

Blackout

THE LIFE AND SORDID TIMES OF BOBBY TRAVIS

Edgar Swamp

Special thanks to my sister Gina Kelliher for reading an early draft of this novel and giving me valuable feedback. To show my appreciation I named one of my characters after her, a dubious honor indeed! Thanks again!

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*This book is dedicated to the loving memory of Ms. Ruby, who
unfortunately passed before I finished the book. I love you
honey. R.I.P. 2006-2016.*

This book is a work of fiction. All names, places, characters etc. are figments of the author's imagination and are not to be mistaken as real. Any semblance to anyone living or dead is a coincidence.

Forward

I'd like to dispel the notion that this book is autobiographical; all of the characters are figments of my imagination and are in no way meant to be construed as real people. And by way of explanation, I'd like to offer here a brief story that inspired this novel, at least the crux of it anyway, involving a person who blacks out repeatedly hence making anything in their life possible at any time.

The year was 1993 and I was working at a bar and grill called Rosie's Water Works in Milwaukee, Wi. I was on my two weeks' notice, planning to leave the city for Raleigh, North Carolina in pursuit of my musical ambitions. At the time, Raleigh was being touted by Rolling Stone magazine as the next Seattle. Um, they were wrong, although Superchunk came from that scene. Super-who? Yeah, that's what I mean. Anyhow, I was nearing the end of my day shift, reading the newspaper and watching the clock, when I noticed a woman who was obviously checking me out. Ah, to be in my 20's again! I don't get that kind of interest from the opposite sex that much anymore, and it's a shame. But I digress. So, I wandered over and started flirting. In all honesty, I'm not that great with the ladies; I get nervous and awkward and sweaty in the presence of pretty women, but in this case I'd had a few beers so courage was on my side. One thing led to another, and she asked me if I wanted to get out of there and go somewhere else. Did I have a car? She asked. I did, a piece of crap that was going to drive me to Raleigh only a few short weeks later. We got in the car and she began flirting with me to the point of almost crashing the car. Not that I minded, I just didn't want to kill anyone, ourselves included. We went to another bar, had more drinks (one which she spilled all over me) and then went back to my place. I'll spare you the lurid details, but she stayed the night. I was a gentleman, I assure you; everything was consensual. Here is where the idea for Blackout arrived:

I awoke first, was gazing longingly at this lovely beauty, wondering how the hell she wound up with me. I'm certainly no Fabio, neither am I Mo Szylak, but this woman was smokin'. The explanation...drum roll please...She woke up, and the look she gave me was one of confusion and fear.

"Where am I?" was her first question, quickly followed by "Who are you?" I'd like to tell you that I was crushed, my feelings hurt, yadda, yadda, yadda, but I was a young man in his 20's. How a woman ended up in my bed (without the use of a date rape drug or handcuffs) mattered not to me. What did was that I got some nookie, and it only cost me a few drinks. However, she was serious. I'd picked her up while she was in a blackout. Apparently, she'd been drinking all day before she entered Rosie's, then I sauntered over with a grin and a half-chub. Her drink of choice was whiskey and Diet Coke. After about seven or eight of those she didn't know much more than her name, probably. I should have known there was a reason she went home with me so easily! Turned out, she told me while I was driving her home, that this was a regular occurrence for her. Because of this, she was trying to quit drinking. I believe I recommended she switch to beer...but that was me back then. Now I would suggest AA.

So that got me to thinking: what if someone did that all the time? What kind of life would they have? In a blackout, anything and everything is possible. I took that premise and went way overboard, of course, but that is what fiction does; takes an idea and exaggerates the heck out of it. I'd be a liar if I said I'd never blacked out myself; binge drinking will do that to you from time to time. Yet the idea for this novel was based on a one-night stand I had with a woman I'd probably have never slept with had she not been so inebriated that she got a good look at my ugly mug. Score one for me, right? And wherever you are Cassandra (not her real name) I hope you got your drinking problem under control. Maybe you took my advice and switched to beer? I hope so! Peace!

Edgar Swamp 2017

Chapter One

"Hi, my name is Bobby Travis and I'm an alcoholic."

It was Monday at three-thirty in the afternoon. Bobby Travis stood before the group of nine other people (plus the moderator), wringing his baseball cap in his hands, feeling the same guilt he felt every Monday because, well, he'd gone and screwed up again.

"Hi Bobby," the group intoned.

"Now, I know this ain't gonna come as a surprise..." he began, and when he looked up he could see the looks of anticipation in his fellow alcoholic's eyes. These folks, these other rummies who'd finally had enough and wanted to pick themselves up, dust off the grime, and get out of the gutter, the majority of them had earned their sixty, ninety and three hundred and sixty day chips. Bobby? Well, let's just say if there was a chip for making it four days, he would have earned a year and half's worth by now. Instead he hadn't earned a single one, yet he kept coming back because by god it would eventually stick. He was certain of that. In the meantime, his stories were of great amusement to the others so that they might live through him vicariously. His exploits were nearly legendary.

"I blacked out again," he confessed, and there was an almost audible sigh amongst the people gathered. Yes, this was what they had come here for every Monday since Bobby had joined AA, to find out how he had spent his weekend, well, what he (barely) remembered of it anyway. What was most interesting was where he wound up, because that was the part he *did* remember, and it rarely failed to disappoint.

"I finished my last swimming pool around four-thirty, and I had my mind set that this was gonna be the week that I wouldn't do it, that I was just gonna go home and call my daughter and find out what time her soccer game was on Saturday. But, like always, I got kinda sidetracked..."

This was Bobby's standard line, one everyone gathered knew by heart. The moderator felt a tug of pity for the desperate man, but moreso felt an overwhelming curiosity as to what happened next. He couldn't help it; he was a sucker for a train wreck just like everyone else in the room.

Bobby glanced around at the others, briefly caught the eye of the man in the crowd whom he'd been sidetracked by, and knew it was best to leave him out of it. Tommy had recently earned his ninety-day chip, and there was no reason to spill the beans on the poor guy. His family was really counting on him to get his shit together, whether it was for real or not. Mostly not. He and Bobby had been tying one on together on and off over the last several months, respectively. The only difference was that Tommy stuck to the booze and never got caught. Bobby wished he could say the same.

"So I wound up at Hooligans again, right around Happy Hour." At the mention of 'Happy Hour' several mouths in the room went dry, hearts started pumping faster than usual. *Oh yeah, a cold beer would taste great right now, maybe paired with a shot of whisky or tequila. Or maybe a martini with extra olives, hold the vermouth, thank you very much. I prefer them neat, bartender, and keep them coming until I am no longer able to sit on this bar stool. And that's an order.*

"After about four or five drafts I began to think maybe I needed a bump..."

This was all in standard order for Bobby's stories. They always started with beer and then segued to drugs. This was also when Tommy departed and some of Bobby's seedier friends oozed out of the woodwork.

"I know a guy who could get me a teener and so I gave him a call."

The 'guy' was actually the Mexican-American bartender at Hooligans, and instead of giving him a call Bobby merely leaned over the bar and asked if Tony was holding. He was. He always was. A handshake followed, one with a clump of sweaty, crumpled bills, the other with a small bag of crystal meth. This then led to a trip to the bathroom, where a bump was snorted in his favorite nostril, the one without the inflamed tissue a

doctor had previously warned him about. Shortly after returning to the bar and resuming his beer drinking, the speed kicked in. This was always where Bobby's stories got interesting, or where they became the most mysterious. It simply depended upon how much Xanax Bobby took.

"Pretty soon my heart was beating pretty fast, and I started getting nervous..."

Bobby had once overdosed on methamphetamine. He'd collapsed outside his trailer (the dump he lived in before he'd inherited his father's house) following a minor heart attack, and a Hispanic gardener saw him and called 911. An ambulance deposited him at Scripps hospital in Encinitas, where he then spent eight hours in the emergency room, getting lectured by everyone who came through his door. From the nurse who placed his catheter to run a bag of IV fluids to the technician who took x-rays of his chest...everyone took a turn. The only one who hadn't given him a speech was the doctor, who made jokes, told him he probably hadn't done any 'permanent damage', and left the room saying 'see you soon'. The rest had all made it their official duty to let him know what a loser he was, and he took it to heart, literally, and ever since, whenever he took the drug, he always felt as if his heart was beating too fast. This never failed to prompt another meeting with the bartender who, besides selling meth, cocaine and various 'research chemical' stimulants (synthetic cathinone's, ethylphenidate, and pyrovalerones), also sold standard benzodiazepines (alprazolam, clonazepam, lorazepam, diazepam, etc.) as well as analogues of the compounds, procured via the World Wide Web. Clonazalam, flubromazalam, diclazapam, etizolam, whatever you wanted, Tony the bartender at Hooligans could get it. Bobby preferred Xanax because it worked fast; he chewed three or four .5 mg tablets and soon his beating heart was no longer an issue. Another two or three of these coupled with more meth and whole lot more alcohol and...surprise! Instant blackout. This, as previously mentioned, was where it always got interesting. Or murky, depending.

"The last thing I remember I was talking to this woman, well, girl really. She couldn't have been more than twenty-one or twenty-two..."

Another thing about Bobby: despite being a chemically dependant screw-up he was exceptionally good looking (the ravages of drug use making his rugged good looks more...rugged), and had no problem making time with members of the opposite sex, even when his speech was slurred and his vision doubled. Not only were his drunken antics entertaining, but the exploits regarding his sex life were also endlessly amusing/titillating. Presently, the people gathered around unconsciously leaned forward on their chairs a little more, as if this would help to better hear his story.

"I can't remember what we were talking about," Bobby continued, "maybe my pool cleaning business, because I figure chicks want to know how I make a living..."

Bobby was totally making this up. He actually had no idea what he talked about with the woman. All he knew was that he went to the bar to order a few more beers and the next thing he remembered was waking up on a floor smelling of urine and dirty socks, his pants around his ankles. Propitiously, his butthole didn't hurt, but a quick check revealed his wallet was missing. *Again*. Crap. And not only did this mean that his last fifty bucks in cash was gone, but also a bunch of uncashed checks, payments received from his pool-cleaning clients. There was no way he could tell any of them that he lost their checks; he was simply going to have to go without being paid this week. This also meant he couldn't buy food, pay his electric bill, put gas in his truck...all in lieu of giving money to the mother of his daughter for child support.

Yet this was only the beginning of the story, and the others listened rabidly, although it meant they wouldn't get a chance to share this week. But that didn't matter; none of them, not even Frank (who was constantly getting into fights with strangers after one too many Jack and Cokes) could top him. Nor Sasha (the one-breasted cancer survivor who had accepted Jesus as her personal savior only after she drove her car through a crowded school playground and miraculously missed every single kid while trying to aim *for* them) had anything more than 'I caved and drank a

whole bottle of peach schnapps while watching The Voice over and over on my DVR—I'm better than all those cheesedick bastards!'

And no one cared. They came here, after all, to listen to Bobby. He was like a real-life soap opera. You could just imagine the narrator's voice in your head:

"Will the drug-addled, booze soaked, sex fiend, gambling addict Bobby Travis find out who took his (fill in the blank: wallet, pants, shoes, kidney) or will he be forced to eat ketchup packets from McDonalds again this week? Tune in and find out!"

His fellow addicts gladly tuned in, and they loved this program. Every week they were all ears, ready for more. They even made bets before he arrived, wagers that involved him siring more children, crashing his truck, or winding up in jail. He rarely disappointed.

But for Bobby it was a nightmare, a vicious cycle that he was doomed to repeat over and over ad nauseum until he at last took the program seriously and accepted his various responsibility's. Luckily for the group this was unlikely to ever happen. Unfortunately for Bobby, it would seem.