

## 1. Steal if you want to go faster... The summer of '96



Ok I stole the money, there's no other way of looking at it; one minute I didn't have twenty-eight grand, the next, abracadabra, I did. But I stole it from somewhere that wouldn't really miss it; not that much anyway, that's partly how I justified taking it. I'd like to tell you where, but that would be even more foolish than actually taxing the money in the first place. No one got hurt, and hopefully no one ever would! I looked on it as an act of God. It had to be an act of God, because I came about it so easily. God smiled down on me in a moment of boredom, and said, 'Here's twenty eight grand, you don't deserve it, after all you're a spoilt middle class kid, who's never really wanted for anything. But *fuck it* human life's too short, and I know you won't disappoint me by doing anything sensible with it.' The fact I don't believe there is a God, doesn't really enter into the equation. Maybe fate was out with Spud and I on that warm June night in 1996. Or maybe we were a couple of chancers of the highest order, who just got lucky and hit the jackpot. If I had thought about the possible consequences of my actions; I would not have taken the money, but it was something innate within me, an automatic reflex that drove me on and formed our destinies that night. It would have been a mad summer anyway, but twenty-eight grand in your back pocket, sort of makes you believe, puts you in orbit - blasts you right off!

It was that commercial break of the summer before we started University. We had finished our 'A' levels at Parr-for-the-Course High School in Didsbury, Manchester. Spud was scraping funds together at his Mac-job at the Virgin Mega store. I was killing time until our planned - Inter-railing debacle metamorphosed. My benevolent father had given me the required funding to help alleviate the guilt of leaving us when I was fourteen and running off to America to be a Programme Buyer for NBC, and re-marry with a cheer-leader. Money can never replace love, but it can go part way to comforting you. We had it all set to Inter-rail around Europe for a month. But twenty-eight grand sort of changes your plans somewhat; a month could now be stretched with no monetary constraints. No need to kill time until Spud had the required funds. We had won joint first prize in a beauty competition - collect twenty-eight grand! That's how it felt.

It was mid June, the previous crime and all the emotions that accompany such a crime, pushed me out of bed to perpetrate yet another more tangible crime. This ranked up there with the Assassin out of Frederick Forsythe's, *Day of the Jackal*. In that book the Assassin goes to Catherine House in London, the births and deaths place, and gets a passport in the name of a man that was born on the same day as himself, but had never possessed a passport in their lifetime, but who was now dead. Up until November 1996, you could walk into any post office in Britain, and get a one year visitor's passport for anywhere in Europe, by just showing your birth certificate or some kind of official proof like that, plus two passport sized photographs.

I went and rummaged in the Chadwick's study and eventually I found all their birth certificates. I should explain here, that the Chadwick's were our neighbours, or more correctly were not our neighbours as Mr and Mrs Chadwick, and the younger of their two sons lived mainly in Saudi Arabia, where they had a very successful engineering business. They very rarely came home and I was left in charge of looking after their tropical fish. I let

myself in three or four times a week and fed them, and often watched them when I was stoned. I had a trusted position of responsibility. On the whole I did a good job and the body count was minimal. Daniel was the eldest son, he was twenty-one, his birth certificate was there, and as a bonus his driving license was too, he must have had an International one in Canada; where he was studying engineering to eventually take over the family business. So I went down to the middle of Manchester, with his birth certificate, his driving license and two passport photos of yours truly, and I became Daniel Anthony Chadwick. Word of caution here if you have a time machine and you go back to pre 1996. When the man behind the counter filling out the temporary document asks you if you have, *'Any distinguishing marks or features?'* Try and have a better response than: *'Erm, erm, no I'm pretty non-descript, just look at me!'* While he eyes you up and down and then has no option or inclination to disagree with your own self-assessment!

If all governments are as stupid as ours, no wonder it takes them a lifetime to catch real Jackals and Unabombers. I also did something else incredibly prudent - this was in fact Darren my drug dealer's idea. I got two spare sets of keys for the car cut, then put the original ones back in the draw, minus finger prints, the finger of the Dibbles could be pointed at me, but not instantly it couldn't.

I didn't even feel nervous, how could they catch you; they couldn't basically, piece of piss. I needed to do this before *Spud the Magnificent* got back from Sheffield. Spud was in Sheffield as he had started shagging my older sibling Toni. This was a lifetime's ambition for Spud, at least since his hormones had kick-started his sexuality. He had always considered Toni out of his league, as she was two years older than him. As far as older sisters go she was as cool as they come. And I could half see why he thought she had been out of his reach, but now he had lived the dream, his confidence had mushroomed. I also arranged the ferry, and the big dilemma was when to tell Spud, he still thought we were going on the train.

Spud returned effervescent, colossal, majestic and full of himself. We had so much to do, a little dab of speed was essential to make sure we completed everything, and so, so much money to do it with. Spud's ingrained thriftiness made me laugh in town while getting some travel insurance. I went into the first travel agent's we came across.

'Don't you think we should shop around?'

'With twenty eight grand in our back pockets, get a grip Oliver Tobias.'

It was surprising how much there was to do; toiletries, magazines, books; always a hard one, the money and traveler's cheques, music. I felt a little guilty because Spud was planning everything with the economy of space in mind, but I knew to tell him any earlier than the day we went would make him twitch like an epileptic cat's arse. He would have more time to panic, it's like when they make people redundant and they don't tell them until Friday afternoon, just after their lunches, and also I needed a big speech prepared. By the end of the day we had done everything, and Spud suggested we leave that night and spend a night in London, or possibly Dover, God knows why Dover, but it was the type of spontaneous suggestion that had to be encouraged and saluted. I gave him a couple of hours to pack, luckily my mum was away producing a documentary in Ireland, or else the plan would have fallen apart. I threw all my possessions for the holiday by the back door.

I have to admit I was nervous getting the car out of the garage, but it wasn't really suspicious, if any one asked. I was just taking it for a spin to keep the engine working properly. I had passed my test by the way - I'm not that irresponsible! If I got stopped anywhere in England, it was my dad's car. Customs frightened me because of the drugs.

5g Speed (Pink Champagne)	£30
5g Coke	£250
10 LSD tabs	£30
30 Ec\$	£210 (bargain)

TOTAL £520

Add to the original street price the Customs/Police factor; whereby they times everything they seize by two or three to make them look better in the media. I don't know where they buy their drugs from, but they are getting well ripped off. You can now see my concern, but if you counted Spud into the equation it was purely for personal use!

Mr C would never press charges, but the drugs put things in another league, taking the car was just two middle class kids with high spirits, drugs under the bonnet... *well...* don't collect £200.

I had to be strong for two, and I had the rudiments of an argument, it was about three in the afternoon, Spud's Ma and Pa would not be back from school yet, I had to get around before they did. I locked the garage, put the keys back in the kitchen, and put their house keys back in our kitchen. I'd thought things through well, things could go wrong... *but... well... fuck it!!!* The most nerve racking part was parking the car in the road, mind racing, then going back to shut the gates. As I locked the gates, I tried to tell myself this was a role play like we used to do at school, be confident, act natural, most importantly *try not to shit yourself!*

The car was an automatic - an automatic steal. I placed it in drive and felt washed with a nervous waterfall of adrenaline as I cruised down the road, avoiding the middle of Didsbury. The last thing I wanted now was someone waving at me - Noddy in his hot and stolen car.

## 2. Seize your own fate!



I parked the car outside Spud's house which was a pretty stupid thing to do, especially if his parents had been in, luckily they weren't. Spud's bedroom window overlooked the quiet leafy street. He saw me before I saw him; he instantly knew it was Mr C's wheels. I shut the door half nervous half Eddie Murphy getting out a flashy car in Beverly Hills Cop, then I spotted him up at his bedroom window like a Rampton Rapunzel, he was shaking his head in disbelief, incredulation, shock and horror. It was like a mime act through the closed window, his head was shaking from side to side, and you didn't have to be an expert in sign language to know he was saying *No, no way.* I stood there smiling at him, his negativity feeding me, reverse psychology - the more you can't have it, the more you want it. He left the perch of the window as I walked up the path, the door opened and he was there, but this time in audio, head still shaking rhythmically.

*'No way... absolutely no fucking way. We've taken a risk with the money already, this is taking the piss.'*

*'Let's at least discuss it.'*

*'I know, let's not,'* his head shaking like a kitten at a badminton match.

I put on a condescending old person's voice, which is never the best approach to get your own way. *'Let's have a nice cup of tea and a biscuit and discuss it like two mature grown-ups.'*

*'You fail that on two accounts.'*

`Let's at least talk about it... if I can't convince you, I promise on your life I'll take it straight back.'

`On my life?' He pointed at himself, `...*why not your fucking life?*'

`Yours is worth more than mine.'

That seemed to reassure him a little, and the epileptic head shaking stopped. We moved into the living room, Spud sat in the armchair facing the window, and I stood by the window. I took a deep breath, I felt like I was on the stage and about to start a Shakespearean soliloquy.

`I'll go first...'

`First to prison...'

`I don't want any negative comments... only positive ones ... thank you.' I knew with Spud you had to relax him, or get him laughing if you wanted to get your own way... he wasn't laughing yet, he looked as though he'd swallowed a Bluebottle still attached to a turd.

`Right, I'll start with the bottom line... life boils down to a few moments... and this Spud is one of them...' I put a little bit more passion into my speech, as though I was convincing myself, which in reality I was. `...When you are old and dying, and you have nothing to keep you warm but your memories, you will look back on this moment and smile, an insane - *what the fuck you laughing at smile*, because Spud, life *does* boil down to a few moments of absolute unadulterated crazy hat-stand madness... madness... deeds that make you smile and feel good every time you talk about them... Every time you think about them... and when you tell other people they don't believe you, because they think you're twisting their melons... but you know it's true, and that's all that matters... and when you're old and responsible, with kids for example, think of the warmth... the contorted contradictions when you're trying to instill morals in them... and this is one of life's few moments, ~~as~~ when you're old, you don't do mad crazy things, you conform, and watch *mind numbing, spirit crushing game shows, do DIY and buy things on the drip*, (I was quoting from *Trainspotting*, but it made the point well) it is what you do in your youth that forms your whole life and future personality. There's no risk here, what risk there is, I will take it all. I will shoulder the responsibility on these shoulders.' I pointed with my index fingers in a semi-ridiculous aircraft cabin crew manner, to try and raise a smile, not very likely in his present state. `You know nothing about it if you like? I'll take all the heat, absolutely nothing.'

Spud looked past me at the car, then continued shaking his head. I was pleased with my speech, I wanted to say more, but couldn't think of anything, it summed things up well, there was very little else I could say, except to reassure him about the risks, which in retrospect were monumental, but at the time appeared minute.

`It's not only buying a house on the way to madness and renting out a room to King George, it's buying the green-belt surrounding, building houses on it and renting out all the rooms... and the sheds!q

This sounded like a negative comment, but it was a step in the right direction, Spud was laughing, at least inwardly anyway.

`It's not Spud, it's safe, it's sorted, top draw, on top...' I switched back to passionate again, `... life boils down to a few short moments and this is one of them... I've forged the papers in Daniel's name...'

`Grandma's arse-holes...' he said with involuntary shock, rather than for comic effect.

`There's no way we can get caught.'

`A second ago it was *you*, already it's *we*...'

`I meant *me*. I'll take all the risks.' I had to take more care with the semantics.

I wasn't sure where to go next. I thought the life boils down speech might suffice, but it obviously hadn't.

`Look Spud a few days ago I wouldn't even have contemplated doing this with you, but after Toni, you've really started to believe in yourself, aim so hoofingly higher, if we don't do this now, you will be aiming low again, constricted by the constraints of society...'

`Don't start all that *shite* again...'

`Well it's true...'

`And if we go on the train, we will come back sad, unfulfilled characters, destined to a life of low self-esteem, poverty and Dickensian misery?'

`It would not have made any odds, but now we've got the car, it makes a whole fucking gigantic mountain of odds. It's like turning back near the summit. OK it's mad, I agree with you, but robbing twenty eight grand is, not turning up for your McJob is, shagging my sister while my mum's down stairs is... Don't let me down Spud, trust me on this one... look at the Baby, it goes faster than the Starship Enterprise after a service, air-conditioned like an igloo, it's got the most amazing fuck-off sound system... we can go where ever we want... any old time, it's the ultimate European fanny magnet... we'll be fighting chickens off with shitty sticks with this piece of German technology... listen Spud... I put on a very serious commanding voice, `...there is no such thing as fate - you make all your own fate - CARPE DIEM, CARPE DIEM... I raised the passion an octave higher, `...seize your own fucking days - don't leave anything to fate... I returned to calm reassuring friendly, `...think carefully before you answer, if you say no I'll take it straight back to the Chaddies, (there was no way I was taking it back, but I wanted him on my side, it was important for European unity - it was important for a single European currency - and that currency was brotherhood!) but remember life boils down to a few moments, those moments of madness will keep you warm when your prostate and bowels have packed up, when no one can be arsed to come and visit you, when your main companions are your memories, saying yes now, will mean a far better, a no travel restricted jaunt, more women sucking your dick, you always aiming much higher in life, like Toni for example, not getting trapped by conformity, and most importantlyõ pleasing me, who after all is your spar... and is taking *all* the risks.'

Spud stood up and wandered over to the window, focused, without speaking or even glancing at me. He stood and watched the gleaming high performance German saloon in the mid afternoon June sun; this was probably the hardest decision he had ever had to make, because it was the most upfront consciously criminal one he had ever had to make.

`It shouldn't be imprisoned in a dark lonely garage, it's our baby now and it's our duty to set it free, to run with it, to bring it back to life.'

Spud tried to block me out and focus further on the car and all that taking it might entail.

`Go with your gut feeling Spud, think about yourself in that old people's home wishing you'd done it... go for it Spud... let your heart rule your head, this once.' I started to sing very liltingly, *'don't dream it, be it... don't dream it, be it.'*

Spud turned away from the window, and walked towards the living room door, then stopped before leaving the room, without turning, with little apparent emotion, `I'll get my rucksack.' Then he left the room like a virgin on her wedding night.

I shouted after him, `Go on Spud... my son... you're reborn.'

He threw his rucksack on the back seat, and we were on our way, two greyhounds from the traps, two bullets from a double-barrelled shot gun... *not*... two patients at the dentist waiting to be drilled - Manchester City Centre was the treatment, after that I knew I could relax a little. As we pulled away from Spud's out onto Wilmslow Road, near Christie's Hospital, Spud was trying to get his head around the new crazy and unnecessary situation, asking question after question, trying to cover the angles. I told the truth, except when he asked if I had any car insurance. It's never easy getting insurance for a stolen neighbour's car, and it would have also left unnecessary tracks.

The reason I decided to borrow Mr C's car was none of the hire companies would rent a car to an eighteen year old. Needs must when the devil drives! His questions eventually dried up, and he went to put the radio on, but I checked him, which was the wrong thing to do, it only unnerved him and me further.

`Can you just leave it off until we get through Manchester, I just need to concentrate a little.' Since passing my test over a year ago I'd hardly ever driven, and never anything as powerful

as this - a top of the range, air-conditioned Merc-mobile. I thought about what I'd said about the radio as we crawled up Cheetham Hill Road, and I relented. Spud at last started to relax his anal sphincter, and his chiseled muscles relaxed into the contours of the well-crafted seat. The quadraphonic cheesy house tunes from Key 102 filled the car and started to wrap around us in our new surrogate womb.

Spud looked across at me accusingly and inquired, 'Where are we going? I thought we were going to Calais?'

'Change of plans darling.'

He put on his Cilla Black voice, '*Surprise, surprise.*'

'Guess?'

'Fuck off,' he added tersely.

'If you don't guess, you don't get.' I was teasing him, because I could, I was Paul Gasgoine, and he was Jimmy Five Bellies.

'Oh fuck off will you...'

It was too mean, inhumane. 'Hull, then Amsterdam.' I put him out of his misery.

He sank back into his seat then added, 'Good call... how do we get to Amsterdam?'

'North Sea Ferries... tomorrow evening, sailing at seven.'

'Silly question, but you've got tickets, yeah?'

'I haven't...' I looked across at him and smirked a care in the community smirk, we were just getting onto the busy M62 East Bound, then I blurted out, '...but Daniel Anthony Chadwick has!'

He shook his head, 'You're one mad fucker Chief...' He laughed, '...not only the houses and out houses, but the wheelie bins as well.'

'Might as well hang for a sheep than a lamb, as they say in Wales.'

'Xenophobia and racism... yellow card.'

'Barr, barr... Bar-barian.' We listened to Graeme Park spinning his tunes that would not look out of place on a cracker, until we lost the reception on the top of the Pennines.

### 3. Cigarettes and Alcohol



We were cruising around eighty, yet it seemed like the car wasn't even moving. We would have been doing more if it wasn't for the volume of traffic. Without warning I pulled off the motorway into Hartshead Service station and parked up. It was teeming - where were all those people going?

'Come and have a look in the boot, Spud... you like?'

A look of apprehension frog marched into the middle of his face and started to set up camp. I knew what he was thinking, 'Who or what might lay in the boot?' Animal, vegetable, mineral or criminal?

With a forced smile he replied, 'No I don't like... you haven't kidnapped someone have you? I hope it's not a dead body? Say it's not?'

I put on a dead-pan expression, 'There are no guarantees Spud, the only rule is, *there are no rules...*' I put on an even more austere expression. '...I've done something mad Spud... even by my standards friend... by anyone's standards.'

Horror was now fighting apprehension for the camp site, and judging by the dilation of his pupils, and his frozen face, he was caught naked in the middle of the fighting, with only a toothbrush for defense.

'What the fuck have you done?'

'Come and have a look, Murphs... it's amoral!'

I released the boot with a lever from inside the car, we stood next to the boot, it was slightly ajar, but there was no way Spud was lifting it up. I carried on the charade.

'Forgive me Spud, let only God judge my actions.'

I flipped up the boot with one finger, there like an Aladdin's Cave, a Pandora's Box, a plethora of musical feastage, fifty-odd different CDs, his face lifted with the ascending boot, relief erupted into joy and smiles.

'Thank fuck for that... top one Star, at last you've done something commendable, and above the law.'

Amazingly most of the CD's were the ones my Uncle Danny who works in the Music Business had given me a week earlier, when I met up with him at Barca, in Manchester. I'd asked him for his favourite top ten CDs of all time, and the top ten CDs that changed music history over the last forty years. I expected two written lists, and amazingly got the twenty CDs in question and some promotional stuff as well. I was gob-smacked, he was quite touched, as he modestly informed me, 'I didn't have to pay for them you know, they were free for me, and they are free for you.'

`Right I'm off to get some snacks and cigs, when I return I want a Camberwell Carrot, and... you know I said life boils down to a few moments... well this is one of them Spud, I want you while I'm gone to pick a tune, a single tune that sums up us, this moment in time, and all the hoofingly large moments in time to come... choose wisely, because this is a defining point in time, a tune that every time you hear it will make you orgasm with inward excitement...' I shouted loudly, `... go on my son.' I left him to his task, I was only being stupid, but he took the challenge very seriously.

When I returned he was sat in the front passenger seat, CDs strewn around him, on the floor, his lap, the driver's seat, the dashboard, like they'd unexpectedly fallen through the roof. I laughed at him, he'd relegated the carrot for this task, the potential music moment had taken precedence over everything else, it was hypnotic, it made you want to change places, but Spud wasn't ready for the motorway of life. He spoke first through my laughter.

`I'm down to three.'

`What are they?'

`Not telling you, that would spoil the surprise, you drive Thelma and I'll just carry on regardless.'

`Give me a clue... *Spud you like?*'

He put on a Thai whore voice, `*No I not like soldier boy.*' Then his normal one, `*Fuck off and drive James, Kingston upon Hull, double-time, and don't spare the whoresies.*'

We rejoined the motorway, I kept looking across to try and see what he'd chosen, but he was giving nothing away, he was playing his CD cards close to his chest. The anticipation was marvelous, making me tingle and giggle, he'd made his choice, but he was delaying to build the tension.

`OK Chief... fasten your seat belt, take a deep breath, hand your peanuts `round, because it's that time... life boils down to a few tunes time... and this is it... *you complete toss-pot.*'

He slipped the CD into the machine, keeping his hand over the writing on the CD, it retracted like a Moray eel back into its burrow and reminded me of the coke disappearing up my nose last weekend back at Darren's. The few seconds before it kicked in, turned to minutes, he simultaneously pumped up the volume, until eventually...

*Top hat symbols 1-2-3-4.*

A joyous grin erupted from my mouth and widened across my face. I knew what it was; it was a piece of inspiration, apocryphal, mesmeric, absolute wonderful ravishmentō

*Rhythm guitar, crystal clear... dah-dah daar.*

I felt the music deep within my body and soul; it made me shake with excitement.

*Drums. Tambourine.*

Feet tapping, steering wheel tapping, brain tapping satisfaction and pleasure.

*Wall of sound rhythm guitar.*

The music would have been enough but the lyrics that followed were seminal and pivotal, and very, very true, spoken words could not sum things up as lucidly. It was like Noel Gallagher had written the song just for us, for this moment in time, and us only, this is what Uncle Danny had talked about... *perfect moments*, the song was *Cigarettes and Alcohol*. The words ran around our insouciant hedonistic consciousness and left us in no doubt, where we were, what we had done and what we were about to do, it had transcended poetry. When



the words poured forth we sang in unison, loud, raucous and out of tune, but very in tune with the momentō or maybe it was just my imagination?

We knew this song, like we'd written it ourselves, before job, we both shouted out, McJob, simultaneously, like we had a hundred times before singing along to it in our bedrooms.

And so in that instant on the M62, in June 1996, a song took on more meaning than I could have ever imagined... We didn't have to be old and rosy with retrospection to feel good about it, we felt alive, sexy and colossal right there and then, zipping along in the early evening sun. (I've just turned into Kevin from the Wonder Years) It was a piece of unbelievable inspiration from Spud. The song finished, and Spud stopped the CD, he put on his best Liam Gallagher Manc accent and uttered,

`Owe was that ower kid?'

I replied in a similar, but not as professional voice, `That woz tops... I woz mad foor it.'

`Just mad bruther.'

He returned to his normal tone, `This was a close second.'

He placed a CD in the machine, and sat back in his chair and pretended to be ambivalent.

The electronic beeps of Jamiroquai's, *Space Cowboy*, kicked in, we both laughed, Spud yelled, then sprang from his stupor and grabbed me playfully by the knee, like a granddad might do. There is no way I can do justice in words about these two songs, you have to listen to them, to grab the full meaning.... but when it comes on strongō wellō *you gotta just... make it happen...!!!* And that was what Spud had done... we both knew it, the holiday had moved up a stratosphere, he was on board in first class with me... it was now going to be... *hoofing...* `cos we were *both now fucking mad for it!*