

Tragedies and Triumphs of Circuit Static

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Chapter One – Downward Spiral

I stood staring out my apartment window in Vancouver, Washington. I knew that it would be one of the last times I would get to look out my large window, and have a place of my own for a long time. It felt like it may be the last time I ever had a place of my own. I had just recently lost my job, and hadn't been able to find other work despite looking for months. I have no biological family left, so that wasn't an option for help. The adopted family that brought me up didn't get along with me and didn't seem to be an option at the time. The only option was one good friend who lived nearby.

It is a truly depressing feeling when you can't find work, and don't know how you are going to afford to live day-to-day. Not to mention, it is no secret that living with a friend as a roommate can take a serious toll on that friendship.

I remember looking around at my few remaining possessions. I had sold or gotten rid of most of them at this point. So much so, that everything I owned could have fit in my car, if it hadn't wrongfully been towed recently. I didn't have the money to fight the issue legally, and the car wouldn't have been worth as much as it would have cost to get it out anyway. My apartment that I would soon be leaving was as empty as I felt inside.

When I was originally told I could stay with my friend, he was in an apartment by himself. Then, by the time I was going to move in with him, things had changed for him as well. Now he was going to be living in a house with his mother and sister. It was also substantially farther from any public transportation than his previous apartment was. Plus, the only option for me to stay there was to stay in the garage. It always had a ton of bugs and spiders. It was always the least comfortable temperature in the house, and I had to pretend I wasn't even there (because the landlord didn't know I was staying there). Don't get me wrong, I appreciated that I wasn't out on the street, and had something to eat, but it was still not a comfortable way to live.

My friend, along with many friends on the internet, were even kind enough to help me raise just enough money to buy an old, beat up, van. It still doesn't run the best, but it has got me through some hard times and I wouldn't have made it to where I am today without it.

I was also correct that staying with my friend would take a toll on our friendship. By the time I felt obligated to move out, we were not spending near as much time hanging out as friends. I even got the impression I was largely being avoided. I still hadn't found work.

Chapter Two – Wicked Little Town

When I moved out of my friends' garage, I returned to where I had lived with my adopted parents in a rural town in northeastern Nevada, called Elko. I had moved away from it previously because the only real options for work, when available, were to work at the mines or at the casinos.

The trip from Oregon to Nevada was horrible. When I left winter weather had just started and one of the worst winter storms to hit northern Oregon was coming through the same time I was traveling. It didn't help any that I was in my van, which was in questionable running condition anyway. The tires on it were atrocious. I even got to an area at one point that required snow tires, and I had no choice but to go through anyway. I couldn't stop there until who knows when and risk freezing to death. I had nobody who could have come to help me. I truly had no choice but to hope for the best.

Even still, when I finally did arrive in a small town in northern Oregon on my way, I ended up having to stop for the night because the storm had become that much worse. You literally couldn't see the road at all.

The next day, when I got up and checked to see if I could head out, I saw that the interstate to the west of me was closed. That's right, the interstate! Luckily for me I managed to keep going east. The trip had me nervous almost the whole time as I was driving very slowly, trying not to slip off the side of the road. Visibility was bad for most of it too. I am just happy my heater was one thing that worked well on the van.

When I finally made it to Elko, it had taken me just over two days to make a trip you should be able to make in half of one. I also found out that, despite knowing I was coming, there was no area prepared for me to stay in. I ended up bringing in my makeshift bed that I had in my van and put it in a pantry, which is where I would be staying now. The whole reason I had come back to Elko is that I was assured by my step-father that I could get work at the mine. I didn't want to work there, but I desperately needed a job.

I then found out that this was just a 'suspicion' of his. Despite working at the mine and being a foreman at the time, he didn't even bother to find out if there was work before telling me there was. So, turns out, there actually wasn't any work there for me after all. I had left a larger city area, with more jobs in general, for nothing. The living conditions were no better either, actually far worse.

Chapter Three – Out in the Cold

After spending some time staying there and still not able to find work, things took a turn for the worse. I already didn't get along great with my adopted family. They had even turned me away much earlier in my adult life, when I needed a place to stay temporarily after coming back from the military. This was largely why they weren't much of a consideration for me as an option for a place to stay.

They have three very large dogs that they let do whatever they want. This is also why their other friends and family don't come to visit. One day I was sitting looking for work on my laptop with my headphones and external hard drive plugged in. One of the large dogs then decided he wanted to play. Since the dogs weren't taught not to jump up, the dog didn't think anything of it. The dog jumped up on me and pulled my computer, hard drive, and headphones down onto the ground. It broke the cable for my headphones and my external hard drive no longer works. I lost a great deal of work, including my recent resume revisions, and some of my recent music work. I hadn't backed up recently mostly because there was no room for any of my things inside, so everything was still packed up in my van. Plus, not much time had passed and I didn't realize how much I had done in a short amount of time.

I got mad, I still think understandably so. I made a comment that if the dogs weren't allowed to randomly jump up on people the problem could have been avoided. I went back to the pantry where I was sleeping and examined how extensive the damage was. When I came back out some time later, I was presented with a letter that had been written. The letter basically said I had no right to get upset, and told me that I needed to leave.

This was late at night, in the dead of winter, and it was below zero outside with lots of snow and ice on the ground. I had nowhere else to go in Elko. I packed up my few things from inside and left. I even ended up breaking my only TV by accident because of the conditions I was trying to hurriedly pack up and move during. I didn't have much money, but got a room for the night so I could go online. I honestly felt like it may have been the last time I was going to be able to do anything. Elko doesn't have homeless shelters (they don't care about homeless people). The churches there also don't care if you are homeless, they won't help you or let you stay there. I expected I would be dead of freezing to death or starvation soon. Not having a place to live makes it even harder to find work. Have you ever tried getting a job when you don't have an address, or way to keep your clothes, and yourself, presentable?

I got checked in at a cheap hotel, and got online to say what I thought would likely be my goodbyes. I truly had hit rock bottom and had no idea how I was going to survive from this.

Chapter Four – A Surprising Response

I started posting messages to my fans and friends on Twitter. I couldn't believe what happened next. Shortly after posting about what had just happened with my step-family and how I was kicked out (and am now dead to them), I started getting questions about how people could help.

That night I managed to get a substantial amount of donations from people with PayPal and Google Wallet. I seriously couldn't believe that so many people who were almost complete strangers could be so generous. Over the course of my life, I typically haven't seen much generosity. I can honestly say this may have been the most generosity I have ever seen directed at me.

I even had an ex-girlfriend I hadn't spoken to for some time contact me and let me know that I could come and stay with them while I looked for work. The catch was I had to move to Salt Lake City, Utah. Not only was I dreading the need to yet again travel in the horrid winter conditions with my van, but I have hated the Salt Lake City area my whole life. In my opinion, it is run by a bunch of conservative cult members who don't seem happy unless they are oppressing others with their own religious beliefs.

Again I set out, and again I had a horrible trip. I could barely keep my van on the road. When I got closer to Salt Lake City, my van also started overheating, in the winter! It got so bad a few times I had to pull over and stop, or could barely accelerate which caused a big-rig truck to nearly rear-end me.

I did finally make it to my ex-girlfriend's house. She seemed really happy to see me and for about the first month everything seemed great. We were getting along really well, I had some promising possible opportunities for work, and it seemed like I finally might be getting my life back on track.

Looking back on it, it seems like anytime I thought things were getting better for the last few years, I was thrown a curveball. This was no exception.

Chapter Five – History Repeats Itself

While the first month living in Salt Lake with my ex was fine, it didn't take long for it to seem like more of the same failures. I had a job offer extended to me, then it was rescinded (the first time this has ever happened to me in my life). Not long after this I was started to be treated much more distant by my ex who was making it very clear she didn't want me there anymore. When I first got there she invited me to go do things with her, and spoke to me when she got home from work. As time progressed it changed to where none of this was the case anymore. Again, I could tell that I was an unwelcome guest.

My suspicions were confirmed when she finally told me she wanted her house back and I needed to move out. At the time I had another promising job I had already started interviewing for and was expecting it to only take a couple more weeks. I asked if a couple weeks would be OK, especially since I didn't know anyone else in the area and still didn't have a job, or paycheck. While she seemed hesitant, this seemed OK.

Then, on my way back from an interview that was fairly far away, my van temporarily broke down on the way back from it. Despite barely making it back to my friend's house and mentioning this, her response was you are supposed to be moving out. Apparently, somehow my asking for two weeks that would have been just after the start of the following month was translated in her mind to the first of the month. Because of this I was caught off-guard and basically forced to pack up and move out, again, before I had already planned to.

I think what bothered me most about this was when I came back, after having to deal with my van breaking down (and where I planned to live after moving out if I didn't have another option), the door was locked. I was never given a key in the whole time I stayed there, the front door was always left unlocked when I left so I could get in. I had to knock on the door and hope someone was there. Everything I owned was inside, except the clothes on my back and the van.

So there I was again, with nowhere to stay. I had no other friends in this area, and I was nearly done trying at all. I ended up getting a storage unit with the little money I had managed to save from donations people had sent me and converted my van so I could live in the back of it.

Chapter Six – Van Life

One of the things I am thankful for is that the weather had started to warm up some and it wasn't snowing near as much. I was also able to do some inexpensive work on my van that seemed to help more than I expected it would. The next trick would be having enough money to be able to eat, keep my van running, and being able to be interview ready when the time came.

My days were challenging. They typically consisted of finding a place to park where I wouldn't have to worry about getting towed, or being otherwise harassed. Waking up the next morning and going to the library so I could get online and look for work. Then trying to find some really cheap option to have a single meal for the day (which was all I could afford). There was also a really cheap gym that had showers. Again, if it hadn't been for the donations I received and the sales of my music, I wouldn't have been able to do any of this. If that had been the case, I likely wouldn't have survived...

As a bit of an aside, to all those who suggested going to church for help, I have some insight on that. When I was living in my van and looking for places I could park, I found some street parking near a church. It was a good place to park because the street near the church was wider than the rest nearby. It was a public street (which I need to point out again). I parked there overnight to sleep in my van a few times. Then, one day I got to my usual parking spot a little earlier than usual and was met by someone there. I was basically told I couldn't park there and they were going to call the police. I explained how I was parked on a public street and had every right to park there. There were no signs and I wasn't breaking any laws. Despite that, they still planned to call the police. The last thing I wanted to do was get into an argument with the police about my parking there, especially with how much influence the Mormon Church had in this area. I was only a few miles from BYU, to give some idea, so I had to leave. Luckily, I managed to find another good street parking space that I was able to park at overnight for the next roughly month-and-a-half.

It honestly kind of amazes me that despite living in this way, I was still trying. I spent months living like this until I finally had some options that looked promising. Which is good because even only having to buy food and gas, I wouldn't have been able to live off donations and the sales of my music alone for much longer.

Chapter Seven – Happiness is an Option

Finally, I not only had a company that I had been interviewing with for a while, but a new company interested in my candidacy for employment. It even came to a point where I had to make a decision between them. Then I was able to finally start a new job. This happened just over a year after I had lost my previous job, and after I had moved multiple times (not including living in my van at the time).

I started the new job and they really do some amazing things. I am happy to say not only did I find a job, I found a good job and can afford to live again!

Despite having found a job, I was still having lots of trouble finding a place to live. Not only do places around here charge what I consider ridiculous amounts just to apply to live there (I have seen between \$25-\$250 application fees), but have other restrictions. When I was living further south in this area, near Provo Utah, they also have gender, religious, age, and other types of restrictions. Again, since the government here is largely run by the Mormon cult, they get away with things that are normally federally protected.

I was still having trouble finding an apartment, or roommate. Since I finally had a job and now it was summer, I was having the problem of it being way too hot to live in my van. So, I started looking at hotels. I did manage to find some fairly inexpensive hotels because of their extended stay rates. Even still, it was far more than I wanted to be paying for far too little. It also didn't allow for saving much in the event something happened, and if I found myself out of work again.

As of the 22nd of September 2017, more than a year-and-a-half after I last had a place truly of my own, I managed to find a townhome to move into.

While most of my life has been challenging in general, I haven't had an instance where I was considered 'homeless' for well over a year straight. If it hadn't been for the generosity of friends, fans on the internet, and the miracle of my van still running (albeit barely), I likely wouldn't have got here... perhaps ever.

If you are reading this I hope you remember this short story when you see someone who needs help, or if you yourself are in need of help. Even though it may not always seem like it, there are people out there who are willing to help.

If you can help and do, know that people like you, are the reason people like me who were down on their luck temporarily, could rebuild their life. If you are somebody who is living with nothing, hopefully this can help show you don't need to give up. I know that I myself definitely

got sick of hearing everyone saying 'it will get better'. It does start to sound more like a cliché than anything after a while. However, it is possible. Don't be afraid to reach out. Even the most unlikely of places to ask for help may merit you more help than you ever expected.

This short story itself is even a testament to the help I have received. If it hadn't been for recent donations to help me with all the expenses to move into the new place, I likely wouldn't have written this. I am happy to say that when I look back at those who said, 'things will get better', no longer seem like such a cliché after all.

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About the Author

Circuit Static, legally known as Chisholm Morris, is an entertainer and technologist. While primarily known for his music, Circuit Static also does acting, writing and other artistic hobbies. This book, “Tragedies and Triumphs of Circuit Static”, was created as part of his End of Summer Fundraiser in 2017. If you would like to know more, be sure to check out the [Connect with Circuit Static](#) page at the end of this book.

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