

The Bottom Line

Matthew M. Welsh

SATORI GROUP INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

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To my family, especially my sisters, Megan and Mallory. Their kindness, joy for life, and sense of humor has filled my life with inspiration, wonder, and fun.

A Temporarily Satiated Ego	9
Beer and College Life	12
Anger	32
William James and a Proof of God's Existence	50
Prayer and Meditation	72
Mind/Body Connection and Weightlifting	95
A Course in Mysticism	105
Energetic Balancing	116
Sex and the Sacred Feminine	166
Illumination	194
A Cost-Benefit Analysis on Spirituality	223

The following novel is a fictional story inspired by actual events, people, and books. The traditional religionist or the spiritually timid are forewarned that the material presented herein may be disturbing and therefore better bypassed. The reader will likely question the validity of the theories presented. The ideas build upon one another and the reader will gain a better understanding of each idea by the end of the novel. Some of the theories may still likely challenge the reader because many of those theories need to be experienced in order to gain a complete understanding.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it is in everyone, and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

— Marianne Williamson

A Temporarily Satiated Ego

The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.

— Michelangelo

“Love you.”

“Bye Walt. Love you too.” Walt’s parents wished him goodbye as they slowly walked out of his freshman dorm room. His mother turned around to wave goodbye again. Her son had just arrived at Midwestern University and she was leaving him to live on his own.

This was the pinnacle of Walt Metsh’s life thus far. Midwestern University was a prestigious university. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, it was one of the top ranked universities in the country. Students from all across the world sent in applications. The admissions committee quietly prided them-selves on rejecting more high school valedictorians than any other university.

It had not been easy for Walt to get into M.U. In high school he was primarily motivated by the fear of the painful consequences that came with a rejection letter from M.U. in conjunction with the hopeful pleasure of receiving an acceptance letter. He trained himself like Skinner’s lab rats who moved in order to avoid a shock and also like Pavlov’s dog who behaved because it associated pleasure with the desired outcome of eating. He wanted to avoid the stinging pain associated with get-ting rejected from M.U. and, like Pavlov’s

dog, salivated at the thought of gaining acceptance from such a prestigious university.

The process and journey of high school had little meaning for Walt. It was tough, demanding, and rigorous. He spent count-less hours studying for tests and spent the rest of his free time consumed in extra curricular activities such as student council, volunteer work, and sports as a means to an end – an acceptance to M.U. If he did not get accepted to M.U., all the time he spent in high school working to get in would have been wasted and meaningless.

Fear and desire drove Walt to succeed. He could not let himself relax. He had to constantly remain intense and on edge in order to drive himself. He hated feeling the possibility of fail-ure and wanted to avoid it at all costs. There was no solid knowingness in his mind that anything would work out and he took endless measures to work at achieving his desired result. Nevertheless, he made it. The bottom line was that the pressure and demands that he placed on himself helped him receive his letter of acceptance from M.U., and temporarily satiated his ego.

As soon as his parents stepped out of the door, Walt sat down at his desk in his college dorm room to contemplate the beginning of his college career. College seemed so complex to Walt. How much homework would he have to do? What was dorm life? What were the parties like? Did a lot of people drink in college? Would he make any friends? Would his insecurities inhibit him? Would he be able to control his temper? What did the girls look like and how would they treat him? Did the cafeteria have good food? How would he do his laundry? Where were his classes? There was so much that needed to be taken care of. There were grades, his classes, his major, and a new sense of independence waiting to be explored.

He glanced down at the gifts his dad had left for him, a box of cigars and the book *Real Magic, Creating Miracles in Everyday Life* by Dr. Wayne Dyer. The thought crossed his mind to skim through it, but he did not have the time, and besides the last thing on his mind was spirituality. Walt had read Dyer's book, *Wisdom of the Ages*, after graduating high school. It had some helpful bits of practical advice, but most of it was too out there, too spiritual, and just didn't make any sense to him at the time. Plus, Walt had more significant things on his "to do" list than contemplating his spirituality.

He quickly registered for classes and chose his major. He wanted a major that would guarantee the best probability of him

making a lot of money after he graduated. There were stories of business majors being able to skip classes to spend the day watching movies, playing video games, and the week nights drinking at the local college bars. Additionally, students in the School of Business had a reputation of getting the jobs after graduation. The salaries were good too. The average starting salary was \$42,500 and some who excelled in college were starting at around \$100,000. The combination of straight forward classes and the lure of a high paying, stable job after graduation was enough to entice Walt to enroll in the School of Business and declare Finance as his major. He made it into M.U. Surely, he could handle its Finance courses and the other formalities of college.

Chapter 2

. The next week promised to bring Walt even more excitement. One of the few joys Walt derived from class was the chance to meet girls. His shyness often prevented him from making friends with girls. Occasionally, he might make eye contact or exchange a hello in passing, but often times they looked the other way or just ignored him. However, the small discussion groups in his Composition class allowed him to share his ideas with his fellow classmates and Elisa was an outgoing girl in his class who actually took the time to make conversation with Walt. On Tuesday, Elisa asked Walt if he would go to their dorm's upcoming dance on a blind date with her roommate, Gabby. Walt was happy to go to a dance with anyone so he agreed.

Just hours before the dance on Friday, Walt found out that Gabby was really cute. Overwhelmed with the possibility of dancing with an attractive girl, he proceeded to start taking some shots of Jagermeister to help him loosen up and take the edge off. Maybe it was because it tasted like candy, but Jag seemed to go down so smooth. Something about it gave him an extra kick; not to mention it was a little more potent than the average liquor. After Walt mixed it with Red Bull, he would be on for the night. Maybe it was just in his head, but after the Jagerbombs, he was ready for the dance. At about seven in the evening, he received a call from Elisa.

“Hello,” Walt answered.

“Hi this is Elisa. Gabby’s on her way over. I told her how much you liked Jagermeister and she got you a bottle as a gift for the dorm’s dance.”

“Yeah, that’s awesome. I’ll see you in a little bit.”

Shoot! I forgot to get Gabby a gift for her dorm’s dance. Walt realized as he hung up the phone.

He frantically thought about how to find a gift for her and then he realized he could maybe have a cool gift. A week earlier, Walt went out to eat at the Outback Steakhouse with some friends. As he was waiting to be seated the hostess gave him a device that lights up when a table became available. He thought it would be a cool keepsake and conveniently forgot to return it to the restaurant.

That was it. He could tell Gabby that he had stolen it for her. It was original, funny, and maybe it would impress her. This is perfect. She might even think he was a one bad dude. He was already about six drinks into the night when they arrived at Gabby’s pre-party in her dorm room.

Gabby’s room was the typical female dorm room. It looked like she had hired the Fab Five from Queer Eye for the Straight Guy to design, decorate, and furnish it. It was complete with tapestries, an accent rug, and scented candles. Georgia O’Keefe pictures were displayed on the wall. The lovely quilt covering the futon was a stark contrast to the ripped sheets covering Walt’s beat up couch. Another noticeable difference was the aroma. Gabby’s room smelled like flowers whereas Walt’s room smelled like 18-year-old guy.

They exchanged gifts as soon as Walt walked in. Gabby was indeed impressed with the stolen gift and said,

“Thanks Walt, this is really cool. I didn’t get the impression from Elisa that you would try to steal something for me. She said you were really nice. But, hey this is something else. I’ve never had a guy steal something for me.”

The Jagermeister had kicked in and Walt looked her in the eyes and told her,

“Oh yeah baby, I’m bad, bad to the bone.”

She smiled, laughed, and thanked him again.

He was developing a tolerance, but after awhile Walt was getting pretty tipsy and thought of another way to impress Gabby.

“So babe, you like stolen stuff?” Walt asked her.

“Well, I guess, you know just little random items that people take from odd places.”

“How about a golf flag? Would you like a golf flag?”

“What are you talking about?” Gabby inquisitively asked.

“The golf course is close to this dorm. I could run over there and steal a golf flag for you. Oh yeah baby, I can tell by the look in your eyes. You definitely could use a golf flag.”

“Sure Walt, go for it.”

Walt decided it would be a good idea to leave his date at the dance and run over to the nearby golf course and steal a flag for her. The course was only a few hundred yards from the dorm and he could return with his plunder before the dance was over.

Nearly wasted, Walt proceeded to run over to the golf course. He had a way to get in. He remembered the sixth hole ran parallel to Juniper road and there was a culvert near the left side of the green. It was about six feet high and ran underneath the fence to a ditch near the stoplight. He could avoid climbing over the eight foot tall fence with barbed wire at the top and get on the course by crawling through the culvert. He quickly climbed down into the culvert, unfortunately ripping his pants and putting a three inch gash on the left side of his knee on the way down. It was actually bleeding somewhat. So he ripped off the bottom part of his undershirt and wrapped it around the

open wound. It doesn't make any difference, Walt thought, *As long as I can get something to impress Gabby, oh yeah, I know she wants me, I can tell by the way she looked at me.*

Walking through the culvert was not as easy as Walt imagined. The water was about eighteen inches deep. It soaked his Timberlands and the bottom part of his khakis. But he stumbled through. On the way out he scrambled up the side. He could see the sixth green was about fifty feet away. All he had to do was cross the small cart path and the flag was his.

Oh no! What was that?

The campus police for some reason had chose to park on the small access road behind the green. I can't believe it, Walt thought, my best plans and there is a cop actually sitting on the trunk of his car. Wait a minute. Who's that with him? Is that the philosophy T.A? What are they doing? Oh my, they're not doing this on the golf course, are they?

Walt was shocked. On one hand the perversion he was watching was disgusting. On the other hand, he couldn't believe that the campus Barney Fife would do something like that. The cop was so preoccupied; it was easy for Walt to sneak up onto the green and the grab the flag. As he was unhooking the flag from the hole, he noticed the grad student running off in the distance and the cop getting back into his car and driving off.

This is great Walt thought. The guys will never believe this story. Walt snagged the flag, jumped back into the culvert, submersed through the 18-inch water and was feeling pretty proud of himself as he pulled out of the culvert and found himself starring straight into the flashlights of the campus Barney Fife. With a condescending tone in his voice and a smug look on his face, he attempted to assert his authority,

“Well, well, well.” Barney said. “Looks to me I got another student that I can fine, and humiliate, and embarrass.”

“Oh please officer, please, please let me go. I'll do anything if you just let me go.”

Actually, that's not what Walt said. That's what the officer was hoping Walt would say. Maybe it was the Jagermeister, maybe it was the gash on his knee, maybe it was being soaked, maybe it was being anxious to get back to Gabby. But for the first time in his life, Walt found himself thinking quickly under pressure in the face of authority. What Walt actually said with a stern tone and gleam in his eyes was,

. . . .

To find out what Walt really said to the officer, go to www.mattwelsh.ws and sign up for Matt Welsh's free newsletter.

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Suggested Viewing

Farther than the Eye Can See Phenomenon
What the Bleep do We Know
What Dreams May Come