

## Gardinnia—Founders—Derek’s Story—Accident\>Climbing (4)

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Derek:

I was an only child.

I saw the money climb, the mountain, the way to survive.

My father was a teacher.

My mother was a waitress.

There were always whispers of lack, of need, of not enough money.

From that sickening vantage point, which I hated, I saw a way out.

There was a mountain to climb, to get off this poverty plateau.

That’s what I called it; I hated them for it.

I had to climb that mountain.

I became intent on the summit and saw the hurtles, the underbrush, the ledges.

School became the first battlefield

Forget academics, I wanted to learn how to compete and win.

Winning was the way to advance.

I became determined to get to the front.

Tests were not about learning; they were about winning.

When a teen, I found a target on that mountain.

If I had to be in the education machine, I wanted to be in the one that would put me into a money stream.

A big money stream.

I saw that it was business.

The arts were fluffy and could hit big, but had no guarantee.

Serving others was nice, but paid in pennies.

No, money was in business.

So I went at it.

In my twenties I selected a wife who would help me.

She had to be hungry, too.

I wanted someone who would push me.

And I found her—a great match.

We were like two race horses strapped in a harness, feeding off each other.

We heaved at our work, side by side, eying each other, competing with each other to drive us.

We decided to have children because, it would advance us—having a family.

She was willing to stay at home with the two, we decided on two, for a few years.

She worked at the edges.

But as soon as she could, she would join me full time.

She had just gotten back in, ready to race.

We found it all exhilarating.

It was the engine of our sex.

But then it happened.

Derek pauses, takes a deep breath before he continues:

It was difficult, deeply difficult, for a long time.  
I'm better now because of Al, and Fred—I'll tell you about Fred in a minute.

We were in the car, me and my family.  
I was rushing, as usual, which excited my wife sometimes.  
But not that day; she was really nervous, trying to slow me down.  
That seemed to make me go faster.

Our company was in the middle of a huge business deal.  
I knew it could pay big, but I knew, if it soured, it would destroy us.  
My young sons, when I was rushing, I think to cope, used to get excited.  
They would encourage me.  
They were laughing that day...that day they were laughing.

Derek pauses:

I received a business call.  
The deal was falling through.  
I should have pulled over.  
I knew the deal didn't have to crash us.  
My partner, in my view, was messing up, but he wouldn't listen.  
We were coming to an intersection—  
I saw the light.  
It was yellow.  
I slowed.  
But it was like the light was taunting me, daring me, mocking me because it was slowing me down.  
I jammed the gas.  
I thought, 'Nothing is gonna stop *me!*'

Derek paused, quieted:

A car was taking a turn onto the street.  
I didn't see it until the last...the last...second.  
It rammed us, flipped our car.

I survived with barely a scratch, but I had killed my family.

Derek had folded forward, stops again.  
He closes his eyes:

Within minutes, I saw that they were dead.

I entered the belly of a snake.

I entered agony.