Prologue

Opening Night

Straining to see the digital wall clock through swollen eyes, I'm ticked off at the red numbers blazing back at me. With crusted lids fluttering open and closed, the figures come into focus: 3:18 a.m.

Where in the hell am I?

Tick tock — 3:19.

Isn't that the date of my birth?

What the fuck happened to my carefully planned demise?

Raising a hand to my thundering head, quivering fingers get entrapped in the foul-smelling puke encrusted in my bleached-blonde rat's nest.

The editor in me sums it up with this headline: Long Story Short — I Survived!

Crafting a meticulous plan involving 100-proof booze, anti-anxiety meds, and sleeping pills, I draft a half dozen files and place them in a folder titled "Death Docs."

Obit. Memorial Service. Letters to Friends and Family. Contacts. Passwords. Misc. Shit.

Rewarding myself with "shots" of my beloved vodka before, during, and after each check mark, I "black out" before getting to the twin vials of lethal narcotics on the marred faux marble of our aging RV.

In finalizing these records, my lifelong addiction to perfectionism ends up saving my life!

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Bob, my husband of 36 years, tells me I fought the paramedics, forcing them to strap me to a gurney. As they roll me past an audience of gawking retirees, I register that we're nearing the end of our three-month stay in a town called Sunrise in the Sunshine State.

Strapped to the guardrails of a hospital bed, I can only look away from the tears spilling into the deepening crevices of his weary face.

Twelve years older, he looks to have aged another decade, as he mouths a simple question.

"Why?"

Thanks for reading. The rest of the story is on its way, and you'll be the first to hear. Meanwhile, read more on the blog at ***GratefulBarb.com****.*

If you're struggling, you're not alone. Call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time.

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