



# LIFE REBUILT

PAINTINGS BY **DONALD RIZZO**

EXHIBITION @ **MARKET STREET GALLERY** | JUNE 2 - 30 | 2014

A **GETBIZI.COM** PRODUCTION



# LIFE REBUILT

A Journey into and out of the depths of despair

Solo Exhibition | Paintings by Donald Rizzo

June 2, 2014 - June 30, 2014

**Market Street Gallery**

1554 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94112 | 1.415.290.1441

# Life Rebuilt

## A Journey into and out of the Depths of Despair

It took a drug induced psychosis, a damaged and decimated relationship with my children, and a downward spiral of guilt ridden self destruction to discover an artistic voice that has become my salvation.

In a paranoid state after not sleeping for three days I phoned the police to report suspicious activity at my home. That same morning my kids and ex- wife were traveling cross country to visit for christmas. The Police found my story very strange and asked if I had been drinking, I said no but since I was sweating profusely with pupils the size of saucers I was arrested for being under the influence.

I sat in a jail and my kids sat at San Jose airport for over 5 hours with no idea why I wasn't there to pick them up and why wasn't I answering my phone. Once I was allowed a phone call I called a bail bonds men and asked them to conference in my kids.

The look on my son and daughters face as I walked out of jail that night haunts me to this day. Yet, that experience wasn't enough for me to stop using. A total psychotic break with delusions, visual and audio hallucinations, and an international game of master mind being broadcast live on the BBC would follow. An epiphany occurred the night of August 2nd-3rd 2008 when the voices told me my daughter had committed suicide, because I blamed her for initiating "the cleaners" (my psychosis). I wailed, nearly unable to breath, my guilt, my selfishness, my obsession with proving I wasn't crazy and everything I was experiencing was real. After two hours, the voices said Don your daughters fine, we just wanted to see if you loved her. I responded "of course I love her, I know who initiated the cleaners, I did, I know who funded them I did."

These delusions weren't delusions to me, they were as real as my reaction to them were real. That night in August 2008 I discovered that a battle between a conscience mind and a sub-conscience mind that are equally headstrong and pigheaded would be a battle of Mutually assured destruction and this war between them must stop. I found through my art a much healthier way of letting my two minds play.

And thus began the Life Rebuilt.

- Donald Rizzo

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June 2, 2014 - June 30, 2014

Opening party | June 7, 2014 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Pride kick off party | June 28, 2014 | 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

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# PAINTINGS ON EXHIBIT

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**Door Unlocked** | 2014  
91 Colors | 1499 Fragments

I would post this ad on Craigslist: You come to my place find door unlocked, and find me facedown, blindfolded, and naked, wearing wrist and ankle restraints, rope attached, spread eagle and lubed. Once I confirmed it was posted, I would shut down my PC, unlock my front door and assume the position. However, I never posted the address. In a psychotic state with audio and visual hallucinations and the fact that "The Cleaners" tracked my PC and internet activity; they knew my address. Add the fact that I had extreme apprehension with being blindfolded. Because of sensory deprivation of sight, two other senses, hearing and touch were heightened. At some point I would hear the door knob turn and then the door ever so quietly close. Then two or three people quietly, slowly move down the hallway. I would feel the mattress compress as if someone had put their knee on it to reach one of the rope ties. I would then hear one of them whisper not to jerk my arm, then I could feel the needle prick and the familiar sound of Psssss at the end of the injection. I wouldn't feel the rush, but I would feel the high. At some point I would move a leg or arm far enough to realize the rope tie wasn't secured to the bed. I would reach up and take the blindfold off and as I looked around the room, everything that I thought was occurring in the room dissolved away. I would look at the clock and 6 hours would have elapsed. As this composition emerged as I was working different images, my conscience mind had its realization and I chuckled. Who really showed up after I posted that craigslist ad, two mannequins, or was my sub conscience sending a parting blow, a synonym for mannequin is dummy.





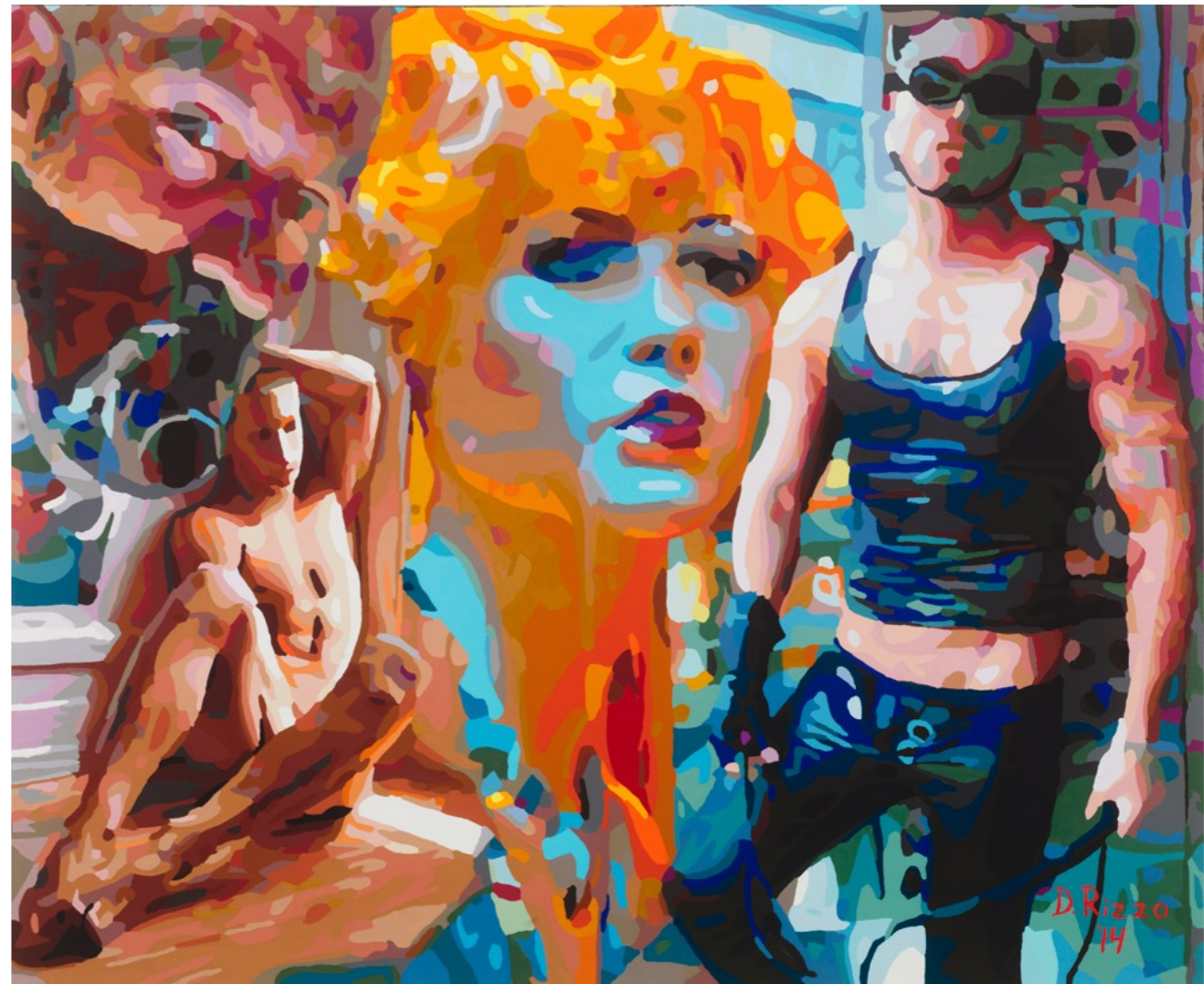
**Gut Feeling** | 2014  
67 colors | 1227 fragments

My psychosis was adaptive, when I would figure out the modus operandi, typical within two weeks it would shift and adapt. In my psychosis my family had contracted with an organization I called “The Cleaners”. The cleaners monitored my phone, text, email and internet usage, they watched, followed and monitored me 24/7, the cleaner’s goal was to make using no longer fun. I discovered that as long as the cleaners were with me I had a veil of protection. They would always step in and ensure no harm would befall me, they were under contract. I discovered that reading a person’s reaction was more valuable than what they said. I would say things and do things just to get a reaction. I would dissect that reaction and then determine the next course of action. After I was arrested, the case played out over 6 months and eventually the charges were dropped. Before the arrest I never had a concern about law enforcement; after the arrest, huge concern. Before the arrest, no cleaners. It was because of the arrest, that my using was discovered by family, and when they believed I had returned to old habits, they contacted the cleaners. In the past after a PNP session I would hop in my car and drive home. The presence of the cleaners changed all that, if I would get into a car and drive, the cleaners would phone the police and I would be cooked. So, I would walk home and sleep. In the morning, I’d walk back to get the car. It was these treks that my psychosis took a twisted turn. If I flipped out by what I was hearing or seeing, that also would cause my arrest. So I developed a Gut feeling. I thought of it as the dark side, which feeds off emotions such as anger, jealousy, fear, lust, and hate, and I would use those emotions to calm me and safely see me home. As this composition emerged, I knew exactly what the center face represents, I harnessed that anger and hate and on the inside I was saying “fuck you all to hell” but on the outside was as cool as a cucumber.

**Psychotic Echos** | 2014  
69 colors | 2079 Fragments

I was working this composition with two male figures and a mannequin and it didn't speak to me. So I started to look for other male figures and when these four came together it didn't speak, it shouted. I can speak about three of these figures, the fourth I am not ready, maybe someday, but not today. At times the voices would not shut up, I would be driving and one would start "Don you're driving too fast" another "Yea, Don the roads are really slick, slow down" I'd say "Shut up and let me drive, what do you know about driving?" "Don Slow down you're going to go off the road." I'd speed up "You want me to slow down, shut the fuck up, give me a god damn minute just one minute of peace" " No not until you slow down" I'd speed up some more. I had the veil of protection, because if I was injured there would be a major lawsuit for those cleaners. I wanted to be able to go sit outside with no observation, no monitoring, and defiantly no voices. Just give me 20 minutes, please 20

minutes, that's all I ask what's 20 minutes. A few times I would hide in the basement, in a room with no windows, in the dark. No phone, no computer, but those damn voices were always there. "Don what are you doing, you can't stay down here forever. Eventually you have to come out." "Not until you promise me that you aren't going to start fucking with me" this conversation would go on and on for more than two hours. Eventually they'd promise me that today would be different and I'd come out and like Lucy and the football, it would be groundhog day all over again. The third figure represents control, some would say I'm a control freak. With meth, I surrendered my control, I served that master. Once I got sober, I determined that I would never surrender again. But I also know once that drug is inside me, it's like a switch, my hand would go straight for my cock. If I wanted to stay sober I had to ensure not to find myself in a situation where meth may accidentally find its way into some elbow grease, or on someones finger as they played with my ass. It would have to be a total lifestyle change, it would have to be Vigilance.







### **Falling Into Despair** | 2014

78 Colors | 1324 Fragments

Falling or slipping into the depths of despair is a painful downward spiral. No one decides hey today I think I'll be an addict. It to is a downward spiral. I tried my first illegal drug at the age of 41. MDMA, Ecstasy, within three weeks I smoked meth. For me it wasn't a slow slippery slope. I fell hard and fast. Before meth I was a sociopath. I told one person, laid it all out describing my sociopathic behavior from the age 6 to 45. After I finished telling the tale, I wanted that person dead. I will never tell that tale again. It was the most uncomfortable thing I have ever done. There was a period of time while trying to end the cleaners reign, that I said my Mom was dead to me. Why, because she was the one who hired the cleaners. I cut off all contact. When she would call and leave a voice message, I wouldn't even listen to it, I'd just delete it. Emails received, not read, simply deleted. I wanted the cleaners to see how much pain and hurt this was causing, so they would step in and say "enough ok Don you win". One night I was driving home it's 2AM and I was at a stop light and another car was driving too fast and side swiped the bridge abutment, I saw sparks from the friction but the car raced on. The voices said "Hey Don, that was your Dad, he was in a car accident, his pickup is smashed up pretty bad and they had to take him to the emergency room" That morning I received a call from my Mom, I didn't answer it, but on that day, I listened to the voice mail "Don its Mom I just wanted to let you know that your father was in a car accident last night, he's going to be ok, but I think his pickup is totaled". I deleted the message and rolled over in my bed and cried. If I had returned the call, the cleaners would know it was all a charade. Four months, I had invested in breaking the cleaners. That adaptive psychosis, it amped it up. The voice said "Don it's your daughter, she initiated the cleaners, your daughter." I wasn't going to lose, I'm not crazy, I had to prove I was right. Ok she's dead to me. No contact, at this point I wasn't communicating with any member of my family. It lasted for six more

months. I did listen to a few of her voice messages. One that I heard was her telling me she received a 4.0 GPA for that semester. I rolled over into a ball and cried, those fucking god damn cleaners, END THIS now, please. I wasn't going to break. This is all real, I am not crazy. I just need a sliver of proof. It came to end on the night of august 2nd-3rd. Two weeks later the cleaners offered me a job, they said I would make an excellent consultant. I told them where they could put their job offer. I said I could never put anyone through what you put me through you sick fucks. The irony who's the sick fuck, but hey I'm no longer a sociopath.



## Squirreled Fetish | 2014

63 Colors | 1074 Fragments

Squirreled: hide something of value in a safe place.

Fetish: an object or bodily part whose real or fantasied presence is psychologically necessary for sexual gratification and that is an object of fixation to the extent that it may interfere with complete sexual expression.

Secrets - the ones we keep, the ones we reveal, and the ones that change our lives forever.

I thought about how there are two types of secrets: the kind you want to keep in, and the kind you don't dare to let out.

There's a value in having secrets, we wouldn't be ourselves without them. Yet others are trapped by their secrets. After all, we are nothing more or less than what we choose to reveal. What I am to my partner is not what I am to my children.

With my adaptive psychosis, everything I said out loud, or out loud conversations, I would hear a voice repeating my comments. I believed this was being broadcast over a blue tooth network so all the cleaners would be current. One day I said "you don't know my private thoughts, I may say one thing but that's to get a reaction, you don't know my true and honest thoughts." That adaptive psychosis; within two weeks, every private thought was repeated. As soon as a private thought started to enter my head that I didn't want anyone to hear, I would have to immediately change my thought so it wouldn't be broadcast. This was pure madness and lasted for over seven months. You see, I would have a lock box that opened with a combination, inside that box I would place a key, that key would open another lock box where I had placed my meth. I would change the combination and to remember it occasionally would repeat it to myself in my head. But now when I repeated it the voices would repeat it out loud. So as soon as I started to think of the combination, I would have to immediately think of something else. Wouldn't remember the combo. I'd put a key around my neck, that opened a lock box that had a key that opened a lock box.... If I fell asleep the cleaners could get the key, so I couldn't fall asleep. Madness.

## I thought You'd Want What I Want | 2014

81 colors | 1410 fragments

This title comes from the song "Send in the Clowns" from the musical "A Little Night Music". Judi Dench, who performed the role of Desirée in London, commented on the context of the song. The play is "a dark play about people who, at the beginning, are with wrong partners and in the end it is hopefully going to become right, and she (Desiree) mistakes her life in a way and realizes when she re-meets the man she had an affair with and had a child by (though he does not know that), that she loves him and he is the man she wants." But he doesn't want her.

For four years while living in London, I was in a relationship both of us were on work visa, and from different countries. He showed me a whole new world. We had been dating for about five months and had tickets to go see the musical "Les Miserables" and on that day my employer informed me that I'd be returning to the US. The song "One Day More" hit home.

"Tomorrow we'll be far away,  
Tomorrow is the judgement day.  
Tomorrow we'll discover.  
What our God in Heaven has in store!  
One more dawn.  
One more day  
One day More"

I immediately began looking for a job in the UK. After four years, I came to the realization that I'd need to return to the US, and hoped he would come with. "I thought he'd want what I wanted." At the time because of immigration rights and the state of marriage equality it would be difficult. I returned to the US he stayed in London.

In retrospect, this began my self destructive period. We continued to email, occasionally chat on the phone and see each other. He'd travelled to the US or I'd travel to the UK. With three years of sobriety, I see how I entered into a new pattern of self-destruction after each time seeing him. This was not his fault but totally on me. Today 10 years after my return to the US, we rarely communicate. But he will always have a special place in my heart.





**Cock Blocked** | 2014

81 colors | 2041 fragments

Losing out on an opportunity due to someone who acted faster, more aggressively or had something more to offer.

Prior to Meth, on a scale of 1 to 10, sex was 9+. On Meth, sex was 100+. That feeling 3 seconds before ejaculation, on meth lasts for 5 hours. Now take an adaptive psychosis, and a sub-consciousness that wants to ruin all the fun. I became more and more isolated, trusting less and less people. I was doing meth to enjoy sex more yet, meth was cock blocking me. How ironic.

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**Gazzoni** | 2014

65 colors | 2015 fragments

Gazzoni is a wrestling move where one starts in the bottom position and at the end of the move is in the top position.

In one relationship we'd thumb wrestle for position.

Putting paint on canvas takes on average 70 hours. 70 hours to be alone with your thoughts. It's in this time of contemplation where conscience and sub conscience mind come to an understanding. I'm only able to do these writings after I've finished a painting.

Gazzoni; a moment when one takes back control. Going from a submissive position to a dominate position. A few days after that night in August 2008, I heard a song on the radio and it had the lyrics "breaking dawn" The psychosis didn't end that night it lasted for many months more. So, when I heard "breaking dawn" and the voices started with "thats right we broke him, we won, nah, nah". And I started "oh no you're not, you mother fuckers, you're not going to win, you're not breaking me, . . . . ." In the past I would fall right back into the battle. The Gazzoni, the voices can say whatever they want but, today and every day since I take back control, and in the end we both live to see another day.

**Who Let The Dogs Out** | 2014

84 colors | 1878 fragments

Some paintings I'll keep the message to myself. The viewer sees a vibrant colorful painting full of life, a painting which has come from a period of deep despair, when I would listen to an Annie Lennox song "The Saddest Song I've Got"

Darling are you healing  
From all the scars appearing  
Don't it hurt a lot  
Don't know how to stop  
Don't know how it stops  
Now there's no sense in seeing  
The colours of the morning



I would look at the scars and abscess on my arms and ask what's the point of seeing the colours of the morning or on Interstate 80 in Rawlins, Wyoming, driving 90 mile per hour in a blizzard and losing control of the car as it slides off the road towards a clump of trees and so wanting and ready to slam into those trees. the lyrics from "Will You Be There" with a bit of an adjustment:

In My Darkest Hour

Will Anyone Still Be There?

In My Doubts

Through My Fear

In My Deepest Despair

Through Many Trials

And Frustrations

In My Anguish And Pain

Who will Care?

And Tribulations

With My Anger

Do I Want Another Tomorrow

Darkness is the absence of light, it only takes a spark, a minuscule amount of light to see color and from this spark one can grow it into a fire, pushing the darkness further away. For me, darkness is always with me, it surrounds me. I just need to keep an ember with me. My art is that ember.

## Vitamin-D Deficiency | 2014

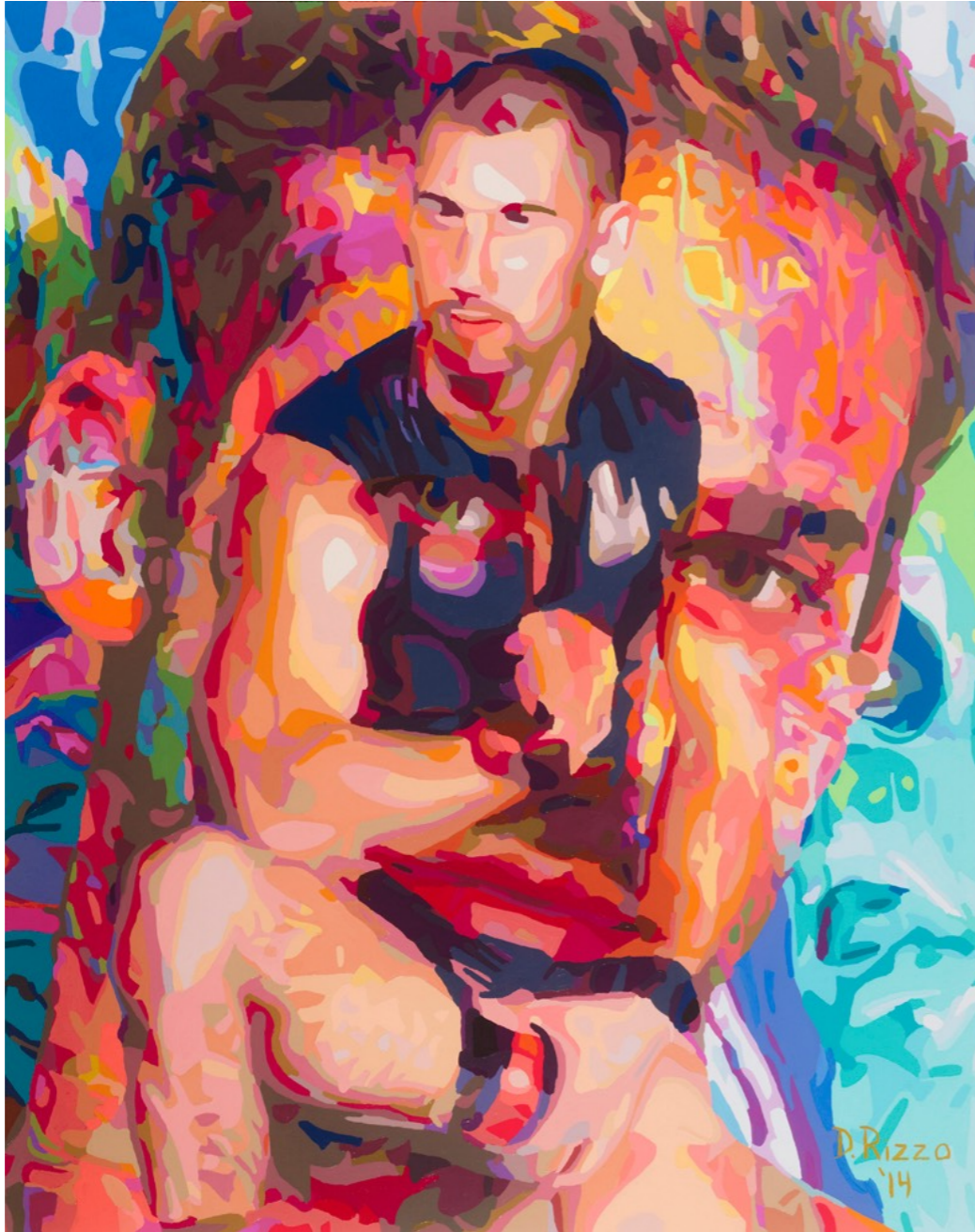
78 color | 894 fragments

I was diagnosed with HIV and when my T-cells dropped below 200, I started highly active antiretroviral therapy ( HAART). Shortly thereafter I noticed I was having some difficulty walking up hills. I talked to my Doctor and he assured me it wasn't the medication. Some time had past and the difficulty walking up hills worsened, and I started having trouble going up stairs on my right side. Once again my Doctor assured me it wasn't my HIV meds. I decided to take a 6 month holiday from the meds, and by the end of the six months, I was able to climb stairs normally. So, my Doctor changed my meds, and within 6 months was having trouble on the right side climbing stairs. Again I was told it can't be the HIV meds. Then my Doctor went bankrupt. So I started seeing a new Doctor, he refereed me to a Neurologist. Over the next two and half years, I continued taking my HIV meds, my weakness had then spread to both legs and I developed winged scapula. The neurologist believed I had an inflammatory muscle disease called polymyositis. There is no cure for polymyositis and can only be diagnosed with a muscle biopsy. With polymyositis eventually your muscle weaken to the point you can't swallow, or breath and you die. I was asked about my

insurance, the biopsy would cost about \$30,000. I demanded the surgery. The pathology report stated "Numerous mitochondria show elongation and branching, these findings raise suspicion for a drug-induced myopathy, as the patient is on two HIV drugs which are associated with myopathies"

If I didn't have adequate insurance, I would have continued taking these poisonous, toxic medications and died. Vitamin-D Deficiency or Cock Sucker wipe your mouth.





**Armory** | 2014  
92 color | 1943 fragments

Then there are times when I'm not sure what my sub-consciousness mind is trying to say. There will be a time some months from now, I could be driving in the car, or waiting somewhere when my mind wonders and I reflect back on a moment and then it happens. Typically I'll chuckle, shake my head and think to myself you little shit.



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