

HOW THE DEVIL'S CHARITY IS CURRENTLY KILLING ME  
DEATH BY A THOUSAND KIND CUTS

D.O.W.

## **Author's Note**

### **Why This Book Exists**

This book only exists because I filed a series of lawsuits. One against every system. Because every system is quietly failing while singing their own praises.

- Family
- Church
- Landlord
- Employment/Corporation
- Insurance
- City Government
- County Government
- Federal Government
- Federal Judicial System and Corrupt Judges

The. Entire. System.

The courts may have refused to give justice. They have refused to look at the merits on any and all of my cases because, as my experience shows, they are designed to protect institutions, not people. But they did give me something else: a paper trail. Every motion, denial, email, and order is a receipt. Without that record, this would be easy to wave away as ‘his perspective.’ With it, you’re not just reading my story—you’re looking at what the system actually did, in its own handwriting.

While this book has been anonymized so that the focus can remain on the pattern rather than individual players, with the purpose of shielding my family from further attack from these individuals since the danger is still near and present, I have the court records and evidence to back up every story and accusation. So, if anyone does come after me for defamation for some reason, I’m ready to actually reach the merits of my claims against them in court. If and when they do, I’ll be happy to share their name with the world. But my family is somewhat fragile and we are not looking for another fight right now. Which may actually inspire some of these people to attack, based on our current vulnerability. But just know. I’m ready if that happens.

This isn’t simply a sad story of how I feel. This isn’t a story of, this is somehow my faded memory. These events are real. Every one of them. Events have not been embellished or changed for literary purposes or for the purpose of looking more like a victim or make me somehow look better. With direct evidence in the background, backing it all up. What I have written here is as accurate as I can make it while winding you through a complex chain of events.

Finally, I have everything backed it up with an undeniable pattern and framework. The Devil’s Charity. Help that harms. The Optics Economy. A world designed to only look like its doing the right thing while it slowly murders you by committee.

## About Names, Pseudonyms, and Real Cases

This book is built out of real events, real harms, and real systems.

But every person and every institution in these pages appears under a fictionalized name.

That includes:

- Family members
- Employers and managers
- Landlords and neighbors
- Churches and church leaders
- Counties, cities, agencies, and corporations
- Judges, lawyers, inspectors, and other officials

I will be using the same fictionalized names for these people and institutions:

- In this book
- In my blog posts
- In my “How \_\_\_ Nearly Killed Me Using the Devil’s Charity” video clips and series

So, if you see County A, City C, Foundation Corp G, Analytics Corp, Bishop K, The Trust Family, Stepfather S, or any of the other labels I use, those are deliberate pseudonyms that point back to the same underlying actors each time, but without putting their legal names in lights.

There are three reasons for this:

1. This book is about a pattern, not a hit list.  
The Devil’s Charity is my name for a playbook—the way modern systems weaponize “care,” “safety,” “policy,” and “personal responsibility” to slowly destroy people while preserving their own image. Individual players matter, but the real villain is the operating system.
2. I want to tell the truth without doxxing anyone.  
The events I describe are drawn from my own life, my wife’s life, and our lawsuits. But trauma stories are messy, and memory is human. Pseudonyms give me room to protect privacy, blend roles when needed, and focus on the structure of what happened instead of inviting a pile-on against any single person.
3. The legal and factual record lives somewhere else.  
Where there are actual court cases, complaints, and motions, those documents exist in the real world with real names on them. They are the place for line-by-line factual dispute. This book is not a court filing. It’s my pattern map—my attempt to show how a lifetime

of “care” and “policy” can add up to something that looks an awful lot like a slow-motion institutionalization.

If you know me personally, you may be able to guess who some of these characters are. That’s fine.

If you don’t, it doesn’t matter. The pattern is the point.

Nothing in this book is meant to be legal advice, and nothing here should be mistaken for a judicial finding of fact. These are my experiences, my perceptions, and my arguments about what the Devil’s Charity looks like when it runs to its logical end on one human life.

In the pages that follow—and in the video clips and posts that go with them—you’ll see how each fictionalized person and institution “almost killed me” or pushed me closer to the edge...

...and how, taken together, they form a single playbook for how our society can quietly bleed someone out, label them “unstable,” and call the whole thing care.

## **How This Book Relates to The Devil's Charity**

If you're reading this, you may have already read my other book, *The Devil's Charity*.

That book was the theory and the autopsy.

It named a pattern I kept seeing everywhere:

- harm framed as help
- control framed as care
- punishment framed as “natural consequences”
- and slow, grinding damage wrapped in the language of “love,” “safety,” “policy,” or “stewardship.”

It told my mother's story and mine in parallel, and then pulled back the camera to show how churches, families, courts, and companies all use the same playbook:

Hurt someone in a way that looks holy or responsible.

Watch them wobble under the weight.

Call their collapse proof you were right about them from the beginning. Even while openly declaring that you always wished them well.

This book is what happens when you turn that lens fully on my current life and don't look away.

If *The Devil's Charity* was the blueprint of the machine,  
*How the Devil's Charity Is Currently Killing Me* is the live stress test.

- The events in these pages are not hypotheticals.
- They are not “composite case studies.”
- They are the actual collisions my family of five has had with counties, cities, courts, employers, landlords, churches, and “helpers” over the last few years.

To keep the focus on the pattern, I've anonymized individual people and institutions.

The county that gutted my project is County A.

The city that finished the job is City C.

The consulting firm that fired my wife for telling the truth is Analytics Corp.

The church that saved my life and nearly killed me is The Church of Good Intentions.

If you know us in real life, you may recognize who's who.

If you don't, it doesn't matter. The operating system is the same.

There's one more thread this book pulls tight:

how all of this—layered together—slowly pushes a person toward collapse, diagnosis, or institutionalization, while the very systems doing the damage call it care, safety, or “the best we could do.”

That’s the part I can’t shake.

I watched that process take my mother.

This book is me naming how the same process is now circling me.

## **Prologue – The Bird at My Throat**

I am writing this while the thing is still chewing on my life.

This isn't a memoir written from a safe distance, with a tidy arc and a reassuring moral. It's more like writing notes on the inside of a house that's quietly filling with smoke.

From the outside, we look... fine.

We rent a decent place.

We have three kids who still laugh more often than they cry.

We have books on the shelves, a decent sofa, and enough photos on the wall to prove we loved each other at some point.

If you walked in on a calm day, you might think:

“They're struggling a bit, sure. But lots of families are. They'll be okay.”

You wouldn't see the stack of court filings.

You wouldn't see the credit report that looks like shrapnel patterns.

You wouldn't see the unopened medical bills, the emails from landlords and managers and HR departments, the quiet terror in my wife's shoulders anytime a new envelope shows up in the mail.

You wouldn't see the math.

Because that's what this really is now:

a slow, relentless equation that keeps trending toward breakdown.

## **The Thread I'm Hanging By**

Every day, I do a kind of internal roll call:

- Did anyone threaten eviction today?
- Did another case get tossed on a technicality?
- Did another “helper” turn out to be working for the system instead of for us?
- Did we lose another job, another appeal, another piece of breathing room?

Every day, I ask some version of:

“How close am I to becoming the kind of person they can write off as crazy?”

Not suicidal.

Not planning an exit.

Just honest enough to say:

“If you run this level of stress, debt, and gaslighting through one nervous system long enough, something is going to snap. And when it does, there is a whole apparatus ready to say: ‘See? We told you he was unstable.’”

That’s the part that scares me more than death.

Not dying.

Being turned into a cautionary tale in someone else’s story.

## **I’ve Seen This Movie Before**

I watched a version of this happen to my mother.

She didn’t start out as a “difficult patient.”

She started out as a woman in pain.

She had a real disease. A body that betrayed her.

She went to the people who were supposed to help:

- priesthood leaders,
- doctors,
- alternative healers,
- family.

Everyone brought their tools:

- blessings,
- diets,
- pills,
- lectures,
- fasting,
- quietly withheld support until she did it their way.

She was surrounded by the language of care:

“We’re doing everything we can.”

“The Lord is in charge.”

“If she just has enough faith...”

“If she just tries this one more thing...”

From inside her body, it felt very different.

It felt like being bled slowly by people who insisted the pain was proof the medicine was working.

When she finally died, the system around her got to say:

“We did our best. God called her home.

What a valiant example.”

Or even gaslighting... “She was healed.”

They never had to say:

“We misread her suffering. We layered shame and spiritual puzzles on top of a body that was already losing a war. We made her doubt herself until the very end.”

That’s the Devil’s Charity in its original form:

- harm done under the banner of help,
- slow violence dressed as faithfulness,
- a dead woman whose story is rewritten as a success.

I didn’t realize then that I was watching a prototype.

## **The Updated Version**

Fast forward.

I am not lying in a hospital bed.

I'm pacing in a courtroom hallway, or on hold with an insurance company, or standing in front of a landlord's email, or sitting across from a bishop who says "God's timing" as my kids' food runs out.

The vocabulary changed.

Instead of:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments,"

I hear:

"We're just following policy."

"We have to treat everyone the same."

"We can't make an exception."

"You need to take personal responsibility."

"Have you tried budgeting better?"

"Have you considered therapy?"

Instead of priesthood blessings, I get:

- denial letters,
- procedural dismissals,
- "unfounded" complaints,
- technical rejections that never touch the actual harm.

Instead of healing diets, I get:

- performance improvement plans,
- safety inspections,
- emergency motions,
- "for your protection" shutdowns.

The result feels eerily similar:

- We lose housing while the record says "tenant chose to vacate."
- We lose jobs while the file says "not a good fit."
- We lose cases while the docket says "dismissed without prejudice," as if that means anything when you can't afford to try again.
- We lose support while the story says "we tried to help, but they just wouldn't cooperate."

Each actor gets to walk away feeling righteous.

Each system gets to stamp my forehead with a new label:

Unsafe.  
Non-compliant.  
Unstable.  
Difficult.  
High-risk.  
Poor fit.

I get to carry all of them at once.

## **The Road to the Ward**

I used to think institutionalization was something that happened mainly to:

- people with severe, obvious mental illness,
- or people who “went off the deep end” in some dramatic way.

Now I understand it as something much quieter:

the point where enough systems agree that you are the problem that it becomes rational to sedate, warehouse, or write you off.

Not because you posed some sudden, dramatic danger.

Because you became too expensive to understand.

Too inconvenient. Too disruptive.

Too full of contradictions that implicate the systems themselves.

The easiest way to resolve that tension is to locate the problem inside your skull.

Label it.  
Medicate it.  
Document it.  
Move on.

When I look at my mother’s story now, I see the same arc:

1. Unexplained suffering.
2. A swarm of helpers with rigid frameworks.

3. Years of “care” that deepened the wound.
4. A final collapse that proved, in their minds, that she just couldn’t or wouldn’t get better.
5. All while on the surface for the majority of her life she looked more beautiful, younger, and more privileged than average.

This is what I call the Optics Leash. When everything looks better than most on the surface, you look like you have every advantage, while you are silently dying by thousands of quiet cuts. An element that I am very familiar with in my own life as on the surface, I am good looking, talented, well spoken, and relatively well put together. Which further justifies everyone in cutting further... because on the surface I look like I should be able to take it.

She never got the benefit of a frame that said:

“Maybe the problem is bigger than you.”

I don’t want that to be my ending.

I can feel the pull, though:

- The late-night heart palpitations when another envelope arrives.
- The simmering anger when a judge cites “procedure” instead of reading the facts.
- The bone-deep exhaustion when a church leader spiritualizes what is obviously a material crisis.
- The numbness that creeps in when I realize how many times I’ve told this story and how little difference it has made from the system’s perspective.

I am, in a very real sense, hanging on by a thread.

Not because I hate my life.

Because the load on that thread is absurd.

## **Why I’m Writing This Now**

It would be easier to wait.

To only tell this story if I actually end up:

- in a ward,
- on a grave marker too early,
- or in some quiet, medicated exile.

Then it could be framed nicely:

“He just couldn’t let things go.”

“He was always intense.”

“He had so much potential, but he just couldn’t get out of his own way.”

No.

If I disappear into an institution—or out of this life altogether—I want there to be a record that says:

“He named the pattern.

He documented the steps.

He was not confused about what was happening.

He was being destroyed by systems that insisted they were helping.”

So I’m writing this book in the middle of the process, not at the end of it.

I’m going to walk you through:

- Case files from counties, cities, courts, churches, employers, landlords, and consultants.
- How each of them “nearly killed me” in their own way.
- How each cut came wrapped in the language of care, safety, or responsibility.
- How those cuts add up to a slow-motion institutionalization that everyone involved can feel good about.

Along the way, I’m going to keep tying it back to my mother:

- what killed her,
- what’s trying to kill me,
- and why I refuse to let the system have the last word on either of our stories.

If I sound angry, it’s because I am.

If I sound tired, it’s because I am.

If I sound hopeful, it’s because somewhere under the scar tissue, I still believe that telling the truth about this pattern might crack it open enough to change at least a few fates—including my own.

This is my attempt to put a label on the thing before it gets to write one on me.

This is my way of saying:

“If I end up in the ward, or under a stone, don’t you dare say you didn’t know what killed me.”

Now, case by case, I’m going to show you what the Devil’s Charity looks like in real time—

and how, one polite cut at a time,

it tries to turn a living human being into a file, a diagnosis, and finally,

a warning story that keeps everyone else in line.

## **Chapter 1**

### **How the Devil's Charity Is Currently Killing Me**

Right now, as you read this, I'm not in a psych ward.

I'm not on the street.

I'm not in jail.

I'm not lying in a hospital bed.

On paper, things look... survivable.

I live in a rented place in a mid-size city with my wife and our three kids. There's food in the fridge most weeks. The lights are on. We own a beat-up car that still technically runs. If you dropped by on a good afternoon, you'd see:

- art projects on the table,
- kids arguing over a game,
- my wife on her laptop building one more thing that might finally work.

You would not see the cliff we're standing on.

You wouldn't see the stack of lawsuits that mostly went nowhere, not because they were meritless, but because we ran out of money, time, and emotional blood.

You wouldn't see the credit score that's been shattered by medical debt, job loss, and strategic default just to stay alive.

You wouldn't see the eviction threats, the insurance interrogations, the "friendly" emails from landlords and managers and HR people reminding us that our suffering is "unfortunate" but ultimately our responsibility.

From the outside, the Devil's Charity is quiet.

From the inside, it feels like having a bird at your throat, talons dug in just hard enough that you know if you jerk the wrong way, it will rip something vital out and everyone will say you overreacted.

### **The Dual-Income Noose**

In the world we're living in, a family of five like ours is not supposed to survive on one income. That's not a moral statement; it's basic math.

The cost of housing, food, healthcare, transportation, and childcare has drifted so far out of sync with wages that “single breadwinner” is mostly a nostalgic aesthetic for commercials and campaign speeches. In reality, you need:

- two full-time jobs, or
- one full-time job + side hustles, or
- some combination of employment, credit, and family subsidies

just to keep the wolf from the door.

We had all of that once.  
Businesses, property, momentum.

Then County A took the first swing.  
City C finished the job.  
A string of employers, courts, and “helpers” took turns after that.

Now, here’s what “normal” looks like for us:

- My wife is highly educated, highly capable, and currently unemployed in the traditional sense. She’s scrambling to build a business from scratch because institutions that were supposed to be stable either fired her when she told the truth or forked her job off a cliff.
- I am effectively blacklisted by my own story. Every time I’ve tried to re-enter the system quietly, I find that the cost of silence is my mental health and the cost of honesty is my employment.

On paper, the story is:

“They just haven’t found the right fit yet.”

In reality, the story is:

“Systemic harm crashed our lives, and every attempt to stand up about it has made us more radioactive.”

We are in the income version of the Devil’s Charity:

- The economy demands two adults working full speed.
- The systems that could stabilize us systematically cut our legs out.
- Then the same systems look at the wobble and call it “poor planning.”

## **How It Looks from the Outside**

Here's how a reasonable person might narrate our life if they didn't know the backstory:

"They lost some properties. That's sad, but it happens."

"They've moved a few times. Lots of families do."

"They've had some conflicts with landlords, employers, and churches. That's life. Common denominator, though..."

You can almost hear the implied shrug.

Without the pattern, it looks like:

- a string of bad luck,
- some poor decisions,
- maybe a personality that rubs people wrong.

From that perspective, the prescribed solutions are always the same:

- "Budget better."
- "Lower your expectations."
- "Stop fighting everything."
- "Go to therapy."
- "Focus on gratitude."
- "Stop living in the past."

None of those are evil on their own.

Some of them are even useful in normal circumstances.

But when you're on the receiving end of systemic harm, those phrases become a kind of soft weapon. They turn structural wounds into personal defects. They frame your insistence on naming the pattern as proof that you're the problem.

That's the first step of institutionalization:

relocate the crisis from the world to the individual.

## **What It Feels Like from the Inside**

From the inside, here's the daily reality:

- **Housing:**  
We rent because every asset we had was gutted by a county, then a city, then a bankruptcy, then a financial collapse we didn't cause. Our current management company has dangled eviction more than once—not because we trashed the place, but because we dared to push back when basic livability (air conditioning, safe gas lines, hot water) collapsed and we had to choose between sleeping in an oven or going into more debt.
- **Work:**  
My wife was hired and fired as a whistleblower at AnalyticsCorp. Then “restructured” out of a federal job at Agency I in a way that technically passes HR muster and practically kneecaps any hope of stable public employment. I was chewed up and spit out by Foundation Corp G in one of the most structurally predatory sales cultures I've ever seen.
- **Health & Debt:**  
A car accident injured me badly enough that I can't work the way I used to. Insurer J-1 treated me like a suspect, not a patient—two-hour interrogations designed to catch me in a discrepancy they could later weaponize. Medical bills piled up while we waited for a process designed to be slow. Meanwhile, basic living expenses went on credit because where else do you put them?
- **Church & Community:**  
At The Church of Good Intentions, a bishop once helped save my life. Later, when my wife had just lost her job and I'd been in that car accident, he delayed food for my family in the name of “God's timing.” The message below the surface was clear: “Your suffering is not yet legitimate enough to justify immediate relief.”
- **Courts:**  
Judges 1, 2, and 3 taught me that “justice” is, in practice, something you purchase. When you can't afford a lawyer and filing fees, you don't get a verdict on the merits; you get a procedural exit ramp. A higher court eventually granted me in forma pauperis status on appeal while affirming lower court outcomes, creating a contradiction that the highest court in the land refused to even docket over technicalities.

Each one of these would be a big deal on its own.  
Stacked together, they become something else:

a sustained attack on our margin, our credibility, and our sanity.

And because each cut comes wrapped in the language of “policy,” “safety,” “stewardship,” and “due process,” the cumulative effect is easy for outsiders to miss.

That's the Devil's Charity:

every actor is sure they're doing the right thing,  
and the person in the middle quietly loses their life.

## The New Institutionalization

When I say “institutionalized,” I don’t just mean locked doors and hospital gowns.

I mean:

- becoming someone whose story is officially downgraded to “unreliable narrator,”
- whose financial desperation, anger, and exhaustion become more legible to professionals than the pattern of harm that caused them.

The pipeline looks something like this:

1. Strip Stability While Gaslighting and Shifting The Blame Back To The Unstable.  
Take away assets, jobs, housing, or legal recourse under the banner of safety, policy, or compliance. While shifting the blame for the losses onto the one harmed. Or pointing at the appearance of stability on the thin surface as either an excuse that we have enough or are living beyond our means.
2. Demand Performance.  
Expect the harmed person to show up to court, work, church, parenting, and community roles as if nothing happened. Dock them socially when they can’t.
3. Pathologize Resistance.  
Frame every attempt to name the pattern as bitterness, obsession, or mental illness. Encourage family and community to “detach with love.”
4. Offer Clinical Containment.  
When the person finally breaks—panic, rage, collapse—redirect them into purely individual solutions: therapy, medication, hospitalization. Make sure none of those have mandate or jurisdiction to address the systems that caused the harm.
5. Rewrite the Story.  
Once the person is sedated, exhausted, or dead, tell a neat story about how “everyone did their best” and “some people just can’t be helped.”

My mother rode that exact escalator, mostly within a religious and medical framework. The more she suffered, the more spiritual and clinical interpretations piled up on top of her. By the end, her actual voice hardly mattered. She was a case, a puzzle, a lesson.

I can feel that same escalator humming under my feet.

I have not stepped on the last few steps yet.

But I can see them.

## **Hanging On (Barely)**

So, when I say I'm hanging on by a thread, I don't mean:

"I'm one inconvenience away from doing something reckless."

I mean:

"I'm one setback away from fitting neatly into the story they've been writing about me for years."

The story where:

- I'm too intense,
- too stubborn,
- too litigious,
- too easily offended,
- too unwilling to forgive,
- too proud to "just move on."

The story where my mother was "so valiant" right up until she died in a system that refused to admit any part in her suffering.

The story where, if I finally crack under the weight of:

- lost businesses,
- lost homes,
- lost jobs,
- lost health,
- lost trust in institutions,

they can say:

"See? We knew something was wrong with him."

Not:

"Maybe something is wrong with us."

That is the spiritual, legal, and psychological cage I live in right now.

It's why I write.

It's why I sue.

It's why I refuse to nod politely and let the official story stand.

Because if I end up broken in a way the world recognizes, I want it on record that this was not a personal failing in a vacuum.

It was the predictable outcome of an operating system I now recognize on sight.

## **Why This Chapter Comes First**

You might wonder why I'm starting with the present instead of telling these stories in order.

It's because I need you to understand the stakes before we go case by case.

If we start with County A, City C, The Trust Family, Foundation Corp G, Analytics Corp, Agency I, Landlord J, The Church of Good Intentions, and Judges 1–3, it would be easy to treat each of them as an isolated scandal:

- “Wow, that county was rough.”
- “That company sounds toxic.”
- “That bishop sounds insensitive.”
- “That landlord sucks.”

You might even be tempted to play referee:

“Okay, this one looks like they really hurt you.  
That one sounds like a misunderstanding.  
That one... maybe you overreacted a bit.”

That's how the Devil's Charity survives:  
by getting good people to treat systemic patterns as a string of unrelated incidents.

So I'm starting here, with current vitals, because I want you to keep this question in the back of your mind the whole time you read:

“If I stacked all of this on my nervous system, year after year, how would I be doing?”

And another one:

“If my own mother had died in a system like this, how seriously would I take the possibility that I might be next?”

## How This Chapter Still Bleeds

At the end of each chapter, I'm going to add a short section like this—because none of these stories are really over.

### How This Cut Still Bleeds Today

Right now, as I type this:

- Our credit is wrecked in ways that will haunt us for years.
- Our income is unstable by design, not by choice.
- Every move we make—housing, work, medical care—is constrained by damage that began in courtrooms and offices where people told themselves they were doing the right thing.
- I live with a constant hum of adrenal fatigue: part trauma, part math, part anticipation of the next “unfortunate” decision from someone with power over some essential part of our lives.

The system's story is:

“They're struggling, but a lot of people are. We've all done our best. If they're still in crisis, maybe they're the common denominator.”

My story is:

“The Devil's Charity has been running on my life for years, cutting in a thousand small ways, and then holding up my wounds as proof I'm defective.”

My mother bled out under that story.

I am trying, with everything I have left, to name it clearly enough that it can't quietly do the same to me while everyone claps for how “responsible” and “caring” the systems were.

In the next chapter, we'll start with Case File A: The Friendly County That Opened the Trapdoor—

and you'll see how the first big cut was made.

## Chapter 2

### Case File A: “Friendly County” and the Safety Myth

If you drove past the “Welcome” sign into County A, you’d think it was the friendliest place in the world to start a business.

No business license required.

No long forms.

No bureaucratic gauntlet at the front door.

On paper, that looks like freedom.

In practice, it was the first move in a slow, quiet kill.

County A didn’t greet me with a list of rules.

It greeted me with nothing—no business license, no clear path, no written roadmap of who had authority over what.

So, I did what any reasonable, motivated person would do:

I built.

I invested.

I asked questions.

I tried to obey the people who seemed to be in charge.

What I didn’t understand then—and what I’m documenting here so I never forget—is that the lack of an upfront gate became the trap.

They let me pour years of money, time, and emotional capital into the property, and then used “safety” and “procedure” as weapons to shut it all down when it suited them.

That’s the Devil’s Charity in government form:

- No business license means “We’re helpful, not controlling.”
- Years of silence means “We’re being flexible and reasonable.”
- An emergency injunction means “We’re protecting the public.”
- Sending CPS and the police means “We care about families and children.”

From the outside, every move looks defensible.

From the inside, it nearly killed me.

They allowed me to invest deeply and then they pulled the rug out from under me.

## **1. The County That “Didn’t Want to Make It Hard”**

County A’s first gift to me wasn’t a grant, a tax break, or a mentoring program.

It was a shrug.

“We don’t require a business license out here.”

Translated into plain language:

“You’re free to guess what the rules are.”

There was no moment at the very beginning where someone sat me down and said:

- “Here are the limits.”
- “Here is exactly what this property is zoned for.”
- “Here’s what you cannot do unless X, Y, Z is in place.”

Instead, there was:

- A green light to start a U-Haul rental.
- A willingness to issue permits for improvements.
- No insistence on an architect or engineer at the outset, even though the building and square footage triggered state-level requirements.

It felt like cooperation.

“We’re not like those over-regulated places,” the subtext implied. “We want small business.”

Only later—after loans had been taken out and hundreds of thousands of dollars were sunk into the property—did that “friendly flexibility” flip into:

“You should have known better.

You didn’t follow the rules.

You’re the problem.”

The Devil’s Charity move here was structural:

1. Skip clarity at the front door.
2. Let the developer carry the risk and the investment.
3. Weaponize technicalities and shifting positions after the fact.

By not establishing authority early with something as basic as a business license, the County kept itself blameless while setting me up to take the fall for every misstep in a maze they never clearly drew.

The worst part is that because the courts will not hear the merits of my complaint, this core structural problem along with the others that I list, that most negatively affects the poor and middle class, will never be addressed.

## **2. Years of Inaction as an Unspoken Promise**

When I converted part of the property to a hostel during COVID, it wasn't a reckless experiment.

It was a solution:

- Essential workers needed beds.
- Vulnerable people needed somewhere safe and affordable to land.
- The building was functioning, occupied, and—importantly—openly listed and reviewed online.

We weren't hiding anything.

Over time, the hostel became:

- A Superhost operation with a 4.7+ rating.
- A known, public-facing business with hundreds of reviews.

County A knew, or easily could have known, exactly what was happening on that property. They took no action even though they had been previously fierce in action over the U-Haul business which I will later explain.

No:

- Notices of violation.
- Stop-work orders for the hostel use.
- Inspection campaigns.
- “We have concerns; let's talk.”

Nothing.

For over a year, their inaction functioned as a promise:

“If this were dangerous, if this were illegal, we would have told you by now.”

I interpreted that silence as implicit approval—a concept the law itself recognizes: if a government entity stands by and watches you operate in the open for a prolonged period, their failure to enforce can reasonably be read as consent or acquiescence.

Then one day, without warning, the same county that had done nothing for over a year suddenly treated my hostel like an imminent disaster.

That whiplash is not just emotionally jarring.

It’s the exact dissonance that the Devil’s Charity thrives on:

“We were so patient for so long.  
Now we have to be extreme.  
You forced our hand.”

### **3. The Emergency Injunction: When Optics Became Everything**

By the time County A decided to act, I had moved out of state as the hostel had been operational for nearly two years.

No slow escalation.

No series of written warnings.

No, “Here’s a list. Fix these items in 30 days or we’ll shut you down.”

They skipped right to the nuclear option:

An emergency injunction in a more favorable court, bypassing the district court that should have heard it first.

Emergency powers are supposed to be reserved for real, immediate threats:

- Buildings about to collapse.
- Systems on the brink of catastrophic failure.
- Conditions where human life is genuinely at risk right now.

That wasn't the case here.

An electrician brought in for repairs found no imminent fire danger, no conditions warranting a sudden evacuation.

But “no emergency” doesn't look good on paper.

So, the county leaned hard into optics:

- Photos that made everything look worse than it was.
- Language that implied chaos and danger.
- Framing that turned years of their own inaction into my alleged recklessness.

They didn't come into court saying:

“We neglected inspections for years and now we're scrambling.”

They came in saying, in effect:

“This out-of-state owner has created a ticking time bomb, and we—the responsible adults—must act.”

That's the Devil's Charity in full costume:

- Their neglect disappears.
- Your effort becomes the problem.
- Their panic looks like virtue.

The emergency injunction was denied in the end. But in a Devil's Charity story, losing in court doesn't mean you stop. It just means you switch tools.

#### **4. The Day They Brought CPS**

The same day the emergency injunction was denied because the judge claimed not to have the power to kick people out without notice during Covid, County A escalated anyway.

If they couldn't get the judge to rubber-stamp their emergency narrative, they would create one on the ground:

- They sent Child Protective Services.

- They sent the police.
- They told residents they had to leave immediately, without proper process, as if the building had been condemned when it had not.

Families who had lived there peacefully for over a year were suddenly treated like they were in imminent danger—not because of anything that had changed in the building, but because the county had lost face in court.

I was put in an impossible position:

- If I resisted, I'd be framed as the reckless landlord endangering children.
- If I cooperated, my business died on the spot.

I chose to protect the people over the property.

I canceled thousands of dollars in future Airbnb bookings to house those being forced out, eating revenue I desperately needed just to keep everyone from ending up on the street.

County A didn't have to physically swing a weapon to nearly kill me.

They just had to:

- Label me unsafe.
- Weaponize other agencies.
- Force a mass eviction under the banner of “child protection.”

CPS and the police could say, “We're just doing our jobs.”

The county could say, “We just raised concerns.”

That's the Devil's Charity at its cleanest:

Everyone involved gets to say they acted “for safety.”

No one has to own the actual human fallout.

## **5. The Human Cost They Never Put in Their Files**

When you read government filings, you see:

- Case numbers.

- Orders.
- “Findings of fact.”
- Neutral-sounding phrases like “ceased operations” or “enforcement action taken.”

You never see:

- A young family with kids under five forced out with nowhere stable to land.
- A business owner scrambling to house people at personal expense because the county that claims to protect the vulnerable just traumatized them.
- The way your nervous system starts living at a constant boil, waiting for the next hit.

You don’t see the death downstream.

One of the people folded into the wreckage lost his home and job in City C when everything tumbled. Later, he broke parole and ended up dead. His real name is Shawn Weaver, a name I will not allow society to forget.

You won’t see his name in the county’s narrative. You won’t see the chain that runs from “emergency injunction” and “CPS visit” to “man dead a year later.”

But I do.

When I say County A nearly killed me, I’m not being metaphorical.

- They stripped my primary income.
- They stripped the equity I had built.
- They lit the fuse that led to bankruptcy.
- They pushed me into a spiral where I was suicidal, not because I was weak, but because the math no longer worked: a family of five, a collapsing business, no safety net, and a county that seemed determined to make an example out of me.

And then, on top of that, someone else actually died in the blast radius.

No one at the county has had to look that in the eye.

## **6. How Friendly County Is Still Killing Me Today**

You’d think this story would end with:

“And then I left County A behind.”

I didn’t.

I moved zip codes.

The pattern followed.

Because once a county writes you into its files as:

- “Noncompliant.”
- “Unsafe.”
- “Problematic.”
- “Litigious.”

...that narrative starts to bleed into everything else:

- Judges reading later cases see you as the guy who “couldn’t follow the rules.”
- Employers see gaps and chaos on your résumé without seeing the system that created it.
- Landlords see risk instead of context.
- Even family starts to quietly believe the whisper that, “Well... where there’s smoke...”

Meanwhile, the original spark was a county that:

- Failed to require a business license at the start.
- Neglected legally required inspections.
- Let me operate a high-visibility hostel for over a year with no intervention.
- Then screamed “emergency” and sent CPS the moment I defended myself in court.

The full story is more complex and yet to come. But this is what happened.

Friendly County isn’t just a place on a map for me.

It’s a pattern embedded in my medical records, my credit report, my employment history, and my nervous system.

Every time a new system fails us—an employer, a landlord, a court—it’s like an echo of that first “safety” story they told about me:

“We tried to work with him.  
He just wouldn’t comply.  
We had to act.”

The Devil’s Charity doesn’t need to be actively swinging today to keep killing you.

It killed my credit.  
It killed my property.  
It killed my business.  
It killed one man outright and left me walking with a death wish I had to fight every day.

And it still kills me, slowly, whenever a new decision-maker sees only the wreckage and never the county that lit the match.

## **7. Why This Case Had to Be First**

I put Friendly County at the front of this book for a reason.

It's not the only system that nearly killed me.

But it was the first to:

- Wrap harm in the optics of safety.
- Pretend structural neglect was patience.
- Use other agencies as moral cover for retaliatory moves.
- Treat me as less than human while insisting they were "protecting the public."

This is the template.

Once you see it here, you'll see the same pattern in:

- The city that stripped all uses from our next building in the name of "code."
- The employers who fired us while preaching "values."
- The church that delayed food in the name of "God's timing."
- The courts that blocked access to justice while claiming to protect "judicial resources."

Friendly County is where the modern hunt began in my life.

Next up is Case File B: the attorney who took that county's story, wrapped himself in the robe of the court, and turned "safety" into a weapon sharp enough to cut through due process itself.

Because the Devil's Charity isn't just local.

It has friends in higher places.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Case File B – The Emergency That Wasn’t**

In the last chapter I talked about “the County” as a faceless thing: the ordinance, the zoning office, the permitting maze, the policy.

But systems don’t move on their own.

Someone has to pick up the file, sharpen the knife, and decide how hard to swing.

In my story, that someone was the County’s in-house lawyer.

For this book, I’m going to call him Counselor Slate.

Not his real name.

Very real impact.

### **The Man With the Red Stamp**

Every system has a person whose job is to say:

“Looks legal to me.”

They don’t swing the hammer, they don’t kick anyone out personally, they don’t drag families into the rain. They sit behind a desk, pick up a pen, and decide which procedures can be “flexed” for the greater good.

Counselor Slate was that man in my story.

On paper, his job was to protect County A from liability:

- make sure procedures are followed,
- make sure people get notice,
- make sure emergency powers aren’t abused.

In practice, I allege he did the opposite.

He took an old, unrelated lawsuit about a U-Haul dispute from years earlier

and quietly amended it into an “emergency” weapon aimed at my hostel and the people living there.

He did it in a way that:

- bypassed the normal lower court,
- bypassed proper service and notice,
- and dropped an “urgent” hearing on my head with about two days to prepare.

All under the optics of safety.

That’s the Devil’s Charity right there:

- take a tool that’s supposed to protect people,
- and use it to bulldoze the very protections it was built on.

Call it “help.”

Call it “public safety.”

Hope nobody looks too closely at the process.

## **How to Manufacture an Emergency**

Here’s what an actual emergency looks like in law:

- imminent danger to life or safety,
- no time for normal procedure,
- temporary action, narrowly tailored,
- then a full hearing with proper notice.

What happened in my case was not that.

Instead, here’s what I allege happened:

1. There was an old complaint on file about U-Haul issues from 2018. Showing that the county was once quick to enforce and sue... yet somehow allowed the hostel to operate openly for two years. But that case had nothing to do with the later hostel use or the people living there.

2. When County A wanted the hostel shut down fast, Counselor Slate reached back into that old file and amended it to include my current operations.
3. By stapling the “hostel emergency” to an already-open case, he could skip the normal starting line:
  - no fresh service,
  - no clean chance to respond,
  - just a sprint to an “emergency injunction” in a higher court.
4. He framed it as an urgent matter of safety:
  - children in the building,
  - fire risks,
  - scary words like “life safety” and “hazard.”

The way he so casually tried to explain to the judge how this was an open and shut case and how people should just be shoved out of their home during covid with no warning still astonishes me today.

On paper, you’d think they’d just uncovered a death trap.

In reality, the “emergency” was a legal shortcut:

- a way to bypass due process,
- a way to get a judge to sign off quickly,
- a way to shut me down before I could mount any kind of defense.

That’s why in my complaint I call it fraudulent misuse of legal process.

Not just “Oops, we filled out the wrong form.”

Deliberate.

Layered.

Calculated.

How the judge allowed this to start to begin with still blows my mind. But that’s the thing about the system, they don’t have to enforce your rights and they aren’t held accountable for when a violation of your rights destroys your life. So the legal system has less to do with justice and more to do with what people can get away with against the uneducated and vulnerable public.

## **The Safety Story vs. the Human Reality**

Here's what the safety story looked like from far away:

- Brave County lawyer rushes into court.
- Children are in danger in a “non-compliant” building.
- The County must act now to protect them.
- An emergency injunction is necessary to uphold the law.

If you're a judge flooded with cases, that sounds compelling.

You see:

- County A on one side,
- An “unsafe” hostel on the other,
- And a lawyer insisting time is of the essence.

You don't see:

- years of mixed messages from County A,
- structural failures and absent inspections on their end,
- my attempts to comply,
- or the real people living there with nowhere else to go.

You see optics.

That's the Devil's Charity again:

- hang a “Safety First” banner over the door,
- and nobody asks if the door opens onto a cliff.

## **The Day the System Turned the Knife**

After Slate's maneuvering, the court declared that the hostel use could no longer continue.

Residents came and begged not to be turned out—some facing homelessness if the building closed. The judge ultimately said there was nothing he could do and shut down the use anyway.

He had already found enough power to:

- accept an amended complaint stapled onto an old file,
- bless an emergency path that bypassed due process,
- and effectively give County A what it wanted.

But when real people stood before him and asked:

“Who has the power to help us?”

He had no answer.

That’s the twisted genius of the move:

- Maximum authority when it comes to shutting things down.
- Minimum responsibility when it comes to protecting the people affected.

County A gets a win.

The court looks “neutral.”

The families lose everything.

And the one who engineered the whole path—Counselor Slate—disappears back behind the paper.

## **CPS, Condemnation, and a Manufactured Crisis**

Remember how it was all about safety?

After the emergency injunction was denied, child protection investigators and police still arrived and forced a family with children out of the building. They reportedly told residents and employees that the building had been condemned—even though it hadn’t been.

From Texas, I tried to manage the chaos:

- Investigators required every storage unit on the property to be opened in a torrential downpour, as if we were hiding children inside metal boxes. (I’m still horrified by this detail.)

- They offered the family two nights in a hotel and then a homeless shelter where the father would be separated from his wife and kids.

So, I did what I always seem to do in these stories:

- I canceled thousands in bookings that we desperately needed.
- I moved the family into a small compliant apartment across the street.
- I ate the loss.

That decision, layered on top of everything else County A had done, helped push us over the edge:

- I couldn't keep up with my own rent anymore.
- My family of five ended up housing insecure.
- We were dependent on church rent assistance for a year. (I fully acknowledge that the church with our Roanoke Bishop saved my life that year.)

County A got to say:

“We protected children.”

The investigators got to say:

“We acted out of an abundance of caution.”

The court got to say:

“Our hands were tied.”

Counselor Slate got to say:

“I just followed the law.”

And my family got:

- bankruptcy,
- homelessness risk,
- a reputation as the problem.

That's the Devil's Charity in full:

Everyone in power gets to feel righteous.

The people on the receiving end get destroyed.

### **The Collateral Body Count: Shawn Weaver**

If this were just about me, it would be bad enough.

But I'm not the only one the emergency-that-wasn't helped kill.

Shawn Weaver was a former employee and friend who lived and worked on the property. When County A's actions bankrupted the business and stripped my ability to house people, Shawn Weaver lost both his job and his home in one sweep.

He was on parole.

Try staying compliant with parole when:

- you suddenly have no income,
- no stable address,
- and no margin for error.

The County's decisions triggered a cascade:

- Shawn Weaver falls out of compliance,
- gets dragged back into the system,
- and ends up on a fatal path he doesn't escape.

Meanwhile:

- I'm scrambling to keep one displaced family out of a shelter,
- while watching the broader circle of people who depended on that property lose their lifelines.

So when I say Counselor Slate "nearly killed me," I don't just mean emotionally.

I mean:

- the decisions he signed off on directly helped destroy the economic engine that kept a fragile circle of people alive,
- one of those people is now literally dead,

- and my own family has been shoved to the brink over and over again.

He didn't swing the baton or strap anyone to a gurney.

He just edited a caption, re-used an old case, and called it safety.

That's enough.

### **Why This Belongs in a Book About Being Slowly Killed**

You might be asking:

“Isn't this just how the system works?  
Aren't emergency powers and legal shortcuts sometimes necessary?”

Sure.

Sometimes emergency tools are necessary.

But here's the pattern I need you to see:

1. Emergency powers are supposed to be narrow.  
In my story, they became a fast lane to crush a small operator who was already begging for guidance.
2. Safety optics are supposed to protect real people.  
In my story, they became a shield for bypassing process, then a story the County could hide behind when those same people ended up homeless or dead.
3. Legal counsel is supposed to ensure fairness.  
In my story, the lawyer for the government became—allegedly—the architect of the unfairness itself.

When you zoom out, it looks like this:

- A County that refuses to give clear business rules.
- A County that selectively enforces when it wants control.
- A County lawyer who finds a clever way to make all of that look like urgent, righteous safety work.

And then there's me:

- stripped of property,
- stripped of income,
- housing insecure with three little kids,
- watching a former employee die in the ripples of a decision I didn't make.

That's why this chapter belongs here.

Because when you stack this on top of everything else in this book:

- the family betrayals,
- the employment hits,
- the federal job loss,
- the church delays,
- the landlords,
- the judges—

you start to see that the Devil's Charity doesn't just run in one institution.

It sits in the seams:

- between law and optics,
- between "emergency" and "expediency,"
- between what we call safety and what actually keeps people alive.

Counselor Slate will likely never see himself as a villain in my story.

He'll see a man who did his job, protected the County, and used the tools available.

But from where I'm standing, hanging on by a thread, he's one of the people who helped load the weight.

And if I end up dead early—from stress, from a breakdown, from the slow grind of being stripped and blamed and cornered—this chapter is one of the receipts.

Not because he wanted me dead.

Because the system rewarded him more for speed and optics than for fairness and mercy.

That's the emergency that wasn't.

And it almost killed me.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Case File C – The City That Finished the Job**

If County A lit the fuse, City C was the hand that calmly walked over, picked up the burning charge, and dropped it into whatever was left of my life.

This chapter is designed to be a sort of bookend of harm. Later chapters will go back in time between this event and County A's actions to show you all of the harm in between.

By the time we got to City C, we were already limping:

- The rural project was gone.
- Bankruptcy had stripped away everything that could be stripped.
- We had three kids, a new baby, and a trauma history with that region that made my skin crawl every time we drove past certain exits.
- All of the trauma in between that will be discussed later.

The move back wasn't a fresh start.

It was a forced return to the scene of the crime.

And City C—under the banner of codes, safety, and “appropriate use”—took what might have been a stabilizing home and turned it into a financial sinkhole that finally snapped the line we'd been hanging by.

### **1. The House That Was Supposed to Save Us**

On paper, the property in City C looked like salvation.

I'll call it The River House.

The pitch was simple:

- A fully paid-off building instead of rent.
- A chance to run a small hostel / rooming operation to keep us afloat.
- A way to “start over” close to family, with at least one solid asset under us.

From the outside, it looked like:

“See? Your family helped you. The system came through. You’ve got a roof and an opportunity. Time to stop complaining.”

From the inside, it felt like this:

They burned one house down with County A,  
forced us to move back into the blast zone,  
handed us a second house with strings and conditions,  
then stood back and watched as the city quietly soaked it in gasoline.

The River House was a commercial property with history:

- It had been used as lodging in different forms.
- The building physically worked.
- We weren’t trying to sneak anything through—we were trying to operate openly and legally.

But just like in County A, we stepped into a system that already had a story it wanted to tell about people like us.

We just didn’t know it yet.

## **2. Smiles at the Counter, Knives in the File**

City C didn’t start with sirens or condemnations.

It started with meetings.

We sat across from officials I’ll call:

- Planner M – the zoning gatekeeper.
- Inspector G – the man with the clipboard for physical conditions.
- Fire Official F – the “life safety” voice.

They spoke the language I’d heard a dozen times before:

“We just want to make sure it’s safe.”

“We’re here to help you get into compliance.”

“We’re trying to work with you, not against you.”

It was the same gentle tone:

- helpful,
- collaborative,
- “we’re all on the same team.”

If you’ve never been on the wrong end of that tone, it can sound comforting.

If you have, you start to hear the subtext:

“We are the ones with definitions.  
You are the one who will be defined.”

City C, like County A, had years to act if they believed the River House’s prior uses were wrong or dangerous.

They didn’t.

The building had a past, a record, a way of functioning. They knew that it had been operating as housing.

But when we tried to step into it as a family scraping to recover, suddenly everything about it was a problem.

Uses that had existed before became “nonconforming.”  
Configurations that had been fine for others became “unacceptable risks.”  
Every square foot was now a potential lever.

All in the name of safety.

### **3. Stripping the Uses – How to Kill a Building Without Touching a Brick**

The most effective way to kill a property isn’t to bulldoze it.

It’s to strip its uses.

That’s what City C did.

Piece by piece:

- They denied or revoked the ability to use it as lodging in any practical sense.

- They tightened interpretations of code.
- They reclassified things that once passed as “grandfathered” or acceptable.
- They dangled possible paths forward—architects, upgrades, expensive changes—knowing full well we didn’t have the money to chase all of them.

They know that stripping all uses is illegal. But the people they target and do this to generally don’t have the resources to fight it. So, they get away with it and they will deny and deflect to avoid any accountability and to maintain credibility and power.

On paper, it looks like:

“The City simply enforced its codes and standards.  
The owner chose not to bring the building into compliance.  
The market then determined the property’s value.”

In real life, here’s what that meant:

- A building once worth close to its tax value was functionally reduced to land value only.
- The furnishing, the potential, the prior use history—all of it was wiped out by the stroke of a pen.
- When the smoke cleared, the River House sold at a fire-sale price that reflected only what you could do with a patch of dirt, not a functioning lodging space.

City C didn’t have to say, “We destroyed this family’s last shot at stability.”

They could say:

“We protected the community.  
We ensured proper use.  
We upheld safety.”

That’s the Devil’s Charity writ small:

- Call it “upholding standards.”
- Let the market take the blame.
- Never mention the family that lost their footing entirely in the process.

#### **4. The Optics of “We Were Trying to Help”**

Like County A, City C never said:

“We targeted you.”

If anyone in that office ever tells this story, I imagine it going like this:

“We tried to work with that owner. We really did.

We gave options. We explained the codes.

We can’t just bend the rules because someone had a rough time elsewhere.

At some point, if they won’t or can’t comply, we have to protect the public.”

That sounds reasonable.

It always sounds reasonable.

You don’t hear:

- The way the standards are flexed for some and rigidly applied to others.
- The way “options” are offered that are financially impossible, just to say they were offered.
- The way “public protection” becomes the phrase that ends every conversation about human fallout.

There was no line in any City C memorandum that said:

“We understand this family has already lost one property to government overreach. We understand they were effectively forced to relocate here. We understand this building is their last real asset. We understand that by stripping its uses, we may be pushing them toward collapse.”

They don’t write that part down.

They write:

“Owner did not bring property into compliance.

Uses removed. We will argue every technicality to make sure our verdict sticks.”

## **5. The Second Burning**

I’ve said this before, but it belongs in this chapter:

Losing the River House felt like having the house burned down twice.

First, County A.

Then City C.

In both cases:

- Local government reached in under the banner of safety.
- My business or property became the example.
- The actual human beings living inside the blast radius were treated as an unfortunate side note.

Worse:

- The people around us—extended family, acquaintances, even some neighbors—absorbed the official story faster than ours.

They didn't see:

“This is the second time in two years that a combination of local government and ‘helpers’ have obliterated this family’s foundation.”

They saw:

“Wow. Another property gone.

At some point, you have to look at the common denominator.”

The Devil’s Charity loves a second burning.

The first can be written off as bad luck or a tragic misunderstanding.

The second is where it gets its real power:

- That’s where your credibility starts to evaporate.
- That’s where people quietly step back.
- That’s where you start to feel radioactive.

Not because of what happened to you.

Because of what the system has already decided about you.

The end result is that your house is burned down two years in a row while everyone around you quietly absolves themselves of responsibility and blames you for the tragedy.

## 6. What the City Didn't Have to See

City C didn't have to see what their decisions did next.

They didn't have to see:

- My wife trying to hold a career together as the ground under us shifted again.
- The way we had to use the small proceeds from the forced sale just to stay afloat.
- The fact that a huge chunk of that money went to pay a lawyer to pursue a whistleblower case at a consulting firm that later got tossed on a jurisdiction technicality.
- The way each “legally correct” decision rippled out into shredded credit, shredded trust, shredded health.

All City C had to see was:

- Their own file.
- Their own codes.
- Their own narrative of public stewardship.

They could walk past that building for years afterward and tell themselves:

“We did the right thing.

If someone lost money, that's unfortunate, but our obligation is to the public, not to any one investor or tenant.”

Meanwhile, in my body:

- The stress, the shame, the fear—they don't live in the file.
- They live in my chest, my gut, my disrupted sleep, my kids' nervous systems.

You know what's really wild?

If I had finally snapped after losing the River House—had a full breakdown, a hospitalization, a violent outburst—they would never have connected the dots:

“We took someone who had already been professionally and financially gutted, removed their last stabilizing asset, and then watched them collapse.”

They would say:

“We had a difficult man in our city, and eventually he proved how unstable he really was.”

They would feel vindicated.

That's the Devil's Charity's favorite trick:

- Push someone to the brink.
- Watch them lose balance.
- Hold up the wobble as proof they were dangerous all along.

## **7. How City C Is Still Killing Me Today**

So how is this cut still bleeding?

Here's the short version:

- The equity that might have given us a down payment, a buffer, or seed money for a different life?  
Gone in a fire sale.
- The sale price didn't reflect what the building had been or what it could have been. It reflected what City C's restrictions allowed it to be:  
effectively a piece of raw land with a cursed structure on top.
- A huge portion of the money that did come through went to lawyers and survival, not growth. It was triage.
- Every future landlord, employer, or official who looks at our history now doesn't see:  
"This family fought two municipal overreaches and survived."  
They see:  
"Multiple failed ventures. Multiple moves. Multiple conflicts."

City C doesn't see the way their choices still live in my house today:

- in the way we count every dollar,
- in the way we think about risk,
- in the way any new opportunity is haunted by the question:  
"What happens when someone with a badge decides they don't like this?"

They don't see that their part in the story is one of the reasons my wife is now trying to build something from scratch instead of advancing in a stable job; one of the reasons I'm writing this book instead of managing properties; one of the reasons "institutionalization" no longer feels like an abstract risk but an eventual outcome if this pattern doesn't break.

The city gets to keep its self-image:

Responsible.

Safety-conscious.

By-the-book.

I get to tally the cost every month when the bills come due.

## **8. Why This Case Comes Before the Family Chapter**

You might expect the chapter about my family to come first.

But I wanted you to see this:

- County A + City C form the outer walls of the maze.
- Inside those walls, families, employers, churches, and courts all make their decisions.

When my extended family shifted from “We’ll help you” to “We need to protect ourselves,” they were doing it in a context shaped by:

- a County’s safety narrative,
- a City’s code narrative,
- and a culture that always, always tilts toward trusting institutions over individuals who are visibly struggling.

So before I tell you how The Trust Family nearly killed me in the name of responsibility and stewardship, I needed you to see this:

By the time they withdrew, it was from a man who had already been lit on fire twice by his own local governments.

The smoke they smelled was real.

They just misread where it was coming from.

Next, we’ll move into Case File D – The Trust Family, where “help” came with strings, conditions, and a narrative that put me on trial in my own bloodline long before any judge saw my name on a docket.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Case File D – The Trust Family**

By now you’ve seen the outer walls:

- County A lighting the fuse.
- Counselor Slate using “emergency” to bypass due process.
- City C finishing off the last workable asset in the name of “safety.”

But none of that happened in a vacuum.

This chapter acts as an overview of my family system and the interactions. Later chapters will touch on more details and different events.

When the government is done with you, the story moves into living rooms, group texts, wills, and trust documents. It moves into the people who believe they know you best.

This chapter is about The Trust Family—on all sides:

- The stepfather who consolidated my mother’s stability and called it stewardship.
- The relative who sat on my inheritance “for my own good.”
- The sibling and in-law who “rescued” me by taking everything.
- The grandmother and aunts who tightened control, absorbed value from my mother’s estate, and quietly locked me out of her final chapters.
- And the simple fact that my wife had almost no real scaffolding from her parents while all of this unfolded.

No names.

Just patterns and choices.

You can decide whether this was “help.”

### **1. Structural Orphaning: How the Ground Was Cut Out**

My biological father died when I was four in a family car accident that nearly killed me.

Years later, my mother remarried. My stepfather built a successful business and, for a while, we looked like a solid middle-class Mormon family with a promising future.

Then my mother got sick.

An autoimmune disease slowly ate away at her body while a certain religious culture kept telling us:

- if we just had more faith,
- if we just tried one more treatment,
- if we just followed one more impression...

God would fix it.

He didn't.

When she died, my stepfather did what looked responsible from the outside: he kept the house, consolidated accounts, and made sure everything was "in order."

Later, when he sold his company for a life-changing sum, he cut my sibling and me each a small share—enough that, on paper, it looked generous. Enough that extended family could say:

"They were taken care of. He did right by them."

It was just enough money to be visible.

Not enough to replace the loss of two parents, or to provide real long-term security.

What it did do was:

- give everyone a clean conscience,
- shift the assumption that "Riley's fine; he got his,"
- and erase any felt obligation to examine how much my mother's stability had been absorbed when she died.

In other words:

I got a slice that looked big in a family conversation and small in comparison to what had been consolidated.

That's the original family-scale Devil's Charity move in my life:

- Stewardship framed as generosity.
- Consolidation framed as care.

- A gesture big enough to look like provision, small enough to leave me structurally exposed.

But we were fundamentally disenfranchised from the family, with no parents to take on future weight as my stepfather structurally distanced himself from any responsibility to me and my siblings over time.

## **2. Capital Without Scaffolding**

When my biological father's estate was finally settled, he left enough money to buy several modest properties outright.

That inheritance is how we were able to:

- move from Utah to Roanoke,
- purchase the projects that County A and City C would later target,
- and attempt to build a small portfolio and a future.

We moved to Roanoke on purpose—to be near my wife's family, assuming that if we built something stable there, we would have a real support system around us.

What we had, in reality, was:

- capital with no scaffolding:  
money to buy properties, but no one willing to share the real risk if the government came for them;
- no parental safety net on my side:  
my father dead, my mother dead, my stepfather distant and in control of what remained;
- almost no parental safety net on my wife's side:  
a divorced father she was estranged from, and a mother with a serious heart condition on a fixed income.

The money bought buildings.

It did not buy:

- backup housing if those buildings were stripped of use,
- childcare when my wife's body broke down,
- a stipend to cover bills while the courts dragged things out,
- or a family shield when governments and employers turned predatory.

From the outside, the headline was simple:

“They had an inheritance. They bought properties.  
If they failed, it’s because they mismanaged it.”

On the inside, the truth was this:

We had fuel, no firebreaks,  
and no one behind us if the wind changed.

That’s the Devil’s Charity setup:  
enough visible wealth to justify stepping back, no real structural support when it actually counts.

### **3. My Wife’s Invisible Load**

My wife did not enter this story with a cushioned background either.

Her parents were divorced.  
She was estranged from her father.  
Her mother’s heart condition meant she could barely manage her own life, let alone come live with us for weeks at a time.

So while we were:

- trying to build and run those properties,
- navigating five difficult pregnancies and two miscarriages,
- and raising a house full of small children,

we did it with:

- no healthy grandmother moving in for months,
- no “let the kids stay with us this summer while you recover,”
- no one writing a check big enough to buy us time or stability.

It was just us, in a house of cards built on:

- orphaned capital,
- fragile bodies,
- and the naive assumption that proximity to family equals support.

When my extended family later told themselves the story:

“They just lived beyond their means.  
She’s a bit of a princess.  
They probably ate out too much.”

What they didn’t see was:

- my wife trying to stay pregnant and alive with almost no backup,
- me trying to be a full-time provider and a caregiver and a developer and a defendant,
- both of us doing this without a net, because the people who could have formed one were busy believing their earlier gestures had “done enough.”

That’s the context where the rest of this chapter happens.

#### **4. The Protector Who Sat on My Inheritance**

On top of all that, there was The Protector—a male relative on my father’s side who became gatekeeper over another slice of inheritance.

This was money from my grandfather’s estate, earmarked as my share.

Not a hypothetical gift.

Not a “maybe someday.”

A concrete portion that existed and could have been transferred.

He kept it under his control.

The story he told himself and others was:

“He’s not ready. I’m protecting him from himself.”

Instead of releasing the funds when:

- County A’s actions had destroyed my income,
- I was trying to rebuild under extreme stress,
- my family needed a stabilizing cushion,

he:

- held the money,

- loaned me fragments of it at interest,
- spoke about it as if it were his resource to manage.

When I objected, the line was always some version of:

“Inheritance is never guaranteed.”

In a philosophical sense, sure.

In this actual context, it was a dodge.

The estate had been divided.

My share existed.

What “wasn’t guaranteed” was his willingness to let go.

The result was simple and brutal:

- The safety net was there on paper.
- It was not there in practice.
- When I hit the ground, it did not catch me.

From the outside, people saw:

“He had a lot of chances.

He just couldn’t pull it off.”

From the inside, the truth was:

Someone kept my parachute in their own closet,  
and called it love.

That’s Devil’s Charity again:

- harm framed as protection,
- control framed as care,
- withholding framed as wisdom.

## **5. The Five “Rescue” Options With No Way Out**

Then there were The Rescuers—my sibling and their spouse.

By the time they stepped in:

- County A had already detonated the first project,
- The Protector was still sitting on my inheritance,
- my wife and I were caring for small kids in the middle of pregnancies and miscarriages,
- and my mental health was at the edge.

They wrote a formal letter outlining five options to “help” us deal with a collapsing project and its attached property.

On paper, it probably reads like sacrificial love:

“We’re willing to step in.  
We’ve thought through several possibilities.  
We want to keep you from losing everything.”

But if you map the structure, every option converged on the same two outcomes:

1. I kept the project—on terms that were financially impossible and would almost certainly lead to failure (and blame), or
2. They took it over completely—gaining control, potential upside, and narrative authority.

There was no path where:

- risk was truly shared,
- my family’s survival came first,
- my autonomy remained intact.

By the time that letter arrived, I wasn’t negotiating from strength. I was bargaining from fear and exhaustion.

Devil’s Charity loves that state.

Because then, when you sign, it looks like consent instead of collapse.

I signed.

I handed over the business and property on terms designed in their living room, from their vantage point of stability.

They stepped into the role of owners and saviors.

Later, when the numbers didn't meet their expectations, the conversation inside the family turned into:

"We took a hit trying to save him."

The structural pieces that never made it into that summary were:

- the withheld inheritance,
- the government sabotage,
- the pressure of my wife's health,
- and the fact that these "choices" were offered to someone already on the brink.

## **6. The Letter That Turned Me Into The Problem**

Once the ink was dry, The Rescuers did the most effective optics move in the family toolbox:

They wrote The Letter to extended family.

It laid out, in confident detail:

- how overextended we supposedly were,
- how emotional and unstable we had been,
- how they bravely stepped in to shoulder risk,
- how much they were now carrying because of us.

There was no serious mention of:

- County A and City C's misconduct,
- the Protector's long-term withholding,
- the early consolidation on my mother's side,
- the psychological state I was in when the "options" were offered,
- what my wife's body and mind were going through.

The story it gave everyone else was clean:

"They made bad choices.

We tried everything.

You can't help someone who won't be helped."

After that, my role inside the family system was basically fixed:

- the unstable one,
- the overspender,
- the one who “had so much and blew it,”
- the one everyone had tried to save

They didn’t have to campaign against me after that.

The structure—backed by that letter—did it for them.

Every later crisis, lawsuit, or conflict slotted neatly into the narrative:

“There he goes again.”

That’s a textbook Devil’s Charity move:

- you do something self-protective that looks like care,
- you tell the story early and loudly,
- and then silence does the rest.

## **7. The Maternal Gate: House, Control, and a Funeral I Never Saw**

On my mother’s side, the pattern showed up with a different symbol:  
my grandmother’s house.

Years before any of this came to a head:

- The house and its gravity had already been shifted toward certain daughters.
- My mother’s branch—through her, then through me—was already quietly diminished.
- When my mother died, value that could have formed part of my foundation instead flowed back into my grandmother’s structure.

By the time my life with the Roanoke and City C properties was unraveling, that groundwork was already in place.

I didn’t go back to Utah planning to attend my grandfather’s funeral. I went because:

- things at home were unstable,
- my marriage was strained,
- I needed space and some version of “home.”

While I was there:

- my grandfather declined and died,
- my grandmother was grieving,
- I was already emotionally shredded.

I talked with her about what was happening:

- the collapsing property,
- the trust issues,
- how cornered we were.

In that fog, I floated an idea:

“Maybe we could sell the collapsing property,  
move in with you for a season,  
and I could eventually buy this house from the estate.  
We both land softer.”

In my head, it was a desperate attempt at a humane solution.

To my aunts, it landed like a threat.

They saw:

- a grandson in crisis,
- sniffing around the one asset they already considered theirs,
- in a moment when they wanted nothing disturbed.

They closed ranks:

- I felt unwelcome and left early.
- They increased physical and digital control around my grandmother.
- They framed it all as “protecting her” and “doing what’s best.”

Then, later:

I learned that my grandmother died from a public announcement.  
Not a phone call.  
Not an invitation.

Just a notification.

I was cut out of the last major ritual to say goodbye to the woman whose name I carry in my heart when I talk about my mother's line.

And again, I'm sure the internal story was soothing:

"He was unstable.  
It would have been too hard.  
We had to protect the peace."

They didn't have to say, "We don't want him there."

They just had to not pick up the phone.

## **8. How All These Stories Fused Into One**

None of these acts happened in isolation:

- stepfather consolidation,
- orphaned capital,
- Protector withholding,
- Rescuers' five options and family letter,
- maternal gatekeeping,
- my wife's lack of a real net.

They all braided together.

From the outside, extended family and casual observers saw:

- a man who inherited enough to buy properties,
- a man who lost properties and went bankrupt,
- a man who moved states and kept ending up in court,
- a family that always seemed to be in crisis.

From some relatives, they heard:

"We helped him financially. He wasted it."

From others:

“We rescued him from his own decisions. It cost us.”

From others:

“He showed up at the worst possible time, stirred things up, then sent angry letters about money.”

Overlay that with:

- ignorance of County A and City C’s overreach,
- no awareness of my wife’s health history,
- zero understanding of what it takes to fight multiple systems pro se,

and the composite they settled on was:

“He’s overleveraged, dramatic, and can’t be helped.

She’s spoiled.

Everyone tried.

This is just who they are.”

That’s how the Devil’s Charity shows up in a family:

- one flashy gesture becomes the whole story,
- structural harm and quiet extractions go unspoken,
- the person collapsing under the accumulated weight becomes the diagnosis, not the warning.

## **9. What I Mean When I Say “My Family Nearly Killed Me”**

When I say my family nearly killed me, I don’t mean any of them sat down and plotted my death.

I mean:

- When they could have formed a net, they chose appearances instead.
- When they could have shared risk, they chose to secure their own position and call it prudence.
- When I broke under state abuse, structural orphaning, and sheer exhaustion, they told a story about my character and walked away clean.

They:

- called consolidation “stewardship,”
- called withholding “protection,”
- called coercive contracts “rescue,”
- called erasure “boundaries,”
- called their distance “wisdom.”

And then they said, sometimes out loud, sometimes just in their heads:

“We did everything we could.  
It’s tragic, but it isn’t our fault.”

That’s the Devil’s Charity at the blood level:

Help that harms.  
Care that cages.  
Boundaries that double as absolution.

If I die early—from stress, from accumulated damage, from a body that finally can’t hold it all—you will have two stories available:

- the old one:  
“He was always unstable. He just couldn’t be helped.”
- and this one:  
“He was structurally orphaned, carrying a sick wife and small children through systemic fire, while the people who could have shared the load chose optics over outcome.”

This chapter is here so the second story doesn’t get buried with me.

In the next chapter, we are going to step back for a moment and dive deeper into the County’s actions that lead to this fallout with family and the coercive arrangements they used to “help” me and protect themselves.

## Chapter Six

How the First Hostel Became a Trapdoor

(or, Why We Left, Why We Came Back, and Why Everyone Thought I Was Just Lazy)

By the time anyone from the outside looked in on our life and saw “a failed hostel and a guy who couldn’t keep a job,” the groundwork for that verdict had been laid for years.

Most people only saw the last frame:

- a family in bankruptcy,
- a River House in City C stripped of all uses and firesold,
- a move to another state that didn’t “stick,”
- and me, eventually back near County A, taking a corporate job that would also implode.

From that distance, the story is easy:

“He’s unstable.

He keeps trying stuff and it keeps blowing up.

He just doesn’t want a real job.”

This chapter is what sits under that lazy summary.

It’s the trapdoor.

### 1. The Hybrid That Was Never Allowed to Work

The County A property didn’t start as a hostel.

It started as a hybrid that actually made sense:

- truck-rental business on one side of the building,
- flea market on the other.

Two legs under one table:

- the truck-rental side would bring in stable, predictable income — people always need to move;

- the flea market would give local vendors cheap stalls and tap into that steady flow of traffic.

On top of that, County A did not require a business license.

That sounds friendly on paper:

- no bureaucratic gauntlet up front,
- no formal “this is what it means to be a commercial operator here,”
- no one saying, “Here’s where the real landmines are.”

We moved forward because:

- no one told us we were out of bounds,
- the county’s verbal guidance sounded like a green light,
- and we needed something that could actually carry a young family.

We signed the contracts.

We opened the truck-rental side.

We launched the flea market.

Then County A decided:

the truck-rental business had to go.

I pushed back — not as some rogue who just likes fighting, but because the code could reasonably be read in our favor and there was no clear, consistently applied standard that said we couldn’t be there.

When it became clear they weren’t going to budge, I agreed to shut it down.

But dismantling a truck-rental operation is not like flipping off a light:

- there were contracts,
- inventory,
- a national partner,
- people mid-move.

It takes time to wind down safely and responsibly.

County A didn’t wait.

They sued anyway, while I was in the middle of winding it down — the very thing I’d already told them I would do.

They didn’t shut down the flea market.

They killed the anchor and left the weaker half standing alone.

On paper, we still “had a business.”

In reality, they’d:

- chainsawed one leg off the table,
- left us wobbling on one,
- and then blamed the table when it started to crack.

That lawsuit would later sit on the books like a dormant landmine, ready to be repurposed against the hostel.

At the time, it just felt like a bad break.

## **2. The Storage Units That Froze Mid-Build**

Because County A didn’t require a business license and because we were trying to be smart, we weren’t just sitting on the hybrid as-is.

Part of the plan was storage units:

- small buildings under 256 square feet,
- serving both the flea market vendors and the truck-rental traffic,
- adding a third pillar of predictable rental income.

County A told us:

- any building under that size did not need a building permit,
- and we were told, verbally, that we could build as many as we wanted under that limit.

So we did exactly what we were told:

- designed a line of small units, each under the threshold,
- started construction,
- poured thousands of dollars into materials and work.

What no one bothered to tell us:

- commercial projects play by a different set of rules.
- Once your total square footage crosses a certain line, they suddenly want:
  - a full site plan,
  - and a stamped architect or engineer.

We only learned this after:

- the units were partially built,
- the money was sunk,
- and County A decided to pull the brake.

Because they had already sued us over the truck-rental business, the storage units got tangled in that same web:

- the project was halted,
- the units sat half-finished,
- that capital turned into dead weight.

To make it worse, the bank had issued a lump-sum loan, not a staged construction loan.

That meant:

- we were paying interest immediately,
- on money we could no longer deploy properly,
- every day of delay was cash out the door with nothing coming in.

And when I tried to salvage it:

- no architect wanted to step into a partially built project,
- in a county that had already shown it was willing to sue.

So we sat there with:

- a crippled hybrid business,
- part-built storage units,

- bleeding interest on a frozen project,
- and no clear path to completion.

All of this before Covid ever arrived.

### **3. The Casino Down the Road**

Then came the second structural hit.

About five miles away, a shiny new casino opened.

The optics:

- bright lights,
- packed parking lot,
- ribbon-cuttings and speeches about “economic development.”

On the ground, it meant:

- the same limited local dollars that might have circulated through small vendors and the flea market  
were now flowing into slot machines and tables,
- money was being sucked out of the community and into a centralized drain.

Our flea market, already standing on one leg without the truck-rental side and loaded with the weight of stalled storage units, now had to compete with that.

We weren’t running “a weak flea market.”

We were:

- standing on a sabotaged business model,
- in a local economy being quietly hollowed out,
- under a county that could change interpretation midstream and reach for the lawsuit lever whenever it liked.

The outcome was baked in.

The flea market limped; it didn’t thrive.

#### **4. The Covid Pivot: Building Shelter on a Minefield**

When Covid hit, the flea market model went from limping to nonsense.

No one wanted “bargain tables in a shared indoor space” anymore. People were scared. Vendors couldn’t justify the risk. Foot traffic evaporated.

At the same time:

- housing insecurity exploded,
- people were being evicted,
- traveling workers and nurses needed somewhere affordable and semi-stable to stay.

We looked at the building:

- big interior,
- bathrooms,
- infrastructure already there,
- stalls that could be re-imagined as rooms and bunks.

So we pivoted again.

We turned the County A building into a hostel:

- affordable beds for people who had nowhere stable to go,
- space for traveling workers and nurses,
- a way to keep the lights on and respond to the crisis at the same time.

Important detail:  
the hostel worked.

- Residents lived there without major incident.
- Reviews were good.
- There were no fires, no mass chaos, no horror-movie outcomes.

But structurally, it was built on:

- a hybrid never allowed to function properly,
- frozen storage-unit capital,
- a casino distorting the local economy,

- a lump-sum loan bleeding interest,
- a county that had already sued us once and left a dormant case sitting on the docket.

The hostel stabilized the building.

It did not stabilize our family.

## 5. The Circus Behind the Front Desk

From the outside, some relatives and observers later convinced themselves that we were:

“Trying to live off one hostel.

Of course it couldn’t support a family. That’s just bad planning.”

In reality, we never lived on the hostel alone.

Behind the scenes, my life looked like this:

- managing almost thirty short-term rentals across three properties we owned:
  - guest communication,
  - cleaning and turnovers,
  - maintenance,
  - dealing with platforms and reviews;
- running fix-and-flips:
  - buying distressed houses,
  - renovating them,
  - selling them to generate chunks of cash;
- doing all of that while:
  - my wife was in bed with a brutal third pregnancy, after two difficult ones and miscarriages,
  - we had small children who still needed hands-on parenting.

And when the kids were finally asleep and the last Airbnb guest’s crisis was resolved, I was:

- writing about my stepfather,
- dissecting narcissistic systems and spiritual abuse,
- slowly building the conceptual skeleton for what would become The Devil's Charity.

So while certain relatives were quietly characterizing me as:

“Unstable, overleveraged, lazy, can't hold a real job,”

the actual situation was:

- I was doing three jobs at once,
- in a district sabotaged by its own government,
- with almost no extended-family scaffolding on either side,
- while my wife's body and mind were constantly under siege.

The flips worked.

The rentals mostly worked.

The hostel helped people.

They just couldn't out-run the structural traps, the lawsuits, and the mounting pressure.

## **6. Looking for Stability Outside the Blast Zone**

We did what any sane person would do in that situation:

We looked for a way out.

The idea was simple:

- get out from under County A's jurisdiction,
- get out of the local economic gravity of the casino,
- find something boring and stable enough to carry us.

That led us to Sunbelt State.

We found a small, cash-flowing motel:

- nothing fancy,
- already operating,

- far away from the County A blast radius.

Plan:

1. Move to Sunbelt State.
2. A member of the Trust Family acts as lender.
3. We run the motel, stabilize, and finally get a clean slate.

It wasn't some flashy scheme.

It was intentionally boring.

Then a bank stepped in—not because the project was bad, but because they didn't like how my family-lender's finances looked on paper.

They quietly killed the deal.

No “fix X and come back.”

No shared problem-solving.

Just: No.

So again, we pivoted.

## **7. The Second Hostel, Split Focus, and the Long Shadow of County A**

We stayed in Sunbelt State.

With help from the same family branch, we purchased a commercial building and started converting it into another hostel:

- using all the painful experience we'd gained,
- trying to build far from County A,
- hoping that a new setting would finally let us breathe.

But the past wouldn't stay put.

While we were:

- designing and building the Sunbelt hostel,
- trying to get it ready for guests,

we were still tied to County A and City C:

- the first hostel’s legal and financial fallout was still ongoing,
- the County A case and its ripple effects made every decision heavier,
- energy, money, and attention were constantly split between defending what was and building what might be.

Eventually, County A and its allies pulled their final levers:

- used “safety” language as cover,
- reached back to that old truck-rental lawsuit,
- and shut down the County A hostel entirely.

The bankruptcy that followed didn’t just strip the County A property.

It pulled in everything it could reach, including the River House in City C.

The River House ended up:

- technically still ours,
- legally trapped,
- sitting at the center of decisions made by people who never had to live in the mess.

That’s when The Trust Family moved in with their “help.”

## **8. The Five Options That Weren’t Choices**

Chapter Five lays out, in more detail, how the Trust Family designed a five-option “rescue” letter.

I won’t restate every line here.

What matters for this chapter is:

- every option was built on their comfort, their risk tolerance, and their narrative;

- every option either:
  - left me carrying an impossible level of burden under their supervision, or
  - required me to surrender control of the project and the upside;
- there was no authentic path where:
  - risk was shared proportionally,
  - our family's stability came first,
  - and my autonomy remained intact.

By the time those options were presented:

- County A had already detonated the first project,
- the casino had siphoned the local economy,
- the storage units were frozen,
- the hybrid model had been kneecapped,
- the Sunbelt motel had been killed in underwriting,
- the second hostel was mid-build under constant pressure,
- my mental health was fraying,
- my wife's body had been through repeated trauma,
- we had kids who still needed us to function.

I wasn't sitting there calm and clear-headed with endless time to evaluate.

I was exhausted and cornered.

That's exactly when Devil's Charity "choices" bite the hardest:

"We're not forcing you.  
We're just telling you the only responsible way forward."

On paper, I signed.

On the ground, it was consent under duress.

That's how I was leveraged out of the original hostel and its attached projects:

- not in a single dramatic grab,
- but through a staged process where:
  - earlier consolidation on my mother's side,
  - a gatekeeper sitting on inheritance,
  - county sabotage,

- economic shifts,
- and the weight of my own collapse

all converged into a moment where the Trust Family could say:

“We’re the ones saving this.

If he doesn’t like the terms, he can walk away and lose everything.”

They took the upside, wrapped it in the language of sacrifice, and let the wider family believe they were carrying my cross.

I walked away with:

- a shattered body of work,
- a family spinning from crisis to crisis,
- and a narrative pinned on my back that said:

“He just can’t make anything work.”

## **9. How the Narrative Turned Me Into the Problem**

After that, the story was simple inside the family system:

- I had inherited capital.
- I had multiple properties.
- I ended up bankrupt anyway.

Everything else — County A’s abuse, the casino, Covid, the hybrid sabotage, the storage-unit trap, Sunbelt false starts, the five-option leverage — got collapsed into:

“He makes bad choices and can’t stick with anything.”

Even my wife, who has fought with me through all of this, wasn’t immune to the pull of that narrative at times.

Not because she’s cruel.

Because:

- she was also drowning in pregnancies, miscarriages, job losses, and a collapsing system;
- she couldn't possibly hold all the moving parts in her head every second of every day;
- when every employer, judge, landlord, and relative you encounter quietly reinforces the same story about your husband, it sinks in.

The condemnation varied in intensity:

- sometimes it was open frustration,
- sometimes exhausted eye-rolling,
- sometimes quiet distance.

But it was consistent:

“Why can't you just hold down a normal job like other people?”

“Why does everything have to be so complicated?”

“Why are we always one step from collapse?”

From their vantage point, it looked like:

- one man,
- a string of “failed ventures,”
- and a growing trail of conflict.

From my vantage point, it was:

- a structurally orphaned kid turned adult,
- holding up more weight than most households ever see,
- in systems that quietly punished every attempt at autonomy,
- with no real net when those systems misfired.

Devil's Charity thrives on that disconnect:

- the more complexity it hides in the walls,
- the easier it is to point at the person collapsing in the middle of the room and say:

“See? That's the problem right there.”

## 10. Why We Came Back

So why, after everything County A had done, did we come back anywhere near that blast zone?

Because once:

- the first hostel was dead,
- the River House was trapped in the bankruptcy,
- the Trust Family had rewritten themselves as saviors,

the script from almost everyone — courts, culture, and family — sounded like this:

“If you really care about your family,  
if you really want to save that last property,  
you’ll come back,  
take a respectable corporate job here,  
and fix it the ‘right’ way.”

“Right” meaning:

- their map of respectability,
- their comfort with risk,
- their concept of a “real job.”

Not:

- the flips I was actually good at,
- a safer project in a different jurisdiction,
- a structure that would finally acknowledge what County A had already done.

That’s the trapdoor:

- you get sabotaged,
- you get leveraged,
- you get narratively branded as the problem,
- and then the only path offered back to “legitimacy” is through the very territory that burned you down.

That’s where the next case file picks up:

A glossy foundation-repair empire,

a manager who knew exactly how to twist the knife,  
and a corporation that looked like salvation from the outside...

while quietly tightening the noose.

That's Chapter Seven.

## Chapter Seven

How a “Dream Job” Weaponized My Breakdown  
(or, What It Means to Get Feasted)

By the time FoundationCorp G called, we were already in motion.

We hadn’t left Sunbelt State because we wanted to.  
We left because the ground underneath us kept getting rearranged by people and systems who never had to live with the fallout.

Keep in mind by this point we had

- Been forced into bankruptcy by the county.
- Been forced back into the blast zone by a helpful family and given up our hostel in the Sunbelt State.

In a sane world, here’s what would have happened:

- We’d have finished the new hostel in Sunbelt State.
- We’d have been given enough breathing room to stabilize it.
- We’d have been allowed to pull the River House in City C out of the bankruptcy fire sale, sell it cleanly, and move on.

We would have stayed put, far from County A’s reach.

Instead, the structure said:

“If you want to save that last building,  
if you want to be taken seriously,  
you’ll come back here,  
take a respectable job with a big company,  
and fix it the ‘right’ way.”

There was no category, in that world, for:

“The system is the problem.”

There was only:

“He needs to stop all this entrepreneurial nonsense  
and work for someone else like a grown-up.”

My brother and his wife had already taken control of the upside on the Sunbelt hostel project. They poured hundreds of thousands of additional dollars into it after pushing us out. When it didn't deliver what they wanted, they folded that into their martyr story:

“Look how much we lost trying to help.”

Every structural trap that led to those losses—County A's sabotage, the casino, the storage-unit disaster, the bankruptcy gravity well—was quietly assigned to my character instead of the conditions.

And then, right in the middle of that Sunbelt chapter, another piece slid into place.

## **1. The Recon Visit**

The same relative who'd been gatekeeping my inheritance from my father's side—let's call him The Protector Uncle—came down to visit us in Sunbelt State.

On paper, he was there to “help” my brother with a modest flip project:

- a small house,
- cosmetic rehab,
- simple math.

He controlled the money.  
My brother supplied the sweat and risk.  
It was pitched as mentorship.

By that point, I'd been doing fix-and-flips for years. I knew the numbers. I knew what a house could carry in that market. I walked the property, ran the math in my head, and told my brother, honestly:

“You can put more into this.  
It's still viable.  
It will support the additional investment.”

The Protector Uncle said:

“There is no more money.”

Not “let's look at the budget.”  
Not “here's why the numbers don't work.”

Just a closed door, presented as fact.

Why the Protector Uncle protected his optics by withholding and hiding the money, yet volunteering his time as a martyr to complete a portion of the home while calling my brother a failure.

My brother was forced to stop short, underfund the finish, and accept the verdict:

“Project failed. You overreached.”

Later, the story back home wasn’t:

“We starved the project and then blamed him.”

It was:

“We tried to help. He couldn’t make it work.”

The same pattern he’d used on me—  
holding the purse, deciding when the well was dry,  
then blaming the person down on the ground.

While he was there, he did something else quietly:

He watched us.

- What we ate.
- How often we grabbed takeout to survive another insane day.
- How exhausted my wife was.
- How frayed I was from juggling buildout, kids, and the long shadow of County A.

He took mental notes and wrote false narratives of why we were where we were and how we deserved it.

He didn’t sit us down and ask:

“What does a day in your life actually look like?  
How many plates are you spinning?  
How sick has your wife been?  
How much damage has the government done?”

He just observed, from a comfortable distance, and assembled his own story:

- “They eat out too much.”
- “She’s a princess.”

- “Bankruptcy is basically theft.”
- “I wouldn’t even rent to them.”

By the time he drive home, it wasn’t just a visit.

It was a recon mission.

He brought back a narrative that made everyone feel safer:

“They’re not crushed by systems.  
They’re just careless and entitled.”

Once that story was in circulation, it did two things:

1. It gave cover for all the earlier withholding and control:  
“See? This is why we had to be so careful with money.”
2. It pre-loaded the interpretation for everything that happened next:  
When FoundationCorp G eventually failed, it slotted perfectly into the script he’d already written:  
“Even with a big, respectable company, he couldn’t make it work.”

That’s Devil’s Charity at the family-opinion level:

- Help framed as supervision,
- surveillance framed as concern,
- and a snap judgment turned into permanent doctrine.

That’s the backdrop for the “dream job” chapter.

## **2. The Company That Sold Safety**

On paper, FoundationCorp G was exactly the sort of employer people in my position are supposed to be grateful for:

- fast-growing foundation-repair empire,
- glossy trucks and uniforms,
- ads about “protecting homes and families,”
- a promise that top reps made six figures.
- Love bomb new reps with shiny corporate training and experience

They didn't sell "helping entrepreneurs" or "creative risk."

They sold safety:

- fix your cracked foundation,
- stop the water in the basement,
- stabilize the house before it collapses.

The optics are perfect:

- You're not selling fear.
- You're "educating" homeowners about dangers.
- You're not extracting money from desperate people; you're "giving them peace of mind."

That's exactly how they pitched it to me:

"We help people.

We save homes.

Our reps earn more than most business owners, without the risk."

To my extended family, that was the golden ticket:

"Finally, a real job.

Regular pay.

Big company.

He can stop chasing projects and settle down."

To me, standing on the smoking remains of County A, City C, Sunbelt State, and the recon report my uncle had just carried home, it sounded like:

"If this works, I can save the River House,  
dignify the last of the mess,  
and prove I'm not the problem they say I am."

So we packed up. Even though I was hesitant and I never felt safe back in Roanoke.

We moved back toward County A's orbit.

We walked—again—into the blast radius, because the only "safe" path we were being offered lived there.

That's the first Devil's Charity move in this chapter:

- The company shows up framed as rescue,
- but the cost of the rescue is walking back into the same gravity that broke you.

### 3. The Training: How to Harvest Fear Without Calling It That

FoundationCorp G's training was slick.

We sat in a room with other new hires and they walked us through:

- how foundations fail,
- how water ruins everything,
- how small cracks become big cracks,
- how mold and shifting beams can “destroy a family’s biggest investment.”

They gave us scripts that sounded like concern:

- “I’d hate to see this get worse on you.”
- “If this were my house, I’d fix it.”
- “I know this is a lot of money, but imagine what happens if you wait.”

They never said:

“Here’s how to scare people just enough to sign a contract.”

They said:

“We’re educating them.

We’re giving them options.

It would be unethical not to show the full risk.”

They backed it up with:

- success stories,
- before-and-after photos,
- internal legends about reps who had “saved” families from catastrophic failures.

The commission structure did the rest:

- big payouts on big jobs,
- bonuses for hitting certain targets,
- public praise for high closers.

If you squinted, it looked like what I’d been trying to build on my own:

- visible value,
- clear service,
- good pay.

If you looked more closely, it was something else:

- a machine that turned fear into revenue,
- then framed the conversion as moral duty.

Inside the company, they had one more layer of optics armor:

the Philanthropy Shield.

Stories about:

- charity donations,
- community sponsorships,
- helping veterans, kids, or local causes.

The script was simple:

“Yes, we charge a lot.  
But look at how much we give back.”

If anyone critiqued the model, the shield was ready:

“We’re one of the good guys.”

That’s Devil’s Charity again:

- harm framed as help,
- extraction wrapped in generosity,
- a business that preys on fear while pointing to its donations as absolution.

#### **4. The Leads, the Targets, and the Quiet Throttle**

Sales at a company like this is supposed to work like an assembly line:

1. The marketing team floods the region with ads.
2. Homeowners call in.
3. Leads get distributed to reps.
4. Reps run appointments, present solutions, close deals.
5. Money flows, everyone gets paid.

The promise to us was:

“We will give you the leads.  
You just have to show up and work.”

I believed them.

We moved based on that promise.

We uprooted a family of five, with a new baby, into the orbit of a company that said:

“If you work hard, you’ll clear well over a hundred thousand a year.”

What they didn’t say out loud was this:

- leads are power,
- and power can be used as a tool of control.

When they want you to succeed, they can flood you with:

- high-quality leads,
- warm calls,
- homeowners already halfway to yes.

When they want you to struggle, they can starve you:

- bad territories,
- no-shows,
- old cold leads that should’ve been retired.

On the outside, no one sees that.

All they see is:

“Your numbers are down.”

And once your numbers are down, the story writes itself:

“Maybe you’re just not cut out for this.  
Maybe you’re not working as hard as you say.  
Maybe you’re making excuses.”

In my case, the throttle wasn’t random.

It synced up suspiciously well with the moment I finally admitted just how dark things had gotten internally.

## **5. The Confession They Turned Into a Weapon**

At some point in that job, I broke.

Not because I didn’t want to work.

Because:

- I was carrying the aftermath of County A and City C,
- the Sunbelt detour,
- the bankruptcy,
- the five-option “rescue” from the Trust Family,
- the recon verdict that we were “irresponsible,”
- the pressure to save the River House,
- the weight of three kids and a marriage under constant strain,
- and the quiet conviction that if this job didn’t work, we were out of moves.

On top of that, the leads started getting weird:

- appointments dropping,
- quality dropping,
- inconsistencies that didn’t match the original promises.

When you’re in that state and you start to slide, you don’t just lose income.

You lose your grip on yourself.

I did what we are all told to do in this era of “mental health awareness” and corporate “we care” campaigns:

I told the truth.

I told my manager that I was in trouble.

Not lazy. Not bored.

In trouble.

I used language that, if this were a sane society, would trigger actual support:

- suicidal ideation,
- feeling like I was drowning,
- needing real help, not just “believe in yourself” pep talks.

They responded the way these systems often do:

- meetings,
- HR language,
- “We’re concerned,”
- “We’re here for you,”
- “Take the time you need,”
- “We have resources.”

On the surface, it looked like care.

Underneath, something else was happening:

- my leads slowed even more,
- my schedule thinned,
- the path to hitting targets quietly evaporated.

It’s as if, the moment I admitted I was fragile, the system marked me as a liability and began gently escorting me toward the door.

All while saying the right things.

That’s Devil’s Charity at the corporate level:

“We’re so glad you spoke up about your mental health.

Also, we’ll now begin the process of making sure you don’t cost us anything.”

## 6. Getting Feasted

My direct manager — let's call him Manager F — was the kind of corporate man the Devil's Charity loves.

He knew how to:

- smile when he cut you,
- frame pressure as encouragement,
- translate company cruelty into “tough love.”

If you've ever had a boss like that, you know the vibe:

- They say “I'm just being honest” when they lean on you.
- They say “I'm in your corner” right before they pull the rug.
- They call manipulation “coaching” and abandonment “empowerment.”

Keep in mind that I was originally hired by a different manager, but he moved before I started and Manager F was moved from Florida because of personality conflicts with other staff down in that area.

At first, Manager F played the supportive role:

“We can get you back on track.”

“This is all fixable.”

“You've got to want it, but I believe in you.”

Then the tune shifted:

“You're not hitting your numbers.”

“I can't justify giving you more leads.”

“We all have stuff going on; you've got to find a way.”

He didn't say:

“I heard you say you're near the edge,  
and I'm going to make sure the ground drops out beneath you.”

He didn't have to.

All he had to do was:

- “follow policy,”
- “enforce accountability,”
- “protect the company.”

At the moment when I most needed a stabilizing hand — some form of “We see what you’re carrying; we’ll adjust your load while you get your footing” — I got the opposite:

- less opportunity,
- more pressure,
- and eventually, the door.

There’s a word I use for that now, for my own sanity:

Being Feasted.

It’s what happens when:

- someone in authority pretends to feed you,
- then quietly eats you instead.

If you’ve ever had your crisis used as the justification to cut you loose, you’ve been Feasted.

## **7. The Aftermath: Another Building Lost**

Leaving FoundationCorp G didn’t just mean:

- a bruised ego,
- a line on a résumé,
- a difficult few months.

It meant:

- the River House in City C slipped even further out of reach,
- the last plausible path to saving it under the narrative everyone demanded was gone,
- we were catapulted into yet another round of scrambling for survival.

While The Church of Good Intentions was keeping me alive in the background and covering rent. While I call them the Church of Good Intentions because of later incidents when we moved from Roanoke, I feel I must give credit where credit is due.

But the people watching from a distance did not say:

“A big company used his vulnerability against him.”

They said:

“See? Even with a real job at a big company,  
he couldn’t make it work.”

The recon story from Sunbelt State —  
that we ate out too much,  
that my wife was a princess,  
that bankruptcy was basically theft —  
blended perfectly with the new data point:

“He washed out of FoundationCorp G too.”

My brother and his spouse, still nursing their version of the story about losses on the Sunbelt hostel, could fold this into their martyr arc:

“We tried business with him.  
He lost us money.  
He couldn’t stick with the corporate job either.  
What more were we supposed to do?”

FoundationCorp G got to keep its image:

- the trucks,
- the charity campaigns,
- the “we care about mental health” messaging.

Manager F went on to coach other reps.  
The CEO went on to polish the brand.

We went on to:

- scramble rent,
- juggle late bills,
- absorb another blow to my credibility as a provider,

- figure out how to parent kids in a world where every safety rail had turned out to be decorative.

That's how the Devil's Charity kills:

- not with one mortal wound,
- but with a series of cuts that each look individually "defensible,"
- while the person at the center quietly bleeds out.

## 8. Why This Chapter Matters

You could read this chapter and say:

"Well, lots of people get fired.  
Lots of sales jobs are brutal.  
That's just business."

You'd be right — if you ripped this chapter out of the book and pretended it stood alone.

But it doesn't.

It sits on top of:

- County A's sabotage,
- City C's slow strip of stability,
- Sunbelt State false starts,
- the Trust Family's five-option leverage,
- the quiet withholding of inheritance,
- the recon verdict that we were reckless and entitled,
- and the narrative that cast me as a lazy, overleveraged failure before I ever walked into FoundationCorp G's lobby.

By the time Manager F was "just doing his job,"  
I was already carrying more than most people ever see.

This chapter matters because it shows:

- how a corporation that markets itself as a protector of homes can take a man already pushed to the edge by systemic failures, and use his honesty about that edge as the reason to cut him loose;
- how a “dream job” that promises safety and stability can actually become another step in a long, quiet killing;
- how easy it is to tell the story afterward as:

“He just couldn’t hack it.”

instead of:

“We built a system where the people who admit they’re drowning are the first ones we let sink.”

In the next chapter, we move to another player in this chain:

the consulting firm that claimed to protect small businesses from collapse, and the lawyer who was supposed to protect us from them...

and how both found their own ways to stand on the Devil’s Charity side of the line.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **The Whistleblower, the Mail Route, and the Lawyer Who Blinked**

By the time this chapter starts, you’ve already seen one version of how the Devil’s Charity works in corporate form:

- FoundationCorp G: the “we save homes” company that nearly killed me.
- A manager who Feasted me: used caring language to squeeze more performance out of a suicidal salesman, then cut the rope when I couldn’t carry the weight.

This next layer hits the other half of our household.

It’s about:

- my wife,
- a consulting firm I’ll call AnalyticsCorp,
- a trip back to my grandmother’s house,
- a “steady” job with the Postal Service,
- and a lawyer who promised a quick settlement and delivered a slow dead end.

None of this looks like violence from the outside.

From the outside, it looks like:

- “career moves,”
- “legal strategy,”
- “public service.”

From the inside, it felt like being ground down between gears.

#### **1. After FoundationCorp G: Then What?**

When FoundationCorp G fired me “for my own good,” we were already standing on:

- the wreckage of County A’s overreach,

- City C’s “safety” shutdown,
- a family system that had “rescued” me by taking control and then rewriting me as the problem.

Losing that job wasn’t just a professional setback.

It was:

- the collapse of the last “respectable” story anyone around us was willing to believe about me,
- more justification for the quiet family verdict: He just can’t hold down a real job.

There was no soft landing.

There was just a question:

“What now?”

## **2. Running to Grandma’s: The Old Instinct**

Before either of us landed another job, I did what a lot of burned-out adults do when the bottom drops out:

I ran home.

Not to my house—to my grandmother’s.

I drove west because:

- the air in our life felt unbreathable,
- my marriage was strained under pressures no one around us really understood,
- and some kid part of me still believed, “If I sit at Grandma’s table, maybe the world will make sense again.”

By then, though, that side of the family had its own long-running story about me:

- the inheritance,
- the lawsuits,
- the simplified version of “he never stabilizes.”

I tried to explain what had happened:

- County A,
- City C,
- the hostel,
- bankruptcy,
- the “dream job” at FoundationCorp G that turned into a trap.

Some of it landed.

Much of it got filtered through the same old lens:

“He’s always in crisis.  
He’s always got a story.”

I came back east not more supported—just more aware of how alone we really were.

### **3. The Only Work Left: Carry Their Mail**

Back home, the math was simple:

- I still looked radioactive on paper.
- No one was lining up to hire a guy with a trail of properties, lawsuits, and a recent mental-health firing behind him.
- We still had kids, bills, and no safety net.

The one door that opened was the Postal Service.

Not a cushy, career carrier route with strong union protection.

An assistant carrier job.

The kind of role they use as a pressure valve:

- Non-career status.
- Fewer protections.
- Long hours, six or seven days a week when it’s bad during holidays.
- Constantly shifting schedules and routes.

- High burnout and turnover—nationally, these “helper” positions see huge churn because new hires get crushed under volume and pressure while career carriers are insulated by seniority and contracts.

In other words:

“We’ll hire you because nobody else will,  
and we’ll work you like nobody else can.”

So there I was:

- walking miles a day with other people’s mail,
- learning how many ways a body can ache at once,
- being reminded in a hundred small ways that I was disposable labor in a system designed primarily to protect the people above me.

From the outside, it looked like stability:

“He finally got a normal job.”

From the inside, it felt like being ground into paste to keep everyone else’s letters moving.

#### **4. AnalyticsCorp: A Clean Job on Dirty Ground**

Around the time I took the Postal Service job, my wife landed a position with AnalyticsCorp.

Keep in mind that she previously worked for several months for an insurance company who took advantage of her with fake promises of success.

So on paper, AnalyticsCorp looked like a savior and the opposite of what I had:

- remote work from home,
- professional title,
- a company that billed itself as “helping small businesses thrive.”

They hired her into a newly created role: internal auditor.

The pitch:

“We’ve got three divisions — corporate, capital, and accounting.  
We need someone to review processes, ensure compliance, and tighten up internal controls.”

After everything we’d been through, that sounded like mercy:

- work that used her brain instead of just her endurance,
- a better income stream that didn’t require yet another move,
- and the illusion of a real ladder to climb.

But once she started, the illusion cracked.

She discovered:

- She wouldn’t actually be auditing all three divisions.
- Her “internal audit” work was confined to their accounting arm — a group providing near-CPA-level services to dozens of clients without proper structure or licensing to match.
- Her real job, as her boss saw it, was to rubber stamp what their controllers were already doing, not truly inspect it.

One previous controller had been caught taking a “shortcut”:

- averaging historical payroll numbers,
- pasting them into the books,
- producing a year of fake-but-plausible financial statements.

Those statements weren’t theoretical:

- clients had used them to make business decisions,
- to talk to banks,
- to reassure investors and partners.

Instead of stopping the machine and rebuilding it the right way, AnalyticsCorp tried something cheaper:

- keep the model,
- add one conscience,
- put that conscience under the person whose work she was supposed to examine.

Her title said “internal auditor.”

Her reporting line said “liability sponge.”

## **5. You Don’t Put the Inspector Under the Chef**

What my wife walked into at AnalyticsCorp looked roughly like this:

- No robust month-end close process.
- Controllers juggling more clients than an ethical workload would allow.
- A director of the accounting arm without a proper accounting degree, running the show.
- A history of client risk already on the table from that earlier controller’s shortcuts.

Her job was pitched as: “Audit the controllers and make sure we’re doing what we promised.”

Her reality was:

“Sign off that this is fine,  
while depending on the people you’re supposed to be auditing to tell you what’s really going on.”

She did her job as it actually should exist:

- She flagged the structural conflicts.
- She raised concerns about ethical and legal exposure.
- She questioned whether it was appropriate to keep offering quasi-CPA services without the right framework or licenses.
- She objected to being placed directly under the person whose decisions she’d be examining.

The response was not gratitude.

It was containment.

## **6. Slow Squeeze, Fast Cut**

First, they tried to shrink her.

The director asked her to reduce her hours from full-time to part-time mid-stream, despite the fact that she'd already done the work.

When she raised the discrepancy with HR, HR pulled in a senior executive who understood exactly what was at stake:

- the potential legal exposure,
- the reputational risk,
- the cost of fixing the system vs. the cost of firing the one person pointing out the cracks.

My wife laid out her concerns:

- the conflict of interest,
- the ethical problems,
- the lack of proper controls,
- the prior client who had already discovered fraudulent numbers.

They fixed the paycheck issue.

They did not fix the system.

Soon after, with that same executive in the room, they ended it verbally:

“This just isn’t a fit.”

No termination letter.

No clean paper trail.

Just a meeting that started in ambiguity and ended with my wife unemployed again.

They got rid of the conscience.

Their clients stayed in the dark.

## **7. The Fire Sale: Funding a Last Try at Justice**

By the time AnalyticsCorp cut her loose:

- I was still walking routes for the Postal Service,
- our kids needed more than we could reasonably give,
- the property in City C was headed for a court-controlled sale,

- and all the earlier wreckage was still sitting on our chests.

Then the fire sale happened.

The City C building — fully furnished, full of years of work and investment — was sold off for essentially land value.

We received a slice of what it should have been worth.

Not a windfall.

More like an emergency transfusion.

It was just enough to:

- move our family to a new city (Richmond),
- and hire a lawyer to go after AnalyticsCorp for firing my wife as a whistleblower.

We found a local employment attorney — I'll call him Counsel West.

He listened to her story:

- the so-called internal audit role,
- the structural conflicts,
- the prior controller's fraud,
- her objections,
- the verbal termination.

His verdict was confident:

“This is strong. 95% chance of success!

We should be able to get a settlement in six months to a year.”

We believed him.

We paid him from the fire-sale money.

We moved to a new city, away from Roanoke:

- to reset,
- to be within his orbit,
- and to pursue other doors, including the “safe government job” at the Revenue Agency that shows up in the next chapter.

For a moment, it almost looked like the system might do what it says on the label:

- protect whistleblowers,
- penalize retaliation,
- correct wrongs through process.

## **8. One Year Later: The Quiet Burial**

Six months passed.

Then twelve.

We were still in the new city when the truth finally surfaced:

- The case wasn't marching toward a settlement.
- It was stuck in the weeds of jurisdiction.
- AnalyticsCorp was based in another state.
- The judge had an easy escape hatch: "This isn't the right place to hear this."

Instead of steering around that from the beginning, Counsel West let the case drift straight into it.

The court never reached the real question:

"Did AnalyticsCorp fire her for telling the truth?"

It stayed safely at:

"Is this the right venue to even talk about it?"

And then, just like that:

- Dismissed on a technicality.
- No finding.
- No merits review.
- No accountability.

When we asked about appealing, the answer was predictable:

- Yes, an appeal was possible.
- It would cost more money.
- The outcome was uncertain.

Translation:

“If you want me to keep trying,  
pay again to spin the same wheel  
in a system that’s already shown you what it thinks of your odds.”

We didn’t have the money.

The case died there.

AnalyticsCorp kept:

- their model,
- their clients,
- their public image.

Counsel West kept:

- his fees,
- his professional status as someone who “takes on tough cases.”

We kept:

- the hole in my wife’s résumé,
- the bill for trying to do it the “right” way,
- and the knowledge that even when you follow every official step, the machine has a thousand ways to spit you out before it ever touches truth.

## 9. How It Looks vs. How It Feels

If someone skims that period of our life at a distance, the summary might sound like this:

- “He bounced from a repair company to the Postal Service.”

- “She worked at a consulting firm for a while; there was drama; it didn’t work out.”
- “They sold a property, moved cities, and a lawsuit didn’t pan out. That happens.”

If you sit in it from the inside, what happened is:

- A corporation asked my wife to bless bad accounting and punished her for refusing.
- A federal service relied on my desperation to fill in the dirtiest gaps of their labor model.
- A bankruptcy system wiped out years of work at a discount to tidy up the books.
- A lawyer took the last real capital from that fire sale, promised a six-to-twelve-month resolution, and steered us into a procedural ditch.

None of them think of themselves as villains.

- AnalyticsCorp says it helps businesses.
- The Postal Service says it binds the country together.
- Bankruptcy courts say they ensure fairness.
- Lawyers say they fight for justice within the constraints of the law.

That’s exactly why this all belongs in a book about the Devil’s Charity:

- Everyone is framed as a helper.
- Everyone has a story that photographs well.
- And yet the net effect is a slow, grinding suffocation of the people trapped underneath.

## 10. Why This Chapter Matters

When I say the Devil’s Charity is currently killing us, this is part of what I mean:

- Not just counties and cities.
- Not just churches and families.
- But the entire chain around a single whistleblower event:
  - a company that would rather fire the conscience than fix the books,
  - a postal system happy to consume broken people as non-career patch material,
  - a bankruptcy process that converts homes and dreams into line items,
  - and a lawyer who treats your last lifeline as just another file that might or might not work out.

My wife did what you're supposed to do:

- She told the truth.
- She refused to rubber stamp.
- She sought legal recourse when punished for it.

The system did what it has learned to do:

- isolate,
- delay,
- technicality,
- exit.

In the next chapter, I'll walk you through how, after all of this, she tried one more time to step into a "safe" public role with the Revenue Agency—and how even there, the same pattern showed its teeth.

Because once you've lived this a few times, you start to realize:

It's not that every ship is evil.

It's that the entire fleet sails under a flag that says help,

while the water around it quietly fills with the people it threw overboard.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Case File I – The Fork at the Revenue Service (When “Voluntary Separation” Is Just a Slow Firing in a Suit)**

When we finally moved from Roanoke and landed in River City, it was supposed to be the reset.

We had:

- sold the river building in a fire sale just to get our names off it,
- handed a chunk of that money to a lawyer who promised a quick settlement from the consulting firm that fired my wife for whistleblowing,
- and moved our family on the promise that this time, a federal job would mean stability.

My wife had done everything “right”:

- degrees,
- certifications,
- ethics,
- whistleblowing the moment she saw fraud.

Every time, the system spat her out and called it “just business.”

River City was the last respectable card we had to play.

The job offer from the Revenue Service came like a lifeline:  
a federal position, decent benefits, the kind of job relatives nod at approvingly.

“See?” the family script said.  
“They’re finally settling down.”

What they didn’t see was that she was stepping into one of the purest Devil’s Charity traps in this whole story.

### **1. The Fork No One Admits Is a Knife**

On paper, the Fork Program at the Revenue Service is “voluntary.”

You can almost hear the PR language:

“We’re providing employees with options.”

“We understand life changes.”

“We’re offering this generous separation to those who feel ready to move on.”

What it feels like inside is this:

“We’re restructuring in a way we won’t fully explain.

If you’re smart, you’ll take the fork now.

If you don’t, we’ll make your life slowly unlivable and call it your choice.”

When my wife was first placed in that limbo, the fork wasn’t yet mandatory.

She had a sliver of hope that she could just... go back to doing her job.

We clung to that.

We didn’t want a severance. We wanted stability:

- a paycheck that arrived every two weeks,
- health insurance that actually covered something,
- a job she could do well without having to pretend she didn’t notice fraud in the books.

So when the initial storm passed and she was told she could return to the office, we thought:

“Okay. That was rough. But maybe they’re going to let her just work.”

That’s not what happened.

## **2. Psychological Warfare in Fluorescent Lighting**

When she went back, the message wasn’t delivered in words.

It was delivered in a silence so thick it felt like a punishment.

They made her sit at her desk for entire days with nothing to do.

No cases assigned.

No projects.

No meaningful tasks.

Just:

- eight hours of enforced idleness,
- careful watching,
- the unspoken implication that she didn't belong,
- and the constant sense that if she made the wrong move, they'd finally have a pretext to push her out with nothing.

It's hard to explain to anyone who hasn't lived it how damaging that is.

Being overworked is one kind of harm.  
Being deliberately underused is another.

It says:

- "You are not worth investing in."
- "You are not trusted."
- "We can waste your time and your life, and there is nothing you can do."

And in the background, everyone knew:

- the fork was still on the table,
- the rumor mill was humming,
- people who didn't take it might find themselves later "restructured" without any cushion at all.

We watched that and did the math:

- Stay, and she might be slowly pushed to a breaking point, then dumped with no relief.
- Take the fork, and at least we might have a financial runway to survive the next collapse.

It's not a "choice" when every path except one ends with the system quietly flipping you into the trash.

So eventually, she took the fork.

From the outside, it will always read:

"She voluntarily separated. She took a buyout. She chose to leave."

From the inside, it was:

“We chose the least lethal option in a room full of knives.”

### **3. How a Fork Becomes a Halo**

On paper, the Fork Program will be reported as a kindness:

- a generous option,
- a thoughtful benefit,
- proof that the agency “supports employees in transition.”

It will show up in stats and HR reports as:

- voluntary separations,
- attrition with benefits,
- a sign of good governance.

No one is tracking the psychological warfare:

- the empty desks,
- the day-long voids,
- the fear of retaliation if you don’t “go quietly.”

No one is tracking:

- the panic in late-night conversations,
- the way families like ours sat at kitchen tables doing math and crying,
- the way the optics of choice hid the reality of coercion.

That’s Devil’s Charity at a federal scale:

- harm framed as help,
- coercion framed as flexibility,
- abandonment framed as generosity.

We handed over our stability for the promise of a runway.

What we got was a brief exhale... and then another free fall.

#### 4. The Emerald Escape That Wasn't

We did what desperate, resourceful people do when their own country keeps burning them:

We looked across the ocean.

Call it Green Island for the sake of this anonymized telling.

When the fork money came and we moved from survival mode to “barely above water,” my wife did what everyone says you’re supposed to do:

- She tried to reinvent herself.
- She tried to outrun the wreckage.
- She went to Green Island for three months to scout a new future.

The theory was simple:

- If she could land an accounting role there,
- maybe we could shift our family into a healthier system,
- maybe the kids could grow up in a place that wasn’t constantly trying to grind us into dust,
- maybe the Devil’s Charity would have a weaker grip outside the borders.

What she ran into instead were:

- immigration walls,
- opaque processes,
- and a familiar pattern of “We like you... but,” where the “but” is always something structural you can’t personally fix.

After three months, she came home:

- no firm job offer,
- no visa path that made any practical sense for a family of five,
- and no clear way to leverage the fork money into a stable new life abroad.

The fork was gone.

Green Island was closed off, at least for now.

We were back in River City with:

- a blown-up credit score,

- no job on her side,
- lawsuits still dragging like anchors,
- and a family still expected to function like a normal dual-income household in a collapsing economy.

## 5. What “Jobless” Actually Means in This Story

On paper, right now, my wife is:

“self-employed, starting her own accounting business.”

That’s the version the Devil’s Charity loves:

- It sounds entrepreneurial.
- It sounds empowered.
- It looks like she “landed on her feet.”

In reality, it means:

- She is trying to build a book of clients in a market where trust is thin and attention is fragmented.
- She’s doing it with no cushion, because every prior “safety net” was either:
  - weaponized,
  - withheld,
  - or eroded by the very programs that claimed to help.
- She’s doing it with a nervous system that has been repeatedly punished for telling the truth and holding the line ethically.

The fork money is gone.

The Cogent case stalled on a technicality.

The River House is gone.

The federal job is over.

And yet, somewhere in a file, the story the system tells about her will be clean:

- Chose the fork.
- Chose to leave.
- Later chose self-employment.

There's no checkbox for:

“Was gradually squeezed out by psychological warfare, then flung into the gig economy after trying to rebuild abroad and failing due to structural immigration barriers.”

## **6. How the Fork Nearly Killed Us**

So when I say the Fork Program at the Revenue Service is part of how the Devil's Charity is currently killing us, I don't mean:

- a dramatic scene,
- a single villain,
- or a clear crime.

I mean this:

- It took a woman who had already been punished for whistleblowing.
- It put her in a position where “staying” meant being slowly erased at her own desk.
- It nudged her into a “choice” that looked generous on paper and felt like cornered survival in real life.
- It gave us just enough runway to try something desperate and hopeful (Green Island), then dropped us back into a country where:
  - the lawsuits are still unresolved,
  - the bills are still due,
  - the credit is shredded,
  - and the judgment from onlookers remains:  
“You just can't seem to hold a job.”

The fork nearly killed us not by pulling a trigger, but by:

- draining our hope,
- weaponizing our fear,
- and dressing coercion up as compassion.

If my wife's body eventually breaks from this—if the stress, the whiplash, the quiet humiliation of being systematically pushed out of every “good” job finally lands as illness—there will be no report that says:

“Cause of death: Devil's Charity at the Revenue Service.”

It will just look like:

- one more woman who “couldn't keep up,”
- one more family who “made bad choices.”

This chapter exists so that, if that day comes, there will at least be a record that says:

No.

She did everything right.

The system is what kept changing the rules.

## **Chapter Ten**

How a Car Crash, a Landlady, and Workers' Comp All Decided We Could Absorb the Hit

By the time this chapter hits the timeline, the background noise is already deafening:

- County A has gutted our first project and called it “safety.”
- City C has stripped the last workable use from the river building and called it “code.”
- FoundationCorp G has Feasted me.
- AnalyticsCorp has burned my wife as a whistleblower.
- The Revenue Service has erased her in a mass “efficiency” purge.
- Our credit is wrecked.
- We’re juggling lawsuits as pro se because we can’t afford lawyers.

Now drop a serious work car accident in the middle of that.

And watch three more players step forward:

- Workers' Comp Carrier T.
- At-Fault Insurer G.
- Landlady J.

Hovering in the background—just close enough to touch it all—is our faith community, the Church of Good Intentions.

All of them looking at the same family and quietly deciding:

“They can absorb a little more.”

### **The Crash – and the “Protection” That Never Shows Up**

The accident wasn’t a fender-bender on a lazy afternoon.

I was working.

Driving to an awards event for a door-to-door internet company where I was about to be recognized as one of the top five reps in the region.

In other words:

- I was doing the work everyone said I couldn't hold,
- in a job that proved I could absolutely perform at the level FoundationCorp G once demanded,
- on my way to receive a plaque that would never quite make it into my file anywhere that mattered.

Then the crash.

- Impact.
- Concussion.
- Whiplash.
- Lab numbers showing low CO<sub>2</sub> and reduced neurological function.
- Doctors telling me:
  - no lifting,
  - no twisting,
  - no heavy work,
  - no pushing through it like nothing happened.

On paper, this is exactly why workers' comp exists:

You get hurt doing the job.

The insurer steps in.

Medical is covered.

Partial wages bridge the gap until you can function again.

That's the story Carrier T sells.

In practice, what I got was a quiet maze.

They didn't swoop in with:

- "Here are your rights."
- "Here's the timeline in plain English."
- "Here's how to protect yourself while your brain is scrambled."

They technically answered phones.

They did not:

- walk me through what I had to do while concussed,

- warn me about which doctors “counted” and which didn’t,
- explain which words could be twisted later to deny or minimize coverage.

Instead, the structure did what it’s designed to do:

Assist by omission.

I was:

- injured,
- foggy,
- terrified about money.

They were:

- calm,
- trained,
- fully briefed on rules I could barely read,
- and in no particular hurry.

At-Fault Insurer G was no better.

- Medical bills piled up.
- Imaging, specialists, follow-ups—all on a clock we weren’t controlling.
- G’s position was simple:  
“We don’t talk real settlement until treatment is ‘done.’”

So while they waited for some abstract “done,”

- we watched debts stack,
- our credit fall further off a cliff,
- and my capacity to work stay restricted by a neck that flared if I carried groceries wrong.

Both insurers hid behind their scripts:

“We protect injured workers.”

“We make people whole after accidents.”

Meanwhile, the message to us was:

“You can carry this float.

We'll settle up later... maybe."

### **The Landlady Who Saw an Opening**

Now overlay that with housing.

We had scraped our way into a rental owned by Landlady J:

- premium rent,
- rural setting,
- pitched as "you can stay as long as you like."

When we moved in, the house was:

- covered in dog dander,
- full of hair,
- with open windows that had let bugs and wasps nests collect in the bedrooms.

My wife has documented severe allergies.

Within days:

- she reacted,
- we spent hundreds out of pocket on deep cleaning, air filters, and treatment,
- we did the work Landlady J should have done before ever handing over the keys.

No compensation.

No rent reduction.

Just denial that it had ever really been necessary.

She knew:

- we had a bankruptcy in our rearview,
- we were already stretched thin from the long trail of prior harms,
- our options were limited.

She charged top-dollar anyway.

Because she could. Because our rental options were limited with bankruptcy in the background.

Then the accident hit.

Around the same window, the Revenue Service severed my wife's job in that mass political purge of "probationary" employees.

One minute:

- we are barely managing to hold a life together in Richmond,
- hoping Rebecca's federal job will finally stabilize us.

The next:

- I'm concussed,
- she's abruptly jobless,
- medical bills are growing,
- and the ground we're standing on turns to mud.

We approached Landlady J for a simple, humane request:

"Can we have a one- or two-month extension on the lease while we figure out what to do?"

No history of late payment.

No pattern of missed rent.

No warnings or complaints.

Just:

- the accident,
- the job loss,
- and a family in freefall.

She said no.

No explanation.

No attempt to collaborate.

No acknowledgment of what had just happened.

The same person who once said:

"You can stay as long as you like,"

suddenly decided that not a single extra month could be tolerated.

The only material change?

- We were now visibly more vulnerable.

In between the lines the situation read,

- She lost her property in the Florida Hurricane.
- She wanted to move back into the home by herself with her 30 dogs and reestablish her illegal kennel because the other four bedroom home she owned nearby didn't have a big enough yard.
- She was simply unusually cruel and callous.

In that light, the refusal becomes clear:

She knew we were trapped.  
And she chose leverage over compassion.

### **The Church of Good Intentions – Food, Rent, and Silence**

Somewhere in this same stretch of months, we did what we were raised to do:

We reached out to the Church of Good Intentions.

This was an institution that had, for decades, drilled into us:

“If you're in need, go to your local leader.  
We will not let you fall.”

We had lived that from the other side:

- I'd moved dozens of families over the years—  
loading trucks, carrying furniture, sweating through long Saturdays in the name of  
“service.”
- We had paid tithes.
- My overall family had donated millions in time and money over several lifetimes.
- We had shown up.

So when we were:

- hanging by a financial thread,
- watching grocery money evaporate into gas and medical copays,
- trying to feed three kids while we processed job loss and injury,
- hadn't asked for help at all in at least six months.

we went to our new local leader and said, essentially:

“We need help with food.”

At one point, we were explicitly told a food order was coming.

We waited.

And waited.

Nothing showed up.

We texted. Ignored.

Somewhere in that same fog, after attempting to contact several leaders about the situation and being ignored—I did something almost unthinkable in that culture:

I filed a small lawsuit against the Church of Good Intentions.

Not to cash-grab.

To force a question:

“How does an institution that promises not to let its people go hungry quietly walk away from a family that’s already on its knees?”

After that, every interaction felt radioactive.

The accident hit.

The job loss landed.

The landlady refused the extension and the local bishop internalized that information as if I were somehow blaming his delayed timing for her actions.

And suddenly, under the combined weight of lawsuit, crushed car, and termination letters, the Church finally moved—

Not with people showing up to carry boxes.

With one check and one food order.

Quietly sent to Landlady J to cover a month of rent.

On one level, it helped.

Without that payment, we might have been homeless faster.

On another level, it was deeply revealing:

- The same system that had gone silent on promised food
- managed, under legal and optical pressure, to find money to pay a landlord directly.

They didn't come to see:

- whether we could physically move,
- how my neck was doing,
- how my wife was coping with her job loss.

They didn't send a single person to help us pack or lift or drive. It was black and white different from what we experienced with the same church in Roanoke.

This, in a community where I had personally shown up again and again for other people's moves.

I'd lugged their couches and fridges, stacked their boxes, rearranged my Saturdays around their U-Hauls.

When it was our turn:

- plenty of prayers,
- one rent payment,
- zero bodies in the driveway.

From the outside, the story is simple:

"The Church helped them pay rent during a hard time."

From the inside, the question won't stop ringing:

"Why did it take a lawsuit, an accident, and a termination to get even that much?"

And another:

“What does it mean when an institution will write a check but will not show up with hands?”

The challenge is that, by the time we landed in that new congregation, we’d already been jerked from location to location just trying to find a footing. The new ward looked at us the way Manager F at FoundationCorp G did when he said, “Sales is what have you done for me lately.” There was no view of the pattern, no real consideration of our history or trauma. On the surface we were the family in the “nice house,” so everything looked fine.

The message underneath was simple: if you haven’t given to us recently—or given enough—you don’t count. Any request for help means you’re “stealing the widow’s mite.” Publicly, the church likes to preach that God judges people on their whole story, on a lifetime of effort and sacrifice. In practice, almost nobody in the system actually reviews that history, and there is no earthly forum that will. The courts won’t touch it; they’re designed to avoid merit review of internal church decisions. So there’s no way to challenge the inconsistency, no way to ask for repair. And because almost no one ever sues the church, the default assumption is that the church is the martyr and the struggling member is the problem.

While the bishop underneath had his own biases, too. On the surface, he made the snap judgment that we must be living beyond our means. He was under financial pressure himself. As a lay leader, he still had his own mortgage to pay, and the Church of Good Intentions doesn’t cover that—he’s expected to donate his time on top of whatever work he can find. Standing there, he saw a family in a “nice house” asking for food while he was worried about his own bills. It was easier to assume we were irresponsible than to consider that the system itself might be failing. When the lawsuit surfaced, he became more worried about how it would make him and the ward look than about what it said about structural harm. He even threatened to pull assistance, not because our need had changed, but because the optics had.

When I expressed this frustration to my own family—that the bishop had promised food and then didn’t follow through—they sided with the church. They listed out everything we had ever been given and talked about what “takers” we were, as if that settled the question. It was a way to absolve their own conscience: we had already gotten “enough,” so any further need was on us. They told me they paid their tithing to help the poor, without acknowledging that in the Church of Good Intentions tithing isn’t actually earmarked for the poor at all. That’s what fast offerings are for.

This is how the Devil’s Charity works across every institution: anyone with power can flip the script, label you as the problem, and then feel justified withholding the very help they preach about.

## Hauling Boxes With a Broken Neck

By the time move-out arrived, here's what was true at the same time:

- I was still injured.
  - concussion symptoms,
  - neck and back pain,
  - medical restrictions that made every lift risky.
- Workers' comp had not delivered anything like the steady support their brochures promise.
- At-Fault Insurer G was still in "we'll see once treatment is over" mode. (still haven't seen anything here to this day)
- Landlady J had:
  - refused an extension,
  - scheduled and rescheduled inspections on her own timeline,
  - shown up with men in tow in ways that felt more intimidating than professional that inspired a call to the police on our end,
  - already mentally spent our deposit and then some,
  - and begun drafting a narrative where she was the one being wronged.
- The Church of Good Intentions had:
  - finally paid a chunk of rent directly to her,
  - but sent no one to help us actually get out,
  - offered no practical scaffolding beyond that one transaction.

So we did what families like ours always end up doing:

We moved ourselves.

- I hauled boxes with a damaged neck.
- We juggled kids among stacks of belongings.
- We had a landlord breathing down our necks.
- We tried to clean a house that had been dirty when we arrived, knowing she'd still find "damage" to charge us for.
- We did paperwork and medical appointments between trips to storage.

The landlady later claimed:

- hundreds for small repairs,

- hundreds more for alleged wood “damage,”
- thousands for tile repair tied to a leak we never saw,
- all layered on top of a full deposit she’d effectively decided to keep before the move-out inspection ever happened.

She knew:

- about the accident,
- about the job loss,
- that the Church had stepped in to pay one month because we were in crisis.

None of that softened her approach.

If anything, it sharpened it.

Because when you know someone has nowhere else to go, it’s very easy to convince yourself you’re just “enforcing the lease” while you strip them on the way out.

The Devil’s Charity loves to use personal past trauma to condemn others rather than to exercise compassion. The Bishop did it, the landlady did the same thing. Using similar past trauma as justification to form condemnation and lack of flexibility.

## **Double Burn: Housing, Insurance, and Holy Optics**

Put it all together:

- Carrier T slow-rolls support, hides the rules in fine print, and treats confusion as a filter.
- Insurer G delays meaningful settlement until some hypothetical “end of treatment” while the bills keep stacking.
- Landlady J refuses extension, leverages vulnerability, keeps deposits, and inflates charges.
- The Church of Good Intentions:
  - breaks a simple promise of food when it would have actually prevented some of the slide,
  - responds only after legal and optical pressure with a rent check,
  - then vanishes from the physical labor of moving a damaged family out.
  - while the bishop waffled back and forth of whether I am truly worthy of support because I wasn’t showing gratitude by suing the church.

All of them:

- knew about the accident and job loss,
- knew about the kids,
- knew about the prior systemic blows,
- had power over basic survival: housing, food, medical support.

Each, in their own way, chose to protect themselves first.

That's what I mean by:

The Devil's Charity is currently killing me.

Because every one of these systems tells a beautiful story:

- "We protect injured workers."
- "We make people whole after accidents."
- "We help families find homes."
- "We never let our people go hungry."

Meanwhile, in real time, here's what we lived:

- Thousands in medical debt with no clear payout timeline.
- Worsening credit that closes doors in every direction.
- A forced, premature, medically unsafe move under duress.
- Withheld deposits and fabricated charges.
- A community that will cut checks but not show up with muscle when you're broken.

And me, hauling boxes with a broken neck, fighting panic attacks, yelling at the bishop in an argument that happened the same day I received my blood test with low CO2, begging judges for injunctions, and trying to explain to my kids why Daddy is on the phone with adjusters again instead of playing.

This chapter is not about:

- one bad landlord,
- one slow adjuster,
- or one imperfect congregation.

It's about a pattern:

When you are most injured,  
the institutions that say they exist to help you  
are often the first to pull the trigger—

then look at their mission statements and say:

“We did nothing wrong.  
It’s just business.  
It’s just policy.  
It’s just God’s timing.”

In the next chapter, we turn fully toward the referees themselves—  
the judges and courts who can see this pattern,  
name it in private,  
and still find ways to sidestep it on paper.

## **Chapter Eleven**

### **Case File H – The Three Judges and the Agency That Fired My Wife**

By the time we reached the federal courts, we had already learned how counties, cities, employers, landlords, and churches protect themselves.

What we hadn't fully understood yet was how judges protect each other—and the institutions in front of them—when someone like us shows up without a lawyer.

This chapter is about three judges, one federal agency, and the quiet power of procedure to erase a human being in plain sight.

All names here are anonymized:

- “Revenue Bureau” for the federal tax agency that fired my wife.
- Judge One, Judge Two, and Judge Three for the three federal judges.
- District Court, Regional Appeals Court, and High Court for the actual courts.

The facts are real. The labels are not.

### **1. The Job That Wasn't Supposed to Be Political**

My wife's job at the Revenue Bureau started as the opposite of glamorous:

- she was mid-career,
- working through chronic health issues and the wreckage of everything you've just read,
- and finally had a federal job that promised structure, benefits, and a path forward.

On paper, it was simple:

“You audit numbers. You follow rules. You don't get dragged into politics.”

Then the Bureau launched a “reduction in force”—a workforce purge that hit her division and similarly situated employees in a way that looked a lot less like neutral downsizing and a lot more like targeted removal.

No meaningful process.

No coherent explanation.

Just “you're out”—with a paper trail designed to make it look routine.

She pushed back.

She filed a lawsuit in District Court as a pro se plaintiff, laying out two linked crises:

1. The firing itself – a selective, retaliatory termination dressed up as neutral “restructuring.”
2. The court’s own behavior – delays, procedural games, and quiet bias that kept her from having a real hearing at all.

For one brief moment, the system blinked:

- A first judge granted a preliminary injunction—a rare thing in a federal employment case—finding enough merit in her claims to halt the firing temporarily.

That injunction should have been a signal:

“Something went wrong here. This deserves full sunlight.”

Instead, what followed was a lesson in how quickly the lights can be dimmed again.

## **2. Judge One: How to Rewrite a Hearing After It Happens**

The case was reassigned to Judge One.

Judge One did not have to say, “I’m on the agency’s side.”

He only had to do three things:

1. Control the calendar.
2. Control the labels.
3. Refuse to see what was in front of him.

First came a “status conference” that turned out not to be a status conference at all.

Behind the scenes, there was:

- an off-record conversation with the agency’s lawyers,
- critical decisions made about my wife’s rights and options,

- and a push for her to sign away key protections through a dispute process she did not fully understand and could not fairly evaluate under financial duress.

Only later—after we challenged what had happened—did the court quietly re-label that meeting as something else on the docket, as if the original description had been a harmless clerical error.

It wasn't harmless.

When you change the label of a hearing after it occurs:

- you alter what future reviewers think happened,
- you erase the perceived significance of excluding a party from the conversation,
- and you make a due-process violation look like a minor paperwork correction.

Over the life of the case, my wife filed motion after motion asking for:

- an explanation of the secret process,
- acknowledgement of the ex parte nature of the hearing,
- and a chance to actually argue the constitutional issues in the open.

Judge One responded with a wall of denials—over a dozen summary orders with almost no reasoning.

No discovery.

No appointed counsel, despite the obvious complexity and her financial hardship.

No meaningful engagement with the heart of the case.

From the outside, the docket just showed:

“Motion denied. Motion denied. Motion denied.”

From the inside, the message was:

“You are technically allowed to file,  
but we are not obligated to listen.”

Eventually, the temporary relief evaporated, and the Bureau's decision stood.

My wife did not just lose a job.

She lost the illusion that the federal courts would hold a federal agency to the same standards they expect from everyone else.

### 3. Judge Two: The Gatekeeper of the Filing Fee

While all of that was happening, my own cases—especially the civil-rights case against County A and the housing case after the car accident—landed in front of Judge Two.

Judge Two's specialty wasn't secret hearings.

His specialty was the door itself.

In the County A case, I applied to proceed without paying the filing fee—what the system calls “in forma pauperis.” My finances were fully laid out:

- no savings safety net,
- ongoing medical fallout,
- my wife freshly unemployed,
- and four kids in a two-bedroom rental we could barely hold onto.

Judge Two repeatedly:

- denied fee-waiver status,
- twisted basic financial details in his written orders,
- and framed those twists as proof that I wasn't really indigent.

The record was messy enough that a higher court—the Regional Appeals Court—eventually stepped in and reversed him, ordering the case to move forward.

That should have been humiliating for any judge.

Instead of changing course, Judge Two doubled down in the housing case that followed my car accident:

- accused me of lying on the fee-waiver form,
- threatened sanctions and implied I was a vexatious litigant,
- and still never addressed whether my landlord leaving us without safe housing after the crash might actually matter.

There was no finding on habitability.

No serious engagement with retaliation or safety.

Only:

“We don't like how often you file.

We don't like how poor you are.  
The substance can wait."

To challenge that bias, I had to launch an interlocutory appeal—an appeal in the middle of the case—just to ask whether this kind of hostility at the gate was even lawful.

You can call that due process.  
Or you can call it what it is: a tollbooth that changes its price based on who you are.

#### **4. Judge Three: Justice by Not Deciding**

Then there was Judge Three.

Judge Three didn't shout, didn't sanction, didn't rewrite hearings.

Judge Three simply did nothing.

In two critical cases—one against a major religious institution that had promised food and then withheld it, and one against City C for its role in helping destroy the last workable property—Judge Three received our fee-waiver applications and then:

- let one sit for months,
- let the other drift past every reasonable deadline,
- and ignored repeated, documented requests for a ruling.

No denial.  
No grant.  
No explanation.

Just silence—in cases that directly touched housing, food security, and the same pattern of institutional overreach that had nearly killed us before.

In practice, that silence was a constructive denial:

- without a ruling on the fee waiver, we couldn't properly proceed,
- without progress, we couldn't reach discovery or a hearing,
- without those, the underlying institutions never faced scrutiny.

It's the gentlest form of procedural cruelty:

“If we never answer, you never technically lose.  
You also never get your day in court.”

## **5. The Clerk’s Office: Tiny “Errors” With Huge Consequences**

Behind the three judges sat an entire clerical apparatus that made sure any possible path forward was as rough as possible.

Among other things:

- In the County A civil-rights case, when we sued for hundreds of millions in damages to reflect both individual harm and systemic impact, the Clerk’s Office recorded the amount as hundreds of thousands instead—shrinking the apparent stakes by three orders of magnitude. We had to catch and correct their “mistake” ourselves.
- When we filed an appeal in the landlord dispute, the Clerk’s Office delayed sending the record to the Regional Appeals Court by over a week—a massive delay in a time-sensitive housing case.
- In other instances, they refused to docket amendments that were allowed “as of right” without judge approval, and failed to explain that they only transmit certain documents once, leaving us to discover missing filings by painful trial and error.

Each act, individually, could be written off as:

- backlog,
- human error,
- bureaucratic noise.

Together, they functioned like sand in the gears—always in the direction of slowing, shrinking, or suppressing our cases.

No one had to send an email saying, “Let’s block them.”

The structure itself did the work.

## **6. The Three-Judges Case: Naming the Pattern Out Loud**

At some point, the pattern was too obvious to keep treating as “bad luck.”

So we did something almost no one does:

We filed a separate lawsuit—the “Three Judges Case”—naming:

- Judge One (silencing due-process claims in the Revenue Bureau case),
- Judge Two (weaponizing fee-waiver decisions and hostility toward pro se filings),
- Judge Three (denying access through unexplained delay),
- and the Clerk’s Office (procedural sand in every gear).

We didn’t ask for money.

We asked for:

- recusal—getting biased judges off our cases;
- declaratory relief—a formal acknowledgment that what they were doing was unconstitutional;
- and a basic recognition that you cannot have “equal justice under law” when some people’s cases are quietly strangled at the intake vent.

The response was exactly what the system is designed to produce:

- references to judicial immunity,
- dismissals that pretended we were challenging disfavored “results” instead of the methods,
- no real appetite, at any level, to police the judiciary from the inside.

Once again, the message was clear:

“We police you.

We do not police ourselves.”

The strange thing about the lawsuit against the three judges is that the fourth circuit court could have immediately tossed it if it didn’t have merit. They didn’t. They accepted our IFP to skip the \$600 filing fee, even though they later affirmed the lower courts decision to block us based on fees later in a separate filing. But they did something unusual and accepted our filing as if it had merit and then chose to protect the system in the end by denying it.

They knew the complaint had merit, so they accepted it on optics to prove to themselves that they are fair, with no follow through.

## **7. The Revenue Bureau Case: Courts as Co-Defendants**

In my wife's suit against the Revenue Bureau, this same pattern showed up in sharper relief:

- She documented how the agency had used a workforce purge to quietly get rid of people like her.
- She documented how the court had helped—through secret hearings, retroactive relabeling, and reflexive denials.

By the time she filed her Second Amended Complaint, it no longer described just “wrongful termination.” It described two intertwined crises:

1. Abuse of administrative power by the agency itself.
2. A court willing to launder that abuse through procedure.

Her case explicitly framed the judiciary as part of the problem:

- The court delayed emergency motions.
- It recast critical hearings after the fact.
- It tolerated ex parte communications that would have set off alarms if the roles were reversed.

At every turn, when there was a choice between:

- protecting a vulnerable worker who had already once won injunctive relief, or
- protecting the appearance of institutional infallibility,

the system chose the institution.

## **8. Taking It to the Top: When the High Court Looks Away**

At that point, there was only one place left to go.

We took the pattern from all of these cases—County A, the Revenue Bureau, the landlord dispute, the church, the Three Judges case—and we carried it up the mountain.

We filed two different petitions with the High Court:

1. A standard petition asking the High Court to review the way lower courts treated indigent, pro se litigants—recognizing poverty in one breath while still blocking access through fees, procedural games, and denial of tools.
2. A separate emergency mandamus petition, asking the High Court to adopt a simple rule for people in our position:
  - docket first,
  - then review,
  - and in complex civil cases, either provide tools or counsel so the fight is at least recognizably fair.

We weren't asking for a guaranteed win.

We were asking for:

- a consistent way into court,
- a recognition that fee waivers plus zero tools is a bait-and-switch,
- and an acknowledgment that a system that calls itself adversarial cannot be fair when one side can't even see the board.

The High Court's answers came back the way they come back for most people:

- one petition quietly returned over technical formatting issues—page counts, section ordering, the kind of thing any clerk's office could have helped cure under a “docket first” rule;
- the other disappeared without response.

No explanation.

No clarification.

No signal to lower courts that any of this mattered.

When the highest court in the land declines even to speak to a question like that, every judge and clerk below them hears the same thing:

“You're safe.

You don't have to change.”

The truth is that there has never been a single documented case of the United States' Supreme Court accepting a pro se filing that was civil and not criminal facing. The truth is that they bar the door before any filing like mine can even be considered.

## 9. What This Chapter Is Really Saying

This chapter is not just about three judges and one agency.

It's about a pattern:

- Counties can overreach and call it safety.
- Cities can strip uses and call it zoning.
- Employers can discard you and call it “business necessity.”
- Churches can offer help and then close the pantry door.
- Landlords and insurers can stall and call it process.

And when you finally drag all of that into federal court without a lawyer, the judiciary can:

- deny your fee,
- mis-enter your damages,
- sit on your motions,
- hold hearings you're not really allowed to attend,
- rewrite the record afterward,
- and then accuse you of abusing the system.

All while insisting the system is working exactly as designed.

The Devil's Charity at this level doesn't hand out food boxes or temporary housing.

It hands out forms:

- “in forma pauperis” forms,
- “pro se guidance” pamphlets,
- judicial-conduct complaint forms that vanish into confidential channels.

Enough paper to look like access.

Not enough power to change anything.

We took that pattern all the way up, to the last door in the building.

They looked at the stack of cases—county, city, employer, church, federal agency, three judges, clerk's office, appeals contradictions—and said nothing.

That silence is part of the record now too.

If this system ever collapses under the weight of its own contradictions, no one will be able to say:

“We didn’t know.”

They knew.

They just chose to protect the building.

## Chapter Twelve

I Used to Fix Foundations for a Living.  
Now I Point Out Cracks in the Whole Country.

For a while, my job was simple:

I worked for a big foundation repair company.

A tech would go into a house, measure the floors, probe the walls, check the crawlspace. Then I would show up at the kitchen table with a tablet full of bad news:

- your floors are sinking,
- your walls are bowing,
- your crawlspace is rotting out from under you.

And then I'd lay out options to keep the house from collapsing.

Sometimes the damage was obvious: doors that wouldn't close, cracks splitting down the drywall, floors sloping so badly you could feel it in your knees.

Other times, everything looked fine on the surface.

You only saw the problem if you knew where to measure.

That's where I lived for a while—between the optics of a stable home and the physics of a failing foundation.

Now I live there full-time, just on a different scale.

I used to show people foundation cracks in their houses.

Now I point out foundation cracks in:

- counties,
- cities,
- corporations,
- churches,
- courts,
- and families.

And the reaction is the same, almost word for word.

## 1. How Homeowners React to Bad News

In living rooms and kitchens across multiple states, the script rarely changed.

You sit down, pull out your measurements, and say something like:

“The house is moving.  
This wall is bowing.  
The soil is shifting underneath you.  
If you don’t deal with it, the damage will spread.”

Then you watch their faces go through stages:

1. Denial:  
“We’ve lived here twenty years. It’s always been like this. The last guy never said anything.”
2. Minimizing:  
“So what if a few doors stick? All houses settle. We’ll just patch the drywall.”
3. Blame-shifting:  
“Are you sure you’re not just trying to scare us into something expensive?”
4. Stalling:  
“We’ll think about it. We just can’t handle this right now.”
5. Panic, later, when the crack they ignored tears open in a way they can no longer pretend not to see.

Sometimes they’d tell me outright:

“You’re just a salesman. You profit off fear.”

And the ugly truth was:

- sometimes that was right,
- sometimes the company really was more invested in closing than in caring,
- and the cracks became sales tools, not warning bells.

But the physics remained, whether the motives were pure or predatory:

If a foundation keeps shifting and no one stabilizes it,  
it breaks.

You can paint over the cracks a hundred times.  
The house does not care.

Gravity never votes.

It just wins.

## **2. What I'm Doing Now Is the Same Job, Just Scaled Up**

Now imagine the “house” is:

- a county that doesn't require business licenses, waives architects when it's convenient, then sues small developers into the ground;
- a city that strips a building of every lawful use it was bought for and calls it “safety”;
- a family that consolidates wealth and calls it generosity while leaving you structurally orphaned;
- a corporation that burns through front-line workers and hides behind philanthropy;
- a church that calls scarcity and delay “God's timing” while people are literally out of food;
- a court system that denies you tools and calls it neutral procedure.

The cracks look like:

- “isolated” suicides and overdoses,
- quiet breakdowns,
- people living in cars,
- families moving three times in two years,
- workers with degrees applying for warehouse jobs,
- “housing crises” that only ever seem to hit the bottom 80%.

From the outside, each story is treated as personal misfortune.

From my vantage point, it's all the same pattern:

The load is shifting.

The piers are failing.

The footings were never set to carry this much weight.

And the people in charge are standing in the kitchen saying:

“It's always been like this.

You're just overreacting.

Stop scaring everyone.”

### 3. Why People Hate Crack-Readers

When I worked in foundation repair, I learned something ugly:

The person who points at the crack often becomes the problem.

Not the soil.

Not the builder who cut corners.

Not the storms that soaked the ground.

The messenger.

It goes like this:

- If you show them no problem, you're nice.
- If you show them a small problem, you're helpful.
- If you show them a structural problem they can't afford, you're a predator.

It doesn't matter how calmly you talk.

It doesn't matter if you're right.

The more accurately you diagnose, the more disruptive your presence becomes.

Now look at what I've done in this book:

- I've pointed at cracks in County A's regulatory foundation.
- I've pointed at cracks in City C's zoning and "safety" logic.
- I've pointed at cracks in the Trust Family's structure.
- I've pointed at cracks in FoundationCorp G's business model.
- I've pointed at cracks in the analytics firm, the Revenue Bureau, the landlord, the church, the judges, the High Court.

I haven't just said,

"There are cracks."

I've said,

"Here's how the load is being transferred onto the same people, over and over, and here's how everyone pretends that's not happening."

To people invested in the current ground, that makes me the structural defect.

Because if I'm right, they are not just innocent homeowners.

They are either:

- beneficiaries of the way the house was poured, or
- people who've patched their own cracks by helping transfer the stress downhill.

If you don't want to see that, it's much easier to decide:

"He's bitter.

He's unstable.

He just can't accept responsibility."

That's the emotional version of:

"All houses settle.

It's not that bad.

We'll just repaint."

#### **4. What Happens to a House When You Only Ever Repaint**

Here's what I saw over and over professionally:

- The homeowner declines real structural work.
- They patch, caulk, repaint.
- The doors keep sticking.
- The wall pulls further off plumb.
- Ten years later, someone else inherits a much more expensive problem.

And then one of three things happens:

1. **Forced Sale:**  
The house becomes "too much work," gets sold at a discount, and someone with cash and tools scoops it up, fixes what should've been fixed earlier, and profits off the spread.
2. **Condemnation:**  
The house quietly becomes uninhabitable. The value collapses. The neighborhood absorbs the damage.
3. **Catastrophic Failure:**  
A wall fails, a pipe bursts, something gives way dramatically enough that everyone can finally see what was always there.

I'm worried we are nearing step 2 and 3. We've already sold our nation to huge amounts of national debt. The next steps are condemnation and catastrophic failure.

Now zoom out:

When counties, cities, employers, churches, and courts all refuse structural work, the “house” is the society itself.

- The forced sale looks like privatization and consolidation: the same handful of players quietly collecting distressed assets, buying debt, and writing the rules.
- The condemnation looks like whole neighborhoods and classes written off as “blighted,” “unskilled,” “at-risk,” or “undeserving.”
- The catastrophic failure looks like... pick your disaster:
  - mass protests,
  - waves of self-harm,
  - dropping life expectancy,
  - or quieter collapses like my mother being institutionalized while everyone said “we’ve done all we can.”

None of that requires a conspiracy.

It only requires enough people in charge to say, over and over:

“We’ve looked into it.

The cracks are cosmetic.”

## **5. So What Do I Think the Outcome Will Be?**

You asked me that directly, so I’ll answer you directly.

I see three plausible outcomes, and we’re probably living in all three at once, depending on where you stand:

1. The House Collapses on Schedule  
The people and institutions doing the most harm keep calling it help as they come in for the rescue and for optics.  
The Devil’s Charity keeps patching optics instead of fixing structure.  
Enough of us break early—through illness, burnout, addiction, suicide, quiet strokes and heart attacks—that it looks like random tragedy instead of systemic design.  
The official story will be:  
“We did all we could.”  
The unofficial reality will be:  
“We refused to stop overloading the same beams.”
2. The House Gets Quietly Converted  
The cracks become too obvious to deny, but instead of repairing them, the system

changes who the house is for.

- more gates,
- more HOA rules,
- more screening,
- more fees.

The structure stays the same; the occupants change.

People like me get pushed out to the edge, into motels, trailers, couch-surfing, or exile in another country. While the rich insulate themselves and force the negative consequences of the system on the weakest players.

Those who stay inside reassure themselves:

“See? The house is fine. We’re fine.”

They just don’t notice how many people are now standing outside in the rain.

### 3. Enough People Learn to Read Cracks

This is the only hopeful one.

It doesn’t start with a revolution.

It starts with regular people saying:

“Wait.

This isn’t just about one ‘difficult person.’

These fractures show up everywhere.”

And instead of shooting the messenger, they start:

- listening to the inconvenient stories,
- asking who is always standing under the sagging beam,
- refusing to call patch jobs “solutions,”
- demanding tools or counsel when dragged into a fight they never asked for.

I don’t know which outcome wins.

On most days, if I’m honest, Outcome #2 feels like the default.

On bad days, like I wrote earlier, I can feel the early-death line in my own story and in my wife’s, not because we’re suicidal, but because bodies have limits and ours have been carrying too much weight for too long.

But on the days when I still bother to write any of this down, it’s because I am betting, however slightly, on Outcome #3:

that if you can see the cracks clearly enough,  
and name them before the house falls,  
someone besides you might move.

Maybe they don't save me.  
Maybe they don't fix County A or City C in time.  
Maybe the judges never apologize, the church never admits it waited too long, the employers  
never say they chose image over outcome.

But maybe some future kid standing where I stood—  
surrounded by “help” that hurts—  
will have language for what's happening to them before it grinds them down.

If that happens, even once,  
then reading the cracks out loud will not have been a waste.

I used to sell pier systems and wall braces.

Now the only thing I have to offer is this:

“The house is not fine.  
You're not crazy.  
And repainting the drywall won't fix it.”

What everyone does with that is out of my hands.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **How a Thousand Small Fires Can Kill You Without Leaving a Mark**

Most of what I've written so far looks big on paper:

- counties filing emergency injunctions,
- cities stripping entire buildings of use,
- corporations firing whistleblowers,
- judges closing the door.

Those make sense in a lawsuit.

What almost never makes it into the record are the small fires:

- the week with no hot water,
- the gas leak no one takes seriously until you call the fire department—twice,
- the broken AC in 100-degree heat with three kids and a traumatized nervous system,
- the “late fees” that appear when you spent your rent money on survival gear the landlord forced you to buy.

None of those events, by themselves, will ever be described as abuse.

Put them all together, on top of everything else in this book, and they become something else:

A method of slowly killing people  
without ever laying a hand on them.

### **1. The New Place That Was Supposed to Be “Normal”**

After the car accident.  
After the job loss.  
After the first landlord conflict.  
After the church drama.

We moved again—this time to what looked like a normal, mid-range rental run by a professional management company.

On the brochure, it was perfect:

- stable neighborhood,
- decent schools,
- corporate management instead of a volatile individual owner,
- close enough to services and jobs to build something from.

We signed the lease because, at that point, “normal” was the only fantasy we had left.

We weren’t expecting luxury.

We were just hoping for a stretch of time where nothing caught fire.

Instead, the building itself began to explain the Devil’s Charity more clearly than any judge or bishop ever could.

## **2. A Week Without Air: “You Still Owe Full Rent”**

The first big “small” fire hit during the hottest week of the summer.

The AC died.

Not “it’s a little warm.”

Dead.

We had:

- kids in the house,
- one spouse still recovering from a car crash,
- another spouse carrying years of accumulated stress and trauma,
- bodies that already lived in fight-or-flight.

We reported it immediately.

The management company—let’s call them ManageCo—responded with the tone of someone checking a box:

- a work order was “submitted,”
- a contractor was “queued up,”
- we were asked to “be patient” because “these things take time.”

Days went by.

The house became an oven.

So we did what everyone in that situation eventually does:

We spent our own money—about thirteen hundred dollars—on window units, just to keep the place livable enough that no one passed out.

We weren't splurging.

We weren't upgrading.

We were building a life raft inside a house we were already paying full rent for.

When the next rent cycle came around, we did the obvious math:

“We had no central AC.

We had to buy units out of pocket to keep the place habitable.

The budget is what it is.

We can't pay full rent and the emergency climate-control bill at the same time.”

We told ManageCo:

“We'll be paying reduced rent this month because we had to cover what you didn't.”

Their answer was simple:

“No.

You owe full rent.

If you don't pay it, we'll start the eviction process.”

No acknowledgment of:

- the heat,
- the kids,
- the health issues,
- the fact that they had legal obligations to keep the place habitable.

Just policy.

We pushed back. Hard.

We pointed out:

- tenant rights,
- habitability standards,
- the timeline of our requests,

- the receipts for the window units.

Their response shifted tone but not structure:

“We understand your frustration.  
But if you don’t bring the balance current,  
we’ll have no choice but to move forward.”

That’s the Devil’s Charity in rental form:

- minimal repairs framed as “caring for residents,”
- threats framed as “standard procedure,”
- the cost of their neglect pushed back onto the tenant,
- and then moralized as a failure to “meet obligations.”

We originally withheld \$1300 for rent to cover the cost of the window units. But then they threatened to evict us over it, so we paid it but not the late fees that had accrued from withholding that money. So, they threatened to evict us again over the late fees. Then they came in for surprise inspections to gather evidence and it look like we were the problem. This was all while my wife was in the Green Isle attempting to find paths for immigration, and I was watching three small children with continuing documented back issues from the accident. We finally threw a fit.

Eventually—after we turned up the heat, threatened legal action, and made it clear we wouldn’t just quietly absorb the loss—they refunded the \$1300.

### **3. The Second Threat: “We Can Always Not Renew”**

Once you’re behind their eyes as “that tenant,” the ground changes.

It wasn’t just:

“We’ll evict if you don’t pay.”

It became:

“We might not renew your lease.”

Which, translated, means:

“We hold the power to throw you back into the rental market at any time,  
and you know what your credit and record look like after these last few years.”

(One of the main reasons we are attempting to immigrate to a new country for the actual possibility of a fresh start. If we have to move again, it will likely not be here.)

When every move you make is a trade between survival and “compliance,” the stress doesn’t just double—it multiplies.

You start running the silent math:

- If we push back too hard, will they kick us out?
- If we don’t push back, what else will they let slide?
- If we move again, what will that do to the kids?
- How many more deposits do we have left in us?

This is how a thousand small fires work:

None of them look like abuse in the police report.

All of them land in the same nervous system that’s already been through war.

On paper, ManageCo can say:

“We fixed the AC.

We even reimbursed them.”

They won’t record:

“We tried to keep the late fees.

We used housing as leverage.

We treated a medical and safety crisis like a minor billing dispute.”

#### **4. No Hot Water, Call Back Later**

The AC wasn’t the only thing.

At a different point, the water heater died.

A few days without hot water can be survivable in theory.

In practice:

- young kids,
- dishes,
- laundry,

- already frayed, exhausted parents.

We reported it.

Same pattern:

- work order,
- contractor queue,
- “thanks for your patience.”

No one at ManageCo had to wash a toddler with cold water in a tub after a day of trauma calls, medical bills, and job applications.

No one over there had to decide between:

- heating pots of water on the stove,
- or just giving up and telling the kids, “We’ll try again tomorrow.”

It eventually got fixed.

Everyone could say:

“See? The system works.”

What never shows up in that version is the quiet erosion:

- of dignity,
- of sleep,
- of whatever thin layer of stability you had left.

## **5. The Gas Leak That Needed a Fire Truck**

Then came the gas leak.

You know that smell the first time you think:

“This isn’t normal.”

You report it.

You get told:

“We’ll send someone out.”

No one comes quickly enough.

So you do what you’re supposed to do when a utility becomes an immediate threat:

You call the fire department.

Not once.

Twice.

Firefighters show up, walk through the house, take it seriously, confirm what your body already knows:

“This isn’t safe.”

Now the management company has to move.

Not because empathy kicked in.  
Because liability finally did.

They dispatch someone who can actually diagnose and repair.

They treat it, in their own notes, as a maintenance item:

- leak identified,
- leak repaired,
- case closed.

They don’t log:

- kids sleeping in a house that could have gone very wrong,
- two exhausted parents deciding whether they can afford a hotel,
- the emotional whiplash of any new “small” threat after years of bigger ones.

From their vantage point, it’s just one more line item:

“Addressed gas issue.”

From ours, it was another reminder:

“If you don’t scream loud enough,  
no one comes.”

That’s the Devil’s Charity again:

- the system calls itself “responsive,”
- but only responds fully when your fear finally becomes inconvenient for them.

## **6. The Dual-Income Trap: Why There’s No Margin for Any of This**

All of this would be brutal for a stable, well-resourced family.

Now layer in the dual-income trap.

We live in a culture where:

- housing prices,
- healthcare,
- childcare,
- transportation,
- and debt

are all quietly calibrated to two full-time incomes in a household.

The math underneath everything assumes:

- two adults working,
- minimal interruptions,
- no major health collapses,
- no long stretches where one parent has to be home.

Our reality was the opposite:

- a spouse whose body has been through multiple high-risk pregnancies and miscarriages,
- years where one of us couldn’t work full-time because someone had to keep kids alive and appointments managed,
- repeated job losses not because we were lazy, but because we were expendable the moment we became inconvenient,
- an economy that punishes any interruption like it’s a moral failure.

When one income disappears—even temporarily—the whole structure doesn’t wobble; it drops:

- rent is still priced for two incomes,
- utilities are still priced for two incomes,
- groceries, gas, insurance, copays—all still priced for two incomes.

There’s no “half price” version of survival for a one-income family of five.

So when ManageCo says:

“You still owe full rent, plus late fees,”

they’re not just talking to us.

They’re speaking in the language of a system that assumes:

“If you can’t keep up, it’s because you mismanaged,  
not because the game is rigged to require more than you can physically give.”

The dual-income trap turns every disruption—pregnancy, illness, accident, layoff—into proof that you are defective.

Not the pricing.

Not the policies.

You.

From the outside, the story becomes:

“They’re always scrambling.  
Maybe they just don’t budget well.  
Maybe they eat out too much.”

From the inside, the truth is:

We were running a race designed for two healthy sprinters  
with one person limping and the other dragging a sled of kids, medical bills, and unresolved trauma...

and the track officials kept yelling:

“Have you tried running faster?”

## 7. The Thousand Fires You'll Never Hear About

I'm telling you about:

- the AC,
- the hot water,
- the gas leak.

But if I covered every small fire in the last decade, this book would never end:

- the school forms that got lost,
- the insurance appeals that vanished into voicemail,
- the “random” glitches on online portals,
- the “we never got that fax,”
- the prescription delays,
- the “we’re out of stock,”
- the “your appointment has been rescheduled,”
- the “we can’t see you unless you pay the full balance today.”

None of those, by themselves, look like an attack.

Together, they function as one.

They keep a certain class of people—the already overburdened, the structurally one-income, the health-fragile—from ever having enough bandwidth to:

- build savings,
- rest,
- plan ahead,
- or fight back in any sustained way.

Because every time you lift your head to see the larger pattern, something small catches fire at your feet:

- a utility,
- a bill,
- a leak,
- a form.

You stomp it out.

You lose another day.  
The system never has to face itself in a mirror.

## **8. “Bad Luck” as a Cover Story**

When people on the outside hear about these things, the default response is:

“Wow, you’ve had some bad luck.”

Or, if they’re a little more blunt:

“It can’t always be the system.  
Maybe you’re just being too picky.  
Maybe you don’t handle stress well.”

“Bad luck” is how a society explains away structural patterns it doesn’t want to acknowledge.

Because if this is just about my personality, then:

- no one has to ask why so many people are in similar situations,
- no one has to ask why essential services are always one glitch away from crisis,
- no one has to ask who benefits from a population too exhausted to organize.

When you’ve been hit by enough big blows—county, city, employers, courts—the smaller ones don’t feel small anymore.

They feel like someone leaning on a bruise.

Not hard enough to break the bone.  
Just enough to make sure it never heals.

## **9. How the Devil’s Charity Operates in Daily Life**

This is what I want you to see:

The Devil’s Charity doesn’t just show up in court orders and corporate memos.

It shows up in:

- a landlord who “forgets” habitability law but remembers to charge late fees,
- a management company that only really moves after public agencies get involved,
- a church that waits to help until you’re on the edge of collapse,
- a benefits system built on the assumption that two adults can always work full throttle.

It is the pattern where:

- negligence is framed as “unfortunate delays,”
- threats are framed as “policy,”
- crises are framed as “miscommunications,”
- and the people struggling under the weight of it all are framed as “high maintenance” or “irresponsible.”

By the end of it, your body carries the story even if no one believes your words:

- your cortisol,
- your blood pressure,
- your sleep,
- your digestion.

No one will list that on a balance sheet as “damage done by property management” or “the cost of a two-income economy on a one-income family.”

If you die early, it will be recorded as:

- stroke,
- heart attack,
- cancer,
- “complications.”

No one will put on the death certificate:

“Accumulated bureaucratic cruelty,  
delivered in small, deniable doses,  
in a system that quietly requires two incomes  
from a family that barely has one to give.”

But that’s what it is.

A slow, quiet method of killing people  
while insisting the whole time that you’re just  
“doing your job.”

## Chapter Fourteen: Conspiracy or Bad Luck?

In the last chapter, I talked about the “thousand small fires” that get written off as Acts of God, bad luck, or unfortunate timing.

This is the chapter where those fires start to stack up high enough that any reasonable person has to ask:

Is this just bad luck,  
or is somebody helping it burn?

I’m not going to tell you I can prove that everyone ever involved in my story sat in a room and plotted this out step by step.

What I am going to do is line up what actually happened—with witnesses and paperwork where I have them—in the order it happened.

You can decide whether this was all coincidence,  
or whether power has a way of getting what it wants without ever putting anything in writing.

### The Well That Wouldn’t Die... But Wouldn’t Live

A week after County A filed the emergency injunction...  
after the judge rejected it...  
after CPS and the police came out to scare people out anyway...  
while residents were still living in the building, trying to hang on...

The well started to fail.

Not in a movie way—no dramatic moment where the tap turned and nothing came out.

Real life is uglier and slower than that.

The water still technically “worked,” but:

- the pressure dropped,
- the flow stuttered,
- sometimes it ran, sometimes it coughed,
- and everyone could feel it becoming unreliable.

If you've always been on city water, that might sound like a nuisance.  
If you've ever lived on a well, you know what it really means:

"You are now living on borrowed time."

At that point, the people who had stood in court begging to stay weren't fighting for a cash cow. They were fighting for a crippled building with a sputtering water source that could not be trusted.

County A, of course, had just marched into court calling the place an imminent danger—but for completely different reasons.

When the well began acting like it was at the end of its life, I started looking for answers.

On one side of us was a narrow parcel for a new housing development. On the far side of that parcel lived my neighbor. He had the vantage point I didn't: he could see the drilling rigs on that middle strip, and he walked over and talked to the crew.

On camera, in a recorded statement, he explains that the new development between us:

- drilled four wells on that parcel,
- even though, according to the permits I later pulled, it was only authorized for two, and
- allegedly drilled them to roughly twice the permitted depth, based on what the drillers told him at the time.

He wasn't the one punching holes in the ground.  
He was the eyewitness.

When I checked the permits from County A, they matched his story on the paperwork side: that parcel was permitted for two wells at a much shallower depth.

When you double the number of wells and allegedly drill them to about twice the depth the system planned for, you don't just "add capacity."

You shift the local water table.

So the setup looked like this:

- My building and the new development were drawing from the same aquifer.
- The middle parcel between us and my neighbor had four wells instead of two, allegedly drilled to about twice the permitted depth.
- Right on the heels of County A's failed "emergency" shutdown, my well went from "weak but working" to "barely hanging on and clearly failing."

If you want to stand back and call that “just bad luck,” you can.  
But you have to call all of that luck.

I did what a responsible owner is supposed to do.

I went to the health department and said, in essence:

“The new development between us drilled four wells.  
My neighbor has this on camera and spoke to the drillers.  
The permits only authorize two wells on that parcel at a shallower depth.  
My well is now failing.  
Will you investigate?”

They refused.

Not because the permits said something different.  
Not because the neighbor’s statement was unclear.

They told me that investigating would be “very difficult.”

Difficult for who?

- Difficult for the developer, who might suddenly be liable for over-drilling?
- Difficult for County A, which had just finished presenting my property as a dangerous mistake and now had a convenient new datapoint: “See? Even the water doesn’t want this place to exist”?
- Difficult for the department that would have to step between a shiny new housing project and a half-destroyed hostel County A already wanted gone?

Here’s what I know:

- The development drilled four wells.
- The permits allowed two.
- My neighbor’s testimony is on video.
- My well was barely functioning.
- And the agency whose job is to police that kind of abuse chose not to touch it.

The well limped along, but everyone could feel the writing on the wall.  
You can’t run a full building on “maybe the water will work today.”

From a distance, on paper, County A can shrug and say:

“See? The property was unfit anyway. The water proved it. We did them a favor.”

From where I stood, it looked more like:

“After County A failed to shut us down in court,  
a development between us and the neighbor quietly punched four allegedly over-deep wells into  
the same aquifer,  
my well started dying in slow motion,  
and the system that should have intervened watched it happen  
and called it ‘difficult’ to look at.”

Act of God?  
Or one more lever pulled by growth and indifference?

You decide.

The Electrician Who Saw Through the “Emergency”

If this were just my perception, it would be easy to call it paranoia.

But I wasn’t the only one inside the building watching what actually happened.

Enter Robby Adams—a Master Electrician who started his apprenticeship in 1973 and has been licensed at the top of his field since 1992. That’s over thirty years as a Master Electrician, and half a century working with wires, codes, panels, and actual fire risk.

County A forced me to bring him in after they slammed the emergency brakes on the hostel based on a list of electrical “emergencies.”

Robby went through the building point by point, with the County A exhibits in hand.

Here’s what he found:

- Extension cords that, yes, needed to be cleaned up or replaced with proper outlets, but did not pose any imminent fire hazard.
- An exposed wire in a light fixture that wasn’t even active—no power going to it.
- Extension cords on the exterior of the building feeding a storage unit that needed to be corrected, but again, not an immediate, life-threatening condition.
- A cord running through a vent that County A made a big deal out of—when in reality, it was a low-voltage internet cord running through an unused metal HVAC vent, not a live electrical line waiting to start a fire.
- A board near an electrical panel that posed no real threat beyond aesthetics and code cleanliness.

Every one of these little snapshots was shown to the court like a crime scene photo.

And every single one, in Robby's professional opinion, did not justify an "emergency" shutdown of the entire facility.

He didn't just say that casually. He put it in writing and under oath:

Nothing in the building's electrical system posed an imminent or immediate danger of fire. There were no issues so severe that they warranted the immediate shutdown of the facility.

He fixed all of it anyway—every item on County A's first list.

He did it by hand, while I directed him from across the country, and he did it according to the National Electrical Code (NEC), the national standard.

If this had actually been about safety, that should have been the end of the story:

- violations identified,
- violations corrected,
- building brought up to code,
- people allowed to stay.

But that's not what happened.

## Moving the Goalposts

Once Robby finished the first list and testified there was no imminent danger, you might think County A would say: "Great, thank you. Let's get everybody back into compliance and move forward."

Instead, they brought out a second list.

After their emergency injunction was rejected by the court, and after the first list of "emergency" violations had been corrected, they suddenly "found" more issues:

- exposed junction boxes that were not live in a way that created immediate danger,
- non-functioning wiring that posed no active safety threat,
- missing smoke detectors and other minor code items that, while needing to be addressed, did not present an imminent fire hazard.

Robby fixed those too.

And still, County A would not reopen.

In his sworn statements, he spells it out in language that should make any judge sit up straight:

- that County A's behavior was significantly out of the ordinary compared to how they treat other property owners;
- that in decades of working across County A and surrounding jurisdictions, it is standard for local officials to work with owners, provide guidance, and offer reasonable timelines to bring properties into compliance;
- that in my case, they did the opposite: they seemed determined to find ways to shut the business down rather than help fix it.

He also points out something that goes straight to the heart of this book:

- Usually, a county requires an architect or engineer and conducts regular inspections on a project like mine from the beginning.
- If County A had followed that normal pattern, any structural or electrical concerns would have been addressed early, long before residents were living there during Covid.
- Instead, they failed to require proper oversight at the start, then suddenly dropped the architect/engineer requirement and even a fire sprinkler system on me later—knowing there was no public water, and knowing there were other code-compliant paths available.

In other words:

They chose the most impossible fixes first  
and used those impossibilities as a weapon.

From a Master Electrician's point of view, this wasn't just overkill. It was arbitrary and retaliatory.

Robby doesn't use those words lightly. He uses them because, as he says, this did not look like normal enforcement. It looked like a personal vendetta carried out with official tools.

Then They Followed Him

Robby didn't stop at the wires. He also testified about what happened after he told the truth in court.

Following his testimony in my favor, he says he was followed by the County A sheriff—who, not coincidentally, is related to one of the county officials involved in my case.

Not once.

Not a vague “I thought I saw a cop a couple of times.”

He describes being tailed over the course of several weeks, enough that this fifty-year electrician—who has worked all over County A without incident—felt it was deliberate and retaliatory, tied to his role in my case.

He came away believing:

- that County A’s actions were driven by a personal vendetta,
- that they were not acting in good faith,
- and that their behavior toward both of us was meant to punish, not protect.

Again: you can call that coincidence if you want.

But now we’re stacking:

- an emergency shutdown with no real emergency,
- a first list of “urgent” hazards,
- all of them fixed,
- a second list suddenly appearing after the court rejects their injunction,
- all of those fixed too,
- no reopening,
- and then the Master Electrician who said so out loud being shadowed by sheriffs connected to the same power structure he just embarrassed.

At some point, “just bad luck” starts to feel like a joke.

The Buyer Who Blew Up My Last Good Account

Now jump with me to City C and 913 East Main.

By this point, City C had quietly stripped away every legal use of that building. On paper, it still looked like a property. In reality, it was a hostage.

One of the only things keeping us afloat during that period was our Airbnb listing.

Not some throwaway profile.  
Our good account.

- nearly a thousand reviews,
- years of reputation,
- a history of successfully hosting guests.

That account was one of the last threads holding our financial life together.

We had guests on site—mid-stay—using the building exactly the way we’d been told we could.

Then Buyer J who was also an realtor entered the story.

He presented as a buyer. He put 913 East Main under contract in his name and, on paper, it looked like a lifeline:

“We have a buyer. We have a path out.”

While he had the property tied up, he—or someone acting on his behalf—went to the building and spoke directly to my guests.

They were told they were going to have to leave and that the property was being sold.

Not by City C.

Not by a court.

By a representative of the guy under contract to buy the property.

You can imagine how this landed with paying guests who had done nothing but book a stay.

They were scared.

They were confused.

They were suddenly in the middle of something that felt like a raid.

From Airbnb’s point of view, the optics were simple:

- guests forced out mid-reservation,
- serious complaint,
- something that needed to be “made right.”

So Airbnb did what platforms do when they’re trying to look responsible:

- they processed roughly \$10,000 in refunds,
- and they hit my account with an additional \$5,000 debit I had no way to absorb.

Overnight:

- the income from those guests vanished,
- my account balance went deeply negative,
- and the profile I'd built with nearly a thousand ratings was effectively destroyed.

That account is still frozen in that state today: negative, unusable, poisoned.

So not only did we lose the City C building.  
We lost:

- the platform we built,
- the reputation we earned,
- and one of the only tools that could have helped us recover later.

Context matters here:

- City C told us we could operate, then quietly froze all legitimate uses.
- Jenkins stepped in as a “buyer,” tied the building up, and then someone connected to him scared my guests out.
- Guests panic, complain, and leave.
- Airbnb, trying to be fair to the guests, wiped out around \$10,000 and hit us with a \$5,000 debit we couldn't pay.
- The account that might've carried us into the next season was torched.

You can call that bad luck.

Or you can notice how often “bad luck” invariably showed up right after a county or city decided I was a problem.

Two Tickets in Thirty Days

The same gravitational pull showed up again in City C.

Once City C set its sights on 913 East Main, I suddenly became very interesting to one particular officer.

I walked out of that building and got pulled over.  
Ticket.

Less than thirty days later, I walked out of the same building and got pulled over by the same officer.  
Second ticket.

Same cop.  
Same property.  
Same narrow window of time in which City C had already decided my building was a problem.

I fought them in court and, for once, things broke my way: both tickets were thrown out on a technicality.

In that courtroom, I looked the officer in the eye and asked him if he was working with City C to target me.

He looked startled.  
He denied it.

And in this case, I actually believe him. He didn't look like a man executing a careful plot; he looked like a man who'd suddenly realized he might be part of one.

So no, I don't think there was a memo that said, "Ticket him twice this month."

But I do think once a city decides you and your building are a problem, you become a lot easier to notice.

So Which Is It?

So which is it?

Conspiracy?  
Or bad luck?

Honestly, I think that's the wrong question.

I don't need everyone in this book to have been on a group chat plotting my downfall for this to be terrifying.

What I see is something more diffuse and, in many ways, more dangerous:

A shared gravity inside the system  
that always tilts in favor of itself,  
always punishes people who don't go quietly,  
and always has a way to make the target look like the unstable one.

When you're the only one who can see the pattern clearly, that's when it starts to break your mind.

You try to explain how the fires line up, how the well failed, how the buyer blew up your income, how the witness got followed, how the tickets appeared—and everyone else just shrugs and says, “That’s life.” That is the moment people like me get labeled paranoid, “mentally ill,” or unstable. That’s how you end up medicated, dismissed, or even institutionalized—not because there was no pattern, but because the pattern was too threatening to be acknowledged.

In that kind of gravity, you don't need a mastermind.

You need:

- A county already angry you fought it in court.
- A new development that quietly drills four allegedly over-deep wells where two shallower ones were permitted.
- A health department that finds it “too difficult” to intervene when your well starts failing.
- A “buyer” who ties up what’s left of your future and gets your last good income stream detonated in the process.
- A platform that refunds and debits you into oblivion in the name of fairness.
- A Master Electrician who says there was no emergency, then gets followed by the sheriff.
- A city where your car suddenly becomes very visible once your building becomes inconvenient.

From the outside, each event can be explained away.

From the inside, it feels like this:

Every time I tried to get back up,  
another lever got pulled just enough to knock me down—  
and every lever came with a polite explanation,  
a rule,  
a procedure,  
or an Act of God stamp.

Conspiracy or bad luck?

You can call it whichever helps you sleep.

I call it what this book is about:

The Devil's Charity at scale—  
a system that can destroy a life through a thousand “reasonable” actions,  
while everyone involved swears they were only doing their job.

I want to remind you that I'm not embellishing any of this. This is all true and backed up with evidence and lawsuits.

I know I don't come across as fragile. I am tough. I am stubborn. I am strategic. I've built businesses, fought counties and cities, written books, and I am still here trying to claw my way out. It takes a lot to break me. And that's the point. If someone as capable, driven, and relentless as I am can be chewed up like this, what chance does anyone have who isn't? What chance does a single mom, a disabled tenant, an undocumented worker, or a kid aging out of foster care have when this is how the system behaves on its default settings? The people at the top who look down and congratulate themselves on their “success” need to understand that much of what they call merit is really just predation with better optics—that their comfort is sitting on the backs of people who can't breathe. And somehow, we've all been trained to call that pressure fairness.

## Chapter Fifteen

### How They'll Try to Rewrite This Story

By the time you're reading this, there's a decent chance one or more of the people or institutions in these pages has already seen it.

They will not be surprised.

I didn't quietly slip away and write an angry book in the dark.

I:

- filed lawsuits against each of them (or nearly each – where the law couldn't reach, the pattern still did),
- wrote letters,
- sent emails,
- filed grievances,
- stood in hearings,
- begged in church offices,
- confronted managers in person and on the phone,
- and, in some cases, raised my voice until it shook.

I told them exactly what they were doing and what it was doing to us.

They chose anyway.

That's important to say up front, because it changes what this chapter is really about.

This isn't a chapter about whether harm happened.

It's a chapter about how the story will be spun now that the harm is on paper.

### 1. The First Line of Defense: "He's Misrepresenting Everything"

Every system in this book has a ready-made script for a moment like this.

They don't have to gather in a secret room and coordinate it. The culture has already written it for them.

It goes something like this:

“We’re saddened he feels this way.  
We don’t recognize events as he’s describing them.  
We did our best under difficult circumstances.”

Family will translate that into:

- “He’s always been dramatic.”
- “He’s rewriting history.”
- “We sacrificed so much; this is how he repays us.”

Corporations will translate it into:

- “We followed policy.”
- “We value our people.”
- “We can’t comment on ongoing or past litigation.”

Church leaders will translate it into:

- “We tried to minister.”
- “We followed the handbook.”
- “We regret that he chose to take offense.”

Judges and agencies will translate it into:

- “The record speaks for itself.”
- “He is simply unhappy with the outcome.”
- “We cannot respond to every frivolous accusation.”

Notice what all of these have in common:

- They flatten complexity.
- They pathologize the person speaking.
- And they refuse to re-examine the structure.

The goal is not to prove I’m wrong in any specific detail.

The goal is to make me sound unreliable enough that the details don’t have to be examined at all.

## 2. The Second Line of Defense: “We Did So Much for Him”

When denial isn’t enough, the next move is always the same:

“Yes, maybe mistakes were made.  
But look at everything we did for him.”

The Trust Family will talk about:

- inheritances paid out,
- sacrifices made,
- “chances” I was given.

They will say, “We bought them time. We gave them options. We tried to help.”

They will not talk about:

- inheritance held back “for my own good,”
- options that all converged on them gaining control,
- letters that secured their reputation while quietly exiling me.

The foundation company will talk about:

- the leads they handed me,
- the training they provided,
- the “support” during my mental health crisis.

They will not talk about:

- throttling those same leads,
- moving the performance bar midstream,
- telling me to keep selling in the middle of suicidal ideation instead of removing me from the field.

The analytics firm will talk about:

- the opportunity they gave my wife,
- the flexibility of remote work,
- the complexity of their business model.

They will not talk about:

- asking her to rubber-stamp work she believed was unethical and possibly illegal,
- cutting her hours retroactively,
- firing her after she raised the alarm.

The tax agency will talk about:

- the “voluntary nature” of the fork,
- the paid time she received,
- the policies that supposedly applied to all.

They will not talk about:

- weaponized boredom as a management tool,
- psychological pressure to accept the fork or risk everything,
- the way a “voluntary” choice stops being voluntary when your entire financial survival hangs on it.

The church will talk about:

- storehouse orders eventually filled,
- fast-offering checks eventually cut,
- local leaders “doing their best.”

They will not talk about:

- promising food and then delaying it because “God’s timing,”
- quietly resenting the help because my bishop wasn’t getting his own mortgage paid,
- ignoring a lifetime of me moving other families while no one showed up when it was our turn.

Landlords and insurers will talk about:

- repairs eventually made,
- checks eventually written,
- policies followed.

They will not talk about:

- days without AC in dangerous heat,
- interrogations designed to catch me in a contradiction rather than understand the injury,
- the long delay before any payout, while bills stack and credit implodes.

Judges will talk about:

- heavy caseloads,
- procedural rules,
- the duty to protect limited resources.

They will not talk about:

- the contradiction of one court denying my fee waiver as “frivolous” and another granting it on appeal,
- the ex parte meetings with powerful institutions,
- the quiet decision at the highest level not to even docket the question of basic access.

All of them share a single move:

Put their “good deeds” between themselves and the harm.

That’s the Philanthropy Shield.

### 3. The Philanthropy Shield (and Why Some Players Use It Better Than Others)

Earlier I described the Philanthropy Shield in detail: the way people and institutions use visible generosity to hide the machinery of exploitation.

Here’s the compressed version:

1. Make money or preserve power in ways that quietly hurt people.
2. Publicly “give back” a fraction of that—money, time, sponsorships, charity.
3. Use that visible goodness as proof you cannot be the problem.

You see it in:

- families who point to one big check or one “generous” act while ignoring years of consolidation and withholding,

- churches that parade humanitarian efforts while leaving real families under their nose to starve or drown in bureaucracy,
- corporations that sponsor charity runs and “community days” while burning through employees as disposable fuel.

Some are more sophisticated than others.

The foundation company in this book—FoundationCorp G—is particularly good at it:

- glossy marketing about “protecting homes,”
- sponsorships and charity projects,
- polished stories of “giving back” to the communities they dig under and around.

They will show up to build ramps, patch foundations, donate to local causes.

Meanwhile, in the back office and the sales vans, they:

- over-hire, over-promise, and quietly churn through bodies,
- use fear to upsell panic-stricken homeowners,
- treat salespeople as replaceable parts whose mental health only matters if it affects the close rate.

From the outside, it looks like:

“Here is a company that cares about families and communities.”

From the inside, when you’re the one being Feasted, it feels like:

“Here is a machine that will grind you down and then take a tax deduction for the privilege.”

The church has its own version of the shield:

- global humanitarian numbers,
- videos of wells and wheelchairs,
- constant talk of “ministering” and “covenant belonging.”

Those things are not fake.

They are also not the whole story.

They become the shield that makes it nearly impossible for members to face the ugly reality that:

- a bishop can delay food aid on the theory of “God’s timing,”
- a ward can watch a family move injured and alone and stay seated,
- a lawsuit asking for basic integrity in local decisions can be framed as “attacking the Lord’s Church.”

The Philanthropy Shield doesn’t require fake goodness.

It only requires loud goodness.

Loud enough that any critic can be painted as bitter, ungrateful, or mentally unwell.

#### 4. “He’s Just Bitter / Sick / Obsessed”

That will be the third line of defense:

“He’s traumatized. He’s angry. He’s not seeing clearly.”

And here is the part that makes this move so effective:

They’re not entirely wrong.

I am traumatized.

I am angry.

I have spent years trying to map out what happened.

But instead of asking:

- What kind of system produces this level of trauma?
- What would it take for a sane person to end up here?

...it’s easier to say:

“That proves he can’t be trusted.”

My mental health struggles become:

- a character flaw,
- a disqualifier,
- Exhibit A in why my perception doesn’t count.

What never gets examined is:

- the cumulative effect of being structurally orphaned,
- the weight of pro se litigation against coordinated institutions,
- the toll of pregnancies, miscarriages, illness, and accidents with no real net.

This is another core trick of the Devil's Charity:

Harm someone until they are visibly shaking,  
then use the shaking as proof you did nothing wrong.

## 5. "We Didn't Know" (Why That's Not True Anymore)

There's one more move I want to name clearly, because it will be tempting for many of them:

"We had no idea he felt this way.  
We didn't understand the full impact.  
If only he had come to us."

So let me say this without metaphor:

I did come to you.

All of you.

In different ways, in different forums, over and over:

- I wrote long, detailed letters to family, laying out patterns, asking for shared risk and honest accounting.
- I met with county officials, city staff, and lawyers, pointing to statutes, codes, and basic fairness.
- I begged corporate managers to see what their metrics were doing to me and to others.
- I went up every rung of the church ladder I could reach asking for the food we'd been told would be there.
- I filed EEOC complaints, grievances, and formal lawsuits with attachments and exhibits.
- I sent motions, petitions, and appeals to judges and courts at every level available to me.
- I sat under fluorescent lights and told therapists and leaders that I was not okay, that this was not okay.

Sometimes I did it calmly.  
Sometimes I did it exhausted.  
Sometimes I did it yelling.

But I did it.

They heard me.

And their choices after that are in the record:

- letters they sent,
- actions they took,
- motions they granted or denied,
- aid they withheld or delayed.

This is not a story about innocent ignorance.

This is a story about informed refusal.

I'm not saying they gathered in a room and agreed to kill me.

I am saying:

- they were told this would damage us,
- they chose to do it anyway,
- they trusted the system to absorb any backlash,
- and they expected the rest of the world to nod along and say, "Well, I'm sure they did their best."

## 6. Murder by Committee

When I talk about "murder" in this book, I don't mean a single person with a weapon and a plan.

I mean:

- stress-based illness,
- chronic financial precarity,
- repeated psychological blows,
- the slow erosion of mental and physical capacity,

until an early death becomes statistically likely—not because of one dramatic event, but because of accumulated, respectable damage.

Every actor in this book can point to their cut and say:

“It wasn’t that bad.  
Other people have survived worse.  
I had my reasons.”

None of them have to own the whole wound.

They can all stand back with clean hands and say, like polite Romans watching from the steps:

“Et tu, Bruté?  
Surely not us. We just did our duty.”

But here is the math they don’t want to do:

- County A, City C, the Trust Family, FoundationCorp G, AnalyticsCorp, the Tax Agency, the Landlords, the Church, the Judges—
- each of you took a slice,
- each of you justified it,
- each of you walked away saying, “It’s tragic, but not my fault,”
- none of you looked seriously at how many slices one human being can lose before something vital doesn’t grow back.

That is murder by committee.

Premeditated not in the sense that you set out to end my life,  
but in the sense that you were told—plainly—what your choices were doing,  
and you chose them anyway.

## 7. If You’re One of Them (Or Someone Like Them)

If you recognize yourself in these pages—even under the anonymized names—this chapter is not here to beg you for anything.

I already begged.

This chapter is here so that when you reach for one of these defenses:

- “He’s misrepresenting us.”
- “We helped so much.”
- “Look at all our good works.”
- “He’s just bitter and unstable.”
- “We didn’t know.”

...you will hear one quiet question underneath:

“Is that an answer, or is that a shield?”

If you are a reader who is not in this cast, I wrote this chapter for you too—because sooner or later, your life will put you on one side or the other of someone else’s Devil’s Charity story.

You will:

- sit on a board,
- manage a team,
- lead a congregation,
- administer a policy,
- or hold the purse strings in a family.

Someone will stand in front of you, shaking, and try to tell you what your decisions are doing to them.

In that moment, you will feel a pull toward every script in this chapter.

You will want to protect your image, your institution, your story of yourself as “the good one.”

You will want to reach for the shield.

I can’t stop you.

All I can do is name the pattern so clearly that if you still choose it, you will know what you’re choosing.

Not ignorance.

Not neutrality.

But one more small, respectable cut  
on a body already covered in them.

## 8. The Devil's Charity in One Page

If you've made it this far, you've seen the pattern from a hundred angles. Here it is in one page.

The Devil's Charity is what happens when:

1. Harm is framed as help.
  - Control is sold as "care."
  - Punishment is sold as "natural consequences."
  - Abandonment is sold as "respecting agency."
2. The response to your collapse is used as proof they were right.
  - You break down under the weight?
  - "See? He was unstable."
  - You rage?
  - "See? He's abusive."
  - You go quiet and disappear?
  - "See? He didn't really want help."
3. The system's image matters more than your reality.
  - Family cares more about "what people will think" than what actually happened.
  - Churches care more about protecting the brand than feeding a hungry family.
  - Corporations care more about quarterly optics than the salespeople melting down in their cars.
  - Courts care more about docket optics and "frivolous filer" labels than whether a human being is actually drowning in process.

Every example in this book is just that pattern translated into:

- a trust and inheritance,
- a county and a city,
- two employers and a federal agency,
- a church,
- a string of landlords and insurers,
- and multiple layers of courts.

The names change.  
The script does not.

## 9. If You're Inside Your Own Devil's Charity

If you're reading this while you are still inside your own version of this machine, this part is for you.

I can't give you a magic exit. If I had one, I would have taken it years ago.

But if I could hand you a few handholds, they would be these:

1. Stop waiting for the system to suddenly see you.  
Judge it by what it actually does, not by what it says about itself.  
If it consistently:
  - delays,
  - deflects,
  - blames you for asking,  
believe that pattern. Don't keep offering it fresh chances to prove you wrong.
2. Start quietly documenting.
  - Dates, names, decisions.
  - What was promised, what happened instead.
  - Screenshots, emails, letters, photos.  
This isn't about building a perfect lawsuit. It's about refusing to let the story be completely rewritten. Paper is the only thing the Devil's Charity respects.
3. Separate survival from justice.  
If you are in immediate danger—financially, medically, mentally—your first job is not to “win.”  
Your first job is to:
  - get through the night,
  - keep a roof (any roof),
  - stay alive.  
You can't fight if you're dead. You're not a coward for choosing shelter over one more “principled stand” that would finish you.
4. Pick a few fights on purpose.  
You cannot litigate every wound. You cannot confront every hypocrite.  
Choose the fights where:
  - the pattern is clearest,
  - the paper is strongest,
  - and the potential ripple is worth the cost.  
Let yourself walk away from the rest without calling it “failure.” It's triage.

5. Find at least one witness who believes you.  
If it's a therapist, a friend, a support group, an online stranger—it counts.  
The Devil's Charity thrives on isolation and self-doubt.  
Even one person saying, "No, you're not crazy. That's real," changes the physics of what you can carry.

If at any point you find yourself wanting to end your life just to make the pain stop, that is not proof that "they were right about you."

It is proof the system did what it was designed to do: wear you down until you blame yourself for breaking.

You deserve more time than the Devil's Charity wants to give you.

## 10. Why Tools or Counsel Matters Here

If you strip away the church language, the family drama, the corporate slogans, and the legal Latin, a lot of what happened in this book comes down to one thing:

Information and power were wildly lopsided.

They had:

- lawyers on salary,
- handbooks and internal memos,
- policy teams and PR departments,
- judges they'd stood in front of a hundred times before.

We had:

- Google,
- a frying brain,
- and whatever we could print at the library.

That is why I keep coming back to a simple demand:

In complex civil fights where your housing, kids, health, or basic survival are on the line, courts must offer one of two things:

Tools or Counsel.

Either:

- Tools – real, accessible, step-by-step help that actually lets a normal person navigate the process without being eaten alive,

or:

- Counsel – a lawyer appointed for the limited purpose of leveling the field when the other side shows up with a full legal department.

If that standard had existed:

- County A and City C wouldn't have been able to bury us in procedure and "gotchas."
- FoundationCorp G wouldn't have been able to play HR and performance metrics against my suicidal ideation without any meaningful check.
- AnalyticsCo and the Tax Agency would have had to answer to someone other than their own internal policies when they wrecked our income.
- The courts wouldn't have been able to slam the door with "frivolous" while another court, looking at the same facts, quietly agreed it wasn't.

Tools or Counsel doesn't fix everything.

But it turns "murder by committee" into something that at least has to be done in the light, with someone standing next to you who speaks the language.

That's the reform I'm asking you to remember when you put this book down.

Not a statue.

Not a monument.

Just a rule that says:

If the system insists on a fight, it has to be a fair one.

## 11. This Isn't Just My Story (The Optics Economy)

One last thing.

It would be comforting to believe this is just a weird, unlucky cluster around one family, one county, one church, one set of employers.

It isn't.

We live in what I've called an optics economy:

- Institutions survive by looking good,
- not by being good.
- The scoreboard is impressions, PR, "engagement," quarterly numbers, public confidence.

In that world:

- The Devil's Charity is not a bug.
- It's a feature.

It's how systems:

- protect their image while quietly offloading the cost of their decisions onto the most vulnerable people inside them,
- keep the "quiet desperation index" high enough that you'll accept anything—any fork, any settlement, any unpaid overtime—because the alternative feels like free fall.

My story is one data point in that larger pattern.

And while we're here, let me make one simple request that sits right at street level:

Stop gaslighting the poor.

When you see someone begging at an intersection or sleeping under a bridge, notice how fast the story fires in your head:

"Poor people have poor ways."

"If they really wanted help, they'd get it."

"The system is probably taking care of them somehow."

You don't have to roll down your window and hand them cash.

You don't have to invite every stranger into your guest room.

But you can refuse to pile on the quiet condemnations.

You can:

- stop using “poor choices” as a lazy explanation for structural abandonment,
- stop assuming that because a government program or a church exists on paper, it’s actually reaching that person in time,
- stop telling yourself that anyone still on the sidewalk must have “refused help.”

Sometimes the most powerful thing you can do isn’t a grand gesture—it’s reducing the downward pressure in your own sphere.

Because the person you relieve next to you—the employee you don’t grind into dust, the neighbor you cut slack for, the family member you stop shaming—might be the one who does know that beggar personally. They might be the one who has a spare room, or a job lead, or the patience to sit in the welfare office line. But they can’t offer a structural fix if they’re suffocating too.

So if you’re going to give charity at all, let it be actual charity—something that lightens real burdens—not the Devil’s Charity dressed up as “tough love” and “hard truths” about people you’ve never met.

When you leave this chapter and go back to your own life:

- your company’s wellness program,
- your church’s charity drives,
- your family’s group text about “boundaries” and “tough love,”
- your local court’s budget hearings—

you will see echoes.

You will notice where help is loud and harm is quiet.

Where “accountability” flows one way.  
Where people are shaking and being told it’s proof they’re the problem.

You can’t dismantle the optics economy by yourself.

But in every role you hold—parent, manager, bishop, judge, caseworker, neighbor—you can refuse to run its playbook.

You can:

- listen longer than is comfortable,
- weigh people over PR,
- ask what your policy is actually doing to the person in front of you,

- and choose not to hide behind the Philanthropy Shield when someone finally tells you the truth.

That's all this chapter is really asking.

Not that you believe every word I say.

But that when your own Devil's Charity moment comes,  
you recognize the scripts,  
feel the pull toward the shield,  
and decide—on purpose—whether you're going to pick it up.

Here's the whole section again with your new addition woven in near the end, right after the "All of that is gone now..." paragraph. You can replace your current Section 12 with this and leave the rest of the chapter alone.

## 12. One Man Who Didn't Make It

Before you put this book down, I want to say one name out loud:

Shawn.

I talked about him at the beginning of the book, but I want to tell you about him more now. Shawn spent twenty years in prison for the armed robbery of a pharmacy.

Two decades.

By the time he walked out, the world had moved on without him. Technology, housing prices, social rules, even the way you apply for a job—everything had shifted. All the things we like to pretend are "simple" were stacked against him from the moment the gate closed behind his back.

I met him on the other side of that gate.

I couldn't fix his record. I couldn't rewrite the twenty years. But I could do two things that matter more than any reentry brochure:

I gave him a home  
and I gave him a job.

He had a room. He had a place to stand. He had people to talk to at the beginning and end of a shift. He was rough around the edges and imperfect, like all of us—but he was showing up. He was rebuilding.

And he wasn't just rebuilding for himself.

Shawn had started a small nonprofit built around one simple idea:

He would do taxes for people who were invisible to everyone else.

- The poor.
- Former prisoners.
- The ones who don't understand the forms, don't trust the letters, don't have a laptop or a steady address.

He knew how hard the system could hit. He also knew how much difference a single refund, a single clean return, a single piece of paperwork done right could make for someone hanging on by a thread.

So he sat with the people everyone drives past and helped them face the very agency that had held him for twenty years.

That was his version of grace.

And he was messy.

At one point he grew weed in my basement without my permission.

At another, during a weak moment in my own life, he essentially stole and gambled away about six hundred dollars.

None of that is cute. None of that is okay.

Those are the kinds of details people love to seize on when they want to say about someone like Shawn what so many people have said about me:

“Not worth saving.

Poor people have poor ways.

What did you expect?”

It would be easy for me to join that chorus.

To hold up the weed and the six hundred dollars and say, “See? He blew it.”

But I know the fuller story.

I know the man who:

- sat at a folding table to do taxes for people no one else would help,
- tried to rebuild after twenty years in a cage,
- used the little stability he had to lift people even more fragile than he was.

And if I could have saved him, I would have.

I even asked him to come and testify when the county came after me.

He wanted to.

He knew what was happening. He knew what it meant for him and for people like him.

But he was too afraid:

- afraid of violating parole,
- afraid of being seen by the wrong officials,
- afraid that standing up in court would drop him straight back into the machinery that had already taken twenty years.

So he stayed silent.

That's what the system does to the weakest among us in real time:

it keeps them just scared enough that they can't speak at the very moments their voice would matter most.

When the county, the city, the courts, and the bankruptcy machine tore my knees out from under me, they tore his out too.

In City C, when the property and the business were stripped away, Shawn lost:

- his home,
- his job,
- his fragile bridge back into a world that had already decided he was disposable.

He didn't just lose a paycheck.

He lost the one tiny pocket of stability that said, "You still have a place here," and the staging ground from which he was lifting other people like him.

He was too poor to even keep his phone on consistently. Service would drop. Numbers would change. Messages wouldn't go through.

And by the time he was really spiraling again, I was still living out of state. Trying to protect my wife and kids from the fallout of the bankruptcy, triaging our own survival. I couldn't keep a

roof over us and also keep my hands under everyone else the way I used to. All while my uncle was openly telling me he wouldn't even rent to me as a landlord because bankruptcy is theft.

The line between us stretched, frayed, and then snapped.

After that, the story turned predictable in the worst way:

- he broke parole,
- he was swallowed back into the system,
- and eventually, he ended up dead.

I didn't find out from a friend or a memorial.

The police called me.

My home in the City was still listed as the last one he'd had on record, so when he died, they went down the list and asked if I would come and claim the body.

Think about that.

The same house and business the Devil's Charity had already stripped from us was still, in the records, his last place of safety. When the system was done with him, it turned back to the ruins of what used to be our life and said, in effect:

"You were the last person who tried to give him a home.  
Will you come clean up what's left?"

I can't give you a coroner's report that says "cause of death: Devil's Charity."

What I can give you is the sequence:

- Man does something terrible in his twenties and pays with twenty years.
- Man gets out and actually tries—takes the job, lives in the room, starts a nonprofit to do taxes for the poor and for people just out of prison.
- He is still human and flawed and makes some bad choices.
- He is too afraid of the system to even testify about what it's doing.
- Every institutional knee under the man who hired him gets chopped out at once.
- The bridge collapses.
- The man falls.
- The police call the last address where he was loved and ask if someone will claim what's left of him.
- The story ends the way everyone secretly expected it to end from the beginning.

I live with a simple, brutal truth:

If my knees hadn't been cut out from under me,  
I could have saved Shawn.

If my family had actually believed me and supported me rather than systematically limiting my options and calling it care, I possibly could have saved Shawn. But they chose to save their own bank accounts instead.

And he wasn't the only one I might have saved.

There was Jeanne.

Half crazy, half saint, scrubbing the hostel to death and going through cleaning supplies like water.

Before she came to me, she'd been homeless. I gave her a home and a job too.

She was the one who stood in that courtroom—shaking, exhausted—and still had the courage to ask the judge, out loud:

“If your hands are tied... who can we turn to?”

I didn't even have the guts to call him out that way.

They tossed her out anyway.

I don't know what happened to Jeanne after that. I just know that when they cut me down, they cut the person who was sheltering her. If she slipped back into homelessness, the Devil's Charity will say it was because of her “poor choices,” not because the one person giving her a roof had his legs taken out.

There was Bob.

An old, crippled man who'd been living in a motel before he moved into my hostel. He shuffled around the property like a worn-out guardian, grateful for space that wasn't funded by hourly desperation.

He begged the judge too. An old crippled man, pleading openly in court for them to stop.

I don't know what happened to Bob after they forced him out. I just know that whenever someone tells me this was all about “code” and “process” and “public safety,” I see his face and remember that no one in that room had a plan for him once I was removed.

And there was the family.

A minority family with kids, living in the building when CPS and the police came.

I canceled thousands of dollars in Airbnb bookings to shield them—to turn a short-term revenue machine into long-term housing so that actual children didn’t end up on the sidewalk.

I don’t know where they are now. Maybe they’re okay. Maybe they aren’t. The point is, the system never had to find out, because once I was gone, we all became “unfortunate but necessary collateral” in a story about “enforcement” and “doing things the right way.”

They were also forced out of their home and job in the same day, as I was also employing them and providing stability for them as they built their own business on the side. But it was easier for the government to “protect” them by forcing them out.

So when I say “Think of everyone he could have lifted,” I don’t just mean Shawn’s tax clients.

I mean:

- Jeanne, who might still be scrubbing a place she could call home instead of scrubbing her way back onto the street.
- Bob, who might still be shuffling through a hostel instead of another anonymous room paid for by panic.
- That family, whose kids might have grown up in one more stable chapter instead of another forced move.
- And all the people they, in turn, might have lifted if someone had given them room to breathe.

All of that is gone now—or at least scattered in ways I may never see.

And here’s the part people don’t like to talk about:

Actually helping people is hard.

Not optically helping. Not hashtag helping. Not “thoughts and prayers” helping.

Real helping.

The reason it’s so rare isn’t just individual selfishness.

It’s that the system fights you from both ends.

- The people and institutions stronger than you will crush you without blinking if you interfere with their comfort or their revenue.
- The people weaker than you, the ones you’re trying to pull up, will sometimes blame you for the help you were structurally unable to give while looking at your apparent wealth and justifying their own theft.

Just because I gave people a job and a home doesn’t mean I was held up as their hero.

Often, I wasn't.

And I was okay with that, because in the end the help was never supposed to be about me. That's not why I was helping. That's why instead of investing my wealth in the stock market, I tried to invest it into people and into community and the system taught me very clearly why that move is not common.

It doesn't mean I did it perfectly.

It doesn't mean I've never handed out my own doses of the Devil's Charity—times where I used "tough love" to avoid the deeper sacrifice, or where my fear made me smaller than I wanted to be.

But I understand the game.

Truly helping people is hard. It takes sacrifice. It often isn't glamorous. Humans are messy and hard. They relapse. They yell. They disappoint you. They grow weed in your basement and gamble with money they shouldn't touch. But if I could do it all again and try to help these people again, I would.

If you constantly choose to excuse yourself at the cost of the weakest among us—  
if you use their messiness as a permanent permission slip to walk away—  
that is how society slowly erodes and the foundation crumbles.

That is how my family justified walking away and abandoning me, along with every other institution.

So do the hard thing.

Stand in the dissonance.

Help someone for real.

And don't force them to sing your praises for it.

Don't do it just because the Optics Economy rewards you.

That doesn't mean hard decisions never have to be made. Sometimes the greater good really does require a line.

I once evicted a couple after they openly struck one of my guests across the face and I caught the wild violence on camera even after they tried to deny it.

It wasn't their first infraction; I knew they had stolen from me many times before. But that moment was the line. I couldn't protect them anymore if it meant abandoning everyone else's safety.

I don't think I made the wrong decision.

But it was a hard one and a heavy one, because I knew they didn't really have anywhere else to go.

That's what helping people at the bottom is like:

They latch onto you, because you might be the only stable plank they've touched in years. And one person cannot be an entire social safety net.

That's why there have to be structural changes if this kind of help is going to exist in any sustainable way.

I know that I can't do it alone.

But, I have so many ideas for what that structural change could look like:

- Organized national indoor glamping and hostel-style housing,
- designed carefully and strategically so that the bad habits of the poor don't get to overrun the facility,
- rules and supports that protect the vulnerable without turning the whole thing into another prison.

Spaces where people like Shawn and Jeanne and Bob could actually stabilize instead of just bouncing from crisis to crisis.

But I've been kneecapped too badly.

And the system doesn't like this idea because on the surface it would reduce the burden on housing too fast and I would be blamed for dropping housing prices. When the current housing market is in actuality suffocating everyone even though it optically looks great.

However, like Shawn, I can't help anyone right now because I'm just barely surviving myself. I'm spending my energy fighting to keep my own head above water in a system that would rather see me delivering mail in quiet exhaustion—or dead—than lifted into a position where I could do structural good with what I've learned.

I know Shawn was an adult. I know Jeanne had her quirks. I know Bob was old and poor and that family had their own history. I know the system will happily write every one of them off as a statistic, or as proof that “you can't help some people.”

And I know how tempting it is—even for people who should know better—to grab onto the worst detail of someone's life and use it as a permission slip:

Weed in the basement.  
Six hundred dollars gambled away.  
Hoarding cleaning supplies.

Motel history.  
CPS involvement.  
Too scared to testify.

“See? Not worth the trouble.”

But I also know this:

When you cut your neighbor,  
you also cut everyone they are able to lift.

When you pull the only stable plank out from under a man who has just spent twenty years in a cage—  
a man who is using that plank to haul other people up with him, flaws and all—  
you don’t get to act surprised when he falls, and they fall with him.

This isn’t abstract.  
The Devil’s Charity has a body count.

Some of those bodies have names:

Shawn.  
Jeanne.  
Bob.

And a family whose names I won’t print here,  
because they still have to face the same systems that cut us down.

## **Chapter Sixteen**

Murder by Committee (If I Die Early, This Is Why)

If nothing changes, the pattern continues, and I die early, this chapter is the coroner's note the official paperwork will never write.

Not because I am suicidal.

I am not.

But because when you zoom out on the pattern you've just read, the probability of an early death—for me or for my spouse—is not a dark fantasy.

It's math.

Stress math.

Structural math.

“Who is allowed to tap out?” math.

And every person and institution in this book has a hand on the knife.

No single one of them could have killed me alone.

That's the point.

They did it together, in careful slices, while each one insists they did nothing but follow policy, uphold standards, protect the greater good, or “set a loving boundary.”

That's murder by committee.

### **1. When No One Owns the Body on the Table**

Think back through the chapters:

- County A, which used “safety” to destroy a working shelter while never once offering tools to fix what they claimed was wrong.
- Counselor Slate, who bypassed due process with a smile and a stack of ex parte paperwork, then walked away from the wreck like he'd just straightened some signage.
- City C, which stripped every use from the last viable building in the name of “public protection,” then left the human fallout scattered like debris.

- The Trust Family, who consolidated power, withheld parachutes, and wrote letters that made themselves the heroes of my collapse.
- FoundationCorp G, which built an empire on fear and sales quotas, then cut me loose the moment my mental health interfered with their optics.
- DataFirm Q, which fired my wife for refusing to rubber-stamp their pretend accounting and left us holding both the legal bill and the lost income.
- Tax Agency T, which ran psychological warfare on its own employees, weaponized the “fork” program, and then tolerated retaliation when my wife asked too many questions.
- Landlady B and the insurance labyrinth that followed the car crash, quietly betting we could carry thousands in medical debt and months of uncertainty with no real payout yet.
- The Church of the Well-Meaning, which promised food and then withheld it until lawsuits and catastrophe made inaction impossible.
- The Judges Three and the higher courts, who bent over backwards to protect institutions from scrutiny while preaching form over access—right up to the High Court that refused to even docket a petition about basic entry to justice.

Each one made a choice that:

- saved their time,
- preserved their budget,
- shielded their image,
- delegated their discomfort.

None of them had to say out loud:

“We have decided this man and his family can absorb the hit.”

They just had to act as if we could.

## **2. “Et Tu, Brute?” and the Luxury of a Single Villain**

Julius Caesar at least got the courtesy of one clear moment.

One knife, one circle of faces, one final line: “Et tu, Brute?”

He died knowing who was holding the blades.

What we have now is softer and far more efficient:

- a ring of people who each make one small cut and then step back,

- insisting they're nothing like the man with the dagger.

If I fall, there will be no single Brutus to name—just a crowd of “good people” who each swear they were only following procedure.

- The county official who signs the shutdown order says, “I was just enforcing code.”
- The lawyer who laughs through an ex parte emergency says, “I was representing my client.”
- The judge who shrugs off context says, “I’m bound by precedent.”
- The sibling who tightens the trust document while undercutting autonomy says, “I’m being prudent.”
- The corporation that lets a suicidal employee go says, “We have to protect the team.”
- The bishop who delays food aid says, “The Lord’s Timing.”
- The insurance adjuster who interrogates an injured driver for two hours says, “We’re just verifying the claim.”

No one feels like a murderer.

They feel like professionals.

They feel like responsible adults.

They feel like Brutus in the instant before the line is spoken—still convinced he’s saving Rome.

### **3. The Dual-Income Trap and the Invisible Guillotine**

Layer on top of that the structure we all live in:

- housing costs that require two incomes to tread water,
- food, insurance, and basic life expenses indexed to a reality where one serious health event or job loss can knock you into the abyss,
- a culture where asking for help is seen as weakness or moral failure.

In that world, every “small” act of institutional self-protection lands like another notch on the rope around your neck.

- One county’s decision to weaponize safety codes doesn’t just close a building; it removes an income stream that was holding five people up.

- One court's refusal to waive a fee doesn't just delay justice; it blocks off the only path to a remedy entirely.
- One employer's decision to "move on" from a whistleblower doesn't just clear a desk; it detonates an entire family's stability.
- One church's delay in delivering food doesn't just shuffle paperwork; it means kids eat less, parents sleep less, and stress ratchets up one more click.

The Devil's Charity is the story we tell ourselves so we can believe all of this is normal.

We say:

- "Everyone's struggling."
- "They just made bad choices."
- "It's not the system; it's that one guy who couldn't hack it."

Meanwhile, the system quietly assumes:

There will always be enough Rileys to grind through the gears.

Because there are always more people who:

- don't have a safety net,
- don't have stable health,
- don't have parents who can write a check,
- don't have a lawyer on retainer.

The dual-income trap doesn't just make life stressful.

It turns families like mine into consumable fuel.

#### **4. Diffused Guilt, Concentrated Damage**

Here's the numbers problem:

- Ten institutions each taking 10% of your health is still 100% of your health gone.
- Ten "unavoidable" decisions, each "small" on their own, still add up to a total collapse.
- Ten people who can honestly say, "I only did what I had to," still collectively did what no one will own.

Everyone involved can look in the mirror and say:

“I did nothing extreme. I simply enforced the rules in front of me.”

And they’re right—from their angle.

But none of them are standing where I am.

From here, it looks like this:

- One county’s discretion,
- one city’s zoning,
- one family’s gatekeeping,
- one corporation’s quotas,
- one data firm’s shortcuts,
- one tax agency’s psychological warfare,
- one bishop’s delay,
- one landlady’s eviction threat,
- one insurer’s slow-walk,
- one judge’s eye-roll,
- one Supreme Court’s shrug—

all braided together into a single rope.

Their guilt is diffused.

My damage is concentrated.

That’s what makes this kind of killing so stable.

No one has to feel like the villain.

## **5. “Not Suicidal” vs. “Not Safe”**

I keep repeating this because it matters:

I am not suicidal.

I have been suicidal before.

I know what that territory feels like.

This is not that.

This is waking up in a body that has carried too much for too long, in a marriage that has had to reassemble itself more times than I can count, in a family that has watched the ground vanish under our feet over and over again.

This is nights where my chest feels tight and my brain runs scenarios:

- What happens if I have a heart attack before fifty?
- What happens if my wife's body, after five brutal pregnancies and years of stress, simply says "no more"?
- What happens to our kids if both of us are too broken to keep navigating this maze?

This is not a wish for death.

It's a sober assessment of what happens when you keep loading a structure past its design limits while every responsible party insists:

"It should be able to take a little more."

## **6. If You're Reading This After I'm Gone**

There is a real chance you are reading this after one of the outcomes I'm describing has already happened.

If that's the case, you will be offered an easy story.

It will sound like:

- "He was always intense."
- "He took on too much."
- "They couldn't live within their means."
- "She made risky choices."
- "It's sad, but it's not surprising."

You will hear about:

- inheritances,

- properties,
- lawsuits,
- “all the help people tried to give.”

You will not hear about:

- the missing business license that would have prevented the first disaster,
- the dormant lawsuit weaponized to shut down a shelter,
- the withheld inheritance parachutes,
- the five “rescue” options that all ended in control,
- the predatory sales culture,
- the whistleblowing retaliation,
- the fork that cornered my wife into exile,
- the two-hour interrogation after the car crash,
- the delayed food from a church that preached about widows and orphans,
- the judges who used procedure as a shield against having to see what was in front of them,
- the High Court that refused to even file a case asking, “How are poor people supposed to get in the door at all?”

You will be told, in a hundred small ways:

“No one meant any harm.”

I believe that.

That’s what makes it Devil’s Charity and not a true-crime podcast.

Most of them did not wake up wanting to be Brutus.

They woke up wanting to be responsible, respectable, righteous, efficient.

And still, here we are.

## **7. What This Chapter Asks of You**

This chapter is not a plea for rescue.

By the time you’re reading this, you probably can’t “fix” anything for me personally.

This chapter is a mirror and a warning:

- If you work in a county office,
- if you draft trust documents,
- if you sit on a church council,
- if you manage employees,
- if you process claims,
- if you wear a robe and bang a gavel,
- if you vote, donate, sign, or shrug—

ask yourself:

“Where am I one of the Bruti in somebody else’s story?”

Not a lone, dramatic villain.

Just one more person making one more “reasonable” cut,  
trusting that whatever blood shows up is someone else’s fault.

If I live long and quiet in spite of all this, I will be grateful and a little astonished.

If I don’t, I want this on record:

I was not killed by my own weakness, or laziness, or refusal to be helped.

I was killed... consciously murdered—slowly, politely, procedurally—by a circle of people and systems who all loved the story of their own goodness more than they loved the outcome in front of them.

Et tu, Brute?

Et you.

Et all of us, if we refuse to see how these knives work.

## Chapter Seventeen

### What They'll Say When They See the Knife

By the time this book lands in the hands of the people and institutions inside it, most of them will not say:

“You’re right. That was my cut.”

They will do what systems always do when someone drags the whole pattern into the light:

They will try to edit the story one more time. Maybe one of them might reflect and change, but most won’t.

#### 1. The First Line of Defense: “That’s Not What Happened”

The first move is almost always denial, dressed up as concern.

You will hear some version of:

- “That’s not how it happened.”
- “He’s exaggerating.”
- “He’s leaving out all the help we gave.”
- “He seems very unwell; we hope he gets the help he needs.”

The county and the city will point to code sections and say:

“We were just enforcing safety.”

The church will point to policies and say:

“We were just following inspired procedures and protecting the flock.”

The corporations will point to handbooks and say:

“We followed our internal processes.”

The landlord will point to the lease and say:

“We treated them like any other tenant.”

The courts will point to rules and say:

“We applied the law as written.”

My extended family will point to checks and contracts and say:

“We sacrificed so much trying to help him.”

On the surface, every one of those sentences will sound reasonable.

That’s the point.

Devil’s Charity never comes in screaming,  
“I did this to you.”

It comes in whispering,  
“I did my best. I did what was required. I did what was wise.”

What you won’t see in their statements is the question that actually matters:

“Did our choices, taken together, crush this family?”

Because they already know the answer.

## 2. The Second Line of Defense: The Philanthropy Shield

Some of the most dangerous cutters in this book are also the loudest “givers.”

They will not just deny your pain.  
They will try to bury it under a mountain of good optics.

A county will gesture at its community grants and “revitalization projects.”

A church will gesture at its food orders, humanitarian campaigns, and “ministering efforts.”

A landlord will talk about all the tenants she gave a “break” to, or how she “keeps her rents low compared to the market.”

A federal agency will talk about its mission and public service.

And corporations like the foundation company will wrap themselves in charity campaigns:

- sponsoring walks “for the cure,”
- bragging about how many homes they “saved,”
- posting smiling employees in matching shirts,
- cutting checks to the very kinds of families they are quietly burning out inside the salesrooms.

That is the philanthropy shield:

- Do visible good in front of an audience.
- Use that public good to discredit any private harm.
- Wear charity like armor so that anyone pointing to the bodies looks ungrateful, bitter, or insane.

I am not writing about their press releases.

I am writing about what they did to one family after the cameras were off.

If you ever hear one of these institutions say, “Look at all the good we’ve done,” I’m asking you to hold two truths at once:

1. Sometimes they really did help someone else.
2. That does not un-break my bones or refill my accounts or erase what they did here.

Good deeds do not cancel cuts.  
They just make it harder to look at them.

### 3. “He Never Tried to Resolve It With Us”

Another line you will hear is:

“If he had just come to us in good faith, we could have worked something out.”

Let me be painfully clear:

I did come to them.

I wrote the emails.  
I filed the grievances.  
I called the supervisors.  
I asked for meetings.

I walked the chain of command.

I appealed to:

- bishops, stake presidents, and church leaders,
- managers, HR, and corporate “care” teams,
- county officials and city councils,
- internal affairs and agency ombuds,
- judges and clerks and panels,
- relatives, trustees, and self-appointed protectors.

Not once.

Over and over.

I pointed to the harm their choices were causing.

I begged them to stop doing the thing that was killing us.

I laid out options that would have cost them far less than what they took.

What I got, again and again, was some variation of:

- “Our hands are tied.”
- “That’s not how our process works.”
- “You need to calm down.”
- “We’re sorry you feel that way.”
- “We disagree with your characterization.”

And then they kept cutting.

That is why there is now a lawsuit against nearly every major player in this story—or a finished complaint that could be filed if the courts ever become capable of hearing it.

Court was not my first choice.

Court was what was left when conversation, conscience, and chain of command all failed.

So when you hear:

“He went straight to suing. He never tried to work with us.”

Know that you are listening to a system erase its own refusal to move.

#### 4. “We Had No Idea” vs. Premeditated Harm

Another comforting fiction they will reach for is ignorance:

“We didn’t realize it was that bad.”

“We couldn’t have known.”

“If only he had told us.”

Here is the hardest thing to swallow:

They did know.

The landlady knew when she got the pictures, the doctor notes, the timelines, the legal letters.

The church knew when I walked every step of their own promise chain and then filed suit when they chose optics over feeding my kids.

The consulting firm and the lawyer knew when we burned our last safety valve paying them to help and they chose their own exposure instead.

The federal agency knew when my wife’s health broke under impossible demands and isolation tactics that had nothing to do with actual service.

The foundation company knew when I told them I was suicidal, and their response was to throttle my leads and walk me out.

The county and city knew when they read the injunction filings, the appeals, the complaints, and still chose to protect their own records instead of the people in front of them.

The judges knew when they were handed contradictions in black and white and decided that procedure mattered more than truth.

My relatives knew when I told them, point blank, what their choices were doing to us, and they decided the house, the narrative, and their own comfort were worth more. They decided that me telling them that I was suicidal was too uncomfortable and shameful and that I needed to deal with it on my own because they had already done their part.

I made sure they knew.

I traded whatever was left of my “respectable” image to put the blood right in front of their eyes.

They did not move.

That is what makes this murder by committee, not accident:

- Not one grand villain with a plan.
- Dozens of people, each told clearly what their cut was doing, choosing to keep their hand on the knife.

They will say, “We never meant for this to happen.”

I believe most of them.

But if you are told a bridge is collapsing and you keep sending cars over it, at some point intent is not the hinge anymore.

At some point, you are choosing the fall.

## 5. Who Lifts When Everyone Is “Only a Small Part”?

Here is the question no one in power seems willing to answer:

If everyone only made a small cut,  
and no one is willing to pick up what’s left,  
who, exactly, is supposed to lift?

The county says, “Not us, we just enforced the code.”

The city says, “Not us, we just protected safety.”

The church says, “Not us, we gave what was appropriate.”

The companies say, “Not us, he signed the contract.”

The landlord says, “Not us, they agreed to the lease.”

The agency says, “Not us, we followed statute.”

The courts say, “Not us, we simply applied precedent.”

The family says, “Not us, we already did more than most parents ever would.”

Every one of them believes their individual cut is small:

- just one denial,
- just one termination,

- just one eviction,
- just one refused check,
- just one procedural dismissal,
- just one harsh boundary.

They all stand over the same body, horrified by the blood, convinced it is not theirs.

“Et tu, Brute?” only works as a line when at least one of the Bruti is willing to answer, “Yes.”

What I expect instead is a chorus of:

“How dare you compare us to that.”

The only reason I wrote this chapter is so you can see the shape of the chorus before it starts singing.

## 6. What This Means If You’re Reading This Later

If you are reading this years from now, after some judge has finally closed the last file and some coroner has finally closed my chart, you will have two stories available:

1. The official story, told by:
  - agencies,
  - churches,
  - corporations,
  - landlords,
  - courts,
  - and relatives who want to sleep.

2. This one.

You will watch institutions reach for their philanthropy shields.

You will watch them point to all the people they did help, and all the forms they did file.

You will watch them try to turn this book into a footnote:

“A tragic but isolated case.

He was always a bit unstable.”

I cannot make them do anything else.

All I can do is leave this record and say as clearly as I know how:

- They were told.
- They were begged.
- They had options that cost them far less than what they chose.
- They chose the cut anyway.
- And when confronted with the pattern, most of them will choose their comfort over the truth... again.

If that makes them uncomfortable, good.

Discomfort is the bare minimum price of reflection.

Most of them still won't move.

But if even one person in one of those systems feels the sting of recognition and decides to set the knife down before they do this to someone else, then this chapter will have done more good than all their press releases combined.

## **Chapter Eighteen: What It Would Actually Mean to Be a Christian Nation**

We throw the phrase “Christian nation” around like a weapon.

For some people it means a theocracy. For others it’s a dog whistle for power, control, or nostalgia. For others it’s a threat to their existence.

That’s not what I mean.

When I say we were founded as a Christian nation, I don’t mean everyone believed exactly the same doctrine, or that you have to literally accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior to belong here. Historically, that’s not even true. Our founders were an unruly mix: Puritans, Baptists, Quakers, deists, skeptics, Catholics, Anglicans, Jews, and people who wanted absolutely nothing to do with organized religion ever again.

What was true is this: they built a country that assumed a certain moral center and then deliberately refused to monopolize it.

They assumed that:

- People answer to a higher law than money and power.
- Human beings are capable of both incredible good and horrific abuse, especially when you give them institutions and titles.
- Conscience matters.
- Freedom of religion isn’t just about worship; it’s about protecting the right to follow conscience—even when conscience threatens the comfort of the powerful.

In other words, the “Christian nation” part wasn’t supposed to be a branding exercise. It was supposed to be a constraint on power and a call to personal responsibility.

Somewhere along the way, we flipped those.

### **Jesus vs. the Optics Economy**

If you strip away 2,000 years of branding, Jesus was not a CEO of a religious conglomerate.

He was the man in sandals who walked among the poor, the sick, the outcasts. He did not gaslight the people who were being crushed and tell them they were the problem. He looked straight at the institutions and said, “This is wrong.” He flipped tables instead of spinning optics.

He did not say:

- “Your suffering is your fault. Try being more positive.”
- “Let’s focus on your personal forgiveness while we keep the structure that’s killing you unchanged.”
- “Your pain is unfortunate, but bad for our brand, so please keep it quiet.”

That’s our language. That’s the Devil’s Charity talking. That’s the optics economy.

We took a man who walked into systems of power and said, “You’re devouring widows’ houses,” and then we built systems of power that devour widows’ houses in his name.

We drape his name over:

- Mega-institutions that hoard wealth while preaching about generosity.
- Legal systems that talk about “justice” while pricing ordinary people out of the courts.
- Nonprofits that spend more on marketing about the poor than on the actual poor.
- Churches that counsel abused people to forgive faster than they protect them.

We call that Christianity. It’s not.

That’s the Devil’s Charity hijacking the language of Christ to justify keeping the cuts flowing downward.

## **Freedom of Religion Was Meant to Protect Real Good, Not Institutional Optics**

“Christian nation” doesn’t mean one official church ruling everything. Our founders had seen that movie. Many of them fled it.

They gave us freedom of religion not so institutions could hide behind God, but so individual people could do real good without being crushed by a religious monopoly.

In theory, this kind of freedom creates space for:

- The believer who feeds his neighbor quietly with no camera, no hashtag, and no tax receipt.
- The atheist who sees injustice and says, “This is wrong,” and fights it simply because humans matter.
- The Jew, Muslim, Mormon, Buddhist, ex-vangelical, and spiritual-but-not-religious neighbor who all feel obligated to lift the people around them, each in their own way.

The point is not whether you believe Christ is literally the Son of God.

The point is whether you are willing to live by the ethic he modeled:

- Protect the vulnerable.
- Confront abusive power.
- Tell the truth even when it costs you.
- Refuse to turn people into optics.

A “Christian nation,” if it means anything at all, should be measured by that fruit—not by how many people check “Christian” on a census box, not by how often politicians say “God bless America,” and not by the size of our religious buildings.

### **How the Devil’s Charity Stole Our Christian Language**

The Devil’s Charity loves religious language because it’s powerful cover.

It loves:

- “We care deeply about the least among us” written into a policy that quietly denies them access.
- “We believe in forgiveness” used to pressure victims into silence while the abuser keeps their position.
- “We’re all sinners” used to flatten every harm until no one is responsible for anything specific.
- “Judge not” used to protect wolves and muzzle anyone who tries to expose them.

It turns the radical ethic of Christ into a PR toolkit.

Once you see it, it’s everywhere:

- In banks that sponsor charity galas while redlining neighborhoods.
- In schools that celebrate “kindness week” while ignoring systemic bullying.
- In hospitals that talk about compassion while bankrupting families.
- In courts that talk about “equal justice under law” while building fee schedules that only the rich can afford.

We slap Christian words on systems designed to keep the vulnerable compliant and the powerful comfortable.

That's not a Christian nation. That's a nation using Christian paint to hide Devil's Charity cuts.

## **Turning Back to “Christian Roots” Without Building a Theocracy**

So what does it actually mean to “turn back to our Christian roots” in a way that respects freedom of religion and doesn't force belief?

It means we stop outsourcing conscience to institutions and start taking personal responsibility again.

It looks like this:

- If you're a landlord, you don't hide behind “policy” while you quietly retaliate against tenants who stand up for themselves. You ask, “What is the just, humane way to handle this?” and you do that, even if no one can sue you for doing less.
- If you're a pastor, bishop, imam, or spiritual leader, you don't protect the institution's reputation over the abused. You don't preach forgiveness to the victim faster than you preach repentance to the abuser. You stop using “unity” as a muzzle.
- If you're a judge or clerk, you don't shrug and say “those are just the rules” when the rules obviously block the poor from justice. You use your discretion to open doors instead of hiding behind procedure as a shield.
- If you're a cop, you don't treat the vulnerable as optics to be managed. You treat them as neighbors to be protected, even when the system nudges you to do the opposite.
- If you're a therapist or social worker, you don't equalize abuse and call it “both sides contributing.” You don't reframe systemic harm as personal maladjustment to keep your funding clean.
- If you're just a neighbor, you check on the person who is clearly drowning instead of telling yourself “someone” will handle it. You are the someone.

None of this requires you to sign a doctrinal statement.

It requires you to stop using the Devil's Charity and the optics economy as your moral compass.

## **Stop Handing the Cuts Downward**

At the core of all of this is one simple question:

Where do the cuts land when you make a decision?

When you choose safety, comfort, plausible deniability, or “it’s just policy”:

- Does the weight move upward or downward?
- Do you shield yourself and your institution while pushing the pain onto someone with less power?

That’s the Devil’s Charity in action: using the appearance of care to justify harm that flows downward.

To turn back to anything resembling Christian roots, you don’t need to shout Jesus louder in the town square. You need to look at your own hands and ask:

- Where am I quietly participating in cuts?
- Where am I using language of care to avoid paying real costs?
- Where am I hiding behind rules, roles, or titles instead of owning the harm my choices enable?

The salvation of a nation will never come from better branding or prettier statements of faith. It will come from ordinary people refusing to pass the knife downward—even when the system tells them that’s “just how it works.”

## **The Only Way This Country Is Saved**

You can believe Jesus is the literal Savior of the world.  
You can believe he was just a wise teacher.

Either way, if you want this country to survive its own hypocrisy, the path is the same:

- Live as if the vulnerable matter more than institutional comfort.
- Live as if truth matters more than optics.
- Live as if your neighbor’s pain is not an acceptable price for your plausible deniability.
- Live as if power is something to be used in defense of the least, not leveraged to extract more from them.

That was the radical heartbeat under the best parts of our founding: not perfection, not purity, but a stubborn insistence that conscience matters and power must be restrained.

Every other solution is a band-aid.

Every other fix that keeps the Devil's Charity intact is just rearranging chairs on a sinking ship.

If we want to call ourselves a Christian nation in any meaningful sense, we don't need more public prayers while we sharpen our knives. We need fewer knives.

We need millions of people in every sphere of influence saying, quietly and firmly:

"I will not hand the cuts downward anymore.

I will take responsibility where I stand.

I will genuinely lift the people around me, even when no one is watching."

That is the only version of "Christian nation" worth turning back to.

Everything else is just optics.

If you'd like, next step I can:

- Add a short closing paragraph that explicitly bridges into your prologue, or
- Adjust the tone to be angrier/softer/more legal in feel, depending on where this sits in the book.

Yeah, this belongs in that chapter—it's exactly the bridge between "Christian nation" and your actual life.

Here's a section you can drop in after the "How the Devil's Charity Stole Our Christian Language" part, or wherever it flows best for you:

## **Why I Sued the Church of Good Intentions**

This is why I sued the Church of Good Intentions.

Not because I believe the faith I was raised in is all bad.

Not because I think it should be destroyed.

Not because I suddenly decided the doctrine is worthless.

I sued because, from where I stand, the Church of Good Intentions has become one of the largest engines of the optics economy on earth.

I watched a church that talks constantly about widows and orphans:

- quietly hoard billions “for the building of the kingdom,”
- funnel money through shell businesses and investments,
- build a financial fortress so large it can only meaningfully serve the top one percent,

...while ordinary members are told that their job is to keep tithing, keep quiet, and trust that “the brethren” know what they’re doing.

From my perspective, that is exactly the kind of religion Jesus stood against.

When he flipped the tables of the money changers and called the Pharisees out for devouring widows’ houses, he wasn’t attacking faith itself. He was confronting a religious institution that used God’s name to shelter greed and protect its own comfort.

My lawsuit was my very small version of that.

It was me saying:

“You don’t get to wrap yourself in Christ’s name, hoard unimaginable wealth, and then spiritually gaslight the poor when they ask for help. While having your people tell them that they are taking the widows mite when it is you who is demanding it. From where I stand, you don’t get to change your tithing doctrine to 1/10<sup>th</sup> of your total income when it was originally interpreted as based on surplus only and claim that it is simply God’s Law and that you are innocent. Especially while holding the mountains of money that you do. You don’t get to twist the doctrine of tithing over the years to mean whatever you want it to mean in the end while some still claim they pay tithes to help the poor.”

But no judge is going to allow one man in sandals who does door to door internet sales hold a \$250 billion dollar religion fully accountable. I’m not a fool. I didn’t think that I would win. But that wasn’t the point.

To be clear, I didn’t file because I hate the religion or the people in it. While I see structural problems, I do not believe the church is inherently evil. I filed because I believe the organization is abusing its privilege—and because I was willing to sacrifice what little standing I still had in my own family to say so.

I did the same with my brother around that time when I threw my lot in with him as the main family scapegoat. I lost whatever little credibility I had left. (But that’s a different story)

In my own imperfect way, that was me choosing to stand next to Jesus in the story I see. Sacrificing what little I had left to stand in truth.

That doesn't mean I'm certain Jesus is a literal God and that I believe you should worship him as such. I honestly don't know if he is an actual God. I might never know in this life.

But I don't think that was ever the central point when he said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," or when he walked into systems of power and refused to let them hide behind scripture. He never asked to be treated as a God in life, so why do we justify treating him like one in death as we build massive buildings in his name and justify hoarding and massive institutional wealth, instead of building structural change to care for the poor?

Besides, I want to point out one subtle thing, I never sued a church. On paper, the Church of Good Intentions lists itself as a corporation, and it acts as one to in how it deals with the funding it has absorbed over generations.

His power never came from dominating authority, perfect optics, or ruling every corner of society with a spotless brand.

His power came from empowering ordinary people to do more and to be better—especially toward those at the bottom.

That is the point.

And if a so-called Christian nation, or a so-called Christian church, can't tolerate someone using the courts and their own conscience to say, "You've drifted too far from that," then the problem isn't with the lawsuit.

The problem is with the system that would rather protect its image than hear the very message it claims to preach.

## Epilogue

### Echo of the First Cut

Before any county shut a door, before any judge signed a denial, before any employer called security, there was a living room with scripture on the walls and a man at the head of the table who believed God had made him the foundation.

He wasn't a caricature.

He was disciplined, gifted, tireless.

He got up early to provide.

He stayed late to fix.

He told us stories about hard work and sacrifice.

If you met him at church, you might have admired him.

You might have thought:

“If more fathers were like that, we'd have fewer problems.”

He was also the first person to teach me what it feels like to be cut open in the name of care.

## 1. The Prototype

The pattern you've just read across counties, courts, corporations, and churches?

I met its prototype at home.

- A man convinced he was responsible for everyone's spiritual welfare.
- A theology that turned obedience into proof of love.
- A culture that handed him tools labeled head of household, priesthood, righteous leadership.

He used those tools the way he'd been shown.

- He interrogated a ten-year-old about purity and called it protection.
- He framed my mother's illness as a puzzle God would solve if we just did one more right thing.

- He explained our lives in terms of “faith” and “obedience” and “stewardship,” not in terms of grief, illness, and human limits.
- He compared me to his “thoroughbred” children and thought he was motivating me.

He did not wake up saying:

“How can I ruin these people?”

He woke up saying:

“How can I be a good man in a dangerous world?”

That is the most dangerous kind of knife.

## **2. Et Tu, Brute? in Suburban Script**

In the old story, the betrayal comes in one sharp moment,  
from a friend close enough to touch your shoulder as he drives the knife in.

Et tu, Brute? is a clean wound.

My life didn’t work like that.

It was a long apprenticeship under a man who believed:

- that love meant authority,
- that doubt was rebellion,
- that suffering was a test of loyalty,
- that certainty was safety.

There was no single scene where I could turn, see him holding a bloody dagger, and gasp the famous line.

Instead, there was:

- a thousand family prayers where God sounded exactly like him,
- a thousand little humiliations dressed up as “correction,”
- a thousand moments where my mother’s pain was framed as a spiritual riddle instead of a medical crisis.

It took me years to realize:

The first Brutus in my story never looked like a traitor at all.  
He looked like a provider.

### **3. From One House to the Whole Map**

Once you've lived inside that structure, it's hard not to recognize it at scale.

- County A's "we're just trying to keep people safe" sounded familiar.
- Counselor Slate's "this is an emergency, we had to act fast" sounded familiar.
- City C's "we regret the hardship, but the law is the law" sounded familiar.
- The Trust Family's "we did what we had to do to be responsible" sounded familiar.
- FoundationCorp G's "we care deeply about our people, which is why we can't bend the rules for you" sounded familiar.
- The Church of the Well-Meaning's "we'll help... once we've discerned the timing" sounded very familiar.
- The judges' "we sympathize, but our hands are tied by procedure" might as well have been lifted from our kitchen table.

It was the same sentence over and over:

"We love you.  
We're doing this for your own good.  
If it hurts, that's either necessary or your fault."

Living under that long enough does two things:

1. It nearly kills you.
2. It trains your eye.

The Devil's Charity didn't feel like a new discovery to me.

It felt like finally having language for what I'd been choking on since childhood.

### **4. Why Write Any of This?**

Not to win a case.

The courts have made their feelings clear.

Not to ruin reputations.

Most of the people in these pages will never read this, and if they do, they'll recognize themselves only in the most flattering parts.

Not to cast myself as a flawless victim.

I've made my own mistakes.

I've misjudged people.

I've lashed out.

I've broken things I didn't know how to fix.

I am not writing this to act like I've never held a knife.

I'm writing this because I have.

I know how seductive it is to believe the story that you're the one exception:

- the one hard-working father,
- the one conscientious official,
- the one good landlord,
- the one righteous bishop,
- the one fair judge,
- the one "tough but caring" manager.

The man who raised me believed that too.

He believed it so fully that he never saw the pile of small cuts at his feet.

I don't want to die that blind.

## **5. What I Owe Him, What I Don't**

I owe him this much:

- He taught me to see cracks.
- He taught me to pay attention to foundations.
- He taught me that what looks solid from the street can be rotten underneath.

Those skills are why I can map a pattern from one abusive living room to an entire legal system.

Those skills are why I could write this book at all.

I don't owe him my silence.

I don't owe him the story that his cuts were "just discipline" or "just strong leadership" or "just how things were back then."

I can acknowledge:

- the roof he paid for,
- the jobs he worked,
- the nights he stayed up worrying,
- the ways his own childhood probably mangled him—

and still say:

"You were the first Devil's Charity I ever knew."

Not because you meant to be.

Because you believed that being on the "right side" of things gave you the right to cut.

## **6. Why This Book Exists at All**

This book exists because I refuse to let the record show only the version written by:

- counties,
- cities,
- churches,
- corporations,
- judges,
- and families who want to sleep well.

It exists because if I do die early, I want my kids—and whatever strangers find these pages later—to have another possible sentence in their mouths besides:

“He was always the problem.”

I want them to be able to say:

“He was not crazy for seeing what he saw.  
The world around him really was built this way.”

If that makes the Bruti in this story uncomfortable, good.

Discomfort is the bare minimum price of reflection.

Most of them will not move.

Most of them will double down.

Some will clutch their good deeds tighter and say, “How dare you.”

But somewhere, another kid is sitting in another living room, listening to another well-armed parent, bishop, boss, or judge speak in the voice of God or Law or Reason.

If that kid ever stumbles across this, I want them to know:

- You are not insane for feeling the cut.
- You are not ungrateful for naming it.
- You are not alone for wanting out.

## **7. The Last Line I Can Live With**

I cannot make anyone in these pages pick up their part of the knife.

I cannot make them say, “Et tu, Brute? It was me.”

I can only do three things:

- forgive what I can,
- name what I must,
- and refuse to call slow murder “care.”

If there is a God, I trust He will sort out the rest with more accuracy than any of us have managed so far.

As for me:

- I release the men and women who cut me from the job of being my judges.
- I release myself from the job of pretending it didn't happen.
- I step, as much as I can, out of the center of the circle and lay down the script that says I was born to absorb the blows.

Whatever chapters come after this one—if I get to write them—will not be about proving my worth to the people who made their peace with my bleeding.

They'll be about something else.

Something beyond survival.

For now, if you remember nothing else, remember this:

We are not dying from a lack of charity.

We are dying from charity that has forgotten how to look in the mirror.

## **Final Note**

In the end, the Devil's Charity does not fear exposure.  
It fears clarity.

It fears the moment when a single person stands up from the rubble of their own life  
and says out loud what everyone else was trained to whisper:

“This was wrong.”

That is why these systems function the way they do —  
slow cuts, soft tones, gentle words, quiet punishments.  
Death by a thousand kind cuts works only when the victim believes the knife is a helping hand.

I believed it once.  
I do not believe it anymore.

And the moment that belief dies,  
the system loses its power.

Not because justice suddenly appears.

But because the illusion finally breaks.

I cannot undo what was taken from me.  
I cannot bring back the people who died or the pieces of myself that were carved away.

But I can hold the sword the system prayed I would never find:

the truth, spoken plainly.

And sometimes that is enough to change everything.

## Coda

Like Shawn, I can't help anyone right now because I'm just barely surviving myself. I'm spending my energy trying to keep my own head above water in a system that would rather see me grinding myself into quiet exhaustion—or gone altogether—than lifted into a position where I could do structural good with what I've learned. A lot of people scoff at the idea that I'm trying to support my family through writing. They tell me not to quit my day job, to keep going door to door, to accept my place in the machine and be grateful I'm allowed to keep moving.

That's the ugliest part of all this: on some level, my struggle quietly justifies their position. As long as I am stumbling, broke, exhausted, or gone, they never have to ask hard questions about what they did or what they're still doing. They never have to question how they've exploited me and others to gain and maintain their power and wealth. My collapse becomes their evidence that they were right about me from the beginning. If I were to stabilize, win cases, build structural solutions, or actually help people at scale, it would expose how wrong they were to cut me down—and how many others they've written off the same way. That's why most of the people and institutions in this book will not respond with repentance. This book will more likely evoke anger, eye-rolling, and quieter doubling-down than compassion or change. They will use my pain as one more reason to stay exactly the same, and then call that stability “wisdom.”

Meanwhile, we are structurally collapsing as a society. Housing, healthcare, education, wages, trust in institutions—the load-bearing walls are cracking. Instead of owning that, a lot of the previous generation is trying to tiptoe off the stage with one last armful of comfort: pensions, paid-off houses, investment accounts, cruises, and “well-deserved” retirements funded by the same systems that are grinding their children and grandchildren into paste. The bad foundation gets left for the next generation to manage while those who poured it use the last bit of grace the system has to offer to buy themselves a softer landing.

I also need to say this out loud, because we almost never do:

In the current optics economy, visible success is not neutral.

We live in a system where surface comfort is often built on someone else's quiet collapse. The nicer your life looks on paper, the more likely it is that—somewhere in the stack—someone below you has been underpaid, overbilled, fee-barred, or quietly disqualified so you didn't have to feel the weight of the true cost. Not always, not in every case. But far more often than our myths about “hard work” and “value creation” will allow us to admit.

And that's not just true of individuals. It's true of institutions.

Governments, corporations, universities, churches, foundations, hospitals, “nonprofits”—we've been trained to treat their size and wealth as proof of how much good they're doing. Big endowment, big budget, big reserves must mean big impact. But in a predatory optics economy, institutional wealth usually means something else: that the money mostly circulates among the same thin slice of executives, boards, donors, and consultants while everyone below them absorbs a slow-motion murder by committee.

Policies get written to protect the core.

Fees, fines, premiums, tuition, rent, and interest get harvested from the edges.

The top one percent—of people and of institutions—trade security back and forth while the rest of the population lives on the cliff-face of collapse and is told to be grateful for access to the brochure.

The people and organizations with the most money can see the unrest. They see the protests, the overdoses, the “labor shortages,” the suicides, the crime charts, the impossible housing numbers. Instead of loosening the belt, they tighten it. They hoard more. They build more layers of insulation and plausible deniability: more PR, more legal firewalls, more gated communities, more bunkers, more “safety” for themselves and their own. They call it prudence. They call it stewardship. They call it fiscal responsibility.

But if your response to a collapsing structure is to gather up as much comfort as you can for you and yours, while everyone beneath you takes on more risk and more pain, that’s not responsibility. That’s predation with good lighting.

This book is not an invitation to feel bad and then go refurbish your comfort.

It’s an invitation to stop treating comfort—your own or your institution’s—as proof of goodness.

If your life feels stable, or if you sit inside an organization that feels untouchable, the question isn’t “How proud should we be of what we’ve built?” Nor is it an inherent invitation to congratulate yourself on your own success and prudence. The question is “Whose knees got cut out—directly or indirectly—so this could feel normal to us?” And then: “What are we willing to do about that, besides issuing a statement, posting a quote about empathy, and moving on?”

Because in a predatory optics economy, doing nothing is not neutral. Doing nothing is how the Devil’s Charity keeps printing halos for the people and institutions holding the knife.

This book is not about asking anyone to be comfortable. Comfort is what got us here. When wealth and ease are treated as the proof that you “did it right,” then quiet exploitation becomes a virtue. In an optics economy, success is defined by how well you can sit above the damage, not by whether you helped repair it. But wealth and comfort in a collapsing structure don’t mean you played the game well; they usually mean you learned how to pass the cuts downward—onto the poor, the sick, the young—and then call that arrangement “fair.” The real question isn’t “How much did you accumulate?” It’s “How many people had to bleed so you could feel safe?”

So, this book is about asking people to own their part. To stop passing the cuts along to the weak, the vulnerable, and to the young. To stop measuring their own worth by the comforts they’ve been able to afford themselves while pretending the bill will never come due. You may not have built this foundation by yourself, but you are choosing, right now, whether to reinforce it or start changing it.

That’s part of why this book is free. You’ve already paid enough just by living inside this system; you don’t owe me anything for reading about it. My hope is that you choose to lift the

people around you, and to confront the systems you touch, rather than help them along in the Devil's Charity. But if you ever decide you want to join this fight in a concrete way, one option is simple: buy my other books. This book is my sword and my signal flare—it's meant to cut through excuses and light up the pattern whether you ever spend a dollar on me or not. The other books are my shield and my armor. When you buy them, you're not handing charity to a struggling family of five; you're keeping someone in the ring who is obsessed with building structural alternatives—indoor glamping, sane hostels, frameworks that give people their power back instead of stealing it and calling it “care.”

It doesn't cancel out your own responsibility where you stand. It doesn't buy you forgiveness. It just makes it a little harder for the Devil's Charity to finish the job on me before I can turn what I've learned into something that helps more than one household at a time.

Whether you ever support my work or not, the real measure will be what you do with the power you already have: in your family, your church, your company, your courtroom, your classroom, your neighborhood. You don't have to fix the whole system. But you do have to decide whether you'll keep hiding behind the Philanthropy Shield—or whether you'll pick one place, one person, one policy, and refuse to let the Devil's Charity speak in your name anymore.

## **If You Made It This Far**

If you're still here, you just walked through a map of what it looks like when the Devil's Charity runs unchecked on one life and the people orbiting it.

You've seen:

- how "help" becomes leverage,
- how "policy" becomes a weapon,
- how "wisdom" becomes a way to sit on the balcony while other people bleed in the street.

You've also seen why I framed this book the way I did:  
as a record, not a pity project.

I can't make you believe every detail. I can't make you care. What I can do is hand you the pattern and ask you to be honest about what you recognize in your own world.

If this book did anything for you, I hope it wasn't just to make you sad.

I hope it:

- gave you language for things you've felt but couldn't name,
- snapped some of the gaslighting in half,
- made it harder to participate in the Devil's Charity with a clean conscience.

You don't have to fix everything.  
But you do have to decide what you'll do with this.

## Join the Fight Against the Devil's Charity

This book is free on purpose.

You've already paid enough just by living in a system that calls quiet exploitation "care." You don't owe me anything for reading about it.

If all you ever do is walk away with a sharper eye for:

- how "kindness" can hide control,
- how "policy" can erase people,
- how "charity" can be a tax write-off for harm—

that's already a win.

If you do want to go further, there are a few ways to join this fight:

- Use the language.  
Talk about the Devil's Charity, the Optics Leash, murder by committee. Call out "help" that harms when you see it.
- Refuse to pass the cuts down.  
In your family, workplace, church, classroom, courtroom—take one place where you've been quietly going along and stop.
- Stay in the loop.  
If you grabbed this book from my site, you're already on the list. If not, you can find more tools, essays, and updates at:  
[TheDevilsCharity.com](http://TheDevilsCharity.com)

I'm not looking for followers. I'm looking for people who are willing to stop pretending the bruises are "lessons" and the cuts are "blessings in disguise."

## More From the Devil's Charity Universe

If this book was the sword and signal flare, the other books are the shield and armor: they give you context, history, and more tools to see the pattern in your own life.

### **The Devil's Charity**

(Core Framework – Manifesto + Field Guide)

This is the book where I name the thing.

The Devil's Charity is what happens when:

- control dresses up as care,
- exploitation dresses up as generosity,
- and systems use “help” language to justify slowly killing people they find inconvenient.

In these pages, I:

- break down the optics economy—how looking good has replaced being good,
- map how families, churches, corporations, courts, and agencies all run the same playbook,
- and give you phrases and lenses you can start using immediately.

If you want the big picture—the theology of this whole universe—start here.

### **Next To Murder**

(Origin Story – Shame, Control, and Survival)

“Sexual sin is next to murder.”

If you grew up in a world where that line was treated as doctrine, you already know how heavy a sentence can be when it's aimed at a kid.

This book goes back to:

- basements and bishop's offices,
- missions and marriages,
- the small moments where shame and control got braided into my sense of self.

It's not about relitigating every wound. It's about showing how a boy labeled "next to murder" for something that wasn't murder at all grows into an adult who keeps volunteering for his own execution.

If you've ever carried a disproportionate sense of guilt, this one is for you.

## **Betty**

(Case Study – Legal Narcissism and the Making of a Monster)

Before anyone ever heard my name, there was Betty.

Not my creation—Betty Broderick, a real woman whose story has been told and sold as a cautionary true-crime tale: "Don't be crazy. Don't be vengeful. Look what happens."

My interest in Betty is different.

In this book, I:

- walk through how legal narcissism and court systems can take a woman apart one custody hearing, one sealed record, one "temporary" decision at a time,
- show how "good optics" and "reasonable rulings" can push someone to the edge,
- and ask the uncomfortable question:  
If I had lived her exact life, am I sure I would have ended differently?

Betty's story is a side quest and a mirror. If you want to see the Devil's Charity from a safer distance—on someone else's life first—start here.

## Where to Go Next

There's no wrong order. But depending on who you are and what you're hungry for, here are a couple of paths.

If you want the full pattern as fast as possible:

1. The Devil's Charity – get the framework.
2. How the Devil's Charity Is Currently Killing Me – see it in real time.
3. Next To Murder – understand the origin story.
4. Betty – watch the same machinery grind up another life.

If you need emotional validation and story first:

1. Betty – safer distance, same pattern.
2. Next To Murder – see how it starts at home and in church.
3. How the Devil's Charity Is Currently Killing Me – watch the present siege.
4. The Devil's Charity – step back and see the whole map.

Whichever direction you choose, the goal is the same:

Not just to see what they did to me,  
but to recognize where the Devil's Charity is already speaking in your name—  
and decide what you're going to do about it.

Nice, yeah, those absolutely deserve a nod back here—they're part of the same spine, just told in a different key.

Here's an extra back-of-book page you can drop in after the "Other Books in the Devil's Charity Universe" page and before (or instead of) the "Suggested Reading Paths" page.

You can title the section however you like; I'll call it:

## **Other Worlds in This Universe**

The Devil's Charity didn't stay on the page.

It grew teeth and wings and sails.

If you want to see these same patterns in allegory—at a little more distance, with more magic and monsters—there are two other projects you should know about.

## **The L-Oz Series**

(The Wizard, the Warden, and the Optics Economy in Oz)

The L-Oz books are my long, strange love letter to power, justice, and centralization—told through a reimagined Oz.

In that universe:

- The Wizard isn't just a man behind a curtain; he's the architect of an optics-driven empire.
- The Warden (my Glinda analogue) is fighting for a different kind of justice—slower, land-rooted, harder to fake.
- Dorothy, Wren, and others move through labyrinthine courts, Emerald City politics, and enchanted tools that look suspiciously like the ones real systems use on us.

If you've ever felt like the law is a maze designed to keep you walking in circles while the people in the tower rearrange the walls, L-Oz is that feeling turned into epic fantasy. It's the Devil's Charity in technicolor, with more room to breathe and imagine what a different ending could look like.

## **The Moby Dock Series**

(Nine Ships, Nine Systems, One Optics Ocean)

Moby Dock is a growing nine-book sea series built around a single idea:

Every system that “helps” you has a ship.  
Every ship hunts whales in the name of charity.  
Every hunt runs on optics oil.

Each book follows an Optics Apprentice trained aboard a different magical whaling ship—family, church, corporations, landlords, local government, the IRS, the courts, and eventually the high courts at the top.

On each ship:

- the tools of “care” are actually weapons,
- the crew learns to render people into fuel,
- and a single “white whale”—a person or pattern that doesn’t fit—pushes the ship past its moral limits and toward wreckage.

When one ship goes down, the Apprentice is pulled from the water by the next system, a little more scarred and a little more awake.

If the non-fiction books in this series are the court record, Moby Dock is the dream that comes after: the same truths, translated into storms, leviathans, bargains, and wrecks you can feel in your gut.

You don’t have to read any of these to understand this book.

But if this world has started to make a painful kind of sense to you—and you want to see how deep the rabbit hole goes, in law and in myth—L-Oz and the Moby Dock series are where I’m working those questions out in full color.