

DE VANNON HUBERT



SEX, DRUGS & JESUS

A MEMOIR OF SELF-DESTRUCTION & RESURRECTION

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I became a drag queen 13 years ago after a friend dared me to hop on stage and put on a show. I'm not one to back down from a challenge and so here we are. In a world where the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community is often overlooked, marginalized, and demonized, it is refreshing to find people like us included, in a loving way, within these pages. The love that I feel reverberating throughout this read is inclusive of many backgrounds and lifestyles. This memoir contains a lot of thrilling content, and I feel like it was fast paced as I read through so many intense experiences. I sincerely hope the truth contained within this memoir is shared across the world and reaches the most unreachable of us.

-Amanda Rose Andrews, Miss Apollo 2015

CONTENTS

Prologue: S.W.A.T.	I
Part I (1982-2000)	1
Dream	3
Chapter 1: Gemstones	4
Chapter 2: Changes	23
Part II (2000-2006)	37
Chapter 3: Basic Training	39
Chapter 4: Rank 'N' File	46
Chapter 5: Into the Aurora Sea	58
Chapter 6: Curiosity	78
Chapter 7: Money	91
Part III (2006-2012)	103
Dream	105
Chapter 8: Welcome to Houston	107
Chapter 9: Aspirations	117
Chapter 10: Debtors & Collectors	127
Chapter 11: Dehumanized	148
Part IV (2010-2012)	159
Chapter 12: A Fucking Wreck	161
Chapter 13: Tina	171
Chapter 14: The Crucible	182
Chapter 15: Let's Make A Deal	200
Chapter 16: Mortality	217
Part V (2012)	237
Chapter 17: Not Like The Pornos :(.....	239
Chapter 18: Where Do You Live?	249
Chapter 19: Stunt Queens	271
Chapter 20: Not Again	287
Epilogue: Bittersweet	311
Wisdom & Witchery	331
About the Author	341

For confidentiality, safety, and security, the names of most characters have been changed. Some events and locations have also been modified.

HONORS

My memoir is dedicated to God first and then to the three women who raised me and carried me throughout my life.

* * *

To my Mother. I am sorry I put you through so much. I cannot begin to comprehend what it is like for a mother to watch her youngest child flail and stumble in the terrible way that I did. It is a miracle you did not have to attend my funeral after all the foolish mistakes I made, but to God be the glory for his mighty hand and his outstretched arm. My enemies were not able to prevail over me and the Lord delivered me safely into your hands. Thank you for your sacrifices over the years and for always being in my corner no matter how wrong I was. I have never met a woman who took to motherhood quite as well as you. It seems like a kind of gift you have. Our bond is as though the umbilical was cut at my birth, but our connection was never severed. Thank you for reading all my teachers for filth who put their hands on me when I was in elementary school. Thank you for staying up late to finish my projects for me in high school even though you had to go to work the next morning. Thank you for doing the best you could with the hand that life dealt you. I am thankful for and look forward to the time we have left together in this life.

* * *

Evangelist Nelson, there is no one nor will there ever be anyone who is like you in all the Earth. You are literally impossible to replace, duplicate, mimic, or even come close to. Thank you so much for your tutelage, wisdom, and instruction throughout my life. I appreciate your patience with me as I was making countless bad decisions while being on and off drugs and in and out of jail. Your prayers and divine intervention saved my life. This second chance will not be wasted. It was my privilege to serve as your assistant and altar boy when I was a teenager. It was an absolute honor to be at your side at your death, even though I never thought that day would ever come. I wish you were still here.

* * *

Grandmother, I wish you were still here too, but I understand the need to rest after this life. I will never forget the summer we spent together just the two of us. I miss watching All My Children and The Young & The Restless with you. Thank you for teaching me about God, how to cook, how to read my bible, and all about how to pray. Thank you for not judging me for my sexuality and for being open-minded. When I was 4 years old, I would put on my Mother's heels and run around the little shack we called a home, and it was you who would be my lookout in case my parents returned. I miss your blue eyes and gray hair, but I know you will be there when I cross over.

A Special Thanks

Thank you, Theresa Hissong! It was at a gay bar in Memphis, Tennessee that you were first called "Mother Theresa" by some fabulous queens we had met, and the name could not be more fitting. Thank you for being my literary mother and friend by laying out the steps to make my memoir a reality. Thank you for sticking by my side and encouraging me throughout this whole process even though you were going through so much at the same time. Thank you for coaching me and cheering me on for the past few years until the deed was done and even unto this day. As I join the author ranks, I feel like it was you who birthed me into this moment, and I cannot wait to take some shots of tequila with you again in New Orleans!

The background of the page is a grayscale image. It features several white musical notes and staff lines that appear to be floating or flowing across the frame. These notes are superimposed over a background of soft, white, billowy clouds that fill the upper half of the image. The overall aesthetic is ethereal and artistic.

PROLOGUE: S.W.A.T.

MAY 2012 - HOUSTON, TX

My white Mustang purred calmly under my seat as I stared across the street at Fancy's Bar in Montrose.

It was the first time in two weeks since I'd left my apartment in the Galleria Area. I could hear the music inside, and the urge to dance pushed its way to the forefront of my mind. I imagined skipping the line and walking in like I had so many times before, and the DJ throwing on my favorite song. Except when I heard Kylie Minogue's voice echo "*get outta my way*" in my head, the meaning sounded different. It was no longer my *Bitch, Move* anthem, but my medieval cry of "*Unclean! Unclean!*"

I felt disgusting; diseased. *Fucking HIV!*

I turned my gaze away from Fancy's, shifted my Mustang out of park, and drove.

Montrose at night was still as beautiful as I remembered it. The lights danced across my windshield. Fuck, I wanted to dance. But I couldn't think of anywhere to go. Every gay bar in Houston would know my face, and I couldn't be seen... not with the city's entire criminal underworld thinking I was a snitch.

I felt stuck. I needed to get high again. But I didn't want to go back to my apartment. Not yet. *Who can I trust?* I wondered. *Spaz? No. Suggs? No. Baker? Hell no. Thiago? Martino? Yes, but they'd be working right now. Ridley?*

Of course I could trust Ridley, my right hand man. I did a quick scan for any patrol cars as I waited under the glowing red of a stoplight before pulling out my phone and dialing.

"Token? Holy shit! What the fuck is up, man? Where the fuck have you been?"

"Oh, you know. Just sitting at home and getting fucked up."

"It's not like you to fall off the radar though."

"Oh, come on. It's not like you've been doing shit." I tried to shift the conversation. I didn't want to have to reveal my diagnosis.

"I'm always doing shit! You know me! Where are you now? What's going on?"

"I'm just driving around. Listen, I'm down to my last teener of Tina. You wanna split it before I stock up again?"

"Sure as shit, Token! You know where to find me."

* * *

I didn't recognize the two other tweakers in Ridley's apartment. Their eyes were glued to a porno on the TV, so I figured they weren't undercover cops, but I still wasn't sure if I could trust them. *What if they're snitches!* I trusted Ridley, but even he could be fooled. *No, I told myself, Ridley's one of the most careful guys I know. He wouldn't get caught out by two streetwalkers like these idiots.* Still, I uncomfortably avoided eye contact with them as I passed Ridley my pipe.

I struggled with the thought of telling Ridley about my HIV, but not with these strangers around. It had been almost five months since I found out I was infected but it still felt like only yesterday. Thankfully, Ridley didn't ask too many questions as he was also drawn to the porno. One meaty guy with an anchor tattoo on his neck thrustured furiously on top of a skinny guy's ass in the bed of a red pickup truck.

I tore my gaze away. I wanted to watch and enjoy the last of my meth, but the scene just reminded me of my disease. *My contamination.* I wanted to puke.

"Hey, Ridley, let's go back to my place."

"That's cool. Is it okay if Timmy and Z come with?"

I bit my lip, wishing he had not asked. I wanted to trust these guys, but I didn't trust them. I couldn't trust anyone I didn't know until this shit with

the cops blew over. Still, I answered, "Sure. Why not." I loved enabling people to have a good time, and even though I hadn't seen anyone in a while, I had to uphold my reputation.

* * *

We drove temptingly past Fancy's Bar on the way back to my apartment. I gazed longingly at the lights through a crystal meth fog, my body craving the orgasm of the dance floor. I saw Ridley's sight was also fixed on the bar. I reminisced about a time when I wouldn't have hesitated to detour into the parking lot, skip the line with Ridley and our friends, and party the night away. My stomach tied up into a knot from the shame of driving away from Fancy's without even entertaining the thought with Ridley.

* * *

The man at the main entrance to my apartment complex didn't turn around when I pulled into the parking lot. His bald scalp glowed, even in the night, and he was dressed as if he was going to church. That was, except for the two black leather gloves on his hands which were working aggressively at the lock on the door. It was Little D.

I revved my Mustang's engine, and Little D turned. His two beady eyes burned with murderous intent at me through my windshield. I did not flinch. I knew he had come to kill me, but I didn't care. I was not afraid of my Tony Montana moment. But as I stared down the hitman, waiting for him to pull out a gun and shoot, his expression changed.

Little D's eyes widened in shock. The fear he so desired to instill in me before he took my life was absent, and that scared the hell out of him. Little D stepped away from the door to my apartment complex like a spider caught out when the lights switch on, suddenly eager to retreat to his carefully hidden web.

He could not scare me, and therefore he could not kill me. And so, he ran.

"Who the fuck was that?" Ridley asked when Little D was out of sight.

"Just an old, jealous church friend," I said.

"Oh. Are we going in?"

I still had the engine running. *What if Little D comes back? He could just be going to get backup.* Just moments ago I had been ready to die, but now that I had escaped I suddenly didn't want to die just yet.

"Yo, Token. Are we going in? What's up?"

"I'm horny as fuck, yo!" one of the tweakers in the back complained.

"Why don't I drop you guys off at Fancy's?" I offered. It was an excuse to get away from my apartment. I shifted into reverse and backed out of the parking spot.

"What do you mean, 'drop us off'?" Ridley butted in. "I thought we were hanging?"

"Nah," I said as casually as I could. "I'll drop you guys off. Then I'm gonna go cruising."

Ridley eased back into his seat. "Dirty motherfucker," he muttered whimsically. "A'ight. Works for me."

* * *

I loved cruising Montrose at night. My trans girls were all glammed up and the hottest trade boys in Houston were always out to play. But tonight my ass was not available. *Fucking HIV!*

I tried to just drive and not think about my infection. *In a few hours, Martino will get off work, and then I can crash the night at his place,* I figured. There was no way in hell I was going back to my apartment.

The buzz of my cell phone stole me mercifully from my thoughts.

"Do you know how many calls I've gotten in the past fifteen fucking minutes telling me your white fucking Mustang is cruising around all of fucking Montrose? What the fuck did I say about laying low?" Casey's domineering tone crackled violently through my phone.

"I don't give a fuck!" I screamed back. "Also, I'm running dry. Can I come by for a pickup?"

"No! Listen, Token. I don't care if you've given up on life. Really, I don't. But I do care if one of my main business partners gets shot up in the middle of Houston! I'm having a hard enough time as it is keeping people on my books after your last run-in with the cops. So, do me a favor, will you? Lay fucking low! I'll arrange for a drop-off at your place tomorrow. Transfer payment in advance."

The connection dropped as Casey hung up. If his phone was on a wire,

I'm sure he would've slammed it. I sent the last of my money to Casey immediately, but he underestimated my apathy. If Casey wanted me to lay low, he could fucking put me down himself.

* * *

I intercepted Martino when he walked out of the back of F Bar, and he graciously let me crash at his place. I was his dealer, and he would do *anything* for a discount on my meth. But his curtains were shit, and as soon as the May sun was up, I was hissing like a cat.

"I'm sorry man," I told him, "but if you're not gonna get better blackout shades, then we gotta go back to my place. We are not spending the day in the fucking sun!"

"What do you mean *we*? If you don't wanna stay, then you can go."

"Fuck no, man! What if there's a hitman waiting back at my apartment?"

"Then I don't wanna fucking be there when he jumps you!"

"No, you're not thinking this through," I argued. "If there's two of us, he's more likely to think twice and bail."

"Token!" Martino complained. He didn't like disappointing me.

"Come on. Just walk in the door with me, and then when everything checks out you can leave. I'll even give you some free T for the road."

"Fuuuuck. Fine!"

I drove as fast as I could back to my apartment, eager to escape to the darkness of my blacked-out abode. But when we got back to my place, my front door wouldn't open.

"What the fuck?"

"What?" Martino asked.

"It's like it's been fucking deadbolted from the inside," I said. My key turned the latch, but the door wouldn't budge.

Martino whimpered. "This doesn't feel right. Token, I think we should go."

"Hell no. Don't worry, no one's gonna pull any stupid shit in the middle of the day."

"I feel like something bad is going to happen here."

"The worst thing that is going to happen," I explained, "is that *you* are going to have to go around back and climb into my apartment through the

trash hatch."

"What the fuck?"

"It'll be fine!"

"Hell no!"

"I promise I will give you free T! Just do this for me!"

Martino fidgeted. He really didn't want to disappoint me, and he really wanted the drugs. "You better make this worth it," he said.

"I *promise*."

Around the backside of the apartment complex, I located my trash hatch and gave Martino a boost to get in. "It smells like shit!" he complained.

"Of course it smells like shit! It's fucking trash!"

"Fuck!"

With a loud *CLUNK*, Martino succeeded in getting in through the trash hatch. I hurried back around to the front door where Martino was waiting, scowling in the open doorway.

"Now was that so bad?"

"Give me my fucking dope so I can leave."

"Is the apartment clear?" I asked.

"How the fuck should I know?"

"Come on," I said and shoved Martino back into my apartment as I entered. He whimpered again as I checked the rooms and the corners. It took twenty seconds. I hadn't furnished the place beyond the absolute basics, and there was nowhere anyone could have realistically been hiding.

"Can I have my meth now, please?" Martino begged.

"Okay," I relented. "I suppose you've been a good friend. Thank you."

I opened my kitchen drawer where I kept my drugs to find that I only had half a gram of meth left, and that was it. That was the last of my drugs. *Fuck!* I didn't know when Casey's drop-off would arrive, and the thought of slowly sobering through the wait sounded like purgatory. Still, Martino had done everything I'd asked of him.

Accepting my momentary loss, I grabbed the small baggie and passed it to Martino. "Here, that's the last of everything I have." Martino looked disappointedly down at the bag, clearly expecting more, but he kept silent. "I'll get you another teener when I have more," I offered. Martino nodded.

"Okay, man," he said. "Thanks. Good luck not getting killed."

It was night again, and the drone of a distant helicopter seemed to make the time pass more slowly. Casey's drop-off was taking forever. With my nervous energy, I cleaned my bongs and pipes, and when they were all sparkling clean on my kitchen table the boredom made me want to scream. *I need a fucking Sprite.*

I started getting dressed. I was wearing just my underwear, and I'd managed to get on my jeans when there was finally a knock on my door. When I opened the door, Ridley walked in.

"Ridley?"

"Hey, Token! What's up? Cool if I hang for a bit?" Ridley threw his backpack on my couch and then instantly crashed next to it.

"Sure," I said. I had no objection to Ridley hanging out. I was just disappointed my meth hadn't arrived yet.

Ridley pulled a nine inch tall orange prescription bottle out of his backpack and put it on the table.

"What's that?" I asked. It was full of pills.

"Adderall," Ridley said. "It's like meth, but--"

"I know what fucking Adderall is."

"Right. Cool. Of course. Well, help yourself if you want. I'm gonna go grab some shit from Walmart. Want me to grab you anything?"

I want my fucking meth to arrive! "No, I'm good, Ridley. Thank you, though." I didn't feel like asking him for my Sprite.

"Okay." Suddenly, Ridley was up and back out the door. The sound of the helicopter droned loudly as the door swung open and then shut, leaving me alone again with an extra backpack and a bottle of Adderall.

That's weird. Ridley never goes anywhere without his shit... nobody ever goes fucking anywhere without their shit.

I tried to ignore the abnormality and go back to getting dressed, throwing on the nearest T-shirt I could find. I pulled one sock on and stopped. I heard the pitter patter of feet outside my door, like a family of mice running for cover. I walked to the door and looked through the peephole. What I saw made my heart jump.

A dozen men in black masks and bulletproof vests had lined up on either side of my door. Over their masks were face shields, and they all

carried semi-automatic rifles. The one at the front suddenly raised his hands and gave the “1-2-3” signal.

I turned to run away from the door as fast as I could. I made it as far as my kitchen when I slipped on my one sock and face planted underneath the table.

BOOM!!!

My front door burst into the apartment, flying across my foyer. A shit ton of men swarmed in.

“Show yourself you dirty motherfucker!”

I curled up in a ball underneath my kitchen table, convinced that this would be my Tony Montana moment. *Any moment now... they're gonna start shooting any moment now.*

The lead man had his gun trained on me, and two others were coming alongside him and doing the same. But then he put a fist in the air, and the guns lowered. Behind the face shield, I could see his glaring eyes pinch in confusion, and then soften to pity. I was apparently not the ruthless, cutthroat drug dealer he seemed to be expecting. Instead, I was no more than a scared child in a near fetal position, missing a sock.

Another loud *BANG* reverberated from the back of my living room. Another dozen men swarmed into my apartment. By now I could read the “S.W.A.T.” signage on the backs of these men’s uniforms. The lead cop removed his face shield and mask to get a better look at me. “Fucking fairies. Get him on a fucking chair.”

The other officers picked me up and sat me down forcibly on one of my kitchen chairs. Then they twisted my arms behind my back. I felt cold handcuffs clasp my wrists together. The lead cop took another chair and set it in front of me before straddling it and looking directly into my eyes, inches from my face.

“Now, listen to me, you scumfuck faggot,” he said, baring his teeth as he spoke. His breath smelled like peppermint. “Where is the fucking dope?”

I stuttered and said nothing. For once, all the dope was gone. The cops would find nothing. And I didn’t know what to tell them.

“WHERE ARE THE FUCKING DRUGS? ANSWER ME YOU ROTTEN FUCK!”

His hand flashed across my face. *SLAP!* The sting burned, but the

handcuffs kept my hands from clasping my face. The cop grabbed my shoulder and pulled me upright again. He stared into my eyes.

"Where's he looking?" one of the other cops asked from another room. The cop in front of me didn't answer, but kept his gaze fixed on my eyes, watching closely. *He's trying to see if I look to where the drugs are!* I thought about the kitchen drawer right behind me that would normally be stashed with a glorious array of narcotics, but thanks to Martino that was now empty.

Finally, the lead cop got out of my face. "Bring in the other perp!"

I watched as two more cops dragged in Ridley and pushed him down on his knees. His hands were also handcuffed behind his back. He looked at me fearfully. *He's a snitch*, I suddenly realized.

Then the lead cop hoisted up his rifle and pointed it at Ridley's temple.

"Talk, faggot! Where is the fucking dope! Talk! Or I'll fuck your head up worse than your asshole's worse nightmare!"

I didn't buy the scene. *What the fuck kind of charade is this bullshit?*

Ridley stayed silent. He knew where I kept my drugs, but I could sense he had already told the cops where to look before he ever showed up. This was all a show to make him look like he wasn't an informant.

I looked to where his bottle of Adderall had been left on the kitchen table. It was gone. Likely picked up by one of the cops to be used as evidence against me later.

After a minute of cussing out Ridley, the lead cop lowered his weapon and told the others to take Ridley away. "Alright, tear this place apart! Find those fucking drugs!"

Cops started ripping up my couch and my mattress. Then I heard barking as two K-9 dogs were brought in on leashes. One immediately pounced on my pile of pipes and bongs, knocking one over and shattering it on the floor.

"See, that's what happens when you don't control your animal!" the lead cop said angrily. "Don't fuck up any more evidence!"

Then I heard another *CRASH!* I turned to see that a cop had smashed my mirror plaque that I'd received for being a Distinguished Graduate in the Air Force. "Hey!" I yelled.

"Shut the fuck up, bitch!" the cop snapped back. "Don't they teach you fags manners in Montrose?"

"Fuck you!"

"Don't worry, you'll have plenty of fuck-daddies in prison, bitch!"

What the fuck is wrong with these cops?

In the kitchen I heard more cops rummaging through all the drawers. I turned just in time to see a cop throw my military gold coin for Outstanding Volunteer Service into a black bag. "What's this, your tooth fairy money?" he teased. I opened my mouth to protest again, but one of the cops standing by me slapped me across the face first.

"Don't you fucking say another word, you piece of shit! Save that mouth of yours for the big dicks behind bars!"

In the kitchen, the cop continued to throw everything he found into the black bag. I watched as checks I hadn't cashed yet were taken along with my fake IDs. *What kind of robbery is this?*

"Look at this!" one cop yelled. "GODZILLAAAA! RAAAA!"

He stuffed my Godzilla doll into another black bag.

Finally, my tears emerged. The terror was too much.

"Aww, the fairy's sad!" one cop mocked.

"Awwwww," more cops jeered.

My shiny golden trophy for Academic Achievement that I earned in seventh grade was the next artifact to go into the black bag. After that I stopped watching. I stared at my feet and waited for the raid to be over.

After what seemed like hours, the lead cop came over to me and said, "Listen close, bitch. I'm gonna read you your fucking rights." He proceeded to read me my rights, and then motioned for the other cops to take me away.

"Can I put on another sock and shoes?" I asked.

"Fuck you!" one cop shouted. "I thought you liked being stripped down! I bet you like being tied up, too!"

As I was hauled out of my apartment, I saw several nosey-ass neighbors sticking their heads out of their doors, curious what all the commotion was about. When they saw me being arrested, they nodded their heads in agreement, like I was getting what I deserved.

Several white vans were parked outside. I looked up at the helicopter that had been droning overhead all night and saw that it was in fact a police chopper. *Who the fuck do they think I am? I'm not actually Tony fucking Montana. Fuck!*

A hand landed on top of my head and pushed me into the backseat of a cop car. Before the door slammed, the cop who had been escorting me said, "Hey. Your driver, Kenny, is a good man. Don't go letting your ass bleed all over his seat. You hear me, faggot?"

When the door clamped shut, the world became suddenly very quiet. The engine ignited to a quiet purr, and I was driven away. After a few minutes, the police officer driving me spoke up.

"Hey listen," he said. His voice was gravelly, but soft. "I've been on plenty of raids throughout my career, and I gotta say, you don't seem like the other kinds of drug dealers I'm used to seeing. You seem all right. Sensible. Maybe just caught up with the wrong crowd? I don't know. But listen, when all of this is over, give yourself a second chance, all right? Get out of this city and start over. Do that and you'll be alright. Okay?"

I just nodded along, listening to the gentle hum of the car's engine taking me away.