



Delusions of Grandma
Surrender the Pink
Postcards from the Edge
The Best Awful





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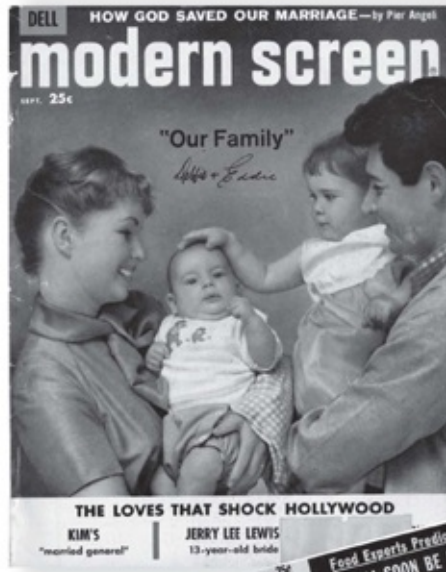
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To my DNA jackpot—my daughter, Billie.

For all you are and all you will be.

I want to be like you when I grow up.



Happy days are here again...So let's sing a song of cheer again



Hi, I'm Carrie Fisher and I'm an alcoholic.
And this is a true story.

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AUTHOR’S NOTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AN ABUNDANCE OF APPARENTLY

So I am fifty-two years old. (Apparently.) Actually, that's more verifiable than the rest of it. I'd better start off with certainties. Here are the headlines (head—in so many ways—being the operative word):

I am fifty-two years old.

I am Carrie Fisher.

I live in a really nice house in Los Angeles.

I have two dogs.

I have a daughter named Billie.

Carrie Fisher is apparently a celebrity of sorts. I mean, she was (is) the daughter of famous parents. One an icon, the other a consort to icons. Actually, that's not completely fair. My father is a singer named Eddie Fisher. What was, in the '50s, called a crooner. A crooner with many gold records. I only say my father is a consort because he's really better known for his (not so) private life than the life he lived onstage. His scandals outshone his celebrity. Or you might say that his scandals informed his celebrity in such a way as to make him infamous.

My mother, Debbie Reynolds, was in what might be called iconic films—most notably, *Singin' in the Rain*. But for whatever reason, when my parents hooked up it had an extraordinary impact on the masses who bought fan magazines. The media dubbed them "America's Sweethearts." The idea of them electrified—their pictures graced the covers of all the tabloids of the day. They were adorable and as such were ogled by an army of eyes. So cute and cuddly and in some ways adorably average. The Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston of the late '50s, only slightly more so—because they actually managed to procreate—making two tiny children to fill out the picture. Or pictures, as the case turned out to be. An All-American and photogenic family.





When I was younger, starting at about four, other children would ask me what it was like to be a movie star's daughter. Once I was a little older and understood, to a certain extent, the nature of what celebrity meant, I would say, Compared to what? When I wasn't a movie star's daughter? When I lived with my normal, non-show business family, the Regulars (Patty and Lowell Regular of Scottsdale, Arizona)? All I've ever known is this sort of hot-house-plant existence, and I could tell from watching how normal people lived—normal people as depicted by Hollywood and burned into our consciousness—I understood that my life was unusual. Like many others, I grew up watching television shows like *My Three Sons* and *The Partridge Family* and *The Real McCoys*. And based on the lives depicted on those shows, I knew my life was a different sort of real. It was the only reality I knew, but compared to other folks—both on television and off—it eventually struck me as a little surreal, too. And eventually, too, I understood that my version of reality had a tendency to set me apart from others. And when you're young you want to fit in. (Hell, I still want to fit in with certain humans, but as you get older you get a little more discriminating.) Well, my parents were professionally committed to sticking out, so all too frequently I found myself sticking out right along with them.



Now, I'm certainly not asking anyone to feel bad for me or suggest that my existence could be

described as a predicament of some kind. I'm simply describing the dynamic that was at work during my formative years.



My parents were focus pullers—and when I say parents, I mean my mother, who raised me, and my father, who checked in from time to time.

I mean, if I came into a room and said, “You know how you saw your father more on TV than you did in real life?” I don’t think many people would say, “Oh my God! You, too!”

And by the same token, I have to ask you, how often do you say, “in real life”?

Like real life is this other thing, and we’re always trying to determine what’s going on in this distant, inaccessible, incomprehensible place.



“What are they like in real life?”

“That happened in real life? *Really!*”

Stuff like that.

I am truly a product of Hollywood. You might say that I’m a product of Hollywood inbreeding. When two celebrities mate, something like me is the result.

I grew up visiting sets, playing on backlots, and watching movies being made. As a consequence I find that I don’t have what could be considered a conventional sense of reality. (Not that I’ve ever had much use for reality—having spent much of what I laughingly refer to as my adult life attempting to escape it with the assistance of a variety of drugs.)

So, as I said, my reality has been formed by Hollywood’s version of reality. As a child, I thought that *Father Knows Best* was real and that my life was fake. When I think about it now, I may not have been far wrong.

I tell you all of this as a newly made bystander. As I have been reintroduced into my world by

electroconvulsive therapy (more commonly known as ECT for those oh-so-fortunately familiar with and electroshock for those who are not)—reintroduced to my life at the ripe old age of fifty-two. My memory—especially my visual memory—has been wrenched from me. All of a sudden, I find that I seem to have forgotten who I was before. So, I need to reacquaint myself with this sort of celebrity person I seem to be. Someone who was in an iconic, blockbuster film called *Star Wars*. (How trippy is that?)

One thing I *do* recall is that one day when I was a toddler, I sat planted closely to the television set watching my mother in a movie called *Susan Slept Here*. And, at a certain point there's a scene where my very young mother tilts her face up to receive a kiss from Dick Powell. A kiss on the mouth. A romantic kiss. So, she has her eyes closed, waiting. But instead of kissing her on the mouth, Mr. Powell bends down and kisses her on the forehead. I sit there, registering this and then look quickly over my shoulder to see if anyone else had seen what I saw. To see if I should be more embarrassed for my mother than I already was. I tell you this to illustrate that I didn't know the difference between movies and real life. In my life, they tended to overlap. Cary Grant (yes, *the* Cary Grant) became a family friend, even though he wasn't precisely that. And characters that my mother played in movies became confused with the person who was and is my mother. So in a way, movies became home movies. Home became another place on the movie star map.

Later on, I worked out that my mother's appearance in the classic film *Singin' in the Rain* was not unlike my own appearance in *Star Wars*. When she made that film, she was nineteen and costarred with two men. I was also nineteen when I made *Star Wars* and appeared opposite two men. How this relevant, I have no idea. Maybe I was just grasping around for a sense of continuity.

I emerge from my three-week-long ECT treatment to discover that I am not only this Princess Leia creature but also several-sized dolls, various T-shirts and posters, some cleansing items, and a bunch of other merchandise. It turns out I was even a kind of pin-up—a fantasy that geeky teenage boys across the globe jerked off to me with some frequency. How's that for a newborn-how-do-you-do damsel in very little cinematic distress?

To wit, one afternoon in Berkeley I found myself walking into a shop that sold rocks and gems.

"Oh my God, aren't you..." the salesman behind the counter exclaimed.

And before he could go any further, I modestly said, "Yes, I am."

"Oh my God! I thought about you every day from when I was twelve to when I was twenty-two."

And instead of asking what happened at twenty-two, I said, "Every day?"

He shrugged and said, "Well, four times a day."

Welcome to the land of too much information.

On top of all this celebrity parents and *Star Wars* stuff, apparently I was once married to a brilliant songwriter, a rock icon of sorts. I mean, this is a man who wrote an array of beautiful songs, and even a few songs that were about me. How incredible is that? And get this—I had always been a really big fan of his music. Huge. As a teen, it was just him and Joni Mitchell. And, as I couldn't marry Joni, I married him. I *loved* this man's lyrics. They were one of the reasons I fell in love with words.

How can you not love someone who writes "medicine is magical/and magical is art/think of the boy in the bubble/and the baby with the baboon heart"? The answer for me was I couldn't. I couldn't not love him. I apprenticed myself to the best in him and bickered with the worst. And to top it off, we were the same size. I used to say to him, "Don't stand next to me at the party—people will think we're salt and pepper shakers."

And wait'll you hear this—I've written four novels. Seriously! And two of them were best sellers. My first novel, *Postcards from the Edge*, was adapted into a film directed by Mike Nichols, starring Shirley MacLaine and Meryl Streep, basically playing a sometimes better, sometimes worse dolled-up version of my mother and myself.)

I could go on and on—because there are certainly a lot of other cool things. The coolest being that I'm the mother of this amazing daughter named Billie. She's my most extraordinary creation.

It occurs to me that I might sound as though I'm boasting. I promise you I'm not. It's just that ECT has forced me to rediscover what amounts to the sum total of my life. I find that a helluva lot of it fills me with a kind of giddy gratitude. Some of my memories will never return. They are lost—along with the crippling feeling of defeat and hopelessness. Not a tremendous price to pay when you think about it. Totally worth it!

But now that we've established that I've had ECT, I have a list that I thought I'd share. A list of the electroshock treatment gang who have also benefitted from ECT.

I do this because I find that I frequently feel better about myself when I discover that we're not alone, but that there are, in fact, a number of other people who ail as we do—that there are actually a number of “accomplished” individuals who find it necessary to seek treatment for some otherwise insurmountable inner unpleasantness.

I not only feel better about myself because these people are also fucked up (and I guess this gives us a sense of extended community), but I feel better because look how much these fellow fuckups managed to accomplish!

So here are a portion of the folks with whom I share electrocompany:

Judy Garland
Bill Styron
Sylvia Plath
Cole Porter
Lou Reed
Vivien Leigh
Yves St. Laurent
Connie Francis
Ernest Hemingway
Dick Cavett
Kitty Dukakis

I should also add that a lot of these people also show up in the alcohol addict line-up *and* bipolar crew (chapter nine), giving some of these multi-listers and myself the admirable distinction of having a trifecta score.

These fine folks are:

Bill Styron
Vivien Leigh
Frances Farmer
Sylvia Plath

Ernest Hemingway

~~Dick Cavett~~

Kitty Dukakis

Yves St. Laurent

Cole Porter

Why did I feel I needed ECT? Well, it had been recommended by several psychiatrists over the years, to treat my depression. But I couldn't bring myself to consider it as it seemed too barbaric. My only exposure to it was Jack Nicholson in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which wasn't exactly an enticing example. From the seizures to the biting down on a stick to the convulsions, it looked traumatic, dangerous, and humiliating. I mean what do we know for certain about it? Aren't there a bunch of risks? What if something goes wrong and my brain blows up?

But I'd been feeling overwhelmed and pretty defeated. I didn't necessarily feel like *dying*—but I'd been feeling a lot like not being alive. The second reason I decided to get ECT is that I was depressed. Profoundly depressed. Part of this could be attributed to my mood disorder, which was, no doubt, probably the source of the emotional intensity. That's what can take simple sadness and turn it into sadness squared. It's what revs up the motor of misery, guns the engine of an unpleasant experience, filling it with rocket fuel and blasting into a place in the stratosphere that is oh-so-near to something like a suicidal tendency—a place where the wish to continue living in this painful place is all but completely absent.

So, when weighing the choice between ECT or DOA, the decision is easy to make. Not only because of my daughter and the rest of my family and friends, but for my formerly high-functioning self. In the end the choice couldn't have been easier to make. Electricity as opposed to game over. I decided to ride the lightning instead of extinguishing the light of life that had once shone out of my eyes. I keep my wick lit for my daughter, Billie, for my mother, my brother—for my entire family—and for each friend I've made with both hands, one heart, two moods, and a head crammed with memory. Memory I must now reacquaint myself with.

Perhaps now is as good a time as any to share with you the message that currently greets all callers on my answering machine, crafted by my friend Garrett:

“Hello and welcome to Carrie's voice mail. Due to recent electroconvulsive therapy, please pay close attention to the following options. Leave your name, number, and a brief history as to how Carrie knows you, and she'll get back to you if this jogs what's left of her memory. Thank you for calling and have a great day.”

Each night I do a show where I entertain with tales of my dysfunction. I've done the same show dozens of times in an assortment of cities, yet somehow—depending on the audience—it's always a little different. Adding myself to the dearth of damaged celebrities that seem compelled to share their tales of their time spent circling the drain.

Wishful Drinking—both the show and the book—chronicles my all too eventful and by necessity amusing, Leia-laden life. I tell this story, partly as a means to reclaim whatever I can of my former life. What hasn't been eaten by electroconvulsive therapy—and partly because I heard someone once say that we're only as sick as our secrets.

If that's true, then this book will go a long way to rendering me amazingly well.

SHORES OF EXPERIENCE BOTH DARK AND UNFRIENDLY

I have to start by telling you that my entire existence could be summed up in one phrase. And that is: If my life wasn't funny it would just be true, and that is unacceptable.

What that really means, other than what it sounds like, is, let's say something happens and from a certain slant maybe it's tragic, even a little bit shocking. Then time passes and you go to the funny slant, and now that very same thing can no longer do you any harm.

So what we're really talking about then is: location, location, location.

An example of the tragic and shocking might be: A few years ago a friend of mine died in my house, but not content to simply die in my house, he also died in my bed. So he didn't just die in his sleep, he died in mine.

Greg was one of my best friends. He wasn't my boyfriend or anything. Meaning he didn't die in the saddle, which would have made me the saddle.

No, Greg was gay. Which might turn out to be something of a theme in this book.

Now, if you entertain, like I do, try to alert your guests *not* to do this. For two reasons, really: a) They'll end up dead, and I don't care how religious you are, that can't be *that* big of a blast, and b) it tends to throw the hostess off her game. Like for a year or three.

Now I assume there might be some curiosity about this fairly exotic experience, and I realize we don't know each other that well yet, but I promise you that's going to change drastically until you might actually feel the need to divorce me, and for that reason there are lawyers standing by (but I promise you you're not getting a dime). Or maybe you're not curious about this because you've woken up next to a corpse and therefore already know a lot more than anyone could possibly ever want to know about it. That or maybe you don't want to know what it's like. It sounds unsavory and distasteful enough without the details. So why dig deeper?

But actually, I've found that a lot of people are curious about this whole business of a man dying in my bed. One of my favorite questions an audience member asked was, "How did you dispose of the body?" As if I dug a hole, put Greg in a bag, dragged him outside, and...well, you get the overall gist of my drift.

Another favorite question is, "Were you naked?" I haven't been naked in fifteen years! I haven't even gone sleeveless in twenty!

Of course, sometimes people ask sensible questions, like, "What was he doing in your bed?" Then I get to say, "Not much." But when they phrase it the other way like, "Why was he in your bed?" I'm forced to reply honestly. I tell them that it was Oscar time in Los Angeles (which is sort of like New Year's Eve for the vapid). And as my home is one of the centers of vapidness on the West Coast,

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