

GARY

CECIL

Piracy: Episode One

About PIRACY

In 1997, there was Netflix. In 2002, there was Redbox. And in 2006, there were the Dellinger brothers.

PIRACY is the story of brothers Tad and Leif Dellinger and their rise to the top, selling pirated movies. Guns, murder, cars, and sex will pave the way in this explosive new book series! It's Breaking Bad - meth + piracy.

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Chapter One

On August 25th, 2006, my brother, Tad Dellinger, was released from prison. Looking back now, I know that it was on this day when the first domino fell, leading me to today: a day I'm certain will be my last.

I'd been waiting for his release for five years. He wouldn't let me visit him, which pissed me off, until I got older and understood why. I thought he was just a jerk, but by the time I turned eighteen, I knew exactly why he wouldn't let me see him. To him—his ideology, if you will—an older brother is supposed to protect you. Be there for you. And, I guess, in a way he felt guilty for his absence. It's quite funny, because I, too, felt responsible. There we were, two brothers feeling guilty and ashamed for five years, because of one asshole who drank a little too much and drove a little too poorly one morning.

I don't remember seeing the truck crash into my door. The only thing I do remember is my mother's screams and the bowl of cereal flying through the air. Sometimes it comes back to me, though, in quick, little flashes. But—and this is probably for the best—I can only see my mother's blonde curls bouncing, and sometimes when the memory comes back stronger, I can feel the

cold spoon on my tongue and the soggy Cocoa Puffs melting in my mouth. Then, just darkness. I was in a coma for a month after the accident, and when I woke up, I couldn't feel my legs. I never did again.

I don't know what sent Tad over the edge, and I never asked. I assume it was nestled somewhere between the cold truth that I'd be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life, or that Mr. Ray Wilmer—the drunk driver—would only spend ninety days in jail, followed by three years' probation.

"Had it been any other man or woman on this earth," my mother would say throughout the years, "they would've been rotting away in prison, and they sure as hell never would've been allowed to drive again."

Mr. Wilmer had three previous DUI violations, all of which amounted to a minor slap on the pecker, before he damn near killed me and my mother. But, he was a congressman for the state of Florida, and had more cops, lawyers, and judges in his pocket than a fat kid had Little Debbie's.

Tad wasn't an angel himself. He'd gotten involved in a gang when he was sixteen. They called themselves the Burning Suns. And they were who put him up to it. You see, I didn't just lose my legs when I woke up; I lost my brother, too.

Tad had become obsessed with Mr. Wilmer, and every day he was on the street with the Suns, they plotted revenge. The word

got out that Mr. Wilmer had an awfully soft spot for a pair of young tits, and especially an expensive girl named Molly. Lucky for Mr. Wilmer, he could find Molly and fresh tits at a club called Exotic, down in Orange County—about an hour south of where we lived at the time: Leesburg, Florida.

Tad and his boys, Jim Hawthorne and Lucas Benton, trailed him down I-75, into Orlando. When they arrived, Jim and Lucas went inside Exotic, while Tad waited in the car with an UZI resting on his lap. The plan had been to drop some roofies in Wilmer's drink, then bring him back to the car when he started to lose consciousness. According to Jim's and Lucas's testimony, the plan had worked. They drug him out of the club, acting as if he were "that friend" who had ruined the night for everyone. Nobody said a thing as they stuffed him into the backseat of Tad's Nissan.

There's this abandoned warehouse a few miles away from Exotic, at the corner of Mission Rd and W Robinson St. I've been there myself. And, let's just say, no one would be around to witness what happened that night. No one except the four of them.

They had cut the padlock off one of the doors with a pair of bolt cutters, and had gotten inside. Jim and Lucas held Mr. Wilmer up by the arms while Tad went to work. I saw the photos; it was messy. Like I said, this was all according to Jim's and

Lucas's testimony. They said that Tad put the UZI on Mr. Wilmer's forehead, and if it weren't for their divine intervention, Mr. Wilmer would have been shot that night. Instead, Mr. Wilmer suffered three broken ribs, four fractures to both arms, and a severe concussion that almost killed him. Almost. That was the key.

If Wilmer had died that night, I wouldn't be sitting in this empty mansion, waiting for death myself.

Jim and Lucas had records as long as a boardwalk on the beach, but Tad was clean. That's exactly how he ended up in prison for only five years. It would've been fifteen for attempted manslaughter, but he plea-bargained for aggravated battery instead.

Jim and Lucas sold Tad out, along with some mid-level dealers; they only got probation. Cried on the witness stand and everything, saying that it was Tad's plan, and that he said he would kill them if they didn't cooperate.

The bad publicity is what expedited the process, though. There were articles in the papers about Mr. Wilmer driving drunk and crippling me. A lot of people started getting behind Tad, saying that Mr. Wilmer got what he deserved. In order to save face, he pulled one of those judges out of his pocket and settled with my brother going to prison for five years instead of fifteen.

Chapter Two

August 25th, 2006, was a Friday, and I was a senior in high school. My mom let me skip that day, and we both went to pick up Tad from the Central Florida Reception Center (CFRC). The drive over was a quiet one. Most of what we had to say had already been said over the last five years. The truth is, all I could do was think about Tad. I missed my brother. He was there for everything in my life before the accident, and when I needed him most, he wasn't.

Before the crash, I used to play baseball. I wasn't the best or anything, and I most likely would have ended my career after high school, but I guess I'll never know, will I? Going into ninth grade as a paraplegic was not what I'd intended at all. I had to learn a whole new way of life. And quick, too. So, I did what any crippled teenager, who still had a functioning brain would do, I found humor. In everything. It took a while, but by my senior year, I was a pretty popular kid. I had friends, even had a few girlfriends at one time or another. But I didn't have Tad. Sure, we wrote each other letters, but it wasn't the same. I needed him to be there when we watched movies, so we could critique them together. I needed him when a new video game came out, so if I was stuck on a level, he could help me. I needed him for advice on girls, bullies. Fuck, I just

needed him. I wanted Tad back.

We pulled through the guards' gate at the CFRC, and I felt sick to my stomach and happy-to-death at the same time. My mother parked in the visitors' parking lot, and we just sat there; we were about thirty-minutes early.

"Are you ready for this, Leif?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said, "I just can't believe it's been five years. He hasn't even seen me like this." I looked down at my useless legs.

"He knows, dear. Your brother still loves you; it's why he's in there." She pointed to the prison. "He just confused that love with hatred, and he did what I couldn't do. Your brother's a hero; don't you ever forget that."

"I know, Mom. I know."

I stared at the building in front of me, knowing that somewhere beyond those walls and fences with barbed wire on top, Tad was out there, waiting to see me.

My mom got out of the car and went inside, leaving me behind. She had an outfit prepared for him, and was instructed by the staff to drop it off, if she had wanted Tad to leave in plain clothes. I saw her go through the doors, and I'll admit it scared me. For the smallest second, I thought she might never come back... But it was just the nerves, talking and manipulating as they do so well. She came out the same door she

entered about a minute later. Apparently, the prison wasn't too keen on guests, unless they were of the long-term persuasion.

About ten minutes later, that door opened again, and out walked Tad, with a guard behind him. God, the years had changed him. He was slimmer, even taller, I thought. He'd grown this hideous beard, and I laughed to myself about it. Then I saw the green eyes as he got close. The same eyes I have. That's when the tears started. Five years of anxiety purging itself from my body.

My mother got out of the car and ran toward him, hugged him. His head rested on her shoulder, and when he looked up, he saw me and winked. That was Tad all right. Sure, he had a strange beard, and even stranger tattoos covering his arms, but it was Tad. My brother. He opened the passenger-side door, and didn't say anything. He just stared at me.

After we exited the gates, he turned around and pulled my iPod from my hands.

"What this, Leif?" he asked.

I'd thought about our first conversation for ages, and I had no idea it would revolve around an MP3 player. But, fuck it, I took what I had.

"That, Tad," I said, "is an iPod. It's like a Walkman, but way better."

"Word?"

"Oh, yeah. This baby can hold up to 10,000 songs, and they never skip, because there's no disk."

"No disk?"

I saw my mother look at us through the rear-view mirror, smiling.

"Yeah, no disk. Well, there is, but it functions differently than you're used to seeing. There's a hard drive inside, like in a computer, sort of. You can store photos, videos, anything on this. It's pretty much the future."

"Damn, I gotta get me one."

He handed it back to me, but I stopped him. In that moment, I realized just how much prison could take away from a person. He didn't even know what an iPod was. I mean, *everyone* knew what an iPod was in 2006. Shit.

"No," I said. "Try it out."

I showed him the basics until he got the hang of it. He put the headphones on for the rest of the trip. That moment—the three of us driving home—was one of the greatest moments of my life. Tad, my hero, my brother, was free. And not only was he back, but *I* was teaching *him*. It was the first of many lessons I would soon teach Tad.

Chapter Three

My mother pulled the van into the driveway, and as we started to get out—well, I should say as they waited for me to lower down the ramp—Tad told my mother to go ahead inside, and that he wanted to go for a walk with me.

Then—and remember, I'd found humor for four years at this point—I said, "You mean go for a roll?" I knocked on my legs with my knuckles. "These babies are out of commission." I smiled. Oh, and I know I said 'I found humor,' I never said I was any good at it.

"Well," my mother said, "okay. Just hurry. I'll get supper ready soon. How does grilled chicken, salad, sweet potatoes, and dessert sound?" She looked at Tad.

"Sounds to me like you already got that covered, Ma. Don't worry; we be back in time to help you set the table, aight?"

"Aiighhtt," she said, four octaves higher than normal and smiling. "My, God, I don't know how on earth I understand a word that comes out of your mouth."

"Thanks, Ma."

"Yeah," I added, "thanks, Ma!"

She disappeared inside the house, and Tad started pushing me down the sidewalk.

Now, if you can get past Tad's speech pattern—or 'ghetto

slang,' as my mother would call it—you'll come to see that underneath, he's a caring, loving, and dangerous individual. Mostly caring. Mostly loving. And sometimes dangerous. It's the dangerous part that keeps me up at night.

It was hot that day. Florida has a unique way of putting you in your place.

"Look," Tad said, pushing me, "I know it's tough seeing me like this and all. Five years is a long ass time, and I don't know how to apologize for it."

"It's fine, Tad. I know why you did it." I watched this little kid ride by on a bicycle. He was on the opposite sidewalk. His legs looked strong, and they spun the pedals effortlessly, like he'd been riding that bike for a million years. I wondered if he understood the freedom he had, but I knew better. Nobody knows what they have till it's gone, and someone much smarter than me said that first.

"What makes you think I did it?" He stopped pushing, then walked in front of me, crouching.

"I just thought—well, Mom said—I don't know, Tad. She said that Jacob and Lucas testified against you. That beating that man was your idea."

He looked away from me for a second, then he darted his head back. Those green eyes of his looked deadly.

"That's not how it went down. They ratted on my ass 'cause

I was clean. I woulda been cool with it; that's what brothers are for. But naw, they didn't just let me take the fall; they let me break my damn neck. That shit wasn't part of the game."

"How come you wouldn't let me see you?" I said, ignoring him; the question had been bubbling in my subconscious like an active volcano for half a decade. I had to ask.

"You my baby bro, how the fucks I'm gonna let you see me in the pen like that?"

"I didn't care. I needed you! Look at me; I'm a fucking circus act for Christ's sake." Those five-year tears were at the gates, but I fought them back.

"I'm sorry, aight. I'm sorry." He wrapped his arms around me.

I wasn't ready for that, but I'm glad it happened. I felt safe, and I didn't feel alone anymore. Then he started to cry. I acted like I didn't notice, but I did.

We made it home just in time for dinner. Tad ate and ate; I assumed it was the home-cooked meal, but it was only later that I found out the truth: Tad was in a hurry.

He excused himself from the table, and drove his 2001 Nissan—my mother renewed the tags in time for his release—to God-knows-where. I watched him pull out of the driveway from the living room window.

Chapter Four

Tad Dellinger was rotting away in cellblock X, row 214, bed number 24601, just twenty-four hours ago. That was all in the past now. He quietly drove down US Highway 27, southbound, toward the Burning Suns' hangout: an old insurance agency building that went out of business eight years ago. They had rented it out ever since.

He called Tony Harris—the stand-in leader of the Suns—from his mother's cell phone, which he borrowed after dinner.

"Who is it?" Tony asked.

"Damn, Tony," Tad said, "is that how you talk to your boss?"

"Mother fucker, say-it-ain't-so. You out?"

"Word."

"I thought you still had some time."

"What can I say? Good behavior goes a long way."

He pressed hard on the gas, passed a van, and got back into the right-hand lane. The hangout was two miles away. He told Tony he would be there soon, and that he wanted to speak to him privately. There was "business" to attend to, and nobody needed to know he was out yet. Nobody.

As he turned into the plaza parking lot, he saw Tony Harris outside the front door of the clubhouse, resting against the

wall. Tony stood six-and-a-half feet tall, wore a black tank top against his white skin, and had tattooed sleeves engulfing his arms in reds, greens, and blacks.

Tad parked in front of the building next door, and flashed his headlights.

Tony flicked his cigarette, and walked slowly toward the car, his hand hovering over his waistline. When he was halfway to the car, Tad flashed the lights again. A second later, he rolled down the passenger-side window.

"It's me," Tad said. "Get in."

"I thought so, but you can't be too careful." He let his hand rest at his side and got into the car.

"What's with all the fucking secrecy?" Tony asked.

"Can't be too careful."

Tad smiled. Tony smiled.

"I'm glad your back, brother. I really am."

"Good."

They talked for a while; mostly about the automation that fills one's life: work, love, family. Tad eventually got down to business.

"There's something I need you to do," Tad said. "And I need it done tonight."

"Anything, Tad. Name it."

"Lucas Benton and Jim Hawthorne." He raised his eyebrows,

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