

Chapter 7

Estranged

*beginning on April 1, 1970
and continuing for 1 year, 4 months, and 10 days*

“He gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. (The prodigal son from Luke 15:13)”

From my earliest years I have been a hopeless romantic. My heart has continually yearned for love and has wept at love’s demise. My soul has always resonated to sentimental songs of unrequited love: *Blueberry Hill* by Fats Domino (1956), *Mr. Blue* by the Fleetwoods (1959), *Blue Velvet* by Bobby Vinton (1963), and *Suite: Judy Blue Eyes* by Crosby, Stills & Nash (1969). Each song lyric is a variation of my own heart-crushing Arlene blues.

This heart ailment from which I suffered might be termed EGRD: “Eros-God Reversal Disorder” suggested by First John 4:8. The transitive sentence reads: “God is love”. Logic may infer an equivalence of nouns on either side of the verb, but that is a deception. The meaning distorts when reversed into “Love is God”. I know this through experience. I made love my god, turning Eros into deity. I enthroned an idol where only God should reign. The result of EGRD was heartbreak on earth and estrangement from heaven.

April 1970

April 1, 1970, marked Arlene’s twentieth birthday. I had purchased twenty roses for the occasion. At about four o’clock I pulled into her workplace lot. I paced the sidewalk with nervous tension, rehearsing magic words I prayed would regain her affection. I imagined her familiar smile and conjured an embrace still fresh to memory. Rain began to pelt my ballcap, so I sat in the Chevy. Red roses rested on a cushion so recently laden by Arlene’s frame.

Drizzle muddied the dusty windshield so I didn’t see her face. Rather, I heard that achingly familiar laugh, then words like, “Help me out. I can’t open this umbrella.” I heard a chuckling male response.

I flung open the door and confronted R. Her escort froze in bewilderment. I inhaled a breath of courage, removed the bouquet from the car, and handed the bundle to the stranger. I sputtered, “Today is Miss Kurek’s birthday. Do me a favor and pass these flowers on to her”. I gave the astonished Arlene a warped smile, then returned to my car. I saw the two gesturing as I sped away.

I parked on a side street, turned off the ignition, and howled with pain. An arrow had pierced my heart. I pounded the dashboard in anguish. The woman I had worshipped had betrayed me.

After regaining a measure of composure, I drove to Whiting. Charlotte recognized my pain and let

me be. I stretched out for a few hours then drove in the darkness back to Muncie. Fantasy was dissolving. Reality was sinking in.

A few days later I received a polite note from R. She thanked me for the birthday flowers, adding I had misinterpreted events. Her kind co-worker had offered to escort her to the lot on a rainy afternoon. He supported her elbow because the stairs were slippery. Arlene said I had embarrassed her and was no longer welcome to visit her at work. I crumpled the letter in agony as I scanned her multiple photos plastered around my study desk.



In my final letter to R, I related a story about my four-year-old nephew Chrissy. He had attended a pre-school party and had brought home two goldfish in a plastic bag. Charlotte placed the little critters into a glass bowl at his bedside.

Chrissy really loved those fishies, but on the second morning he stumbled down the stairway in tears. The goldfish were dead. Chris had loved his friends so much he plucked them from the water and set them near his heart. And thus, it had happened to his namesake uncle as well.

On my next visit to Whiting, Arlene asked to meet me outside her home. I noticed her mother peeking through a front curtain. Through a rolled-down car window, I handed over her 1968 class ring and she returned mine. It was over. By coincidence, on the same day R and I separated, John, Paul, George, and Ringo signed papers dissolving the Beatles.

I returned the wedding bands to the jewelry store in late April. I had paid about half of what I owed for the \$350 set. I hinted perhaps the jeweler might return some of my cash. He smiled, "Sir, we can guarantee the jewelry, but not the relationships."

I muttered to myself, "Would that you could".



I found myself in free fall during the months of April and May. Life held no meaning. My language coarsened. My company worsened. Drug parties and radical politics entered my life. Boone's Farm wine and Winston cigarettes became staples. My comrades termed themselves "freaks" and the word seemed apropos. In our clothing, vocabulary, and attitude, we strove to distinguish ourselves from the "straights" of the world.

In the midst of depression and turmoil, my Spring grades held remarkably steady: An A, three B's and a C. Mark was impressed. I told him "that's why they call it a BS degree."

Since I had abandoned German as a minor, I had to find an alternative. I dropped by the assessment center and took a battery of aptitude tests. My interests scored all over the map, from science, to philosophy, to history. With such an array of aptitudes, the counselor suggested Library Science where I could be a jack of all trades and a master of none.

On May 4, anti-war sentiment boiled over at nearby Kent State University. Four students lay dead at the hands of the Ohio National Guard. A group of us rallied on the Ball State mall and I signed a petition supporting “The Peoples Peace Treaty.” I looked on as several college men burned their draft cards in protest.

The guy who lived across the hall invited me to a local Unitarian Universalist Church. I obliged, thinking it would expand my horizons. I was shocked to see Buddhas, saints, Krishnas, and minarets intermingled throughout a gilded meeting hall. I realized I remained Christian at core. If someone were to ask me, “Who is God?”, my response might be, “The Holy One against whom I am rebelling”.

About this same time Jesus was making a cultural comeback on campus. I began to notice students sporting t-shirts that read “Jesus People”. The vinyl album *Jesus Christ Superstar* topped the pop charts. What was this buzz about Christ? I dismissed it as camp; something that provided amusement to the sophisticated. Jesus was so un-cool; He was becoming re-cool.

Don Zelen’s mother—Grandma Rose—invited me to live in her basement for the summer of 1970. I was able to work forty hours per week at Inland Steel, spending off hours with the Walkers. One summer evening Arlene dropped by the house. I think she felt sorry for me. I invited her into the kitchen for a grape Nihi soda. My ex-girlfriend showed me the new car her parents had purchased for her. I quipped, “So that’s how they bought you off, huh?” Arlene was not amused. She drove into the sunset not to reappear for many years.

My former high-school teacher, Mr. Erickson, lived alone in a Whiting apartment. He invited a gaggle of young men to his place for discussion and counseling. I knew of his foppish reputation, but he was cultured and kind. After watching the movie, *Patton*, I was thrilled to discuss events of World War Two. To my amazement, Mr. Erickson was a journalist in 1945 and actually interviewed the famous general. It struck me for the first time that an old man’s biography is a young man’s history. Over the next year, I dropped by his place whenever in Whiting.

In July, I skipped work to help Jack relocate. We hitched a U-Haul trailer to the back of his convertible and drove two thousand miles west to Longview, Washington. Jack soon found a job selling real estate while Barbara looked after her kitty named Puppy.

Jack and I went to the Kelso Theater to see *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Afterwards we talked for hours about the future of space travel and what life might be like in the twenty-first century. Would we have computers like HAL? Maybe I would live on the moon.

Dad and mom had some kind of religious experience that didn’t interest me. However, I was fascinated by their collection of Bible recordings. An actor named Alexander Scourby had recorded the entire New Testament on long-play phonograph albums. As I overheard the King James Version, my spirit inside wept.

I remained with my parents for a week before flying to Chicago. My Chevy began to burn oil and black clouds trailed me to the junk yard. I replaced it with a classic 1961 Impala for \$250. Unfortunately, three days later, this big-finned beauty was side-swiped while parked on Calumet Avenue. I had no insurance, so my two-tone car remained crumpled for a month of driving.

Big industry was shutting down in northwest Indiana. After my final steel-mill paycheck, I bought a 1965 Catalina for \$450. With bankbook nearly depleted, I packed my belongings and motored to Muncie for my third year of college.

I hooked up with a nineteen-year-old friend named Lynn and together we moved into 828 East Adams, a hippie-house known as “the mansion”. Rent was low, times were high, and music reverberated. Lynn liked me; I used her. She was attached; I was detached. I was in full rebellion against God. I remember steadying a wobbly kitchen table by mashing Gideon pocket Bibles under two wooden legs. The communal house adopted a stray dog and I named the sickly animal “Jehovah”.

The Library Science program accepted me and my curriculum altered course. I attended three library classes that Fall: Reference & Bibliography, Card Catalog, and Children’s Books. The workload proved overwhelming and I barely squeaked out C’s. My bohemian lifestyle contributed not a little.

An assortment of odd balls moved into the mansion, only to reside a day or two. Dozens were attracted to parties, to dope, who knows? The more I struggled to be free, the more I fell into bondage. I barely survived that Fall term, managing to stay off the street, out of jail, and outside the psych ward. Things had to change. In December, I abandoned Lynn and vacated the mansion, packing my worldly belongings into the big Catalina.

I faced a three-week Christmas break, no place to live and little money. I was overcome with wanderlust and got the crazy notion to hitchhike cross country. I figured this would be a trial by ordeal; a test of pluck and resolve. I parked my car in the Theta Chi lot and Mark drove me to his home in Pendleton, Indiana. I stayed with him overnight and departed the next day.

On December 19, at 9:45 in the cold of morning, Mark dropped me along Interstate 80. I was wearing two sets of pants, two shirts, wool socks with boots, a heavy coat, ear-flap cap, and ski gloves. Over top of all this, I poked my head through an Alaskan parka. I lugged a navy duffle bag filled with raingear, extra socks, snacks, soap, flashlight, transistor radio, canteen, pen and tablet. Into the toe of my sock I tucked my life savings—eighty-six dollars. My hand-drawn sign read: “San Francisco”.

I kept a log of my rides to Longview. These are my fourteen encounters during the two-and-a-half-day slog:

1. From Pendleton, Indiana, to Interstate 80 by Mark.
2. I-80 to Indianapolis by a couple who have a kid at Purdue.
3. Indianapolis to Kansas City by two freaks on a honeymoon from Connecticut.
4. Kansas City on I-80 only two exits by four high-school kids.
5. Two more exits on I-80 by a guy with a GTO. His back tires were falling apart.
6. Three more exits by a GI stationed at Fort Leavenworth.
7. One exit by guy in a VW. He gave me a swig of whiskey.
8. Along I-80 about two hundred miles in VW van. I slept a little.
9. From Oakley, Kansas, to Welles Nevada, about 1100 miles, twenty-three hours with Jack and Betty. Roads were bad. Passed through Denver at 10 AM Sunday.
10. From Welles to Sacramento. Guy who was driving the VW van was a hitchhiker himself. Couple was sleeping in back. I slept for several hours. Lots of ice and snow.
11. From I-80 in Sacramento off exit 100 yards. Someone felt sorry for me. Stood for two hours near Sacramento to 11 AM. I drew a new cardboard sign that read, "North".
12. From 1-5 outside Sacramento to the Albany exit in Oregon. Eight hours by Berkeley student. Said he was wanted for murder in California. Far out!
13. Got approached by cop who said hitchhiking is illegal in Oregon. Got picked up by hip couple to Vancouver, Washington.
14. To Longview, one block from home at eight in the evening on Monday.

I didn't tell my folks I was heading West, so they were stunned to see their prodigal son standing at the front door, grubby and disheveled. Dad and mom were in the midst of a charismatic home meeting. About twenty enthusiasts sat in the living room on fold-out chairs. I greeted the happy-clappy Christians, then took a hot shower and slept until noon on the following day.

The change I saw in my father was startling. He was effervescent, dressed in a flashy polyester leisure suit. He could not speak without joy bubbling in his voice. Dad had never liked restaurants, now he was eating out every second day. He counted these as opportunities to witness the faith. Dad had become a thorough-going and effective evangelist. Mom was his full partner, ministering to the ladies.

I was in the Longview house for eight days, enduring incessant chatter about something called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit". I didn't do drugs at the house, but acted stoned so my family wouldn't pester me. To any testimony they attempted, I'd nod my head and croak "far out". The strategy seemed to work.

The family celebrated my twenty-first birthday followed by a big Christmas dinner. Six Zelens, six Foremans, and four Zimmermans sat around the dining room table to hear dad preach about Jesus and lead in group prayer. Frank shared with me about speaking in tongues, describing his recent experience on December 14. He gave me a book by some English guy named C.S. Lewis. I promised to read it on my return hitchhike. Don took me aside and said he would pay for my flight home, if only I would cut my long hair. Fat chance! Plus, I looked forward to my return adventure.

Jack sold real estate out of an office in Kalama. We talked as he drove me sixty miles south into Portland, dropping me off at 8 AM on December 28. It took me three and a half days to get back to Whiting. These are my twenty-seven rides:

1. Jack drove me from Longview to Portland on Interstate 5.
2. Two exits by a kid in a pickup. He needed me as a side view mirror.
3. Three exits by farmer in a pickup.
4. Long wait, then picked up by guy in beat-up '61 Chevy. I went about 150 miles.
5. To Redding, California, by a weird guy going to the Rose Bowl, about six hours.
6. To the San Francisco exit. He was an expert in artificial insemination. We conversed the whole way. He dropped me at 11:00 PM, now heading east on Interstate 80.
7. To Davis, California, by a Davis student, short ride.
8. Picked up by Davis cop whose wife is from Kokomo. He said I couldn't hitchhike on I-80, so he drove me one exit further dropping me off the big highway.
9. With a guy from Auburn who drove me a few exits into Auburn
10. Was in Auburn four hours in cold and dark! Got picked up by a trucker. I spaced and dozed to Reno where I was let out. Walked miles through Reno and Sparks. Made a new sign because I lost my original in Redding. It's easy to find cardboard.
11. To Salt Lake City by a student from Brigham Young. Got eight hours of fitful sleep.
12. Through Salt Lake City about five miles to city limits by a commuter. It was 5 PM Wednesday.
13. About twenty miles by guy in VW going home.
14. To Wyoming by guy from Georgia on vacation in '71 Pinto. I had a five-hour wait somewhere in Wyoming. City cop said if state cop found me it would be \$150 and ten days! I was shuddering cold and shook up.
15. Finally got picked up at 2:00 AM by trucker who slammed on brakes. He said I was crazy to be out in a blizzard. He drove me nineteen hours to Council Bluffs, Iowa. He bought me a meal along the way. I spent New Year's moment near Council Bluffs with my thumb extended. I know because I heard fireworks pop in the distance.
16. Drunk guy drove me through town a few miles.
17. To Des Moines by guy driving about 120 MPH. Slept most of way.
18. By trucker on exit. He drove me a few miles because he thought I was needy.
19. Man drove me another few miles east off of Interstate.
20. Back to I-80 by Des Moines about thirty miles.
21. Black dude to Iowa City. I drove his GTO the last thirty miles. He said he was an entertainer and dead tired.
22. Trucker to Moline, Illinois. He made an abrupt stop at exit to let me out and cop was right behind him. The cop gave him a ticket and me a warning not to hitchhike.
23. I walked off the roadbed to the on-ramp. I got a ride about ten miles to some small city and waited near I-80 for a few hours.
24. Guy going to Detroit took me to Route 41 and I-80. He got a speeding ticket.
25. Got a ride north to downtown Munster. Guy congratulated me on trek.
26. Another three-mile ride. Got to Hammond at 4:00 PM on New Year's Day.

27. Jeannie Grinsted (by pure coincidence) drove me to White Castle hamburgers. I looked up to Mr. Erikson's apartment window and saw the light on. We talked about my great adventure.

1971 to August

I hung around Whiting for a few days recovering from my arduous journey. I discovered Charlotte was now a raving Pentecostal. Dad had preached to her by telephone and my second sister was now speaking at me in tongues. I could not escape. Was the Hound of Heaven nipping at my heels?

I did some overdue accounting and withdrew my first student loan: \$1000 from the First Bank of Whiting. Big Jim Walker dropped me on Calumet Avenue and after a three-hour hitchhike I reunited with my abandoned car. The doors were frozen shut and the battery was dead, but I was happy to resume my university lifestyle.

I didn't have a place to stay, but I had a pocket full of money. After a day of searching I found a suburban house on Lynda Lane, spent \$250 of bank money, and moved in. I was accompanied by Mark and two hippie friends. Each agreed to contribute \$30 per month, but their money was slow in coming. I met Jim Richardson who played guitar in a rock band. After moving in, Jim needed space to practice, so drums, guitars, and amplifiers occupied the living room. Two band members began to couch-sleep in the day and noise-make in the night. Everyone wanted to stay, but no one wanted to pay. After three months of expense, I abandoned the property forfeiting my \$100 deposit.

My grades recovered: An A, two B's and two C's. For the Honors Colloquium my group met in Dean Lawhead's house. These dozen hours a week were an island of tranquility in a sea of chaos. I hooked up with a few girls, but nothing clicked. I was intelligent, but unstable; attractive, then offensive. I suffered from ennui; weariness and discontent of soul.

During times of depression and hallucination, my soul—without prompting—reached back to my childhood days. I never recalled sermons or scripture verses. I rasped embedded hymns: "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus our blessed Redeemer. Sing, O earth, His wonderful love proclaim. Hail Him! Hail Him! Highest archangels in glory. Strength and honor give to his holy name." These words rescued me from abject despair.

My Catalina was back-smashed and three of us went to a local hospital. Our injuries were not serious, but the car was totaled and the driver uninsured. For the next several months I struggled without a vehicle. My thumb managed to get me back to Whiting every few weeks.

On a hitchhike north, a Purdue student picked me up near Lafayette. As we were talking on Highway 41, the driver scooted toward me and rubbed my thigh with his right hand. I shoved it

away and he apologized. He said he was hoping I'd turn out gay. He added he was heading to a gay bar in Chicago and asked if I wanted to join him. Always wanting to broaden my horizons, I consented. It was an eye-opening evening. I drank a few cocktails while fending off several advances. The guy was cool and dropped me off at Walkers at about 3:00 AM.

The stately Eliot Hall at BSU was reserved for seniors only. In the Spring term I discovered I had enough units to qualify, so I applied and took up residence. Regular sleep and meals helped me cope with depression. My roommate was a graduate student named Grubb, who led the "War Resistance League" on campus. Every week we gathered at an anti-war rally. I accumulated a new set of friends, some idealists, some rowdies, and some—like me—just wanting to make the scene.

I followed Grubb and soon became a protégé. I helped him pass out handbills emblazoned with the red clenched fist of civil disobedience. On April 30, a dozen of us anti-war demonstrators piled into the back of a U-Haul truck and headed to Washington, D.C. Our goal was to shut down the capitol. My button read, "If the government won't stop the war, the people will stop the government." My travel bag contained a camera, handbills, snacks and water. The driver stopped every hour to lift the back hatch giving us a breath of fresh air.

May first, 1971, was crazy. About 30,000 protesters camped out in West Potomac Park near the Washington Monument grooving to rock music and preparing for political action. A fellow traveler provided me with two hits of LSD. I experienced the biggest bummer of my life and partook in my last experiment with hallucinogenics.

It was really heavy stuff and with all the music and strange antics in the park, my mind freaked out—tasting sounds and hearing colors. My primary hallucination was that the world would end at dawn. The distant shining monument appeared to be the gates of heaven and chattering protestors huddled around fires appeared as demons from hell. I must have blown my mind because I found myself lying in a medical tent babbling about four horsemen of the apocalypse. I recovered my senses during the night.

At dawn on May 2, bullhorns announced the park would be cleared. I woke sleepers as helicopters buzzed overhead. A few dozen of us spilled onto a street to block traffic. When we saw D.C. police busting heads, we ran for it. Two in my May Day tribe were collared by the cops. The remainder jumped into a VW minibus to watch the action from a safer distance. I rested in a sanctuary church then spent the night with compatriots from Virginia.

On the evening of May 3, I headed to Indiana in an overstuffed car. My satchel went missing and I mourned the loss of undeveloped film. At 4:00 AM, as we were entering Muncie, a patrol car stopped us. They combed the car and the people in it, but found no dope. We spent a few hours in detention, then were released. May Day ended my protesting career. I still searched for meaning, but I knew I wouldn't find it in radical politics.

I was at a pot party when I hooked up with Patty. I regret taking advantage of that freshman girl from Whiting. For a while I experienced the best the world had to offer. I remember having Patty in bed with me and my best friend Grubb sitting across from me in conversation. We were passing hashish back and forth when suddenly on the radio my favorite song sounded: *Eight Miles High*. For a split second I thought, “I have sex. I have comradeship. I have dope and I have rock & roll. O, Lord! Why am I so empty?”

Soon my third year of college ended. Patty’s father provided me with a ride home. I told my girlfriend I was going away for the summer. With a tear, she gave me her Saint Christopher’s medal. I hitchhiked to Pendleton and spent a week with Mark stowing some of my goods in his basement. I remember lying under a full moon in his backyard, bundled in sleeping bags, rambling on to each other through the night.

Mark’s parents drove the two of us to Whiting and seven packed into Char’s station wagon. Mark and I alternated driving while my sister managed four kids in the back. We traveled on the cheap; eating sandwiches and pausing for sleep only one night. Charlotte, Jimmy, Shelley, Chrissy, and Danny sheltered inside the car, while Mark and I stretched under the stars. In the wilderness of Wyoming I awoke with a rabbit refusing to vacate my chest.

Charlotte was an incessant talker. Her sole topic was God—the Father, the Son, and especially the Holy Ghost. Mark drank in the gospel, asking question after question. I found myself an unwitting Bible teacher. Mark grew in knowledge as I meditated on the words pouring from my own mouth. I knew the Holy Spirit was gunning for me.

When I arrived at the John Foreman house, I fell under conviction. I perceived spiritual battle. Was my soul the object of targeted prayer? Were dark powers at work—like those who moved the Ouija Board? I suspected such. Mom embraced Mark and called it a “Pentecostal hug”. Mark told me he didn’t know what “Pentecostal” meant.

Mark had only to observe my dad to grasp the meaning. Dad was a Pentecostal dynamo. In later years someone wrote this testimonial:

John Foreman was a spiritual mentor to me and led me into the baptism of the Holy Spirit at a Full Gospel meeting in Longview. My life of miracles began that night. He was both a teacher and a role model for me. I attended the home prayer and Bible study meetings in Longview and saw every kind of miracle. Not only did I watch as John prayed for people's legs to be lengthened and see people's legs grow before my very eyes, but John prayed for me and then I prayed for others when I got home and their legs were healed as well.

Mark and I entered into many rap sessions with my family, especially with Frank and his new girlfriend Lelia. As religious renegades we escaped to Lake Sacajawea, smoked cigarettes, and talked about Jesus. Could it all be true? We could not refute their testimony nor deny their joy. But being a sinner does provide its pleasures. Were we willing to forego our debauchery?

Mark told me this story of his conversion: One night while he was trying to sleep, he felt under attack by demons. Dad and mom were still awake so he rose to talk with them. Finally, they prayed for him and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

I felt abandoned after Mark's conversion and recognized pride as an obstacle to faith's return. If mom and dad were right about this Holy Spirit business, then I must be wrong. I had been arguing with Frank and others too long to concede.



After three weeks, Mark, Charlotte and the kids returned to Whiting. Without a job East or West, I lingered in Longview. Dad had purchased a 1961 VW Beetle. He allowed me to putter around town, mostly to shop and visit nearby family.

Dad was often a first adopter of gadgets. He lent me use of his new cassette tape player to hear famed Pentecostals such as Kenneth Hagin. I also watched TV shows by faith healers like Kathryn Kuhlman, and read several books by Christian apologist C.S. Lewis. While dad favored the fervor of Hagin and Kuhlman, I appreciated the reflective reason of Lewis.

My father was the newly elected president of Full Gospel Business Men Fellowship International" (FGBMFI). On the second weekend in August, the fellowship held a convention in Boise, Idaho. I knew I could not return to college without Jesus at the center of my life. It was now or never. Which would win out?