



I,
GABRIEL

by

Dominic
Holland

Hello, my name is Gabriel Webber.

I am many things in life, including a boobs man which is a dangerous admission but there are reasons for such candour and will become clear soon enough.

I should not be here. By rights, I should be dead and yet I don't feel blessed or fortunate for being spared. This sounds ungrateful, I know and for this I feel ashamed.

As I write, I am in a heightened state of excitement but also deep sadness and anxiety. In truth, I am lost. I am looking to find my way again and I hope that you might accompany me.

Really, I should begin with an apology: that I am not a writer and nor do I know what this is. A novel perhaps, an essay, a piece of journalism or even a case study. I do not know and I do not particularly care since it is not so important. What is important however is this story; a story I have no option but to tell. A book I am compelled to write. I would have preferred if it could have been written for me in the way that other (great) lives are chronicled. Not that I am so lazy, although this is a factor, but more because I am not a man of words. I did enquire about hiring a scribe, but after meeting a few charlatans I realised that my instincts were correct and that I must write it myself. There is another more curious reason why I must be at the helm, but more of this later and throughout. In truth, I haven't all the answers myself as yet and I am hoping for enlightenment as I write. A catharsis for me then and, I hope, for us all.

I hope so, as, I write what I suppose is my autobiography. By any comparisons it is an extraordinary life and doing it justice is a formidable challenge. A task made more onerous since I am writing in the first person and by modern standards, I am afraid that I am not a very likeable man.

It is an advantage for any story if the hero and narrator is relatable and likeable; easy to admire? This is not the case here. Although people admire me, they do not like me. I know this because, the internet being what it is, they tell me. I am a man of great accomplishments but matched by my failings, all of which must be exposed if this book is to serve any real purpose for me and for my readers.

I used to have quirks and idiosyncrasies which were considered comic, but not any longer. This partly explains why I need to write this introduction. With modern sensitivities as they are, it can serve as a confession - but also a warning.

So, let this introduction serve also as a plea; to encourage my more delicate readers to set aside their pre-judgements so that they can complete this short but important work. It saved my life and I hope that it can save yours too. I am aware that this is some claim. And whilst I do have a highly refined sense of self and am prone to melodrama, I am not being dramatic in this instance, as you are about to discover.

You have my assurances that I will write with fearless honesty. A confessional of a brilliant but flawed man. Anything less is a waste of all our time. Fitting, too, because I consider it to be the greatest accomplishment in my esteemed life. My indelible mark on the world. Isn't this what we all strive for?

As with anything worth achieving, writing a book is not an easy task. It requires much effort and courage and time is against me. These are troubled times and the moral of this story and its timing are prescient. Another lofty claim. Setting myself up to fail, perhaps? Well, read on and decide for yourself.

Someone once said, 'never explain, nor apologise'. I don't like this sentiment but I agree with it, although I concede that I have explained myself already in this introduction. However, I will not be apologising. Inevitably some will accuse me of being motivated by the income that accompanies a best-selling book, but I refute this. Even in my admission that avarice is my central failing and the kernel of this story,

financial gain is not at play here. Something higher is at work which I have a heavy burden to understand and to share. The strong international sales and bountiful income (plus, no doubt, the film rights), whilst most welcome, are merely a bonus and almost a distraction.

This is a true story. A modern-day parable, worthy of Jesus Christ himself. Plenty of pretenders since then have laid claim to the second coming but not me. I am not God. I am just an ordinary man. Well, perhaps not so ordinary.

Finally, I will write with economy so that the message can quickly emerge. Less is more and ever more so as our attention spans diminish.

I, Gabriel is my gift to the world. No need to thank me. But do, please, tell your friends and loved ones.

CHAPTER ONE

I am unsure when this story properly starts nor where I should begin. May 4th this year, seven months ago now, is certainly pivotal and January 12th this year also. But really these dates, although prominent, are mere punctuation marks in a much larger story that I am striving to understand.

As I write, it is a cold December evening and I am resident in a modest London hotel, having left my beautiful Georgian double fronted villa with its two-car garage, a walled garden with a tennis court in the heart of Marylebone village. The reasons for this will become clear as I account for my life and how it has come to all but collapse.

I am blessed with many things in life and perhaps most obviously, my wealth. Too often, wealth is confused with success. A primary school teacher can achieve great things and be an extraordinary success and yet in financial terms is flat average and therefore a failure?

I am fortunate that I am both. I am incredibly successful and spectacularly wealthy. It is also noteworthy that I am a self-made millionaire – and a millionaire in the old-fashioned sense of the word; when being a ‘millionaire’ meant something and denoted real wealth. These days a millionaire is practically anyone who happens to own a drab four-bed semi in Hendon, or somewhere else as tired. And whilst it is vulgar to boast about wealth, it is a part of who I am and central to my story.

Wealth and riches are relative of course. The disparities between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ being the fertile plains on which politicians and other power brokers make their hay. Nor are matters of wealth inequity helped by gauging poverty in comparative terms; since we are all paupers by comparison with someone else and illogical since the poorest people today in the ‘developed’ world are wealthier than practically all their predecessors. And it seems we are no happier for our vastly increased riches.

If social scientists are to be believed, it seems that mankind is becoming progressively more anxious and less happy. It appears the people who foraged and didn’t see their thirties lived happier lives than modern man, who spends his (on average) eight decades in a heated home with running water, flushing toilets, self-cleaning ovens, coffee machines, broadband and other modern marvels.

Since mankind has never had so much ‘stuff’, it follows then that happiness is not a factor of material wealth. This is hardly revelatory, but could it be that our burgeoning possessions are making us unhappy?

The cliché has it that money cannot buy happiness and yet money is what we are innately programmed to strive for. More money to acquire more stuff. The newest, biggest, smallest, fastest... in a never-ending cycle of dizzy despair.

Well, I am truly blessed then, since by any gauge, I am wealthy and I was also happy until an abrupt awakening obliterated my perfect and smug equation and I find myself in this hotel with only my computer for company. I am not happy at all. I am desolate and might even commit suicide if I didn’t have this story to share. A lifesaving book then in so many ways.

Loneliness is central to my unhappiness. I have few friends and no one to confide in and my isolation is compounded by feeling marginalised by the modern world. I am

completely bewildered by modern thinking. I agree with almost nothing said by anyone under the age of thirty-five, or by people my own age but who refer to themselves as 'progressive'. This is important because it is these two groups who set the agenda and wield the power. These are the arbiters and the architects of society and, whether intentionally or not in my not so humble opinion, they are making a dog's dinner of it.

I recall the recent passing of Professor Stephen Hawking and his painful, distorted face staring out from every newspaper and world media outlet. If ever there was a victim who had no time for victimhood. Hawking's life is a remarkable one. A life, not so curtailed in its length as was predicted, but certainly blighted by his wretched disease and yet he lived his life to its full potential and without even a whiff of 'why me'. By modern standards this is a remarkable achievement and, I think, might even be this great man's greatest feat.

But the likes of Steven Hawking are literally dying off, replaced by a generation who are being schooled in the new artform of victimhood. Never in the history of mankind have so many people been so offended by so little. This sentence itself is offensive for its use of the word 'mankind', which the current Prime Minister of Canada has suggested we should avoid. What chance is there for our race when such craven individuals are able to become our leaders?

Today offense does not need to be explained nor accounted for but merely asserted. A pernicious, sinister development; not least because it undermines genuine victims and their suffering, but most damaging because it absolves people of any personal responsibility for their behaviour and outcomes.

'It's not my fault' is the common refrain, implying then that someone else is to blame. Parents. Schools. Teachers. The police. The government, or society more generally?

Victimhood has been granted value and as such, has become something worth pursuing. A dangerous development and a folly and any group pursuing it unintentionally disadvantages itself; a sanctioned form of self-harm.

Martin Luther King's great speech fell on deaf ears. He would be aghast that identity is now less to do with one's character and everything to do with which group we belong to. Male, female and now a myriad other genders. Race, sexuality, class and so it goes on, making it impossible for anyone to keep up.

Nowadays I find myself in many groups which I feel a need to apologise for. I am old. White. Rich. Male. Judeo-Christian. Heterosexual. These are not groups that I have joined, they are just who I am and how I was born. They are immutable. I can renounce Christianity, but this does not alter my ancestry. And although I can now identify as a female, whatever these clever surgeons can remove from or append to my body, I will remain as I was born, a man. An irrefutable fact and yet somehow this is now a scandalous statement and possibly even a crime.

As lonely as I am, it is peculiar then that I don't court more popular views. Belligerence perhaps and no matter how many 'experts' line up against me. Most recently I have fallen foul of the increasingly empowered and strident women's movement, so easily done nowadays - just ask the eminent Germaine Greer. To think that as a student, I proudly marched with my sisters calling for equality and with such

success; women now heading up countries, police forces and corporations. But at what cost, since it seems that modern feminism is most effective now at making ordinary women feel miserable. And these waters are made even more treacherous by the aforementioned trans-movement, which has taken many by surprise and strikes most people dumb with fear as feminists and men identifying as women increasingly rage at each other.

The ascent of the trans-movement is remarkable, gaining full accreditation with their own letter T grafted on to make the acronym LGBT. A stunning victory by co-opting the energies and guile of the battle-hardened gay lobby with more time on their hands now since they have won their arguments so handsomely. And good for them.

By occupying the moral high ground, the trans arguments are impregnable because detractors, even as esteemed and seemingly qualified as Martina Navratilova can be cast aside as immoral or cruel. Add to this the protection of the law, since hate crimes are now a reality. But isn't hate subjective with degrees and nuances? And who decides? Our esteemed lawyers? But the law is not a science. It is interpretative and there is no shortage of avaricious lawyers hunting down the offended to nobly defend them. Or feed off them?

A rotten system then, serving mainly the professionals within and immune to any common sense and even facts which explains how the unequivocal science of biology has been trumped by the new science of sociology.

A mother in labour, in the throes of agony and ecstasy as her baby is being born. Naturally, she wants to know if it is healthy and what sex it is. But who knows these days? Dunno, time will tell. This baby can be whatever it chooses to be? A position helped along by craven celebrities allowing their offspring to choose. In which case, my advice is that they should choose another set of blinking parents and quickly.

This edifice crumbles soon enough when opportunists use the same logic to change their race and even their age. Or male prisoners claiming womanhood to be housed in female jails so that they can continue the sex crimes for which they are imprisoned. Male candidates on all female shortlists and male athletes winning female sports events. A journeyman male tennis player might as well hitch up a skirt and win women's Wimbledon, taking home the equal pay cheque for such light work.

Not that there are not gender anomalies, although thankfully these are rare. Babies born with both genitalia and none. Hermaphrodites and androgyny. These are tragedies, but the plight of these few is made worse by the similar claims of the many. And so, confronting such orthodoxies is to protect the weak and the vulnerable, no? And yet, for doing so I am somehow the monster.

I expect I have lost a raft of readers already, many of whom are now reaching for their devices in order to send me their invective.

Online is the battlefield where the 'justice warriors' go to war. Emboldened by anonymity and mutual support, they seek out the slightest dissent and they attack. Very often, I am called a 'Nazi', which is particularly hollow since my wife is Jewish and her grandparents and extended family were killed by these repugnant people. I

made this point on Twitter in response to an account called @alljewsarenazis and got in return not an apology, but a simple one-word response. 'Good'. How charming.

But enough of what is wrong with the world. What of the man, Gabriel Webber, you will be wanting to know. I have been married to Judith for almost thirty years and we have no children. Not a loveless marriage, but one that is certainly bloody tired. Limp, but reasonably happy and practically functional.

I am fifty-five years old and by 'boobs man' I am referring to my career as a breast surgeon. This revelation might demonstrate my poor sense of humour rather more than assuage any offence caused earlier. Well done to those readers who were offended but are still with me. Hastily, I must explain that I no longer refer to myself as such. I might be insensitive but I am not stupid. On the contrary, I am brilliant and officially so if IQ scores are to be believed. I did, however, used to introduce myself this way. At parties, it was my thing.

'Hello. Gabriel Webber. I'm a boobs man. You?'

Any raised eyebrows would quickly relax on my jokey reveal, receiving laughter from both men and women as well as requests for my business card. Happy days indeed but now, long gone. And to think I could have been more vulgar given the innumerable names for the female breast. Bosoms of course. Baps. Jugs. Hooters. Tits. Melons. Bristol's... you get my point. I argue that they all contribute to the great allure and majesty of the female breast.

Time for a break?

A chance to give my readers pause for thought. But do please stick with me. I have much wisdom and enlightenment to impart.