

## My Curated Existence

When anyone in town needed help, they called Rocky Germain. I'd known the guy my whole life, but I never thought he was anything special. He was just another guy who had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth and liked to lord his wealth and assets over everyone else. He didn't give people things out of the kindness of his heart. He gave them because he wanted to act like he had something to hold over your head. He probably found a way to write that shit off too. I've always hated people like Rocky Germain, but then again, I was born with nothing. I never knew what it was like not to have to worry. I went to Rocky once after my father passed away for money to help with funeral expenses. He told me he just couldn't spare it. I killed that dumb motherfucker the next day and haven't looked back since.

If you're wondering, I felt nothing. I felt absolutely nothing. Well, let me take that back. I felt relief. I felt relief that for once in this absurd world, somebody got what was coming to them. I pulled that trigger and in that ocean of his blood I bathed. I was reborn like all those fucking churches tried to do but never could. I was saved. God is a bullet, and I was its prophet. They never caught me because I'm not stupid. I'm not a Dateline story. I'm real life.

I remember the papers in the days following. "Rocky Germain was found dead in his 10,000 square foot mansion". I sat back, and I fucking laughed. I howled for days. It was fucking funny. It was fucking fitting. Makes you think though. If it had been you or me, there would have been no manhunt. Hell, they probably wouldn't even have reported that shit. When a poor dies, nobody cares. Our lives mean nothing I guess. That doesn't mean we can't raise some hell though. And I sure did. They had a tri-state manhunt going on for me. I wasn't bothered. I sat at home watching Jeopardy. Fuck'em.

Strange thing happened though. Turns out everybody didn't love Rocky as much as it appeared. He'd pissed off more than just me throughout the years. I guess I was the only one with the fucking spine to do what needed to be done.

**Note From The Author:** Look, not all rich people are bad ok. I'm sure they worked really hard for what they have.

I didn't watch too much TV back then. I had just moved into a shitbox apartment and all my shit was still thrown into a spare bedroom. I hadn't sorted through any of it. I was getting tired of Ken Jennings and was ready to change it to some other fucking game show, the news or something. I needed to find the remote. I was digging in the spare bedroom's closet and found something that wasn't mine. It was an old journal. It had "mY cURat3d ex1st3nc3" scrawled across its cover.

**Note From The Author:** Shakespeare once penned "All the world's a stage, and men are merely players". Sometimes life is like a Lifetime movie. Starts bad, middle shows promise, and in the end? Wallpaper would've been more entertaining.

I grabbed the book and tossed it on the couch. I found the remote in the pile of rubble that is my spare bedroom. I flipped over to the news. "Bridge collapse kills 100 people in.....". Good for them. They escaped this pointless life. Now that's God showing mercy. God grants the good with a quick death. God grants the bad with an even quicker one. Karma? Nah. I don't believe in that shit. Or maybe I do. Rocky Germain felt the wrath of my .38. Took a few to really take him

out. He definitely felt it. It wasn't quick. It wasn't quick at all. My finger was guided by the hand of God and in all his infinite knowledge, he used me as his instrument.

You up there God? Can you hear me? It's me, (24 14 20). I know you're out there somewhere. Fuck. I don't even believe in you. That was all me. My fate is decided by me and me alone.

I opened up the journal I found in the closet. The handwriting was just atrocious. It was barely legible. Who taught this motherfucker how to print? I'd hate to see his cursive. Dude's signature probably just looks like a bunch of wavy lines. There's a bunch of horrible drawings in the margin that could only come from the most untalented. They looked like TV screens with figures with X's for eyes staring from inside them. Wow. Edgy. That's some fucking 90's edgelord shit.

**Note From The Author:** It's perfectly normal to draw in the margins of notebooks. It's not edgy. It's human. I've seen many signatures in my day, and they all look pretty bad unless you've really taken a lot of time to perfect them.

Looks like the journal entries started about 15 years ago during the financial crisis. My whole life is a fucking financial crisis. This fucker must have had money. I stole some shit from Germain's mansion before I left. Haven't hocked that shit yet though. Figured it would be too soon. I'll hold onto it for a few weeks and sell it outside the area. Maybe some of it is worth something. It ain't worth shit. I know. That's my luck. That's my life.

Reading through the journal, it felt like whoever wrote it was talking to themselves. They talked in circles. They play their own devil's advocate. "Danny deserved to die. The world is a better place without him." I crossed "Danny" out and wrote "Rocky" over the top of it. Felt more fitting to me.

**Note From The Author:** Maybe it's just my own literary morality, but I would never purposely change someone else's work to fit my own narrative. Everyone's different, but that's where I draw the line.

**Note From The Author's Author:** I really hope this story doesn't end up as being a cop out where the journal ends up as being written by the main character. That is so overused and tropey.

**Monday Aug 18:** Today, somebody caught me dancing in the aisle at the grocery store. I wasn't ashamed though. I didn't care what anyone thought. I think it was "King of Wishful Thinking" or something playing. I was getting my groove on. Right now I'm searching for Corn Pops. The authorities may want me for homicide, but right now I need cereal. I worked there in my late teens and early twenties. It looks a lot different now. Corporations suck all life from everything. They want us living our sterile existence where we are all just drones for the God of profit.

**Note From The Author:** There's nothing wrong with making a little profit. It's not like it's stolen labor or anything.

**Wednesday Aug 20:** Danny boy. Oh Danny boy. You thought you had one over on me. You thought you'd made a fool out of me. It was a long way coming, but fate hit you like a freight train. Broke through your skull like an atomic bomb vaporizing Hiroshima in a show of force to the Soviets.

I pull up to the curb outside Germain's house, "Regulate" by Warren G emanating out of my speakers. The night was as black as a balaclava. I was as mad as the mad hatter himself. I pull down my headpiece and grab the .38. This rich motherfucker, all these rich motherfuckers, they'll get what's coming to them. Climbing over the fence, I drop onto the back patio. He has motion detectors, but I disabled those last week when I quit. Dumb motherfuckers. They couldn't do anything without us.

**Note From The Author:** Capitalism has brought more people out of poverty than any other economic system. Anyone who doesn't agree with that is just very uneducated or severely propagandized. Banning social media that spreads dangerous information is needed in the modern world.

**Note From The Author's Author:** I'm sorry. I was trying to keep my mouth shut, but who the hell does this guy think he is? I'm normally a pretty chill guy. I'm very understanding and reflective, but statements like this are just absurd.

**Somebody In The Dark:** I honestly can't believe you're reading this sentence.

**Additional Note:** 8 2 20

I jimmed the door and got in. The housekeepers were all in bed already, as I knew they would be. I made my way up the spiral staircase to that rich chump's bedroom. God himself couldn't stop me.

**Note From The Author:** Stop!

Silly God, you know I can't hear you. You're not here.

**Note From The Author:** This is wrong. You should not do this. Get out of there as soon as you can. This will only end badly for everyone involved. Non-violence is the only way forward.

**Note From The Author's Author:** You gonna listen to this guy? Come on. Put a bullet in that rich motherfucker. Do it for the plebs.

I slowly opened the door to the master bedroom and made my way in. There Rocky was, asleep, probably dreaming of the next guy he could fuck over.

**Somebody In The Dark:** Hey, yeah you. You hear me don't you? This guy doesn't sound too good. He seems to have a few screws loose. Let's see what he does. Wait, when is this? Has he already done this?

I pull that fucking trigger and blew that bastard away. I want to laugh, but I know I have to get the hell out of there. The maids would probably be waking up any moment after they heard the noise. I'd have to make my blood ritual quick.....

**Friday Aug 22:** I got laid off from my job today.

**Note From The Author:** The narrator slowly started seeing the parallels between the journal and his own life. Other than the names being changed it all seemed to be just like his own life.

**Note From The Author's Author:** You gotta be kidding me. I knew this is where this shit was going.

**Note From The Author:** Chill out pops. I'm just joking. I wouldn't do that to you.

**Additional Note:** 6 17 0 13 19 7 0 18 11 14 18 19 7 8 18 12 0 17 1 11 4 18 3 14 22 13 19 7 4 17 0 1 1 8 19 7 14 11 4 22 4 6 14

I found myself reading more and more of the journal. This guy had some serious problems. I guess not everybody can have their life together like me. Rhythm is life, and life is rhythm. I started thinking about what the title meant, "My Curated Existence". It seems like his life was anything but curated. The journal was nothing but the ramblings of a madman.

**Tuesday Aug 26:** German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is frequently quoted as saying "The best slave is the one who thinks he is free." I think about that a lot these days. I turn on the TV and hear nothing but bad things. It's the fear that keeps us all in line. We don't really have freedom, but we tell ourselves we do. The reality that we're all slaves would just be way too depressing for most to handle. They would mentally break. I lost my job to an AI. My humanity was replaced by a machine that the people it replaced once trained.

I grabbed some food from Burger Heaven and headed back home. I hooked a left on 21st and Lewis. I was a free man still breathing that fresh air. As I rounded the corner, I saw the cops. They were looking around my house with flashlights. Flipping a U-Turn, I headed towards the Eastside Motel. I had the journal with me so at least I'd have something to read tonight.

**Somebody In The Dark:** Damn. My man here is fearless. Straight up murdered a rich man, and he just cruises like he's invincible. Wonder what he'll do next.

**Thursday Aug 28:** Got a call today from my dad. He's got cancer. They say he's only got 6 months to live. I honestly don't know what I'm gonna do. I got no job. I got no money. Now this happens. Voltaire once said, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." In times like these, I think he might have been right.

Unless I wanted to watch an old episode of 'Good Times', there was really nothing on the tv at the hotel. It wasn't even a flatscreen. It was a fucking old CRT. I haven't seen one of those in years. These are the luxuries of the Eastside Motel. They even got hourly rates if you want them. Ah, fuck it. I'm losing the plot. I reach for a 40 I grabbed at the liquor store across the street and curl up with my favorite new piece of literature, "mY cURat3d ex1st3nc3". The next passage intrigues me, "*if you've reached this part, you've already lost your mind: A=0 / Z = 25*". I'm not really sure what that means yet. Maybe I'll find out down the line.

**Note From The Author's Author:** I see exactly where this is all going. This is so lame. I cannot believe I wasted my time being a part of this.

**Note From The Author:** You need to shut the fuck up old man. You know nothing. You are nothing. You're a fucking figment of my imagination.

I read some more of the journal. The handwriting is really bad at a lot of parts, so it's fucking just hard as hell to understand. It's the definition of chicken scratch. I can just imagine the looney motherfucker writing all this down.

**Monday September 1:** The line at the unemployment office was pretty long today. If the guy at the desk wasn't too busy digging for gold up his nose, I would have been out of there quicker than I was. I've been thinking about it a lot. I don't really want to go back to work again, like ever. "Caribbean Queen" was playing at a low volume in the building, and I felt my foot kinda start twitching. I wondered what would happen if I just started doing a full on strut in this place. Nah. Instead, I decided to hurry up and wait. That's what I'm good at.

**Tuesday September 2:** There's nothing good on TV anymore. It's like they know that people aren't really watching, and they're going to be playing on their phones so they just make the most boring shows possible so you don't really have to worry about missing anything. It's a visual wallpaper, nice to look at but doesn't really stimulate your mind any. People's attention spans are so fried now, I don't know how anything could satiate them. Some call it autism. I call it modernity.

**Somebody In The Dark:** It is kind of true what he said about TV though. I haven't really seen anything all that good in a long time. The same goes for movies and music. It's all been done, and done better.

**24 14 20:** Yeah, I totally agree.

I got bored of reading so I decided to watch some Youtube videos. Was flipping through old fucking Neil Cicierega mashups, landed one one with him doing the Dr. Evil pose with a red, white, and blue theme. Who are **24 14 20**? I really wanna know. Maybe that's an unanswerable question. Fuck it. I was never that into religion or philosophy. It's just a bunch of bozos arguing over things without any evidence. After a while, I opened back up the journal. I need to keep my brainrot to a minimum.

**Thursday September 4:** I spoke to dad for a couple hours today. He seemed to be alright. He seemed almost relieved. In this busy modern world of constant stimulation, he said it would be nice to be nothing for a while. My father and I never spoke about religion or belief, so I guess I never knew what his thoughts about it were. I guess this answered it. When he goes, it's just lights out. I guess we differ in that opinion. I don't think you vanish after you go. I think it's something far stranger. I think we become background noise to the living universe, wallpaper to the stars.

**Friday September 5:** Today was a good day. I got hired as security at this guy's Rocky Germain's mansion. Yeah, that Rocky Germain. "Danny Boy" Germain, you know from that 80's TV show "Lights Out". I honestly couldn't believe it when I got the call. I used to love that show as a kid.

I laid the journal down and sat there for a few minutes.

**Note From The Author's Author:** You have got to be shitting me. You really did it. You really did the thing I told you not to do.

**Somebody In The Dark:** \*Jonah Hill "cut it off" motion\*

**Note From The Author's Author:** I honestly think it would be better if it had been a "This is all a dream" ending. This is just lazy writing. What do you think **24 14 20**?

**24 14 20:** Hey, don't bring me into this. I'm not a part of this. You sent this into a writing competition. I'm just a guy who reads it and decides whether I should give it a pass or a rejection...and right now I'm really leaning towards rejection.

Hey, don't I get a say in any of this?

**Additional Note:** 0 8 22 17 14 19 4 0 11 11 14 5 19 7 8 18

Huh?

**Additional Note:** 8 12 9 20 18 19 5 20 2 10 8 13 6 22 8 19 7 24 14 20

**Note From The Author:** Go to sleep kid. You haven't even finished your ending yet.

I fell asleep pretty fast. I grabbed some corn pops from the meager breakfast they had at the motel. While I was eating them, I got my laptop out and typed up the journal and got it ready to send over to **24 14 20**. This whole deal was probably just a waste of my fucking time.

**Monday September 15:** Dad died today. I guess I didn't think it would be so soon. I can't even wrap my head around him not being here anymore. I'll never be able to speak to him again. I'm an orphan now. I've got no one. I sat here earlier with his loaded .38. I was too much of a pussy to pull the trigger though. I think about Dylan Thomas's famous poem. I will not go gentle into that good night. Now I've got to find out how to pay for dad's funeral.

**Subtitle:** (Screen Goes Black)

**Somebody In The Dark:** Is there an end credits scene to this or am I good to go?

**Additional Note:** 24 14 20 17 4 18 19 8 11 11 7 4 17 4 6 14 7 14 12 4 19 7 4 18 19 14 17 24 8 18 14 21 4 17

**Additional Note To The Previous Note:** 24 14 20 2 0 13 15 8 2 10 20 15 24 14 20 17 15 7 14 13 4 13 14 22