

Homecoming

Dear Mom:

I'm coming home.

I know you thought I'd never come back—and probably even hoped I wouldn't. I know you were ashamed of me when I left—though you never told me so—and Lord knows nothing I've done over the past ten years has quashed your embarrassment.

I had to follow my own dreams—much like you did. You taught me to think for myself, and to do what I thought best. You also tried to keep me on the straight and narrow path of righteousness, but I fought you with all I had.

Maybe that's why my leaving shamed you so—I'd learned your lessons all too well. Were you afraid your pious church-friends would learn of your youthful lascivious transgressions? Didn't our Lord say to the adulteress, "Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone?" Is not forgiveness the very cornerstone of Christianity?

I've got so many questions, and so little time, yet I pray you'll feel no guilt for my damned soul. I made my choices with my eyes wide open.

I never thought I'd need you like I do now; I've always been my own man. But I can feel the fever raging inside me—it's like a ravenous lion—and my forehead craves your cool touch.

Memories of my youth seem so clear—despite the myriad drugs that are clouding my pain-wrecked brain. It's been more than twenty years, yet I can almost feel the way your soft hands comforted me whenever sickness left my young body bedridden. But now, the soothing memory simply mocks me in my lonely infirmity.

My mind seems to be the only part of me that still functions, although I'm beginning to believe that even it is failing me. I guess that means I'm still lucid, for what madman ever admits his lunacy?

Mad or not, my mind is filled with happy childhood memories, memories of when you loved me—when you were still proud to call me your son. I can remember you cheering from the sidelines when I scored my first touchdown, and recall the tears of joy in your eyes as you took a picture of me dressed in my tux before the senior prom.

Please forgive the stains on this cheap hospital stationary. The ache in my heart is spilling from my eyes, despite my attempts to hold back the flood. I'm alone—and you want nothing to do with me, first-born or not.

Don't get me wrong; though I've missed you, I've lived a full life: bright lights, loud music, fast cars and faster women. The San Fernando Valley might not be Hollywood, but our modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah has its own stars, and I was the golden boy of Van Nuys.

But my kingdom went up in flames just over a year ago, when I walked out of the doctor's office with my death warrant. I went through my period of denial, and even went home and burned the piece of paper, pretending the test was wrong. I couldn't work of course, but I never told anyone—not a soul—I just announced my retirement from the industry, and then embarked on a six-month long booze, drug and pussy binge.

I would've kept on living like there was no tomorrow, but everything—*the thing*—finally caught up to me, and my body started its downhill plunge. I can't think about it now—I have all eternity to do so—but I can't even imagine how many women I've managed to drag to the grave with me. Most won't even know I've doomed them until after I'm gone.

What a legacy; more than a thousand movies—all available at any adult video store—and my own graveyard.

If only I would've had the courage to end my own suffering. I could have jumped off a bridge, or even went out in a hail of gunfire—suicide by cop—but now, I'm raging against the darkness, and no one can hear me—if a man screams in the wilderness, does anyone hear his voice?

I've stayed away all these years because I knew that's what you wanted; as long as I stayed away, you could pretend I didn't exist. But now—and I'm truly sorry—I'm coming home.

I can feel the darkness rushing at me like the blast of cool and damp air in a desert arroyo before a flash flood, yet I'm not afraid of the looming twilight. It might sound funny, but I'm looking forward to the respite from the pain and sickness that has ravaged my body, and the guilt that is shredding my putrid heart.

Do you see why I'm beginning to question my sanity? I'm foolishly clinging to the belief that the horrors of eternal hellfire will be a relief!

You tried to warn me of the danger that accompanied the sale of my soul for physical ecstasy, but who was I to deprive the masses of my God-given gift? You know I lived my life like Jesus—I loved them all: tall, short, blonde, brunette, blue, green and brown eyes, large breasts, and small. There's nothing so exquisitely and innately beautiful as the female body in all its wondrous forms and manifestations.

Many a fair goddess tried to tame my wild heart, but the first woman I ever loved left it in a thousand pieces when she banished me from her life. I'll never know if you meant to hurt me like you did, but I've found comfort over the years in the foolish belief that you simply loved me too much to watch as I sprinted down the path to perdition.

I could take a woman to glorious heights of rapture—while reveling in the journey myself—and let her shower me with gifts and adoration; but when she demanded more from me than unbridled lust—and all of them did—I ran to the waiting arms of my next lover. I couldn't give any woman a chance to hurt me like you did.

Now, ironically, the one thing I've feared all my life—being alone—is my final fate. Any one of my former lovers would linger at my side these pitifully few remaining moments, but I could never let them see me this way—frail and withered. Better they cling to the memory of me as the Adonis of their most sultry dreams.

Who could have imagined that I would fall victim to the scourge of my generation—AIDS—the gay man's disease? Everyone knows I'm as straight as the day is long, but during all those years I loved in front of the lens, I was lulled to a false sense of security by the monthly blood tests mandated by the industry.

And maybe if I'd limited my adultery and fornication to the steady fodder of air-headed beauties flashing across the blue screen, things would have turned out differently—but how could I appease my voracious appetite with only those saline and collagen enhanced caricatures of real women?

Now, I vainly seek comfort in the memories of my countless liaisons with members of the fair sex—each one an Aphrodite, a Venus to my Mars.

You'll find I've enclosed the remaining pittance from my once extensive portfolio. Regrettably, medical costs have significantly drained my reserves.

You'll also find the invoice—marked paid in full—for my planned funeral service, humble as it might be. I can only hope you'll attend.

Please take what you need from my ill-gotten funds and give any remaining amount to sis.

I'd like to write more, but I don't have the strength—"*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*"

I love you, Mom—I always have—and I'm sorry I let you down. I'm coming home now, and I hope you'll grant my one—and last—request. I'm destined for the lake of fire—"*for the wages of sin is death*"—but before the empty shell of my life is sealed in my ornate cherry-wood cocoon, I pray you'll tuck me into my ivory satin-sheets and kiss my cold forehead goodnight. I'll forever be able to cling to that memory as I writhe in hell's eternal inferno.

I'll be watching for you, like the rich man who saw Lazarus from Hades' abyss; though I know full well you won't be able to offer me any physical comfort from your lofty vantage. But please don't pity me; I'm simply reaping what I've sown.

I've got to close now, my eyelids are so heavy, and I can see I have a dark-robed visitor waiting at the side of my bed—perhaps the priest for my last rites.

How strange. At first his cool, bony touch reminded me of your comforting caress, but now it's searing my flesh, and my lungs are filling with the acrid tang of brimstone—I guess it's time.

Love always and forever,

your son.