

ORANGE COUNTY
THE DARK SIDE



CHRISTOPHER CURTIS

ORANGE COUNTY
THE DARK SIDE

Copyright © 2023 by Christopher Curtis

All rights are reserved worldwide. No part of this publication may be replicated, redistributed, or given away in any form without the author's and/or publisher's prior written consent.

First Edition.

Published March 2023

by Indies United Publishing House

Available in E-Book, Paperback, and Hardcover.

ISBN: 978-1-64456-592-6 [Hardback]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-593-3 [Paperback]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-594-0 [Mobi]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-595-7 [ePub]

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023931667



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

P.O. BOX 3071

QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

indiesunited.net

Disclaimer: This book is memoir. It reflects the author's present recollections of experiences over time. The author has tried to recreate events, locales and conversations from memories of them. In order to maintain their anonymity in some instances the author has changed the names of individuals and places, identifying characteristics and details such as physical properties, occupations and places. Some dialogue has been recreated.

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE.....	6
CHAPTER 1.....	9
CHAPTER 2.....	14
CHAPTER 3.....	20
CHAPTER 4.....	29
CHAPTER 5.....	38
CHAPTER 6.....	48
CHAPTER 7.....	64
CHAPTER 8.....	70
CHAPTER 9.....	96
CHAPTER 10.....	105
CHAPTER 11.....	117
CHAPTER 12.....	130
CHAPTER 13.....	141
CHAPTER 14.....	154
CHAPTER 15.....	166
CHAPTER 16.....	178
CHAPTER 17.....	183
EPILOGUE.....	184

ORANGE COUNTY
THE DARK SIDE

CHRISTOPHER CURTIS



PROLOGUE

On October 29, 2002, walking through a hallway into the living room of the suite I rented, I thought to myself, *can't believe I am staying in this hotel for the second night in a row. I'm pressing my luck. I've gotta get out of Anaheim.*

I was staying with a girl named Tina, who I met a few days before with my homeboy. We started hanging out and I figured she was alright. Tina was good at making money with checks and things of that nature. So we had something in common. Who doesn't like to make money? Plus Tina was nice to look at with a friendly smile.

The Portofino Inn & Suites is a decent hotel in a Gang infested part of Anaheim about a mile away from Disneyland. The suites, with a living room, bedroom, and bathroom, could be a nice apartment if it had a kitchen. In my bedroom, on the dresser was a Pocket Tech digital gram scale and numerous 4.5x3, 4x4 and 2x2 inch bags - in the top drawer was also a gram of meth on a plate. In the living room, on the coffee table was a Fuji 35mm camera, a nylon pouch with numerous varied identification cards, Docu Seal 40 Laminator, and Photo Smart 130 printer. A large plastic container with bank statements, birth certificates, saving bonds, and blank checks sat on the floor.

"Chris, be back in a few hours; I have to take a couple of bank statements and checks to my friend," Tina explained.

"Okay, take the key card on the table. I won't be here when you return. Don't open the door for anyone, and remember, do not tell no one where I'm, staying."

"I won't Chris, stop trippin!" Tina walked out the door without another word.

I had just finished weighing out several bags of meth. Five separate ounces, four quarter ounces, and few grams for a friend. I had to deliver all this dope and get back here to meet my drug connection before 10 PM I wanted to be on my way back to Lake Havasu, Arizona before the sun rose in the morning. I'd been having terrible feelings that something bad was going to happen.

I placed all my dope in my little black bag, grabbed my cell phone, put my Glock 45 handgun down my pants, picked up my backpack, and

headed for the front door. Before opening it, I looked through the peephole to make sure the coast was clear. With my hand under my shirt, holding my gun, I opened the door and stepped into the hallway outside of my room. I looked from one end of the hallway to the other. Feeling at ease, I slightly relaxed and headed for the underground parking garage.

As I stepped into the garage, I placed my hand back on my gun until I scanned the parking lot, looking for any hinky individuals. There was no one around just a whole bunch of empty parked cars. I headed for the Ford Explorer I rented the day before. As I was opening the door, a family obviously on vacation, was driving towards me, trying to locate a parking spot. I climbed inside the Ford, placed my backpack on the passenger seat, gun on my lap, and started the car. As I drove up the ramp into the ground floor parking lot tourists filled the parking lot. The full moon lit up the sky and I was starting to feel much better. All those terrible feelings I was having about something bad occurring had stopped.

I lit a smoke as I drove through the lot towards the main street. When I arrived at Harbor Boulevard, I looked both ways. The traffic was thick. I made a right onto Harbor; then when I got to Convention Way, I U-turned back towards Katella. I made a right on Katella going east. When I arrived at a red light there was a police car on my right in the far right-hand lane on Lewis Street. The police shined his spotlight on me, so I made a right on Lewis and a quick left into a gas station. All of a sudden, unmarked police cars raced into the gas station, practically surrounding me.

I looked from one officer to another thinking *Son of a bitch, I've got 2 -strikes, a Glock on my lap, a grip of meth, and four police officers staring at me through their windshields*. I hesitated, then pushed my gas pedal to the floor. There was just enough room for me to drive through the patrol cars, barely missing hitting one.

I went right back onto Katella eastbound, not slowing down for much. I wove in and out of traffic at high speed. I was careful as possible not to hit another car because if I did, I would certainly catch a life sentence then. I knew I had to dump the drugs and gun. I ditched the rent-a-car in the back of an apartment complex. Barely stopping the car, I grabbed my backpack, gun and hit the emergency brake, jumping out before it fully stopped. I dashed for the first fence I saw, hopping it into an unknown backyard.

I heard the police helicopter speeding toward my location. The backyard where I landed had a swimming pool. I started dumping bags of meth in. Before I finished I heard footsteps and officers yelling, "He went over the wall!" So I jumped back up and ran through the yard, leaping the next fence, and landing in front of a pit bull. I quickly turned around and

jumped back the same way I came. I crossed the yard, hopping the next wall into the neighbor's backyard. As soon as my feet hit the ground, the police helicopter searchlight lit up the sky, extinguishing all hopes of my getaway. I ran through the next backyard and threw what little dope I had left in my possession. Unfortunately, I still had the Glock 45; I had to think quickly. I climbed onto a brick wall and started walking, one foot in front of the other to keep my balance.

As I walked along the wall I saw a tree overlapping it. As soon as the police helicopter's spotlight didn't shine directly on me, I balanced my gun on a tree branch, jumped off the wall and started running again. I came to a gate, opened it and RAN! As I turned the corner, I ran right into seven police officers, all screaming the same thing, "GET THE FUCK ON THE GROUND! NOW! DOWN!"

Looking down the barrel of their guns, with nowhere else to run, I got face down on the ground. SON OF A BITCH!

CHAPTER 1

In 1980 at nine years of age, I was too full of energy. They called it ADHD or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. No matter what you call it, one effect is an excess of energy that needs to be used on something. For me, it was running the streets, or should I say down the streets, of Orange County. I'd grab my backpack, filled with necessities for the day. I was out for the whole day and wouldn't be home until the street lights came on. In the early 80s, that was the deal most parents made with their kids. My parents were glad to get rid of me for the day. In my backpack was a flashlight, some food, maybe a pocketknife, and I was out of the house before my parents woke up.

Growing up on Morningside Street in the City of Orange, my best friends were Ricky and Erik. They were twin brothers. We'd been friends for the better part of 5 years. We did everything together. Our favorite thing was to ride our bikes through the storm drains under the streets. We'd ride those tunnels until there was no place else to ride.

By age 11, riding through pitch-dark storm drains was exciting and scary all at the same time. The entrance to the storm drains was in the orange grove, directly behind my house. All three of us would snake our way to the entrance, arguing about who would go first this time.

See, whoever went first through the tunnels cleared the cobwebs for the rest of us. So nobody wanted to volunteer to lead the way.

"Ricky, your brother went first last time, come on," I explained.

"No way Chris! You go first." Ricky cried.

Erik looked over at me with suspicious eyes and said, "Have you ever gone first, Chris?"

"Of course I've gone first. You guys don't remember."

The twins looked back and forth at each other, confused. So before they could say anything else, I came up with a solution. "Let's draw straws. Whoever picks the smallest straw goes first."

"Well Chris, I don't know," Ricky muttered.

"Come on! Are we gonna argue all day about this?"

Finally we agreed to pick straws as soon as we got there. After drawing straws, we duct-taped our flashlights to the handlebars of our bikes. That time Ricky led the way. Once again I lucked out. Soon as we

were all ready, we walked our bikes down into the drainage ditch.

You couldn't ride side by side inside the tunnels; there wasn't enough room. So we went one in front of the other. The further you rode into the tunnel, the smaller the light got behind you until you could no longer see the entrance light. I never admitted it, but I always had this awful feeling water would come rushing down the tunnel and wash us all away. The only light was our flashlights, other than the occasional storm drain. Every time you passed under a street inside the tunnel, there was always a storm drain.

We'd take advantage of the light at a storm drain and eat lunch. Being kids, we always made a big deal about riding the tunnels. Like it was the adventure of a lifetime. This tunnel ended in Villa Park, right at the entrance of the catwalk, across the street from Cerro Villa Junior High School.

I'd get back home all muddy and tired. Mom would make me take a bath, feed me, and I'd fall asleep as soon as I started watching television. I remember denying that I had fallen asleep.

"Son, go sleep in your room."

"I wasn't sleeping dad. I just had my eyes closed."

"Don't argue with me son."

On plenty of occasions I stumbled to my room, half asleep, hearing the M*A*S*H theme music ending.

The house on Morningside was full of good memories. We had a real pinball machine called "The Swinger." All the kids in the neighborhood were dying to come over and play pinball. We even had Intellivision, a popular video game. All this was around the time Devo (the group with the funny hats) came out. Briefly, life was good for my family.

I spent a lot of time at The Regal Lanes Bowling Alley, especially during the summer months. My brother Jay and I would get five dollars from Mom and race down to the bowling alley. We loved playing Space Invaders, Donkey Kong, and Asteroids, the most popular games at that time. Five dollars went quickly: an Icee and twenty video games were pretty much all we could get. Depending on how well you played those video games, time passed quickly. After the money was gone, I was back on my Diamondback bicycle, racing through the streets.

I was a Ritalin kid. In the 80s, if you were hyperactive like me, you were put on Ritalin. I vaguely remember the way Ritalin made me feel. I do remember being uncomfortable around other kids. I felt like I was always being looked at. It sure didn't improve my situation when every day at 11 AM, I was called out of class to take my medication. I felt out of place and to be honest, a little embarrassed. I don't remember being teased

or anything like that; growing up was just sort of a blur.

As a kid I was constantly getting myself injured. One time dad took my brother Jay and me out of school for the day to go up to Big Bear to play in the snow. We were all bobsledding down this big hill. We would slide down the hill, but it didn't seem quite fast enough. So each time, we went higher and higher. I decided to go all the way to the top.

"Watch this!" I yelled as I gave myself a push and started my run down the hill. Everything seemed to be going alright until I hit a bump, flew off the sled, and slid down the rest of the hill on my side. It hurt like hell!

When I finally reached the bottom, I went straight to my dad's truck. I was in some serious pain. Later my dad came to check on me. As soon as I pulled my snowsuit off, dad started yelling, "Jay, grab all of our stuff. We're going to the hospital!"

I must've hit a rock because the left side of my leg was ripped open, just below my hip. Fatty tissue was actually hanging out of my wound. We spent the rest of that day in the hospital, having my leg stitched up. I remember that day vividly. The doctor had to cut away all the fatty tissue to close the wound. The pain was so intense I was screaming. That was just one of many incidents that would land me in the hospital over the years.

When my parents went out for the evening, Martin, Ricky and Erik's older brother, would babysit Jay and me. Then when my parents actually split, Derik, Martin's friend, would show up. Martin and Derik were really cool. Both were about sixteen. We never had a dull moment when my parents went out for the night. We lived behind an orange grove on Morningside, and when the sun went down, we'd throw oranges at cars driving down Orange County Avenue. Usually it was always the same outcome. Orange hits car, car screeches to a stop, and we run like hell back to our house, jumping the fence right into our backyard. We never were caught and every time Martin came over to babysit, that was our normal activity.

One night we're throwing oranges at cars and blam! We heard a car screech to a stop. This time however, we hit a police car. Red & blue flashing lights immediately lit up the night sky, and bright spotlights soon followed, scanning back and forth into the orange grove, trying to locate us.

Martin yelled, "Chris, Jay, run as fast as you can back to the house!"

We both ran as fast as our little legs would let us. My heart was pounding in my chest. Derik was right behind me.

"Go! Go!" He urged, practically pushing me. We made it back as fast

as we could, jumped the fence and fell down laughing in the backyard. We were laughing and scared all at the same time. After we caught our breath, we went to the front yard to sit on the lawn. As soon as we sat down a police car came cruising down the street and stopped directly in front of the house.

Derik whispered, "Let me do the talking."

As the cop stepped out of his car, my dad pulled up with one of his buddies. Most nights when my parents went out for the evening, they went to "Marty's" a bar about five minutes away from the house. Dad got out of his truck, obviously a little tipsy and asked, "Officer, is there a problem here?"

"Yeah, around ten minutes ago one of my patrol cars was struck in the windshield by an orange, and it shattered the window." The cop replied, staring straight at us the whole time.

My dad looked at us for a second, then back at the cop and calmly said, "Well, officer, I was on the phone with my babysitter fifteen minutes ago and told him to wait out front for me because I was coming home for a few minutes. Martin, was Chris and Jay with you the whole time in the house?"

"Yes Mr. Curtis. We all were in the house." Replied Martin.

"There you have it officer; it couldn't of been these boys."

The cop was so furious that his face was visibly red. He gave us all a dirty look, jumped into his patrol car and left. Dad looked at us and just burst out laughing, then turned and went into the house with his friend.

My family seemed perfect at this time. Dad owned a company called "Curtis Masonry," and it was thriving and successful. Because of this, my brother and I had it good.

Christmas was exciting for us. I can't recall anything we didn't have on Morningside St. We'd wake up Christmas morning, tear open all of our presents, and drive to our grandparents' house to open more gifts. Grandma Iris (Dad's mother) was my favorite. She was always good to us.

Christmas Eve was nice as well. We usually went to my Aunt Maggi's house. She's my mom's sister who lived in Mission Viejo, located in South Orange County. Aunt Maggi is by far my favorite relative on my mom's side of the family. The whole family on mom's side would show up for Christmas Eve. All of us kids would play on the pool table and we ate a huge delicious turkey dinner. Those times are difficult to forget because they are precious memories.

Around the beginning of the fifth grade, my family started falling apart. Mom blamed it on dad, and dad blamed it on mom. Over the years I figured out on my own what really happened. I realized the start of the

problems when my friend at the beginning of school asked, “Chris, why didn’t your parents buy you new school clothes?”

I thought to myself, *School clothes? I don’t have school clothes.* My only concern in the fifth grade was how long my bicycle would last. Because my bikes never seemed to last long. “What are you talking about Brian?”

“Look at everyone Chris. They’re all wearing new school clothes, and you’re still wearing the clothes from last year.”

I looked at Brian confused and replied, “Whatever Brian, I don’t care.”

Mostly wealthy kids attended “Serrano Elementary” since it was located on the border of Villa Park. All the kids were wearing 501 blue jeans and polo shirts. I still wore the clothes from the year before.

I do remember asking my mom about clothes when I arrived home that day. “Mom, when am I going to get new school clothes?”

She gave me a concerned look and said, “We’ll go next week honey.”

Mom was probably shocked I even asked for new school clothes. Our situation became worse when my dad’s construction company was sued. Dad had hired an outside company to build an elevator shaft because his company was too busy. The company he hired mixed the cement improperly and the elevator shaft imploded, causing thousands of dollars in damage, which my dad was responsible for.

To make matters worse, I discovered that my dad had a cocaine problem. Couple that with the recession, and there you have the devastation to our lives, which resulted in dad selling our home on good old Morningside St.

I recall explaining to Ricky and Erik that I was moving, and at that age it’s difficult to leave your friends behind. We were packed and gone a week later.