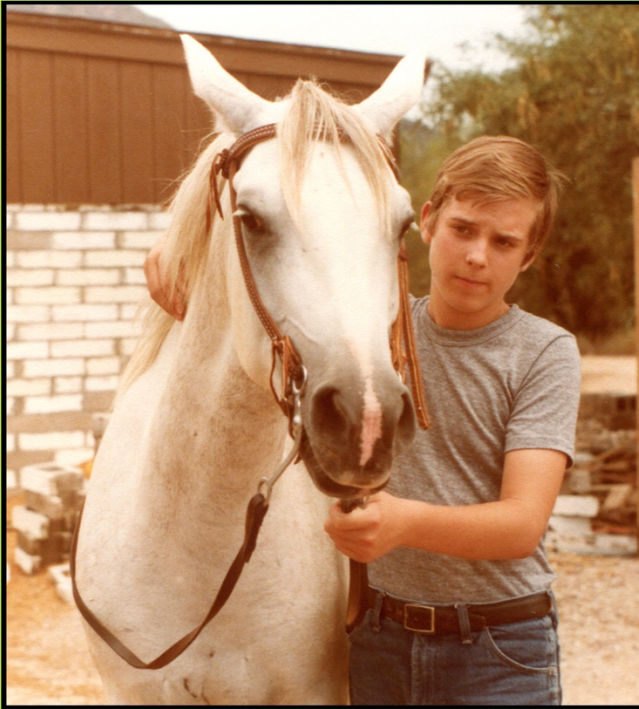


# **SURVIVING SCHIZOPHRENIA**

**My Story of Paranoid Schizophrenia, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Depression, Anosognosia, Suicide, and Treatment and Recovery from Severe Mental Illness**



**Richard Carlson Jr.**

# **Surviving Schizophrenia**

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Compulsive Disorder, Depression, Anosognosia,  
Suicide, and Treatment and Recovery from  
Severe Mental Illness

By Richard Carlson Jr.

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The author would like to thank the editor for her help.

Disclaimer: The information in this book should not be considered medical advice. The author is not a medical professional. Mental health consumers should always consult with medical professionals for advice.

*Surviving Schizophrenia* is a work of non-fiction, however certain facts and other details have been changed.

## Chapter 1

### **Be Honest**

Please listen, because this is important.

The most important thing I've learned from dealing with my severe mental illness is that you have to be truthful to yourself and others. Honesty is not only the cornerstone of a successful and fulfilling life—you cannot receive the treatment you need or experience true recovery without it.

Do not waste years of your life by telling lies.

Because I was not honest with my psychiatrists and family, I did not receive adequate treatment for over ten years. That's ten years of my life that I cannot get back.

Do not hesitate to begin being truthful immediately. Your life might depend on it.

## Chapter 2

### **Born in New York City**

The stork put me into Mom's arms in the early 1970s. My parents were middle class and Catholic, and we lived on a nice street close by a Jewish neighborhood. Did you know that people who have schizophrenia are more likely to have been born and live in an urban environment? I spent much of my childhood in New York City, so I often wonder how much difference that made.

Mom was a hardworking woman who stayed at home to take care of me, as well as my younger brothers, Mike and Steve. My dad was a great father, who provided a good example for me to follow. Once, he took me to his work at the wastewater treatment facility. He and Mom were both caring toward us. Life seemed perfect.

My earliest memories are of my grandparents, who lived on the first floor of our house. My parents, brothers, and I lived upstairs. I would run downstairs in my pajamas to see my grandparents every morning. Grandpa emigrated from Poland when he was seventeen. Grandma was born in America, but grew up in Poland. I loved her so much. One of my most vivid memories is of her making pierogis for dinner. My Polish heritage is so important to me because of my grandparents.

My grandfather was an excellent role model—I couldn't wait to grow up to be just like him. I looked up to my father, who was a great dad, but I remember Grandpa best. He was a nice man, and we would take long walks in the city together.

Once when I was four, I made tire tracks with my toy Batmobile car in the fresh cement that our neighbor, Teddy, had put down in his front yard, and Grandpa smoothed the cement for me afterward.

Grandpa was bald, wore thick glasses, and smelled of the cigars he smoked.

“Don’t do that!” Grandpa exclaimed as he saw me from the window, “No!” However, I continued to drive my new Batmobile through the fresh cement. The Batmobile’s wheels and my small hands were splashed in drying cement. As grandpa hurried out, the sunlight showed through the clouds.

“Vroom, vrooom, vroooooom!” I grumbled as I drove the Batmobile even faster. Batman and Robin had to catch the evil Joker!

Grandpa grabbed my wrist and pulled my toy car out of the muck. I cried out in defiance, “Grandpa, no!” arching my back and clinging tight to the car, trying not to move a muscle. He walked me down the steep steps to our basement for a thorough hand washing.

*But the Joker! Batman and Robin need my help!*

“Do not play in the cement, Richard,” he scolded. When he was angry, his Slavic accent was even more pronounced.



“Mobile,” I said, wanting to play more even as he rolled up my sleeves. Instead of giving back my toy, he scrubbed it, and then washed my hands.

I still needed to help Batman, so I asked if I could play in the backyard. When he let me go, I darted to the dirt where a row of behemoth rosebushes grew. My chest began to tingle as I raced to the rescue through the moist soil.

“Vrooom, vroom, vroooooom!” The Batmobile sped to Gotham Bank.

*I stopped the Joker! I am the hero!*

I was loved by my parents and grandparents very much.

## Chapter 3

### **My Boyhood in Upstate New York**

Before I was old enough to start kindergarten, my parents had a house built in Stormville, which was a small town in Upstate New York. My parents didn't want me to grow up in the city, because they believed the city was too rough for children. They also wanted to make sure I had a good education. It was 1975, and our house had yellow siding with white trim.

Dad put in a small pond in our backyard, replete with lily pads, fish, and crayfish. One day, Dad brought home a huge frog from his work and put it in the pond.

To me, Stormville was the greatest place in the entire world for a boy to grow up. I had a blast catching frogs, tadpoles, toads, turtles, snakes, newts, salamanders, and a myriad of other creatures not only from the pond in our backyard, but from creeks and

ponds all over the neighborhood. I played that I was in the vanguard of the army, I managed a construction site with toy trucks, and I had fun in many other ways at our Stormville house. Wild raspberries and blackberries grew in our front yard, and they tasted so sweet.

Once, my dad hired a man with a bulldozer to remove a tree in our yard, and the man offered to let me drive his bulldozer. I was too shy, so I refused. I wish I hadn't. Growing up, I missed out on a lot of interesting experiences because I was shy.

“How would you like to drive my bulldozer across your yard?” the man asked, climbing down from the dozer. He wore a white t-shirt with holes, old workman's green overalls, and scuffed tan boots.

Dad looked back at me as I dashed behind him, silent. I didn't expect to be offered to do something today that was so much fun! Imagine me—a five-year-old!—driving a bulldozer, just like a real construction worker. The tingling in my chest quivered with uneasy nervousness. It had poured rain earlier that afternoon,

and the summer humidity caused my sweaty shirt to cling to my chest.

Mom put her hands on her hips. “Come out and tell the man, ‘Yes,’ Richard!” she urged.

I looked at my shoes and Dad kneeled down, looking at me. “Don’t be shy. You can drive it and see what it’s like,” he said.

I very much wished that I could drive the bulldozer, but my lips were locked together.

“Tell the man, ‘Yes,’” Mom said again, and I turned my body away from the nice man.

“I’m shy,” I replied, glancing at Mom’s face for a second. If only she’d save me from this situation!

“It’ll be fun,” she encouraged. “Just try it.”

“I’ll sit right next to you,” the man promised, “so nothing will happen.”

I shook my head, looking down at my shoes, even though I really wanted to drive the bulldozer. A minute later, I walked away and found refuge in our backyard. There, I played with my toy bulldozer, pushing sewage

around at my wastewater treatment facility. I felt more comfortable being out of sight from the nice man. But I still wished and wished I could drive the man's bulldozer. If only the man wasn't here—then, my dad could ride it next to me.

My shyness as a child was related to my sensitivity. Approximately fifteen to twenty percent of men and women have sensitive personalities. According to the web site of sensitivity researcher and author Elaine Aron, at [www.hsperson.com](http://www.hsperson.com), sensitive people are often “more aware than others of subtleties,” “easily overwhelmed by such things as bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, or sirens nearby,” and tend to avoid “violent movies and TV shows” and “upsetting or overwhelming situations.” They are also often shy as children and adolescents.

I liked being sensitive, because my sensitivity made me care a lot about my family, my friends, our neighborhood, and my great life in Stormville. I just wished that I wasn't so shy. I also put up with a lot of

bullying because of my sensitivity—it made me different from many of the other boys.

## Chapter 4

### **A Young Writer**

The first time I remember being recognized for writing was in the second grade, when I won the Why My Teacher is My Valentine contest. The winners got to have lunch with their teacher at a restaurant, and have their pictures published in the local newspaper. I was even interviewed by a radio station. I figured that I must take after Grandma Carlson, because she liked to write poetry.

I was in Mrs. Daley's second grade class, just about to leave for lunch, when the announcement was made over the intercom.

"The winners of the Why My Teacher is My Valentine contest have been decided. Thank you to everyone who participated. Two winners were chosen, one from the second grade entries and one from the third grade," the female announcer said.

I listened intently. My stomach began to feel queasy and I had a tingling sensation inside my chest.

The announcer said the name of the third-grade winner first. I didn't recognize the name. Then, she said, "The second-grade winner is Richard Carlson, from Mrs. Daley's class. Congratulations to the both of you. The winners and their teachers are going to get lunch at a McDonald's restaurant. Thank you."

I jumped up and down at my desk as an intense, shooting feeling of happiness pulsed in my chest.

"Congratulations, Richard," Mrs. Daley exclaimed, "and thank you!" She beamed a nice smile at me.

"I won," I said to Tony, who sat next to me. "I won."

"Show-off," he said, and then the class walked to the cafeteria.

All through lunch, I felt such joy inside. *Someday, I'll be a world-famous writer*, I thought, and was proud.



## Chapter 5

### **Rosco**

Years later, my family moved to Tucson, Arizona, which is in the Sonoran Desert. In fifth grade, another boy at my school who was a year younger than me mimicked Rosco, a police officer character in the *Dukes of Hazzard* television series, which was popular at that time. I began to act like Rosco, too.

“You dipstick!” I giddily said to my buddies, Dave, Ron, and Steve, on the playground near the fence that bordered the school grounds. School was almost out and it was summer, and fiercely hot outside. We were dripping sweat like soldiers in a monsoon. The only relief we could hope for was an occasional breeze.

“I’m gonna give you a ticket. I’m going to arrest you,” I said to Megan and her two girlfriends, who were walking up to us, talking among themselves. Then I

pretended to write out a traffic ticket from my imaginary pad, and handed it to her.

“Chase after Daisy!” Ron said as the girls laughed. Daisy was the name of one of the characters from the show, and Megan was pretty, just like her. “Arrest Daisy,” Ron said, and the girls all giggled at me.

“All right, Cletus. I’m in hot pursuit. Arrest them Duke boys!” I said, and I started running around my friends. I did not want them to keep suggesting that I chase after a girl! What a terrifying thought.

I continued to act like Rosco all through the sixth grade, imitating the character’s unique characteristics and giving my classmates imaginary tickets. Sometimes, I would pretend to be driving a police car and make police siren sounds. A boy brought a CB radio receiver to school one day and let me borrow it. I walked around school, talking into the receiver with the cord wrapped around my belt loop. My classmates could only smile.

“Wew, wew, wew, wew, wew!” I screeched the sounds of a police car siren. “I’m in hot pursuit, you

dipstick! I've got a quiver in my liver. Gew, gew, gew," I said into the receiver, just like Rosco.

Dave was most likely to go along with my antics. Once, he acted like Boss Hogg, the town mayor and Rosco's boss.

"I'm your boss!" Dave said, patting his chest, "Arrest Daisy, Rosco!" He laughed.

"Wew, wew, wew! I'm Rosco P. Coltrane." I sped my squad car past him.

"I'm your deputy," Steve exclaimed, pointing at his chest and then folding his arms with a big grin that made me laugh.

"All right, Enos," I replied. Enos was another deputy. "Gew, gew, gew!" "Gew, gew, gew!"

Although it has been over thirty years, I remember feeling even back then that there was something inside my mind that I didn't quite fit in. But I didn't think that being different from everyone else meant that I should ask for help.

## Chapter 6

### **Puberty**

During puberty, I began to really like girls. I wanted a girlfriend very much. Already, I knew that I wanted to have a large family, like I'd had growing up, and that I wanted to wait until marriage to have sex. Unfortunately, there was something wrong with me. I literally did not know how to have a girlfriend because I was experiencing prodromal schizophrenia. Not knowing how frustrated me as a teenager. I tried and tried to get a girlfriend, and even asked my buddies to help me.

I didn't put much thought into wondering whether I might be mentally ill. I had no idea what prodromal schizophrenia and paranoid schizophrenia were. Maybe if there had been more awareness about schizophrenia and other mental disorders in school, I would have figured it out. But instead, my illness continued and I had no idea.

I asked Steve if he could help me get Dorothy as my girlfriend at junior high. Steve was dating Dorothy's friend.

"Why don't you chase after Dorothy," Steve said.

"Okay."

I knew nothing about her and had never spoken to her, but I really wanted to have a girlfriend. I wasn't sure if I should date her, but was dying to be in love.

He wrote a note that asked Dorothy if she'd be my girlfriend, and I signed it. Together, Steve and I gave the letter to Dorothy while she was confabbing with her friends during lunch at school.

She said yes, just loud enough for us to hear as Steve and I stood nearby. Steve cheered and Steve and I walked away.

Because I didn't know how to have a girlfriend, however, I never talked or even sat next to her. Plus, I was still shy. I wanted very much to sit next to her during lunch to get to know her better. I continually put off talking with her. Dorothy never attempted to talk

with me. She broke up with me over the phone, a while later. That was the most we ever talked. Steve and other friends had teased me about kissing Dorothy, however I was confused and didn't know what to say to a girlfriend, because of how ill I was.

"Kiss Dorothy. Kiss her," Steve tried his best to convince me, "Kiss your first love."

"I will," I promised, hoping I'd figure out how to get to know her better soon, hopefully. I just couldn't figure it out, so I continued to put off talking to her.

My freshman year in high school was when I really fell in love, however. Sandie was pretty and had a good personality. I hung around Sandie and several other of our friends. My friends even helped me try to date her. Early on, a friend of mine suggested to Sandie that she and I would be a good couple. I looked up when he said that, and Sandie gave me a mean face. Looking back, I think there were three possible reasons for that face. The first was that she liked me, but wouldn't admit to it. The second was that she didn't like me and didn't want

to be associated with me. The third was that she wasn't certain how she felt about me. She didn't know much about me, after all. She only did what any young girl might do if a guy was showing interest in dating her.

Of course, at the time, the second reason seemed most likely.

I was not able to figure out how a person might react to situations such as that, so I assumed that I was not attractive enough or good enough for Sandie, which hurt me and especially hurt my self-esteem. At first, I couldn't believe that she didn't love me. I was heartbroken, but eventually I got over it. She was a nice girl to be friends with. And, because I was ill, reasons one and three never entered my mind.

I assumed that I did not know how to have a girlfriend because I was shy and such a big nerd. My friends reinforced these ideas. They even tried to help me fit in. Steve suggested that I part my hair in the middle instead of off to the side, which I went along with. Keith and I looked through "cool" clothes in a small

department store in a mall, instead of the nerdy ones I usually wore.

One friend mentioned that I should find a girlfriend who was not so pretty. I was too submissive, and so I didn't say anything to that. I shouldn't have hung around someone who would say that kind of thing. It's possible that I didn't stand up for myself enough as a result of being mentally ill, because I didn't know whether or not I should speak up, or what I should say.

My sophomore year in high school, getting good grades became very important to me. At some point during that year, I began to sit in the library doing homework or studying during lunch. I earned A's in English and B's in Algebra I, and did well in my other classes, too. My freshman year, I had not done well. Now, I was thinking, "I can do this! I can go to college!" I got so much satisfaction from being dedicated to my studies. I would daydream about how dedicated I'd be until I reached my upper division business courses in college, at which time I'd start looking for a girlfriend. I



planned to wait until then, because I wanted to find a mate who would help me grow my father's small resin reproduction casting and mold-making business into a full-time endeavor.

## Chapter 7

### **Dad's Part-Time Business**

Dad became interested in resin casting using silicone molds. My father and I ran this business in our kitchen and at times, my brothers and Mom helped. One project was a full-scale model of an experiment that was going to take place on the space shuttle. I helped Dad sand and putty the sheet Plexiglas, and helped with the gluing and spray painting, too. We also cast reproductions of parts for a full-scale mockup of the interior of a passenger airplane being constructed by a firm in town. The final project was received very highly by the business executives who saw it.

Dad and I met Jerry, a nice man in town who designed custom scale model cars. Dad offered to make resin reproductions of his models, and Jerry agreed. Usually, Dad made the molds with thick, liquid silicone, which hardened but remained flexible enough when

cured to allow a casting to be removed. Often, Dad or I would cast the molds using a two-part liquid resin that hardened within twenty-four hours. I enjoyed helping with the business, as it was a lot of fun. I just loved the idea of making money while doing something that I actually looked forward to doing. I believed that building my father's business would be an ideal career for me.

## Chapter 8

### **Rude to My Friend's Dad**

My friend Keith is a very nice person and a loyal friend. Keith and I had fun swimming in his pool over the summer with his younger sister and other friends. We also did yard work together at a neighbor's house. Keith was a true comedian at times, and he could make anyone laugh. He never put me down, unless he was telling a joke. The rest of the time, he was very considerate of me. He was fun to be around, even though he could be mischievous at times. Keith was the epitome of what a best friend should be. If he would have known I was experiencing prodromal paranoid schizophrenia, he would have told my parents so I could get help.

One day when I was in junior high, I was at Keith's house talking to his father. He invited me inside and said that Keith would be home soon. We were together in

their living room, and then his father left the room. When Keith's father wasn't there with me, I left and rode my bicycle home without saying a word—I didn't know if I should say something to Keith's father and, if I was supposed to, I wasn't sure what I would say. At the time, I didn't even realize that was rude. The next time I was at their house, Keith's father explained to me nicely that he'd been worried about where I had gone. He said that I should tell him if I was going to leave their house. I should have been considerate of my friend's father. I didn't always know how to act or what to do in certain situations because of my illness.

It wasn't obvious to me that I was not well, however. It wasn't obvious to my friend's father that there was something very wrong with me, either.

"The other day, you left without telling me," Keith's father explained. "I was concerned about you. I went looking for you. Next time, please let me know if you are leaving."

“All right,” I replied. I wondered why I hadn’t told him.

“Why didn’t you tell me you were going to leave?” he asked.

“I guess ... I’m shy,” I replied. If he knew that it hadn’t even occurred to me to say something, what would he think of me?

This was one of those moments when I thought there was something unusual about me. I still didn’t fit in.

“Richard,” Keith said under his breath, and then he cracked up, shaking his head.

## Chapter 9

### **Pet Roaches**

My chest chimed as I leaned over and reached into my backpack, pulling out a glass peanut butter jar. As I set it on my desk, Steve—who was sitting next to me—laughed.

“I caught them from the sewer,” I explained, “Gene helped.”

Three roaches scurried about among strips of cardboard and pieces of bread within the jar.

“Keep those away.” Jennifer, whose desk was just past Steve’s, cringed. At the sound of her voice, Mr. Peckney looked over, and his eyes found the jar.

“Don’t let your roaches out,” he said with a smile, and then chuckled.

“I won’t,” I promised. Mr. Peckney’s desk was right next to mine, so I held up the jar and asked, “Don’t you want to see them?”

“Oh, no.” He smiled. “Some parents give their child a kitten or a puppy, but Richard prefers a roach.” He laughed at his own joke, and then walked to the front of the class.

“Gene and I caught the roaches by scooping them into the jar with a piece of cardboard. We removed a sewer cap on a street in our neighborhood,” I explained to Steve. “The roaches were right there on the side of the manhole.”

The bell rang. As Mr. Peckney began taking roll call, Jason got up from his seat, snagged the jar, and took it with him to his desk at the back of the room. I watched him all the way, hoping he would not accidentally break the jar.

“Give him back his roaches,” Mr. Peckney commanded. Jason returned the jar and I smirked, feeling my insides twinge with joy.



## Chapter 10

### **Me for President!**

In my business class in high school, I had to do an oral report. Each student had to describe a possible career choice. I chose being President of the United States. I believe that I chose being president because a vibe told me to; at the time, I thought it was intuition telling me.

That afternoon, after school, I sat next to my good friend Matt on the bus.

“I did an oral report in general business class today,” I explained. “I think it went well.”

“What was it about?” Matt glanced up from the book he had been reading on his lap.

“I did mine on being president. The project had to do with a possible career that we’d like to have. I’m going to become president someday,” I explained.

“Are you going to start a revolution and turn the country into a dictatorship, or try to get elected?” he asked, and his seriousness gave me a tingling, fun feeling inside. “I don’t know if the CIA will put up with you overthrowing the government.”

“Oh, I want to be elected, but I won’t turn the country into a dictatorship.”

“What are you going to do before you become President?” he asked. “What will you do to help get there?”

“I am going to turn my father’s business into a full-time career, with employees,” I explained. “And then, maybe I’ll run for Governor, and then President,” I said.

“I’ll vote for you,” he said. “I think you’d make a good president.”

“Thank you,” I replied as Matt went back to his book.

For a moment, I glanced down at the page he was reading. Then I looked out the window, calculating how

many years I'd have to wait until I met the age requirement for being president.

Twenty years.

It seemed a lifetime away.

## Chapter 11

### **The Letter**

In my junior year English class, I had to write a letter to the wife character in a story we had read, whose husband had committed suicide. The teacher said mine was “cold,” and I was confused. Later, I had my father read it, and he also disapproved. I was even more confused. I was not capable of interacting with people normally.

Mrs. Getner called each student to the podium to get his or her assignment. When, she called my name, I got out of my seat and walked to her. As she handed me the letter, she said, “Yours was very cold.”

I took the paper, looking at the C grade, feeling embarrassed in front of the class. My eyebrows furrowed as I walked back to my seat. What made mine cold? What should I have done differently?

At home, I decided to have my parents read it.

Dad laughed. "It's cold, like the teacher said."

Mom had no comment.

I grabbed the letter and went to my room to put it away.

I was still confused. I couldn't figure out why what I wrote was cold. Frustrated, I put the letter away and instead of figuring out what I had done wrong, I just forgot about it.

## Chapter 12

### College

When I attended Pima Community College, I lived with my parents and siblings. I was a general business major. Being a college student was very exciting for me. College life wasn't like high school—most people were in college because they wanted to be there. I studied hard, wanting to excel. Everything revolved around my studies and my father's part-time business. Now, I was an adult.

Early in college, in fact, I designed several of my own scale models, cast reproductions of them, and sold the reproductions via mail-order. One model was of a 1/43 scale 1959 Cadillac sedan. For that model, I had used an existing model made by another manufacturer as a base. Using modeling tools, I converted the two-door coupe to a four-door. I even made a rear window from scratch and cast reproductions in clear resin. I took great pride in designing, casting, painting, and

assembling the models. I made enough money to pay for most of my college tuition early on, although I didn't make nearly enough to cover room and board.

Two of my built scale models were featured on the cover of *Model Car Journal*, which was a well-known magazine in the model business at the time. These models and others received excellent reviews in the magazine.

I also designed and reproduced a scale model airplane stand with the jet's Israeli name on a base that held the model (which was made by another company) upright in a flight position. However, I sold very few of the stands, even though they were featured in a scale model airplane magazine.

## Chapter 13

### Anne

While I was sitting in the cafeteria one day my freshman year, a strange girl came by, looking happy to see me.

“How have you been?” Anne asked as she sat next to me in the school cafeteria. “Remember me? I’m Anne.” She was very pretty and had short, curly brown hair.

“No,” I stuttered. A person who wasn’t mentally ill might reply, “Oh, hi. Sorry, I don’t remember you.” But all I said was, “No.”

“We knew each other in fourth grade. We’d play on the monkey bars shaped like a car, remember?” she added.

“No,” I replied again.

“On the car, you’d act like you were stuck in a toilet.”



“No ... oh, yeah, I remember,” I replied feeling my chest tingle for a second. It made me happy to remember playing and goofing around with Anne.

“Do you date often?” she asked, showing a nice smile. For a moment, it felt like she had let the morning sunlight into a dark room.

“Oh, no. Not right now,” I said. I could tell that she felt insulted, but she kept a straight face.

“I’ll see you around,” she said, and left.

I was confused, and I didn’t understand why I felt confused about the conversation. I had handled the situation poorly because I just didn’t know what to say. I still regret that. If we had gone out, Anne might have become my girlfriend. If I had gone out on a date with her, perhaps I would have figured out that I was mentally ill. Then again, perhaps going on a date would have been a disaster for me. I wouldn’t have done anything right, and I would have been embarrassed. The whole time, I wouldn’t have had any idea of what to say or do.

I held onto my plan to wait until my upper division business classes to find a girlfriend. After two years at Pima Community College, I transferred to the University of Arizona for my upper division courses. I was still ill, but as time went by, it wasn't as obvious to me that I didn't fit in.

One day, I saw myself in the bathroom mirror when I stepped out of the shower and saw blood on my face. I thought I had been shot in the mouth. I immediately felt very weak and I struggled to walk to my bedroom, hoping that whatever was happening to me would soon pass. I almost collapsed in the hallway, because of how ill I felt. I lay on my bed face down, waiting for the sickening sensation to pass. Eventually, it did. I stood and dressed.

The next time I saw my mom, I told her about it. I don't remember what she said, but we decided not to do anything about it. Looking back, I believe that seeing that false reflection in the mirror was my first psychotic experience.

My first semester at the university was stressful because I had some trouble with one class in particular, and I wanted to earn good grades. Actually, I had been putting myself under a lot of stress with my studies for years. Still, I enjoyed the university and was pleased to be in the prime of my life. After that first semester, I was ready to begin taking upper division business courses at the university. I was on the path to success, and nothing could stand in my way.

But something dreadful was about to happen—something that would drastically alter the course of my future. It is common for people who get schizophrenia to experience stress before becoming psychotic. Researchers have determined that there is a genetic component to schizophrenia, but a stressful event in a person's life can trigger the worst symptoms of the illness.

## **About the Book:**

Richard Carlson Jr. was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia when he was twenty-one years of age. His illness first manifested when he was an early adolescent. Modern psychiatry greatly failed Richard for over a decade. Then, after an incident involving the police, he truly understood that his diagnosis was real, and finally began the long process of recovery. Over ten years later, his life is greatly improved. In the course of his treatment, Richard also recovered from depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and lethargy.

Do not let what happened to Richard happen to you, a loved one, or a patient dealing with severe mental illness. Always be honest with each other, and with your psychiatrist. For patients, family members, caregivers, students, and medical professionals who would like to learn more, visit [www.survivingschizophrenia.com](http://www.survivingschizophrenia.com).

**About the Author:**

Richard Carlson Jr. is an author of children's books and coming-of-age romances. He is a highly sensitive person, or HSP, and has paranoid schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. You can learn more about him at [www.rich.center](http://www.rich.center).

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