These stories are as soft as cookie dough. Hell, my story is ten times harder than theirs all put together.

Then I began to wonder, "Why don't I tell my story of what prison was like for me?" I could almost imagine the looks of surprise when people got a taste of what it was really like.

That was my epiphany that started my book-writing process.

After that, this book became my mission. I wanted to assist people by sharing my experience and by demonstrating to others in similar situations that it is never too late to change your life. It is my way of helping others while I continue to heal myself.

I believe there are a lot of truly brilliant people in prison and jail whose lives are all going to waste because no one ever got through to them. Whether they are phenomenal artists, basketball players, philosophers, the owner of a mom-and-pop shop, and so on.

I want to reach out to those who are hurting and truly make a difference that hasn't been made before, using my own experiences and skills. I know I can get through to these people before it's too late.

This is no small task. I know that, and so do those who have tried before me. But I am up for the challenge.

I plan to make this easier for everyone. I am not going to sugarcoat things; instead, I'm going to tell them in my language.

I am doing this to spread awareness and help anyone going through what I am, in some ways, still going through. I am going to tell you about all the UGLY in my life.

To give you an overview of what my life looked like. I turned 18 in the juvenile justice system. I'm an ex-convict, and I have been to prison and jail more times than I can count. I have been homeless—the real kind of homelessness where you have sores on your feet because you don't have socks. During all this time, I have used every single street drug known to man.

I consider myself a credible courier. I truly believe that I have the experience and the wisdom to do more for people who are in my situation than a counselor like soccer mom Karen, who has never stuck a needle in her arm. She's never run into Target and stolen a six hundred-dollar Dyson vacuum and taken it to the pawn shop for one hundred and twenty dollars.

Only to call the dope man to get a hundred-dollar gram and save the other twenty dollars to get food and cigarettes.

Soccer mom Karen might have a degree or two, but she is not credible where it really counts. How is someone supposed to take advice and learn from someone who has never experienced it themselves? Sure, you learn about a life like mine from a book. I learned it from really doing it.

How are counselors supposed to really understand and sympathize when they have only ever read about the addict mentality? People like me can see right through any bullshit spewing from people's lips.

I know I did when I was an addict. Their words went in one ear and out the other, and it only led me to relapse. This happens a lot when those such as counselors try to get through to someone who has just gotten out of jail after having a little dry time behind bars.

Dry time doesn't necessarily mean that someone is free from addiction. They are holding on with white knuckles, but sooner or later, many tend to revert to their addiction.

So, when someone says that they are going through "dry time," a lot of the time it means that they haven't gotten to the core issues of what's really causing the problem. The question that plagues us all, "Why am I doing this to myself?"

They forget that because they had a bit of dry time, their tolerance level is no longer where it once was. So, when they go to take the normal amount of dope that they would before going to jail, a lot of them die. My best friend was one of them.

I actually have his name tattooed across my chest, Tyler Hauf. He went to prison for nineteen months, and he was dry during that time, but when he got out and tried to do the same dope shot as before, well, now he's dead.

I'm here to keep it real with you, and I'll keep it gutta one hundred percent.

Parents need to read this book. Counselors need to read this book. Young men who are drifting need to read this book. But they won't, so you have to read it for them.