

High jumping a low bar

Turning the page on an experience of getting what I wanted.



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One of the more attractive features of reincarnation is the idea that my body will do whatever I tell it. This is exactly what I fantasize about when I consider a future life. There will be less learning needed because I took care of a lot of that this time. I'll be an older soul, at least, which should increase my brilliance to bonehead level.

I understand that my idea of reincarnation, should it exist, glosses over parts of the more probable reality. I'll have to learn things all over again. I'll have to rely on someone else for a few years to change my underpants. Odds are good that's in my future in this life anyway, so the transition could be easy.

There is a phase of our lives when all we want to do is get older so we can drive and play sports for money, that our mistakes are seldom permanent and we have little we wish we could do over. I'm at the stage of my life where I'd gladly forget how to drive if it meant I could run a mile in less than an afternoon.

Longing for reincarnation happens when I have a moment to see into my past. It is not just a picture of me in the green velvet tux I wore for my prom. It's a time-machine moment when I feel like I've actually seen myself in action years ago. Sometimes it's a longing to relive a moment. A lot of times it's a longing to do one over.

About a month ago I looked at my bookshelf for the next read and decided it would be a book I wrote and was successful in getting published a little more than 20 years ago.

One day at work in 1999 I received the email that a company was agreeing to publish my novel. It had taken some doing to get them on board, which isn't necessarily a bad sign. A publisher's reluctance, I assumed, meant that they had actual standards. That I had to overcome some resistance made the accomplishment that much more exciting.

Fiction, I've discovered since a few aborted attempts to write another novel, does not come easily to me. Writing is hard work anyway. I'm not always aware of that. When I was a reporter I would regularly have people tell me they could never do what I did. I always felt like when I was covering something I loved, that being a reporter was just pretending to work.

The novel I got published was easier fiction because it borrowed heavily from my own life, a reimagining of important moments and a conjuring of some of the less important details. Still, I've tried it since and I'm not sure I have it in me again.

When I wrote the novel I had experience working in book publishing for a year. I'd finished the first draft while working there. Where I had worked when we agreed to publish a book, the agreement included editing, proofreading and book design. I was eager for all that and was expecting it. I never said it, because I didn't think I had to.

The publisher I worked for had a passion for books. The company still exists.

The publisher taking on my book was in publishing for the business, and saw an opportunity in new technology, print-on-demand.

The emergence of the print-on-demand allowed someone to publish a book without buying thousands of copies to send to bookstores or store in a garage. Traditional publishers back then gambled on books. Print-on-demand eliminated some of the gamble. Since cost savings was what got this publisher into the business, nothing would be spent on editing, proofreading or cover design. The editing and proofing fell on me, and it showed. The publisher picked the cover art.

I was trying to write something as philosophically deep and well written as Milan Kundera's [The Unbearable Lightness of Being](#), with an added goal of inspiring people as James Redfield did in [The Celestine Prophecy](#). I didn't like Redfield's writing, but people really took to the message. My story was grounded in the real world, but I thought it would also appeal to those who liked the spiritual themes in Prophecy.

My novel was called "Going Too Far," which was probably a better fit for the lusty romance series you'll find first when you search for it. To find my book you have to include my name. Seeing it won't help. It is listed as "currently unavailable" on [Amazon](#).

For the longest time people claimed to have copies, but the only ones left that I know of are the two on my bookshelf and whatever exists in storage of family members, friends

from high school and a reviewer from Colorado. There is a site that claims to have the PDF and 7,200 reviews of my book, but I don't know if that site is legitimate.

The story itself is one worth telling, I think, and a screenwriter with keen abilities to harvest a worthwhile drama out of wild imperfection might find it worth pursuing. If one did, the credits would at best say the movie was "inspired by" the book. If you've ever seen [Snow Dogs](#) you know how far inspiration can take a story away from [the original text](#). I would like a screenwriter to be inspired to make it better. I'm not that picky, though. Send me a check and I'll sign off on just about anything.

The one piece of editing direction the publisher gave me was to speed up the pace and eliminate a lot of the contemplative work. It wasn't necessarily bad advice, but when I did it I lost all the Kundera and was left only with the Redfield.

When I re-read the book about a month ago, it was painful. That was a surprise. When the book was released I was reluctant to promote it much because there were at least four typos in the book and the cover was terrible. That's all I remembered from the experience. Twenty years later, though, reading the book was like reliving a bankruptcy.

The most painful part is that I believe myself to be a decent writer, but I believed that about myself back then.

The early reviews of the book were solid, I think largely because they were written by people who knew me and wanted me to succeed.

There was one mildly negative review by someone who found the book to be a bit preachy. "... if you are searching for who you really are or looking to find a better, happier life, I would recommend this. If you can't imagine a better life and are happy with who and where you are, you might be a bit bored," reviewer A. Tippie wrote. This was the first of 21 reviews over 20 years that A. Tippie wrote. I have no idea who A. Tippie is and how A. Tippie found my book, but A. Tippie is probably right. In fact, A. Tippie is being generous in saying the book is "a bit preachy." It's a damned new age sermon inappropriately sitting in the fiction section of a bookstore that exists only in my imagination.

There was a point to my book, which is really only a big problem because it wasn't subtle.

The book told. It didn't show.

Example:

“The weather had been rough driving down and it took longer than usual. She barely got there on time and she was leaving a lot undone at home from all the time they were spending together. As he was getting ready to board the other plane, he suggested they meet in Boise for a day. She told him her worries and that it might not be a great idea. So he acted like he understood, but inside it was killing him. He was angry and sad and basically out of his mind.”

I look at that paragraph and imagine a bad George Lucas script. “Anakin, you’re breaking my heart.”

But the biggest problem I have with the book is the experience itself. I know that my decisions about the publisher were influenced primarily by my eagerness. I wanted a publisher with standards, but I didn’t have enough of my own.

I’m open to the idea that I’m being too harsh, that with a considerable amount of work it could become a worthwhile project to redo. No one would have access to the original text, so it couldn’t possibly ruin my reputation forever. I could give it a new title, provide more information about what happens in the first chapter and change one major incident.

I’ve self published since then. In 2012 I used the Amazon publishing platform to take transcripts of podcasts I had done and turned that into [a book](#). I stand by that one, a work that was done in large part for the experience, and to have something else to sell when I really hit it big.

Maybe this is a rare opportunity to do what people talk about, to go back in time and fix something. I could do this without affecting who I am now, other than piling on another item on my list of things to do.

If I did republish *Going Too Far*, I would have to make it clear the book is a reflection of where and who I was in the mid to late 1990s. That has always been my idea. There’s nothing like seeing your past clearly, though, to make you wonder if it’s worth reincarnating.