

THINGS YOU HEAR UNDER A WHISPERING SKY

THE STORY OF JORDI, TROY AND I

I first met Troy because of Jordie, Jordie Thompson, my great friend and filmmaking compadre, retired super famous pro bullrider, who at age 17 was already the Michael Jordan of bullriding, or would have been for one hell of a career, just like Michael Jordan, if Michael Jordan drank too much, did too much cocaine, and indulged the oh so many woman who fell for my buddy, who by the time he was 17, had already scored the highest points ever scored on a single bull ride, 99. I think that still stands today since I'm not sure anyone can score 100.

Troy was one of Jordie's works in progress, one of the many young rodeo cowboys, some more lost than others, that Jordie took on, lived with us at his ranch halfway to Turner Valley, just south of Black Diamond, in the most beautiful province you can imagine, a place called Alberta.

These kids were made to work, do chores, get up and throw bales of hay for the cattle, baying at four a.m., eighty below zero, didn't matter, but he also coached them as to what it takes to become a champion.

And there's more than a few champions, Canadian or otherwise, who somewhere or somehow at one time owed Jordie for helping them get there. And while we filmed our movie MOON OF THE DESPERADOS my life, from small town rodeos in Alberta all the way to the National Finals in Las Vegas Nevada, sitting with Tuff Hedeman's mom and me recording Tuff winning himself a world championship in honor of his slain friend Lane Frost, my life was pretty blessed the things me knowing Jordie brought to my world.

I got to know Troy a little first through a music video we filmed, he and two of his friends played cowboys hitching rides to rodeos, to a song called THE LONESOME KIND by Mark Koenig. Jordie and I had just won every award you could win at the AMPPIA's, a Canadian film and television festival, and we were the first to ever do that.

So many doors began to open and my life as a filmmaker began to take an awesome shape. Thanks to Budweiser in Canada and Wrangler in the U.S. our film became a cult classic in the world of rodeo, and still even now I get fan mail from grown-up cowboys who want to know if there's still a copy out there they can buy to show their young bullrider kids.

That film led to me landing an actual Superbowl commercial for Dupont celebrating the ingenuity of the American Farmer. When your first job is a Superbowl Commercial the road beneath your wheels starts to roll by in ways you never might have imagined possible, and some days all a kid from Alberta can do is hang on.

I realize now that what I'm writing has so many details to share, more than maybe are important now, but someday I can see there's a book here worth of so many great stories of friendships and things conquered, and the glory and price of fame as well. But here I want to focus on a particular

journey, one that might be a little Shakespearean, because it is ripe with not just humor and brotherhood-fought battles, but also deep and lousy tragedies as well, and one that has led me here right now today to share a potential that exists because of it to both help and heal the world some too.

So, strap on your spurs This is one hell of a story

PART TWO – THE ROAD STARTS SOMEWHERE

12,000 dollars a day. Dupont, First Bank of America, Alina Healthcare, Cigna Healthcare, and The U.S. Navy, all paid me to direct commercials for them. There were more as well. Check out www.jethweinrich.com and the client list to see only a small percentage of them all.

By the end, it was up to 18,000 a day. But back when it started Jordie and I decided to make a sequel to our MOON OF THE DESPERADOS. That's the story I am here to tell anyway. Because when it all comes down to it, here's how I have finally come to understand the measure of a life, here is what I know, love is all, the rest is filler.

So with money made and ready to spend Jordie and I, a producer, a partner who owned camera trucks and all the cameras a guy could need, lenses, dollies, jib arms, and a two-man crew from Toronto we hit the road and started our trek from the Sarcee Nation (now the T'suu T'ina Nation) through Blackfoot country, and Cree's too, we headed down one side of the rocky mountains to the Mexican border and across through to New Mexico and then back up the other side of the Great Divide, all the way home.

It was two and a half months, the most incredible life-affirming challenging adventure of a lifetime, one that changed me, gave me my native name (Big Elk, don't ask right now, how I got it was more funny than noble, but whatever), but also became lifelong friends with some of the most noble people I've ever met, both from the Native communities of elders and warriors as well, fancy dancers, and healers, and on some of the oldest and heart lived ranches with some of the wisest and cattle tested, horseman, cowboys, both native and white, a person could ever count himself a wealthier man for having met them

As we started Troy had not joined us yet. He still had a couple of rodeos he'd already paid fees into and that was who he was. In truth, I never saw anyone so comfortable in a saddle, like they were an extension of the horse, growing right from its back, more than just a man upon it.

I had to head back to Calgary as well, about two weeks on, on some business that needed me in Calgary to attend to. So, the plan was to finish what I had to, pick up Troy, and drive the 14 hours back to the Crow reservation to meet up with Jordie and our crew.

This was genuinely the first time that I had to connect with Troy, and it wasn't more than an hour in on the 14 hours that I started to see how really special this kid was, a force of personality, positive, funny, and you could see he had been through things in his life, but he loved every minute of the ride because he was doing what he loved most, he was a badass bronc rider with every potential to be a champion. He had done other things in his life, already at 20 years old, been a stunt man on Disney shows, and learned to stunt double as a skateboarder. One such job in Vancouver, not understanding what a one-way was, he stepped off a curb and was hit by a Corvette going about 60 miles an hour. He sailed over the corvette and came down head-first on the pavement. He was in a coma for three weeks.

It was on this trip he told me how he remembers stepping off the curb, and then he remembers bolting straight upright from his coma, yelling, 'What the...'' pulling all the tubes and whatnot from his throat and the wires from his head. He said the poor nurse who was swabbing his arms at the time and was likely lulled into a deep contemplative trans at the tranquility of it all, screamed like death was upon her when Troy bolted up pulling everything from his body. He said he screamed as well, at her screaming.

What he didn't share was the hell of his childhood, trailer parks, him alone, four years old, five years old, while his mom worked in cowboy bars waitressing, a different guy in her bed on Saturday morning, almost every Saturday morning. He didn't share how he would try and make himself sandwiches for school, so they didn't look different from the other kids, or how his mom's sister would wait at the end of the road for him and they would give him proper sandwiches and drive him to school. One time he had cut his hand so badly and then tried to bandage it up so he could go to school. They took him to the hospital for stitches. When his mom found out she was livid.

'Who the hell are you to tell me how to raise my son? Leave us alone!!'

Something like that. I learned all that later, much later after the twist this story will take. To be warned.

For now, though, lay back and listen more to the ride through Montana back to our crew.

PART THREE – THE STATE TROOPER

It was about five hours to the border, not long to get across, and then there we were in the wilds of Montana, Troy and I getting to know each other.

There were times a cowboy had barely minutes from jumping out of the truck he was in, through the crowds and to the back of the chutes, to rosinning up his rawhide rope, and squaring into the saddle, and nodding his head. Might even pull it off three times in one day.

So, when he told me that there was no speed limit in Montana, just a 15-dollar ticket, from sunrise to sunset, I sort of believed him.

Somewhere around Billings, the flashing lights of a State trooper came rolling up with a vengeance behind us. He pulled us over. I had been going 118 miles an hour, as fast as I figured my Jeep Cherokee could go. The signs posted suggested a 55mph speed limit though. The state trooper explained, yes in fact it was true, it was a 15-dollar ticket, but the rule said, within reason. Within reason? Well, we were excited to get back to our shoot. Could that be reason enough? He let us go, a 15-dollar ticket, and the sun slowly set in beautiful reds and blues just over the mountains to our left as we rolled deeper into Montana.

We arrived at the motel Jordie and the crew were at around four in the morning. Sun would be up soon, so Troy and I sat in the parking lot while he showed me his skills at Hake Sack. He was Renaldo good. For more than forty minutes he kept that little sack in the air, but with tricks too, over his head, down his back, onto his heel, and over his head again.

He told me it was his way of relaxing before riding and he had influenced his new generation of Bronc Riders to join him in Hake Sack sessions behind the chutes, and what's even more cool, he would blast Bob Marley as well, and maybe to the older cowboy's dismay, but this younger breed of cowboys who weren't big on tradition, embraced with enthusiasm Bob Marley's 'One Love' before they got on their bronc or bull. Troy was an influencer.

By 5:30 Jordie was up and trying with no luck his boots on the hacky sack, and then the crew as well, evidence of Troy's mystical influence on everyone around him.

Today was a huge day for us. We were invited to a sacred place that the Crow held with such great respect because it was not only a very real and sometimes even dangerous connection to their long and beautiful history, but it was also a tribal custom that everyone who was a part of the Crow tribe benefited from.

And it wasn't something white men had ever been invited to.

PART 4 – THE BUFFALO RETURN AND TROY LOSES HIS NEW SHOES

As it turns out when Troy was in Calgary, he bought himself a brand new pair of Nike running shoes, all-around good shoes for anything, but especially for moving around as an agile athlete, maybe the kind of running shoes a rodeo clown might wear, because those guys gotta move like cats and out cat a Bull to go help Cowboys in peril.

The Crow tribe invited us on this day to travel way high to the top of the great Butte, a good 9 hours by four by four up beaten track road, winding around this and that, and it was slow going. Up

on top of the butte, a few hundred square miles of Crow Reservation land, cut with canyons deep and winding and stretching, almost hypnotic if you could soar through them like an eagle, or like a small plane, which had tried once with a doctor and his son, flying roughshod through the canyons but coming to a tragic end as the canyon they were soaring through much as an eagle could, came to a deadly dead end. They hit the back wall and dropped 150 feet or more to the canyon ground below. We all stood and looked down at the wreckage still there, and as legend had it, so were the bodies of the doctor and his son, at a request of the family, a tribute, I guess.

So, as I said already, one way up to the butte was by four by four, nine hours to get there, and once there you could stay in the Crow Tribe's hunting lodge, lots of bunks, a place to cook, a place to make a fire outside, a place they sang and told stories, before going on the hunt, because each family in the Crow tribe, if they wanted could order up a buffalo from the herd to be killed and butchered and given to them to live on for the winter. It was their right and also it was a great honor to be one of the warrior hunters who would go to kill the buffalo for the family.

That's where we heard the story of the courage and will to survive that the buffalo has. And also, how the buffalo looked after their own.

On one such hunt, a beast of a buffalo, a head like a king, was singled out and the warrior hunters' shots rang out and they hit the buffalo not just once because the first shots hardly made the buffalo take notice. The story is that they shot that buffalo maybe eight times. After the eighth shot, he started to run, his hooves pounding on the brush and dirt below him, and heading it seemed to the edge of the butte.

So, the warrior hunters fired again, and again, but he still kept going, although finally looking as though he was about to fall. Then two younger bulls came up next to him, and each on one side to the other, they not only helped to hold the wounded Bull up but they also helped him to get to the edge of the Butte where he leaped to his end. Defiant right to the end, he would not allow the Crow warrior hunters to take him home. That is how the Crowes see themselves. Defiant, and they will survive and fight and continue, and like the buffalo, they will still be here long after us white men are gone.

The other way up to the top of the Butte is by helicopter, and that's the way Troy and Jordie and I went with one of our crew members, to first drop Jordie off with the trucks that had arrived the night before, and then us to go find buffalo.

Even though we had many square miles to cover, the herd was well over 800 deep so it didn't take much to find them. It was exhilarating, adrenalin-filled, flying barely over their heads, forty feet or less sometimes, filming out our door as those buffalo thundered across this ancient butte that was

their home. To add to the adrenalin fix we were enjoying, our pilot was an ex-Vietnam war veteran who I believe was slightly insane as well. It was an awesome day to be a filmmaker.

PART 5 – THE SHOES

So, the helicopter lifted from the butte raising dust and remnants of brush and thistles, and those on the ground covered their eyes, kept their bandanas over their mouths, and waited for the storm of ancient dirt to settle again. It was so dry and so hot that the Blades of the helicopter whipped a warm wind that made the angry sun beat down even more.

We had spent the early part of the day flying only high enough to both not see our shadow in the camera but also to not stir up more dirt around the already thundering hooves of the buffalo as they rolled as a reckoning force away from the crazy bird chasing them from above.

We decided to get the buffalo to the further side of the butte where it had rained, a thunderstorm had come and gone, but not as far as we had been, but from a distance it was a magnificent show, like God had reached down with a wave of his hand, lightning striking the earth, and the rain coming down in a wall of gray, so far away it looked like a blanket of whatever it is that life depends on, gracefully falling. In reality, had we been in that torrential moment of glory it might have ended us, all alone and stark, perfect target practice for the bolts of electric heaven charging the earth.

We figured the hour of rain had lessened the dust and would make it easier for us to film. Troy and I and my first camera assistant, who had a nickname that I won't mention yet, because it was meant to conjure images of his sexual exploits with, well, any woman who might have him, money spent or otherwise. The film business, or what was my style of run and gun filmmaking, follow the sun, wild at heart, filmmaking, attracted all kinds, cowboys, ex-cons, sociopaths, I digress. So, the three of us were to be dropped behind enemy lines while the trucks waited for us to give the signal and turn the herd of 800 buffalo towards us where we could get an amazing shot as they roared past us. So, we circled until we saw a small grove of dead gray-skinned trees, three to be exact, not much taller than us, still standing, but long since gone, maybe lightning strikes had done them in, so they stood like three gray ghosts reaching with boney fingers for the sky. There was a bit of brush around them as well and so it seemed like a pretty good perch.

‘Ready, let’s go!’ and out the door we went. Troy first then me, and then our camera dude. Troy was the first to step out of the helicopter and just his luck jumped right into a mud bog created by the storm. ‘Jesus, motherfrucking and other expletives deleted, frucking hell’. That was Troy up to his knees in the wet soaked mud of the earth and its mud grabbing hold of him.

The thundering buffalo were about a quarter mile off and stretching in a line as far to the right and left of us as 800 buffalo can stretch, like a chorus line of the back side of buffalos, which by the way

their hind sides are much less ominous and foreboding as their front side which is where their beast-like heads and horns are, and those eyes.

'Damn it, the walkies don't work.' our expletive-deleted nicknamed camera person yelled. The trucks on the other side of the buffalo couldn't know then when we would be ready for them to turn the herd back towards us. So, they just went for it.

It was one of the most breathtaking and maybe horrifying moments of our lives, seeing 800 buffalo that looked small traveling away from us, their line stretching what seemed like ten football fields wide, but when they turned and then began their stampede towards us, nothing seemed so huge and terrifying as what was now a storm of a million pounds of muscle and vengeance coming towards us. 'Fucking hell, get to the trees.'

We weren't that far off from the trees but Troy was still knee-deep in a vacuum of mud holding him like a child might cling to his dad in peril. Troy somehow, the fear of death probably helped, pulled himself out of that mud and ran as fast as he could to the one tree, not much taller than him, fragile looking but big enough to hide him, and there he stood. He looked as though he had mud knee-high socks on and worse, his wool socks were all he had on his feet.

'Damn it, and other things, I lost my shoes!' 800 buffalo bearing down on him, hidden by the skeleton of a tree long since passed away, and what was most on his mind, his Nikes. My assistant and I had better cover, but not much so, and we had camera boxes and lenses, magazines, and a tripod formed in a wall in front of our trees. And then they came upon us.

I can honestly say that in all my days I never witnessed anything so glorious as 800 buffalo stampeding by us, some so close the gray bones of the trees we hid behind were scratching the buffalo's hides as they went by. We knew that if the buffalo had wanted, they could have stampeded those trees, and us, into the history books of such things.

For what seemed like forever, and likely was no more than a few minutes, so powerful these beasts, even the earth was shaking beneath us in their fury. We were a part of some ancient experience. How many Sioux, and Crow, Comanche, Apache, had seen what we had that day, them in their everyday survival, warrior hunters, gathering everything a buffalo conquered blessed their lives with. It stole our ability to breathe for those few seconds, it was one of the greatest memories of my life, filmmaker or otherwise.

We didn't get a single shot from the experience, barely enough time to find cover, and Troy socks and muddy pants, cursing the day. 'what? Were we supposed to wait?' said our driver.

We gathered shots as best we could for the next five hours though, Troy wrapping his sock feet with newspapers we found in one of the trucks so the thistles wouldn't cut into those feet carrying camera gear, and whatever else.

I look forward to returning to the Crow tribe to share all these years later the footage we now have to share with them, Goerge Takes A Gun, and his words of wisdom, knowing that there are grandchildren of his who will only know him by the film we are going to share. He lives on because we filmed with him.

I wish those same grandchildren could know of Troy as well, not their kin, but someone worthy of what I believe and Goerge believed was our common purpose, as white men and Indians too, it is our purpose to find our common ground, to live with common respect for each other, to know that despite our history, the great creator still expects us to act as brothers.

Troy was a joy, a rebel-rousing collection of what makes any great friend, a great friend, and further said, a great brother.

PART 6- TROY AND THE SHERIFF'S WIFE

To say Troy was a ladies' man, well, it was something way deeper, he was a saint among ladies' men. He loved with all he had in him, and every girl who ever knew him, as a lover, or just a friend, always felt precious around him, but he only really fell deep in love once in all that time I knew him, and it was his peril in the end. I can't say I still don't resent the girl that he gave himself the bullet for, because she was careless with him, with his heart that he gave her so much of, but maybe that's why they fell for each other, too much alike, love is a duel, like Kerouac said, and Troy and the girl turned at ten paces and the story became a heartbreaking one for everyone who loved him.

But back to our film adventure beneath those whispering skies. When it came to Troy and the girls he met, we never saw anything like it. None of us had. In every town we stopped Troy met a girl, and sparks went off that lit fires that burned all night for Troy and whoever the girl turned out to be. Across our wild western America, throughout our short but epic journey, a girl somewhere fell in love, if for only a few hours, and they never forgot him I am pretty sure.

There was a preacher's daughter of course, and we did hear the news that maybe there could be a Troy Jr., he'd be thirty years old now. What a thing it would be to meet that kid.

There was the girl at the seven-eleven, the only time in seven-eleven history that the seven-eleven got shut down at ten o'clock so the girl who worked there could run off with Troy to a barn on her uncle's farm. They watched the sun come up together wrapped in horse blankets until Troy had to break it to her, 'Hey I gotta go, the crew is waiting for me'.

The best story though was the Sheriff's wife, somewhere in Arizona. Troy found a bar with a pool table and that's where the crew was that night, along with a beautiful blond ranch-like woman who Troy said looked kinda like Cher, if Cher had blond hair.

Troy was an anomaly, and an unexplainable force of all things a man has in him, except the terrible things. He loved fighting and I mean get down to it punch 'em up sock em rock em cowboy dust-ups. He broke my nose once for sure. But that was his thing. He would hide and ambush his buddies because friends fight, and that's all there was to it. He hid once in a room in Utah, my room, how he got the key I have no idea. He hid in the closet and as I put my bags down, out he sprung, and the fight was on.

I was bigger than Troy, so I got the better of him although we ended up with him flipped head over teacup death grip on my back and the two of us fell full weight onto the bed. Kaboom. We blew out all four legs of the bed and caved the mattress into the box spring. And we couldn't have laughed harder. And I guess I carry those memories of that kind of moment as precious as anything I can remember. And there were a bunch more, equally as eventful.

I digress again. Troy and the Sheriff's wife.

Troy found a bar with a pool table and started playing and blond Cher saw him lining up the balls and asked if she could join in and play with him.

Of course, yes ma'am. And as the night drew down, she invited him back to her place. She didn't fill him in on any particulars and he didn't ask, but for the sake of the story, I will clarify that she was, no word of a lie, the sheriff's wife.

I guess they were in the thick of it, upstairs in her bedroom, hers and the sheriff's bedroom when, to her surprise, they both heard the sheriff pulling up. 'fuck he wasn't supposed to be back until tomorrow.' She supposedly said, 'Ok, let's go then.' 'What, both of us?' 'Ya both of us.'

And as the front door opened so did the upstairs window and Troy lowered the Sheriff's wife slowly down far enough so she would hit the ground safely, and him right after. They hid in the shadows for quite a while waiting for the Sheriff to give up on where his wife might be and just go to sleep. After a bit, after the lights went out, they both tip-toed to her car which was parked behind the barn.

'Get in, I'll push you', Said Troy and so she did. And with the car in neutral to not start the engine too soon and wake the sheriff up Troy pushed the Sheriff's wife down the long road to the main stretch where they quickly started the engine, but with the lights off, and drove safely away.

Troy said they drove only a few miles because the Sheriff's wife couldn't really contain herself and off onto a side dirt road they went and parked and then went at it until again the sun was coming up.

And as we were loading up the camera trucks here came Troy, in a 1987 silver-wheel rimmed Cadillac, top down, blond Cher at the wheel, blond hair every which way, and Troy with that smile.

'Ready boys?' 'Call me ok' 'Yes ma'am'.

And there it was and there we were off again to our next adventure.

PART 7 – A SOUTHERN UTE JOKE

It's interesting how open and inviting every tribal family we came across was. They loved to have us along, to share, to let us join their comradery, and them to ours. This was the first Native American joke we were told.

'Two warriors were on a hilltop and way down below what looked to have been left behind by a wagon train of settlers was something so odd, they had never seen the likes of'.

'What is it?' asked one warrior to the other. 'I don't know, let's go see'. And the two rode horseback down from the ridge and to this creature that was running here and there. They were dumbfounded. Here was this thing that had the face of a boy but it also had a tail, a tail like a cow. So one took his bow, stretched the string behind the arrow, and let the arrow go, killing the little creature. They scooped it up and then rode back to the camp where they came upon the chief.

'Chief look what we found. What is it?'

'Hmm', said the chief. 'Interesting. It has the face of a boy, but it also has a tail like a cow it seems'. After a bit of thinking the chief then said, 'Well, the face of a boy, the tail of a cow. I guess it's a cowboy.'

Southern Ute Joke.

PART 8 – WE SLEPT IN THE CAMERA TRUCKS

Even though we had eyes and ears back in Canada calling ahead, finding contacts helping set things up, even with Jordie riding ahead, and he knew someone almost everywhere because of his fame and notoriety, sometimes we didn't know what or who we might across and some of our interviews, like the group of 17-year-old Cowboys in New Mexico, we met those kids at a drive-in hamburger stand.

Our days though seemed to bleed into each other. We were up 18 to 20 hours a day setting up sometimes at the side of the road at night to wake up in the perfect spot before the sunrise could

raise the curtain on the day, to hit go on our 35mm timelapse camera to harvest something super magical. No smartphones, no apps, just intuition, where would the sun come up exactly, and then aim, and pray.

We never missed a shot but we had t-shirts made that said, I COLLAPSE FOR TIME LAPSE. That's how exhausted we were every morning. So, when we finally decided we needed a day off to just rest and after driving again until nearly three am to Belen New Mexico, after getting no vacancy signs on almost every motel we passed, we finally found a motel with four rooms, for all seven of us.

It was one of those motels with a pool in the center with the rooms lining each side to create a private pool area, and all the doors pointing inward to the pool. The office was in the corner by the entrance to this interior world of rooms.

'Hey, do you think I could hit the pool from the roof?' The motel was two stories high. I was too tired to care. 'I don't know.' I said, slightly short-tempered. I was too busy talking to the hotel manager, 'We will take all four of your last rooms'.

So, there I was filling out the forms, putting my credit card down, and just as the manager was about to run the charge, we heard.... 'GERONIMO!!!!' Troy's voice yelled and then within seconds Troy hit the pool from the roof of the motel cannonball style dead center, sending a small tsunami of pool water up and over my shoulder and into the manager's office soaking his computer, his desk, and our paperwork.

All of us were soaked as well and so we were together, a band of wet brothers, sleeping on ferny blankets in the camera truck. All of us were equally exhausted and pissed off that the one night of comfort was stolen by Troy and his Geronimo landing his perfect cannonball into the motel pool.

I will forever remember him chuckling to himself long after some of us finally fell asleep. To him, he had just created another badass memory for all of us.

PART 9 – THE APACHES

My girlfriend at the time had traveled down from Canada and met up with us to travel the last few weeks and experience some of what we were doing. She wasn't a filmmaker but on one particular Sunday, she became one, helping me to film what to this day stands as the interview that meant the most to me of the whole trip.

It was a long journey, and by the time we reached Arizona, the guys were pretty battle-weary from not much sleep, long hours driving in the darkness to get to wherever our next sunrise would be

and be ready as well before the sunrise. We had just filmed on one of Arizona's most historic and largest ranches and were told about two Apaches who worked on the ranch as cowboys. One phone call was made, and the two Apache agreed on their day off to meet up in what seemed like the middle of nowhere, a random milepost on a two-lane stretch of Arizona highway close to their reservation.

It was the only day the two Apaches had to share with us, and they only had a couple of hours at that. We were to meet them at two in the afternoon at the exact mile marker they gave us on that stretch of lonely Arizona highway. I couldn't have been more excited, but no one else on the crew shared my joy at the incredible opportunity that filming with these Apaches would be. Troy and Jordie included, had instead been invited to go shoot guns at a gun range somewhere.

‘You guys can't be serious’ I remember saying, or something close to that. And after almost two months of the effort everyone put in, I couldn't press them to do it. But no way was I going to miss out. ‘Lili, I said, let's get the gear together. You and I are gonna go do this.

We met up exactly where they told us they would be and they were there exactly at two in the afternoon. We had got there a bit earlier so I could give Lili her crash course in being a sound tech, and she might not have looked the part but there she was, the old school reel-to-reel Nagra the strap slung over her shoulder, the boom pole and with the furry thing at the end that held the mic, and the headphones too of course.

And I was the cinematographer and interviewer loading the 16mm mags, stringing the film through the sprockets, getting the exposure, which wasn't too difficult shooting 400 ASA black and white film. Whatever the meter said I just exposed the film one stop more.

And then we were ready. I clapped the clapper and Elhart Write, that was his name, said, ‘One two three, action’. And he chuckled at what he said, feeling a bit Hollywood I think, and then we started filming.

It got pretty emotional at times, especially when they started sharing the secrets of Geronimo, and how he escaped from the cavalry by taking the shape of a crow or a coyote. They told us how the bullets would melt against his and his warriors' skin. That's when I began to notice on the horizon behind them a big thunderstorm starting to form. We could already see the lightning flashing across the jagged mountains.

That's our ancestors, they explained. They are bringing the storm to us because they aren't happy right now that we told you some of the things we told you. ‘Ya, ok,’ I thought, in my white man's way of thinking. ‘Pretty sure it's just a thunderstorm’. I didn't say that out loud but I didn't think that Apache ancient ancestors were pissed off and were sending a thunderstorm to say ok, interviews done.

Then the strangest thing happened. I say strange because the storm that was forming was way off in the distance behind our two Apache stars, miles away it seemed, and so I didn't feel there was any cause for alarm. But right then, just as I was thinking my cynical take on their telling us about their ancestors bringing the storm, KAAABOOOOM.

I'm not sure how close it was but I can tell you that it felt to me like it was less than a foot behind me. I could feel the electric energy and the explosion of it, a bolt of lightning that lit us up like a million flashbulbs popping off for a photo no one would ever see.

As it cracked the sky behind me and crashed with such a violent clap of thunder I'm pretty sure I jumped about 15 feet into the air and even hovered off the ground. It scared the living bejeezus out of me and shook me to the center of my white man's ignorance. In all my days I never felt lightning strike so close to me ever.

The two Apache though didn't even flinch. No word of a lie, and even worse, they couldn't stop laughing at the sight of whatever I must have looked like, the absolute terror in my face, jolting upwards like a rocket, and I admit I may even have screamed as well for all I remember. And they laughed and laughed, didn't really stop laughing all the way through us packing up and even in the saying of our goodbyes.

They were so gracious though, and so genuine, with such goodwill and good fun in their spirits as well, that Lili and I soon joined the chorus of the laughter and that was how such a beautiful moment in my life, maybe one of the coolest interviews I ever did, ended, with the bonding of laughter, the human thing for sure that transcends the color of all our skins.

<https://vimeo.com/877313187>

PART 10 – APACHE JOKE

So two coyotes were hanging out one afternoon and one asked the other, hey what's your name by the way? Thanks for asking, the one coyote said, my name is Coyote. Oh really. Then Coyote said, what's your name now that we are on the subject?" My name is Nutherone. Oh really. And why do you think your name is that? Well, said Nutherone, watch, Go run by those kids over there.

Ok, I will. And Coyote ran by the kids. Look, it's a Coyote. And then his friend did the same and the kids yelled, look there's a Nutherone. See, I told you, my name's Nutherone.

Apache joke

PART 11 – TROY BECOMES MY FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Troy was barely 23 years old but his life as a pro rodeo cowboy was taking its toll. If we knew then what we know now about head injuries, concussions, and the consequences, we might have had a chance to help Troy through what he was enduring. Besides that Corvette hitting him, and the coma he went into, there were other traumas as well. He had got kicked in the back of the head by a bronc at a rodeo, bucked off he landed with his forehead against the iron bar of the chute gate. The horse got him square in the back of the head. You could almost feel the outline of a hoof in the back of his head.

Then there was the rolled jeep that he flew from and also hit his head so hard that when he came to in the ambulance, the ambulance paramedics were high fiving each other because they had just shocked his heart back to beating. Life saved.

And on his last ride at the famous Calgary Stampede, the gate of the chute opened with his one boot hooked to the bronc, but his other boot got caught up in the chute itself. He said it was like a make-a-wish time like when you find the wishbone in a turkey. Only his hips were the wishbone. You could hear his hip snap in the top row of the grandstand.

Near the end, he tried to tell us how his hearing was going and he said he was constantly having headaches like when you eat ice cream too fast, and that he had them every day randomly and almost all the time.

Troy had lived more than one lifetime it felt like in his 24 years. He had accomplished a lot of things besides rodeoing, and being a stuntman. He had also been a crew chief on an oil rig up north, the youngest crew chief maybe ever, because he was only 21 and was the boss of men some twice his age. He was the kind of boss that commanded respect, because he gave respect, and he led by the effort he gave, never barking orders, jumping in and taking on the grind with the guys on the rigs with him. So he was the perfect fit to be a first A.D. in the film business and for sure perfect for a filmmaker like me.

The only time I saw him fire someone, was for a guy whose attitude of negative draw was starting to poison the energy of everyone and every effort everyone was trying to deliver. When someone is in your world like that, talking shit when they shouldn't be, disrupting the goodwill of the shoot with their complaining and their gossip, whatever it is, that kind of person just has to go.

So, Troy called the guy over and said, hey can you go get that big burlap sack over there that's full of gravel and go carry it over by the trucks and empty it and then bring it here? So the guy begrudgingly, not knowing why he was doing it, went and did what Troy asked. He emptied the big burlap sack and then brought it back to Troy to show him. 'Good', says Troy, 'Now go get all your stuff and put it in that bag and get the fuck out of here. You're fired.'

Never had an issue on any shoot ever again. There were shoots where we had sixty or seventy people working, lots of trucks, and places trucks had to be, lunch coordinated, city streets shut

down, locations locked, dyslexic directors like me that needed arrows put up on highway telephone poles so that I knew where the next turn was, so I wouldn't get lost on the way to the set. And I was a force of work ethic and will to be reckoned with. I was always at every shoot up an hour before official call time, with Troy, and if I thought of an idea, we would go shoot things ourselves before the client or producers even showed up.

We made sure to have fun always. We shot an Anne Murray video called 'The Wayward Wind' and were filming a portrait of a San Diego Chargers football player in the stadium in San Diego at five in the afternoon, and we needed to make it back for a special dinner booked for us in LA at eight o'clock. Troy was in the camera van and he decided he was gonna race us back to LA in that lowly Ford van, and beat us. He almost did. Not sure we ever were slower than 120 miles an hour the whole way.

When we got to LA at a gas station we both filled up at Troy made a sign that said 'Gay and Proud Of It, Honk If You support Gay rights' and cleverly came up to our car to ask a question, and taped the sign to the driver side door without us knowing. All the way to our hotel in Hollywood we couldn't understand why everyone was honking and waving at us.

That week I was about to sign with DNA, David Naylor and Associates, the most prominent music video production company in the world, and the dinner we raced back for was arranged by David Naylor himself and so I and a bunch of celeb-type people and Troy went out for dinner to Dan Tanas, which is as Hollywood, Frank Sinatra, Robert Deniro, Clint Eastwood a place as you could ever hope to go to.

I sat next to Joni Mitchel that night, and while everyone was in all kinds of conversations, she actually sang a song for me she had just written for her new boyfriend she had just met in Saskatoon while visiting her family. She told me how they went and sat in the back of a theater there in Saskatoon and made out during whatever movie they went to see. She drummed the beat of the song on the table and sang the words softly right there next to me at Dan Tanas.

Troy was sitting a bit down the table from me and I couldn't help but notice some confusion on his face, that he hadn't started eating, and was studying everyone else. I was like Troy, what's up? Turned out Troy was all stressed out about which fork or spoon he was allowed to pick up and when to eat what with. Troy, I said, you have earned the right to eat with your fingers if you want to.

PART 12 – TROY STARS IN JANN ARDEN'S INSENSITIVE

I've told the story or parts of it, mostly the miracle of the bird's part, and how simple a miracle usually is, sometimes it comes in the shape of a small gray nondescript little bird on a windshield wiper.

I know this for sure, life has a way of bringing you changes, whether you want them or not, because what we want is inconsequential to what we are. And it was very much an impossible thing for me to ever wrap my head around, just how miracle driven the blessings in my life were. Back then.

The year we got home from our journey I started my badass career creating music videos and thanks to Neil McGonnigil and a young undiscovered singer named Jann Arden I was a part of what is now a legendary Canadian story, and Jann and I created a quirky wonderfully shot black and white Fellini-esque video for her first big hit, a song called 'I Would Die For You'.

We cast all our friends, Jann's girlfriend, my best friend since I was five years old, Cliff Skelton, even my cattle dog Bill got in on it. To this day I'm super proud of that video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeSgYR-zaxQ>

Of everything cool about it, thanks to Jann's idea to have babies swimming under water the video more than quickly went to number one. And I went on to win my first director of the year in Canada. I also won the prestigious Juno Award, the Canadian Grammy Award. Then we pretty much had our pick of videos and bands and artists in Canada and Troy and I and our crew which even included friends from high school who came to work for me. We had a pretty awesome run but we had no idea the run that was coming. That's when Jann created the song INSENSITIVE, written by Anne Loree, which started the small brush fire in our lives because of the video our team created.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nrGWwHalCU>

We shot the video in a beautiful old vintage apartment building called 'The Anderson Building' which was directly behind the ragged apartment building where now my Red Motel Pictures company had taken up almost the whole top floor. It was a fixture in Calgary with old school businesses downstairs but I'm sure the whole upstairs was once a heroin shack. Troy and I and a bunch of his rodeo buddies took it over though and knocked out walls and put up dividers and joined four apartments into one big one. And what was the coolest of all was that my mother's clothing store called 'Sagesse' took up the corner of the building on both floors.

I had made a promise to myself that once I 'made it 'whatever my mom wanted my mom got. That store lasted almost 19 years. But as I said, all things change. Anyway, back then, with all those rooms my place became a boarding house for any cowboys rolling through town especially during the Calgary Stampede.

And for one week we sure had the time of our lives creating the INSENSITIVE video, like in those movies where the whole town pitches in to create a musical in a barn. Even my sister pitched in with catering and wardrobe and my mom got to see me at work. We had know idea that we were creating what would become one of the most iconic Canadian videos ever.

Jann adored Troy. Everyone did it felt like but she especially connected to him, maybe she understood some of the pain he was going through. So, when we wrote the video Jann was like I want Troy to be the main character in this video. I'm not sure Troy was totally into it because he would have to wear a suit.

That suit became the issue of Troy and I fighting pretty much the whole shoot.

'I can't be the actor in this and your assistant director. This suit is too tight. I don't wear suits.

'Quit your fucking complaining, do the job'

And so on. We got the video done. And within a week it was already in the top videos on Much Music, Canada's MTV, but the song took the video number one around the world. We just made one of the most watched videos, successful music videos in Canadian music television history. From Germany to Australia, from France to New York city, my friends even saw it on tv in Istanbul, Turkey.

It was a pretty surreal time in all our lives, seeing Jann on the Tonight Show singing INSENSITIVE and knowing that our video was being watched hundreds of times a day everywhere.

Just to say it again, I have left out tons of the details of everything, for one, to not bore the hell out ya, and to get you to this part, because of everything that went on how this part of our story comes to its end, for now anyway, the days I'm about to describe I have never written down ever. But I swear that I am about to tell the truth, the whole truth, and not one thing said to make the story more interesting, profound, whatever. What happened next, I swear on the memory of my mother is true.

PART 13 – HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE TRAGEDY OF A MIRACLE, HOW DO YOU ACCEPT THE MIRACLE OF A TRAGEDY

Some of the best times I remember were just Troy and I riding around in my truck, often back roads style near Black Diamond and usually to go hang out with Jordie at his small ranch halfway to Longview at the top a hill that gave whoever stood there a view of what made growing up in Alberta so special.

Troy had this habit though of always when he was with the drive of starting to just poke you, the driver, in the ribs with his finger, which if anyone has done that to you its as annoying as fuck.

He did that to Jordie plenty of times and to the point where Jordie once even stopped the truck and head-butted Troy breaking his nose, which got them both in cowboy style truck battle on the side of the highway. They stopped it before either got too hurt and made up and on they went.

So it was on this particular day when, and I guess because a year earlier I had won my first director of the year, the juno, and now Troy, Jann, and I had a real number one seen around the world music video, that Troy started his poking me in the ribs, while I was driving. But while he was poking me he was also saying this, 'hey, so what's it feel like to be the Steven Spielberg of Canada, man. Come on what's it feel like eh, you're the Steven Spielberg of Canada man'.

'stop jabbing me'.

'why, because you're the Steven Spielberg of Canada?'

'No, because you're annoying the crap out of me, stop'. I said wriggling around because if anyone has poked like that you know it's a super annoyingly lousy tickling thing too.

'Troy, stop it'.

But he wouldn't and he kept at it but continued to say, 'ya, cause we're gonna be doing Van Halen videos soon, we're gonna make Van Halen videos.'

I couldn't help but start laughing , ya Steven Spielberg of Canada, ha, and even more so, why Van Halen of all the bands he could've chosen that day. Maybe because they were at the time the number one band in the world, and come on, what would the odds be that two

cowboys in a truck riding on a back road somewhere in Alberta, what odds were there we would ever even come close to doing a Van Halen video.

As famous as we thought we were, ha, there was honestly a snowball's chance in hell that Van Halen would ever call us.

So, anyway, the story rolled on and something about Troy started to change. On a job in Dallas, Texas, for Southwest airlines, their 25th Anniversary commercial, on the last day of the shoot Troy went off to explore Dallas. The next day while we were waiting for the flight there was no Troy in sight.

I was stressed right out because of what to do. All of us who went for the job were at the airport and worse, starting to board the plane. I got to thinking, you know what, Troy is the A.D., he's also a grown man, so I'm getting on the plane. And just I was here come's Troy, running to the gate, looking rough as hell, and then onto the plane with me.

His story was he had met a cute black girl at a bar who took him back to her place where there was a party going on, and as it was, he was the only white person not just at the party but likely within a few miles where the party was. He of course in his womanizing ways found the girls room and the two of them locked the door and had all kinds of romantic fun til Troy figured maybe it was time to go.

Once outside the house he was promptly robbed by a couple of guys at the party. 'Hey, guys, you think it would be ok to keep my passport at least, I gotta go back to Canada tomorrow.'

So there he was somewhere in who knows where Dallas, no money, no idea where to go, didn't think of maybe calling me at the hotel, and with only his passport he started walking. It took him almost 7 hours to walk all the way to the airport where he just barely got on the flight.

I remember pulling him aside and was like, 'wtf is going on with you? You coulda got yourself killed and for you it's lights out but for us we have to carry the weight of it forever. This road we are on, it is not just about you.'

'ya, sorry boss, it won't happen again.'

Then we got another job this time in Las Vegas shooting for a band called Crash Vegas. We also shot for a couple days in Vancouver. The song we were shooting for was called ON AND ON.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfDzy5RWF9w>

If you watch the video you will see Troy for just a brief second standing behind the 4X5 props camera looking back at us. Troy was right out of it though. He didn't or couldn't function so distraught over something going on with his girlfriend, but it was more than that.

We flew back to Vancouver and at the airport Troy asked if I could pay him for jobs he still was to be paid for, because he had to get back to Calgary. I told him, Troy I know you're in a world of hurt right now, but just breathe, and hang out here for a couple of days. Let's just take a break and hang out in Vancouver and talk things over.

'No, 'he said, 'I have to go, but don't worry it will all make sense in a few days.'

Ya, I will forever be haunted by those words. I hope no one has to go through the super sharp and very confusing pain that a suicide will bring your life. In hindsight you start to see that there were so many signs and so obvious what they were trying to say. To miss those signs, the attempts asking for help you miss, it's the worst feeling in the world.

Two nights later I first got a call from my sister. It's late, like two in the morning Calgary time. My sister says, hey, two detectives just came to the house. They were asking about your jeep which was found in a field near Black Diamond.

'Don't worry about it, ' I said, 'Troy was probably really drunk and just left the jeep in the field. '

Stupid to think that. Detectives don't investigate an abandoned jeep. Then Troy's girlfriend called. She told me that Troy had broken into her house to get something he had hid there. I cut her off, ' You know what, we are all getting tired of yours and Troy's way too full of drama relationship. Figure out because I don't need phone calls at three in the morning over this stuff'. Ya that's pretty much what I said.

It turns out that Troy had been given a handgun by the Grim Reapers biker gang and he hid the gun at his girlfriend's apartment. She was trying to tell me that but as she was the phone rang again. Also, my business partner who I refuse to give his name because of reasons I will explain in a bit, came knocking on my door. First my sister then him.

'Jeth, you need to hear this. The detectives were here because they found Troy's body next to your jeep. Troy committed suicide'.

Ya, right now for me the world feels silent even just typing them. That's what I remember most about that moment. The world went silent. In that short brief moment with the words 'Troy committed suicide' I felt like in that silence the world also shifted, hardly even what might measure out to be a time warp inch, but it did. Instantly I knew that nothing would ever be the same again. Ever.

The next morning, I packed up and started the journey home. On the way to the airport from two deep ditches next to the road, what felt like 500 birds came swarming up and for a minute it seemed we were driving in a cloud of bird's wings and bodies and motion. 'In my religion,' said the Jewish guy driving, 'that's your friend saying goodbye to you.' The way the birds formed, how long they had surrounded us, how I felt, I somehow knew it was true.

PART 15 – THE FUNERAL AND TO THE MIRACLE

**“His life was gentle; and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, THIS WAS A MAN!”
-Shakespear-**

Those were the words I ended my eulogy for Troy with at this funeral. It was an open casket and they had done so much work on Troy that he looked more like a figure at a wax museum. The Troy we were about to burn to his ashes had left us days before forever.. Troy's suicide note had paragraphs written for each of us who were of import in his life and we all got to read what he wrote to us, except for the ten pages he had written for his mom. He apologized to me for making fun of me when I was heartbroken over the girl who came to visit and filmed the Apaches with. That he understood now how a broken heart feels. He thanked me for L.A and that ' I never ate so Good ' he wrote.

He wrote to my mom how he hoped that they would meet again in heaven or wherever. The next few days I helped to tie a string around the loose ends and then I left for Mexico with my blue heeler Bill and for a couple weeks I did nothing but run through the desert and up a small mountain where I could sit and look out at the ocean and beyond.

I had dreams where Troy came to see me and he had this dumb smile on his face and I would try and shake him to his senses, and he would just laugh the whole time. Then almost a month to the day that Troy shot himself my mom got a call at her clothing store.

' Hello, are you related to Jeth Weinrich? This is Eddie Van Halen's manager. Eddie just saw Jeth's video for Insensitive. He thinks it's the best video on tv and wants to know if Jeth would like to direct the next Van Halen video.

Four days later Sammy Hagar and I were on a plane for L.A. to Las Vegas to see Cirque du Soleil and to get ideas for the next great Van Halen video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMZVcZ-tEmM>

This is my version here but Sammy edited another version that was almost two minutes longer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbLjJfrTtNk>

Either way both versions have the scene where I let go of 500 birds in downtown Las Angeles for my best friend Troy.

So, on the morning of the shoot, a beautiful sunrise I remember, and me who couldn't sleep, so waiting for my ride to the shoot I was standing alone in the parking lot of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel thinking things.

Who can prepare you for one minute when your best friend is poking you in the ribs riding in a truck on the back roads to the south of Black Diamond Alberta, telling you that you're going to be doing Van Halen, an astronomical chance in hell that it would happen? Then that friend kills himself and less than a month later you're standing in the parking lot of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, at sunrise, all alone, and thinking wtf?

Ya, so there I was standing there and as I was pretty much talking out loud now. 'Troy you idiot, I'm in L.A. and I am shooting Van Halen. Why did you have to leave? Because this would have been you here with me, this shoulda been you with me'.

And as I am going off on imaginary Troy standing with me there that morning I look over and on the windshield wiper of a car, the only car in the parking lot at six a.m. here at the Hollywood Roosevelt hotel, I see a little gray bird standing there and it looked like it was looking at me.

The car was an early sixties faded blue Rambler I remember and that it was no more than forty feet away from me. I stood for a while actually wondering if that bird was gonna just sit there staring at me, or was it gonna fly away. It didn't fly away.

I walked right up to that car, leaned against it even, and looked down at the bird, still staring at me, and I thought, what is wrong with this bird. Why is it still just staring at me? It couldn't be someone's pet bird because it's too ugly. So it must be hurt. I went through the progression, now I have to go get a box, a little blanket and take this bird to my room so that after the shoot I can take it to a vet, a bird vet.

Then I just reached down and I plucked the bird up and held it with my gently clasped fist, with its head poking out of that fist. I just held it up to eye level and now we both just stared at each other. Then I opened up my hand. The bird, as calm as a windless day, just stood there on my hand looking at me, for the longest time, and me looking back at it. Then as quickly as I had opened my hand, but a good 20 seconds or so after, the bird just flew away. Adios Troy.

My ride came and downtown I went and started filming a video that was the biggest budget any Canadian director ever got for directing a music video. Nearly a million dollars. That video, before youtube or social media, or whatever, was for a short while my second number one video in the world. I put messages on billboards in the video trying to get Troy's girlfriend, who had jumped ship and took off to Croatia, to call me. And I let go of those 500 birds for Troy.

That year I won video of the year again, and I won Canada's best director award which on tv I dedicated it to Troy and his memory. Of the four nominations for the Juno award I had two of them, the first time a director ever did that, but I did not win the Juno that year. But now even more videos came in, and more commercials, and I tried to keep editing all that footage we had collected what now was six years removed, that first trip with Troy down through Montana, where we chased buffalos, met with Crow elders, and way onward, Navajos, the Sioux, the Apaches.

We had also written a script, Troy, Jason Matlock, and Jordie as well, called The Red motel, about two bull rider brothers who after their world champ father committed suicide drive back to the town they grew up in, bringing their dad's championship saddle with them. And I wish my story of sorrows ended there but as it was, this and all you just read is how it all now led into the next suicide, the suicide of Jordie Thompson.

PART 16 – ADIOS JORDIE AND WELCOME I HOPE TO SOME SORT OF HAPPY ENDING

At Troy's funeral Jordie made it plenty clear to all of us, all of Troy's friends, because of how brutal it was to lose Troy that if any of us ever committed suicide he would personally dig us up and kill us again.

Slowly the reality showed the truth of itself and it was obvious that Troy knew what he was going to do for two or more months. People started to come forward to tell us how Troy had searched them out, everyone he ever had an unresolved argument with, a fight, even people who had clearly betrayed him, and he was hurt by, he found us all and made amends so that no one would carry any regrets of not making something right with him.

His suicide note ended with, 'My hips hurt, my back hurts, my head hurts, but most of all my heart hurts. I just can't go on anymore'.

I can't even begin to imagine what his mom went through. None of us ever got to read the pages that he wrote for his mother. How painful it must have been to read those words. His aunt who he had spent his last days with before his death, drinking and doing cocaine with, totally lost it afterwards. I went to her house and she had taken Troy's clothes and laid them out on a chair in a way that suggested it was Troy sitting there, even with his cowboy hat atop the chair.

Suicide not only kills the person who is doing the killing, but it kills a bunch of what's inside anyone who loves that person.

Years later I saw Troy's mom at the Vancouver airport. She still had a look of total heartbroken despair in her eyes, on her face. It never lifted. She was a walking living expression of total sorrow still.

No matter what or who thought this or that, there is no right or wrong, way beyond the guilt and regrets, there is no sorrow I am certain than the sorrow of a mother who loses a child especially brutal through a suicide. I am certain it is immeasurable and constant. It's forever.

And time doesn't just take a break. There is no ok life won't kick the crap out of you anymore just because you have gone through unspeakable stuff. Maybe you become more aware, truthful about what you sense, but as Helen Keller said, faith alone defends.

So hell kept coming in lots of ways and my company ended on the back of betrayal by my business partner, the guy I was best man at his wedding for, and it was the price I paid for

the price I paid dealing with all the sorrows I guess I had been carrying for as long as I can remember. That's another book.

But in a very lousy legal situation just to spite me that partner got custody of our boxes of film and the project I am now sharing the story of.

I moved to LA and I created other projects, one about the life and times of Eileen and Jerry Ford and the Ford modeling agency. It also included working at finishing a script for a movie to direct.

I made friends with Rene Russo and Dan Gilroy, arguably one of the best screenwriters in Hollywood. He wrote The Bourne Legacy, the one with Jeremy Renner, that his brother directed. He wrote and directed NightCrawler with Jake Gyllenhaal, and Roman Esquire with Denzel Washington. One cool and gracious guy who then gave me a master class in script writing. We used our Red Motel script as the piece of work to study.

It was really great and I had a chance to head home and my goal was to surprise Jordie with the news. Instead of going to go see Jordie I went to a football game first, on a Friday night. At the game my good friend Jason Matlock called to tell me Jordie had committed suicide, a shot gun to his head, in a farm house he had rented.

To this day no one ever found out the reasons why. We have some theories. But what is done is done. It's almost ten more years since Jordie died, and here I am with what most likely is my last chance to do the thing I was born to do, and do it through this project that still stands as a testament to friendships, brotherhood, and faith.

Of all the things I would or could share about what happened to Jordie it's this story I would love to end this with:

PART 18 – IT'S STILL PRETTY WILD WEST OUT HERE

A Note For The End Of The World

She doubled up the thick chains on the gate that led up the 200 yards to the house. She put four big industrial strength padlocks on the chains. She wanted to be sure that the fire trucks had one hell of a time getting up to the fire to put it out.

Then carrying a bag over one shoulder and a gas can full of gasoline in the other she walked up the grass track that led that 200 yards all the way to Jordie's house. She walked by the chicken coops and the indoor arena, filled with dirt, and where Jordie trained horses especially in the winter because they also had heaters hanging from the rafters.

She got to the house and pulled out a bottle of red wine, put the opener in one pocket, and poured the gasoline all over the floor, washing away the blood stained footprints of the people who had been in the house just after Jordie shot himself, whoever had pulled his body from the wreckage what his life had become. Still on the table next to the chair are two empty bottles of whiskey.

She looked up and saw two holes in the ceiling.

'Jesus Jordie'. She said, "How did you miss your head with the first shot?"

The second shot counted and she could barely now hold back her tears, and her body began to shake at the site of it all. All that was left of Jordie was above her head in the damaged tiles of his living room ceiling.

She took the bag the wine came in and once the can was emptied she stepped back into the door and lit the bag to make it into a torch and then after a second or two she threw it into the living room.

The place burst into flames behind her as she walked with her bottle of wine up a small hill and then deep into the woods where no one would see her. She opened the bottle of wine and watched the house consumed by the flames now, and she watched the fire trucks pull up and witnessed their struggles cutting the chains on the gate and then coming up the grass track driveway.

The firemen could only contain the fire, making sure it didn't spread into a thicket of poplars and tall grass behind the house and they too just watched the dancing flames, hypnotic pretty much, as the house fell to embers and ashes.

She now half drunk lifted her almost empty bottle of wine and made a toast to the life of Jordie, the unsung hero of horses and cattle dogs, and cats too, and to wayward lost cowboys with dreams to be champions like him, and mostly he was the unsung hero of kids everywhere.

Mostly though she lit that fire because she wanted to set Jordie's spirit free. She was surprised how quickly the fireman had cut through the chains and locks to slow them down, and maybe she was surprised at how fast the house burned right to the ground. The sun was setting and she could hear the lonesome cries of coyotes just over the hills to the right of her. She wondered if the coyotes heard the gunshots when Jordie killed himself.

Maybe like Geronimo Jordie was running with them now, his spirit set free, the last of it rising upwards with the dying embers of the burnt down house as they rose upwards to the whispering sky.

The End