

Hello and Thanks for Visiting my Website/Blog

I'd welcome your thoughts and opinions about my experimentation with the following dialogue between Rich and me. This version of the excerpt is written from both of our Points of View. My previous excerpt was from my own Point of View.

Thanks Dan

Excerpt from Chapter Five

June 27, 2015

DAN: Having spent eight weeks in Gus's garage, Rich's '66 GTO looked like it had just been driven off the showroom floor. Gus knew exactly what to do and how to do it, restoring the engine and all its components to working condition. He recommended a break-in period before beginning my cross-country trip. Last week, Gus gave me the go ahead.

It was my scheduled day of departure and a beautiful early summer morning at the Jersey Shore. Rich's US Road Atlas, National Park Guide, and journal were in the passenger seat. His outdoor equipment and a few new items were in the trunk.

As I turned the ignition, the 389 under the hood emitted a deep guttural sound—vroom! I pressed the pedal up and down and the engine came to life, like the sixties muscle car it was.

“Chasing Shadows” by Dan Duffy

“Put the pedal to the metal, man,” I heard.

I turned my head and seated beside me I saw brother Rich. I couldn't believe that once again he was here with me in his car. He grinned, a wide and eerie smile. His chaotic beard and mustache consumed his face, as if he was a mountain man just out of the wilderness. I looked into his penetrating eyes attempting to see a window into his world. But, nothing was forthcoming. “I see you're back.”

“Of course. Didn't you think I'd be going with you, Danny?”

“You know. I'm never really sure with you. It's been such a shock these past few months. I didn't say anything to anybody about my experience at EZ Storage. I didn't know where to begin or how to make sense of it. I wasn't sure if I was going crazy or just overwhelmed, discovering your car and possessions. And, then you surfaced. Wham! I didn't see that coming.”

“Don't worry. We'll talk. But, right now why don't you drive and I'll just chill,” said Rich.

“Yeah. That's about the only option we have, right? Besides, driving the open road will give me a chance to think.”

Hearing the engine purr, I took a few deep breaths and inserted one of Rich's favorites into the 8-track tape deck, the driving blues-rock band Canned Heat. It was a good omen when

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“On The Road Again” began playing. “But I ain’t going down...That long lonesome road.....All by myself.” I sensed something quite profound about someone not wanting to travel a road alone. Maybe that someone was Rich, or perhaps even me.

As I listened to the hypnotic effect of Alan Wilson’s harmonica playing, I recalled the first time I heard the kings of boogie—at the Atlantic City Pop Festival in the summer of ’69. Rich was also there that weekend, having returned from ‘Nam a few months earlier. We experienced the festival from two different worlds, one of us straight and the other stoned. *But, I’m getting ahead of myself, aren’t I? Damn. Where do we begin after all this time?*

“How about at the beginning? Remember growing up in Teaneck?”

“I sure do.”

Rich’s question triggered my reverie. I searched my mind for a memory or two and remembered when we lived in the apartment over the Deli in 1956.

“I remember us playing outside a lot,” said Rich.

I drove in silence for the next few miles, thinking about Rich and me growing up. I wasn’t sure if I ever told him or not, but I didn’t just look up to him as my older brother. He stepped

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up for me in Dad’s absence. And Dad seemed to be absent a lot from our lives.

Rich shouted as he ran behind me holding the seat of my two-wheeler, “Don’t worry, Danny. I’ll hold you ‘til you’re ready.”

I didn’t think I was ready. What five-year old kid ever is? When I balanced Rich let go and kept running behind. Each time I fell, he helped me up and said, “You can do it.”

“You know Rich. You teaching me how to ride my two-wheeler is a special memory.”

“Yeah. I’m sure you’d do the same for me, if you were the oldest, right?”

“I hope so.”

RICH: As Dan drove, the silence between us flourished, along with more memories of him and me growing up.

That same summer I told Dan to stand on the edge of our second floor apartment rooftop with Dad’s big black umbrella open over his head. I was on the ground, looking up at him, chanting, “Just Jump! Hold on tight!”

I didn’t think it would work, but he jumped anyway, hopeful that I wasn’t leading him astray. Well, he hit the ground hard-

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discovering that umbrellas only allow someone to float in cartoons. Luckily, for him and for me, nothing was broken. He limped for a week but told Mom he fell off his bike. It was his first lesson in separating reality from fantasy and the start of questioning things that I told him to do.

I ran my fingers through my beard, turned my head toward Dan in the driver's seat and said, “I'm not sure jumping off the roof was such a good idea. Maybe I figured because you were smaller, the umbrella would work. We did laugh about it, didn't we?”

“I remember you laughing and me crying,” Dan said.

“You didn't hurt anything too bad. And you covered for me by not saying a word to Mom or Dad about my part. I held my breath for a week. If they found out, I woulda been grounded for a month.”

DAN: “I may not have spoken a word about the incident. But, I vowed to myself not to let you talk me into things in the future.”

“Wow! You did that at age five?” Rich asked.

“Yeah. I think it was an early life lesson for me.”

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Smiling, I shook my head and gazed at Rich. He was looking back at me. His smirk reminded me of another time when he and I stood beside an old ringer washing machine. Someone from a neighborhood apartment abandoned it in our gravel backyard. It was in no-man’s-land, behind the string of stores and apartments and the shopping center parking lot.

That relic sat there with weeds all around it—like a tombstone in a neglected graveyard. We examined it closely, twisting and turning the agitator back and forth.

RICH: “It moves. Get inside, Danny. I’ll push you.”

Forgetting Dan’s earlier vow, I offered to give him a boost and he climbed inside the basin. Crossing his legs around the center post, he put his hands against the sides for balance. I spit on my hands, gripped the rim and ran around in circles. “Faster, Rich, Faster,” he said, holding on tight.

I pushed as fast as I could and fell down laughing, watching Danny’s head spin round and round. He spun a half-dozen more times before it finally stopped. He put his leg over the side and fell to the ground beside me—laughing. He tried to stand but couldn’t. He was dizzy so I helped him up. He just stood there and didn’t take a step—trying to regain his balance.

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Then, his stomach gurgled and he burped. I put my arm around his shoulder and tried to get him walking. But, he couldn't move. His legs were wobbly and sweat poured from his head. He leaned over, put his hands on his hips and barfed remnants of his lunch all over the ground.

“You were always the one trying things out because you were younger.”

“I don't know about that,” Dan said. “Sure it wasn't because you were the instigator, Rich?”

“Maybe. And, you were a little gullible. One thing's for sure. You didn't say anything to Mom or Dad about that episode either. And what about your vow to make your own decisions?”

DAN: “Hell, Rich. You made me pinky-swear not to tell. Besides, I loved being with you. What are a few bruises and a little tarnished pride when it comes to being blood brothers.”

Honk! Honk! I'm startled from my musing when a trucker blasts his air horn. He motions to the driver ahead of me to pull over. The right wheel of the guy's pop up camper was wobbling. *Wow! Is everything all right with my car?* I guess so. Calm down. It seems to be driving just fine.

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But, Rich? Rich? Where are you? Where'd you go? Come back!
Damn. Wasn't he sitting right beside me? He sure was. And, there was a connection between us, dreamlike, but real.

I glance at my GPS, seeing my exit fast approaching. I look at the miles to destination reading on the monitor, twenty-three miles to go. Within thirty minutes, I pull into the same campground as Rich and Ginny did forty-five years ago. As I hammer tent stakes into the ground, an eerie sense of déjà vu envelopes me.

**Want to provide me with your feedback and/or
read my whole story?**

Please take a few minutes to:

1. Send me your feedback about how I've used both Rich's and my own Point of View in this segment:

(danduffyaauthor@gmail.com) and/or

2. Submit your email address on my website (www.danduffyaauthor.com) to receive an announcement of a pre-publication offer for a FREE digital edition of my memoir.

Thanks so much. Dan