

Borderline: My Life on the Run in Mexico, A true story. By Chase Marcotte

(Excerpt)

In my mind the police were just behind me and, the cops had a containment cordon already set up. Flashing blue lights peeked through the occasional gaps in the forest as I continued to crash along. Finally, I saw the yellow lights of a house and I slowed down enough to try to creep my way towards the house without sounding like a herd of elk. I crept into a backyard and got down into a military crawl. I could hear dogs barking but couldn't tell if they were pets or police K9s. The bright lights of a couple of sweeping flashlights let me know where the cops were searching and I crawled and shimmied my way in the opposite directions, freezing and burying my body in the grass and brush whenever a light beam swept my way. It was early March and cold enough to snow that close to the mountain. The wet grass had already soaked through my designer jacket and saturated all the way through my t-shirt and boxers. Somewhere in my criminal life I'd learned that you could hide from the police, but you had to run from their dogs.

A K9 can only go as far as his human handler can follow, and no cop I've ever met likes to go through sticker bushes or swamps. I slid into the woods again and belly crawled until I hit a gravel road. I could see the bright lights of police SUVs just 15 to 25 feet from where I was peeking out of the bushes. The headlights were illuminating the roadway, but I crawled nearer to the vehicle and began crossing the road just underneath the twin beams of the headlights. My body was tensed, and my heart was beating in my mouth. I fully expected to be seen crossing the road and I was almost

frozen with terror as I anticipated the freeze command being screamed at me or even worse, a dog biting into my arms or legs. But those vehicles must have belonged to the two cops I had already seen searching with flashlights for me and I made it across the road and into less dense underbrush on the other side.

The moon was full and there were hardly any clouds out. I could see cow pastures and vague outlines of barbed wire fences in the distance. I came up against incredibly thick blackberry bushes as I neared the first fence. I stood up and covered my eyes with my arms and fell forward into the thorns. Immediately I was snagged in a hundred places by thorns and felt like a fly must feel in a spider's web. My adrenaline kicked into overtime as I imagined being caught here by the police or their dogs. A powerful surge of natural chemicals, and I ploughed my feet into the ground and literally tore through 5 or 10 feet of thorns. Every exposed piece of skin on my body was ripped and snagged and punctured as I powered through. Three or four times I was stuck and had to climb up in order to go forward.

I could hear and feel my pants and jacket ripping on the thorns, but I ploughed forward until I cleared the fence. I fell forward finally, into the clear cow pasture, and pulled some torn sticker branches from my clothes and hair. The barking of dogs and suffocating fear of imminent capture spurred me to not rest. I began jogging in the moonlit pasture and looked back only long enough to see flashlights converging on my entry point into the berry patch. Luckily the patch went for a hundred or two hundred yards in either direction, blocking any easy path into the pasture. Also, the police assumed I was hiding inside the 'impassable' patch rather than had come out on the other side.

In any event, I had a head start of 10 minutes or so before my exit point was found and by then I was more than a mile away and not slowing down. When I hit the first fence after the berry patch, I tried climbing over it. The fence was old and loose, and I got snagged and hurt going over. The next fence I accidentally ran right into, and I flipped right over it onto the other side. From then on as I hit the next few fences, I just let them flip me onto my ass instead of trying to climb over them.

As I ran on, my head began to clear and strangely a sense of calm swept over me. Those insane surges of adrenaline had exorcised the fog in my head, and I was able to just focus on running. I was again in control of my body and my freedom, if I didn't allow myself to be caught. I'd learn later in this adventure that you can find serenity in incredibly harrowing and terrible circumstances, but this was my first taste of this strange phenomenon that I hadn't yet experienced in my life. Eventually I ran to the end of the cow field and predictably ended up in the backyard of a farmhouse.

I walked to a huge barn and was looking for a place to rest inside when dogs began barking again. I could hear the barking getting nearer and I was off running again. On the other side of the farmhouse I found myself against a 10-foot fence. It was new and sturdily built and I used a nearby tree to help climb up and over it. By now clouds had covered the moon and I could hardly see three feet in any direction. The ground was muddy, and my shoes came off in the muck several times. I realized I was in a shallow pond no more than ankle deep, but I didn't notice it at first because my ankles and shins were so badly scratched and numb that I couldn't feel the water. Suddenly I realized I was as thirsty as I'd ever been with an odd taste of metal in my mouth. I bent down and lapped water like a dog. It tasted dirty and I gagged at whatever bits of whatever that

came with the water, but it was still incredibly refreshing. As my thirst was quenched, and with dogs possibly at my heels, I began cautiously walking through the mucky field. One second, I was walking and then I found myself laying in the mud face down with no idea how I got there. My head was fuzzy, and all my muscles were involuntarily tensed. I could taste the metal dental fillings in my teeth, and I felt like throwing up. I shakily rose to my feet and started walking like a zombie with my arms out in front of my face to feel forward since I couldn't see. My hand hit something in my pathway and the brightest light I'd ever seen exploded in my face. My brain told me it was the muzzle flash of a fired pistol and I was thrown to the ground again. I screamed out into the darkness at whoever was murdering me and curled up into a ball waiting for the next bullet to hit my body.

After a second or so of nothing I investigated the night and could see that no one was in front of me. The only thing present was an electric humming or sizzle just a foot or so from my body. As the clouds moved the moonlight brightened and I saw a set of wires or cables suspended from hefty wooden posts. I realized that what I was in was buffalo pasture and not cow pasture. The cables were the industrial sized wires of a high voltage electric cattle fence strong enough to deter a buffalo from crossing it, and obviously strong enough to put me on my ass and in mortal terror. I gathered my wits and moved down the direction of the fence until I got to a gate. I was just as scared of actual buffaloes as I was of their electric fence but the fields on both sides appeared vacant. I climbed over the gate and the fields in front of me were mercifully lit enough that I could see only small fences in my path. I jogged along slowly now as I realized that my leg was hurt from some previous obstacle. I came to a paved road and saw headlights stopped on the road in the distance. Assuming the lights belonged to another cop, I again army crawled over the road and dashed off into light brush and forest on the other side. I'd ended up in someone's yard again and found a trail down to a small man-made lake. In the middle of this lake was a floating raft and I decided to swim out there and rest. Despite everything I'd been through I still had my cell phone, and I took a second to take out the memory card and break it in half. I held the phone over my head and half doggy paddled out to the floating dock. it seems contrary to common sense now, but the lake water was warmer than the air and I felt relief on my cuts and gashes as the lake water soothed my body. I climbed up the swimmer's ladder

and splayed out on the sketchy-ass dock. I caught my breath and relaxed a bit and looked up at the again cloudless night. Mixed with every physical pain I was feeling was also the cloying feeling of an inevitable impending doom. What the fuck has just happened to me? This was the thought front and center in my mind. My phone's battery was almost dead, but I had five fricking bars of service in the middle of nowhere. I needed to call my mom and tell her what was up. I also needed to find out where I was and get someone to come get me. By now I figured my house and car were being searched and the cops would have everything they needed to arrest and charge me with the fraud. So, I dial my mom's number, but my phone didn't connect the call. I tried a couple friends I knew with cars and my phone wouldn't dial their numbers either. I texted mom and told her I loved her, and I was sorry, but I was in big trouble again. A second later mom texted back and said, "OK, I love you". I laid there and cried for longer than a few seconds, my screamingly hot tears mixed and muddled with the cold sweat and lake water drying on my face. My pathetic regretting was interrupted once again by barking dogs. Paranoia had me convinced my cell phone was being used to track me, so I popped out the battery and zipped it up in the pocket of what had been an expensive light jacket. I felt trapped out on the floating dock now, so I took my jacket off and tied it to the top of my head like a bonnet. I slipped back into the water and quickly swam to the opposite shore from where I first entered the lake. Once on the other shore I took a few precious seconds to wring out my jacket, shirt, and pants. I took off my shredded socks and picked out the biggest thorns and then wrung them out, put them on and laced my shoes back up the best I could. My jeans were ragged and hung more off me than on. But I had another trek through woods in front of me and the persistent dogs at my heels. As I readied myself to go, I heard a strange new sound in the night. In a flash I recognized the lazy but powerful "whump" "whump" "whump" of a helicopter's blades cutting into the night's air. Then I saw the beam of a huge searchlight sweeping towards me from the direction I'd come from. Adrenaline again pumping, I dove into the heavy underbrush and tall trees before the spotlight had a chance to find me.

Washington State is beautiful. Our forests are green and thick and tall. I grew up in places like Port Townsend, Port Angeles, and Shelton. Small towns with lots of woods, rivers, lakes, and mountains. I've always considered myself a woodsman. My father is an outdoorsy type of guy, and my childhood heroes were Davy Crockett and the mountain men. I'd been in some deep, dark woods. But nothing I've ever seen or been in could prepare me for what I dove into. Salal, Devil's Club, and Salmonberry bushes made up everything around me. Devil's Club is properly named, and it looks and feels exactly like a thick stick covered in thousands of inch to three-inch thorns. My already torn body was gashed, slashed, and bashed anew as I struggled deeper into the thickets of thorns. The salal bunched up on my ankles and calves and tripped me up and as I fell forward in pitch blackness, I reached out frantically for something to grab onto in case I was falling into a bottomless abyss. What I grabbed onto also grabbed onto and into me and I trudged through my own personal seven levels of hell. Up and down I went stopping

only occasionally to listen for dogs and helicopters. Under the impenetrable canopy of trees and brush not even sound reached me. I bulldozed, and tripped, and fell forward for a half an hour or so, seeing nothing but the six inches of brush in front of me. Finally, the brush began to clear, and a light could be seen in the distance. I slowed down and cautiously approached the light of another house in the woods. At this point I was desperate. I was so physically exhausted that I almost fell asleep right where I tripped and fell in the woods. The adrenaline was completely gone and all I felt was nausea and dread. I seriously considered breaking into the dark house and doing whatever I needed to do to stay out of the night and these woods. It couldn't be that hard to overcome whoever was in there. As soon as I realized what I was thinking, whatever good is in me dismissed the thoughts and I silently laughed at even the contemplation of something that was then so outside my true character. The fact was I was in an altered state of mind where I had forced my body to extremes that were never even approached in my past and this insane survival mode I was in had altered my judgment and conscious. But just that brief slip into true darkness was shocking to me then and now.

I hesitated in the driveway of the home for a moment more as I thought that maybe I could hotwire the parked car. This thought was also quickly dismissed as I didn't have a clue how to do this even if I had had a full tool kit and mechanic's garage.

I had come to a split in the road. Off to my left was a blockaded dirt maintenance road that looked to follow enormous powerlines into the mountains. To the right was a paved road heading somewhere else. No helicopter or dogs could be heard now but I figured all paved roads would lead to trouble, so I took the dirt road that was blocked from vehicle access with huge cement blocks. The overhead power lines hissed and crackled noisily as I stumbled down the path. False dawn had arrived, and it must have been close to 3 in the morning. I'd been running for about five hours now and I was falling asleep as I walked. The cold had crept in on me and my sweat and wet clothes were chilling me further. I walked until in the distance I saw an old truck from the 1940's. I approached cautiously, thinking I'd again ended up in someone's yard. But the truck was alone, apparently discarded or abandoned long ago. Surprisingly the windows were intact, and the doors locked. The door had some give though and I could see the locking mechanism in the crack. I found a slender stick and managed to pop the latch. The truck smelled like mildew and decaying fabric, but it was warmer inside than out and some remnants of cushioning still covered the bench seat. I ripped off the remaining fabric from the bench's backrest and used it to cover my head and chest, clutching it like a Superman cape in front of me. With the door relocked and very little conscious decision making I drifted off to sleep with still just a niggling fear of being found there. I awoke with an adrenaline rush as I felt the sun warming my cut and battered face. How long I'd slept I couldn't tell but daylight had fully arrived. Despite being inside the truck cab, my sleeping had further chilled my body. My hands were still clutching my hero's cape, but I couldn't feel my hands enough to open them. In a panic I shot fully awake and sat up in the cab. I needed to get moving before hypothermia set in any further and

the cops might already have me surrounded. I opened the truck's rusted door as quietly as I could, but the solitary sound of screeching hinges seemed to be the loudest noise ever made by man. I waited for a second and when no shouts from hidden police were heard I left my cabin in the woods and started walking and moving my arms to get circulation back. I saw that my dirt road truly led into absolute wilderness and at a steep incline to boot. My body felt like I'd been in at least two car wrecks and going uphill was next to impossible. I popped the battery in my phone and strangely I still had four bars of service. My battery was down to about five percent though, so I popped it back out. I needed to find out where I was and get a ride out of here. My best option seemed to be to head back to the last house I saw and find a mailbox with an address on it so I could send out an SOS for a ride. I quickly made it back down the road and found a mailbox. The street wasn't listed on the box but thankfully a piece of mail was inside. I turned my phone back on and sent the message to three people I hoped I could trust. My phone told me it was 8:30am and since most my friends were also losers with no jobs, I didn't expect any of them to be awake at that hour unless they were still awake from the night before. I decided to chance it and keep my phone on until the battery died hoping someone would respond before then. As I sat down in the woods to wait for an answer, or my phone to die, about 20 text messages came buzzing into my phone. Not my friends responding, but Tammy telling me to turn myself in and that I was never going to get out of prison again when I got caught. The messages were apparently from the night before and were just now coming through. Before the last message had come through, my phone notified me it was shutting down. Apparently, the phone's vibration notification of Tammy's text messages was too much for my battery and I watched my phone, along with my hopes for a ride, quickly get shut down.

I began walking down the paved road then with the certain belief, if not the certain knowledge, that every step I took was a step back towards prison. Not only was I not getting a ride with anyone passing by, but I was walking down the road now dressed literally in rags, hanging from my bleeding and battered body, and I must have looked like an extra from the Walking Dead. The first person to see me, if not a cop, would surely call the cops, or an ambulance to come arrest me, or rescue me. Either way the result was going to be a jail cell. I knew this, and accepted this. I had run, crawled, swam, and even contemplated murder in the last 12 hours, and I was well passed the point of giving a fuck about anything other than getting in dry clothes and a warm bed. Be it jail, or a hospital and then to jail. So, I straightened my posture the best I could and followed the paved road until it merged with a bigger road and eventually took me to the highway. Not more than two minutes on the highway and I heard the dreaded squeak all street criminals are familiar with, coming up from behind me. It was the sound of the overused brakes of a policer cruiser squeaking to a stop. I kept walking forward like I was just Joe Citizen out on a morning walk. The command to "freeze motherfucker" that I'd been anticipating all night was finally yelled at me. I turned my head to look back and thought about diving off into the woods. But the letters K9 stencilled on the cruiser stopped me



dead in my tracks. I put my hands up and slowly turned around. The cop's gun was out, and he looked eager to shoot. I was told to kneel, then lay down, and I carefully complied. As soon as the cuffs were on me the cop got tougher and started roughing me up a bit. In a flash several more cops arrived, and they all piled onto my back and neck with their knees, telling me to me comply with various contradictory commands which were impossible according to the static laws of Newtonian physics. My clearly wilful failure to comply with these simple commands was met with a self perpetuating escalation of force until after several 'closed fist compliance strikes' and 'rear lateral vascular neck restraints', more commonly known as 'punching' and 'choking' me, I was finally lawfully subdued, and had become 'arrest compliant'.

I knew I was wanted pretty bad or they wouldn't have called out the helicopter on me, but the chase was clearly over and the underlying crimes were all intentionally clean and sterile 'white collar' crimes after all. All this rough stuff was usually reserved for the real thugs, and so I was at a bit of a loss why these cops were so amped up. Thrown into the back of a cruiser I was finally able to relax. The chase was truly over. The good guys had won, and I was resigned to going back to prison. The only thing I said when the arresting officer read me my rights was, 'could you please turn your heater on'. Gratefully I was with a professional and he was kind enough to turn the heat all the way up for the 25-minute ride to the closest jail. I managed to drift off to sleep and woke up once we arrived inside the jail's sally port. I was booked in and it wasn't until I was given an orange jumpsuit which designated, I was going to the 'hole', that I realized something was seriously amiss. I asked a friendly corrections officer I'd known since we both had started our divergent careers why I was headed to the hole on a nonviolent charge. He looked me up and down and said, hey man you're booked on some serious shit. I said what, and instead of answering out loud he just showed me my booking form. I just about died when I saw my charges: Rape in the First, Kidnapping in the First, Assault in the First, Unlawful Imprisonment, and finally, Identity Theft. Oh man, I was so shocked I couldn't have said anything to save my life. I went to the hole and climbed under the sheets and fell asleep to the silent mantra of, oh fuck, oh fuck, oh fuck.