

## *The Money Games*

### *Prelude*

The year is 2045. Wars have been eliminated. The world is at peace. Still, it is man's nature to combat. Why did the Romans need the coliseum with the gladiators? Why did America need NFL football? Why did roller ball become so popular? Man needs conflict. We have never been a peaceful species. So now we have “The Money Games”. This is a chance for the average guy to become super rich. You remember Schwarzenegger in the “Running Man”. This was a take on that. How about the “Hunger Games”. Same kind of concept. I read a mini book written by Steven King called “The Long Walk”. The contestants all started out walking at the same pace. But the catch was, if you didn't walk at least 4 miles an hour, you would get a warning. After your third warning, you would be shot. There was no finish line. Only the last one walking was the winner.

#### **To begin, my character's pluses:**

He has five talents. He was a marathon runner in his youth. He took up kick boxing for awhile. He worked in a circus as a knife thrower. You know what I mean. Throw several knives at a woman secured to a wheel and try not to hit her. He was very good. His other talent is that he can hold his breath for 4 minutes without passing out. His best talent is that he is very smart.

The character talks in his own voice.

My mother and sister are both very sick. They need some serious medical treatment. That is very costly, especially for us poor folks. Obamacare has been replaced with “We don't care”. A necessary savings by our benevolent government that has run out of money under the Democratic give away plan. Unless you are an illegal immigrant, (substitute, illegal alien), there is no free medical insurance for you.

I signed up and entered “The Money Games” show. Don't know if I will be selected to participate, but I will give it a shot.

Of course all this is televised, or I should say, made available on streaming services for a fee.

I am not sure if I was lucky or not, but I got selected.

## *The Money Games* (Chapter 2)

The first contest was going to be no contact. I think it was designed to weed out the dolts. I am not sure if they even broadcast it since there was no violence and maybe kind of boring. Still, you had to pass in order to reach the next level. There was \$1000 up for grabs for 1<sup>st</sup> place. These were the rules:

Each contestant is given the same question. There were 10 contestant in all. Of course no one could hear the answers given by the others. If you answered wrong, you were eliminated. You were given one pass. You could say, "I am not sure" and you would still advance. Also, the top three would advance even if you missed a question.

The early questions were some almost everyone has heard before. All trick questions.

#1 Who is buried in Grants tomb? Nine out of ten answered correctly. One said "I am not sure".

#2 How many months have 28 days? Two said February. The rest said "All of them". Two were eliminated.

#3 When was the war of 1812? One said 1776, another said I am not sure. Another was eliminated.

#4 Which state is the furthest North? South Dakota or North Carolina. Of course it is South Dakota.

Two more bit the dust. Now down to five left.

#5 A two part question. What is the most deadly compound on earth and would you ban it if you had the choice. Two said "I am not sure". One said DDT and yes. I said Hydrogen Dioxide (H<sub>2</sub>O) and No. Down to four. Yes, water is the deadliest compound on earth. More people have died from

floods, Tsunamis, and frozen to death in ice than any other compound.

#6 What is the capital of Brazil? I answered, “I am not sure”. Geography was my worse subject in school. Good thing I answered not sure. One said “Brasilia”, two said “Rio de Janeiro” Now down to two. Rio de Janeiro was the capital up until 1960, then it was changed to Brasilia.

#7 Which planet is farthest from the Sun? This was a real tricky question. Pluto would have been the correct answer, years ago, but it's designation was changed. So I answered Neptune. The other contestant answered Pluto. As it turned out, we were both correct. Pluto was re-designated as a dwarf planet. Secondly, Pluto's orbit is a much more elongated ellipse than those of other planets, so for 20 years out of its 249 year orbit, it is in fact closer to the Sun than Neptune.

The tie breaker:

#8 What does laser stand for? I knew this one. The answer is “Light Amplification Stimulated by Electron Radiation”. The other contestant did not have an answer. I told you I was smart. I took the \$1000 prize. This will help buy some medicine for my mother and sister. The next contest is in a week. They don't tell us what it will be. I only know that as a person advances, the contests become more difficult and more violent.

We shall see.

### **The Money Games** (Chapter 3)

I've definitely stepped into prime time. This challenge involves me against some brute. The winner moves on, the loser ends up in the hospital or worse. We get to chose weapons. Something clicked in my brain. It seems like a long time ago, I faced similar circumstances. Maybe something in my DNA is reminding me of the past. Someone named Mole or Rock comes to mind.

Authors note:

This is a reference to another story of mine called One Million Years B.C. You will have to read that one to know what I am referring to.

No time to dwell on the past now. My opponent chose an ax. I chose a knife. We were at opposite spots in a circle. Kind of like an arena. There were seats all around. A bell sounds off and the battle began. Mr. Brute makes a cautious advance. When he is 10 feet away, I threw my knife and caught him right in the throat. Game over. I heard a collective sigh from the audience. They were hoping for more blood sport.

Later I was brought before the game commission. They were thinking of disqualifying me because they thought my style would hurt their ratings. What they didn't account for was the public voting that goes on after each contest. Kind of like, "Dancing with the Stars". The viewing audience had a say in who advances and who gets knocked out. When their rating came out, it was one of the highest that they had ever gotten. I had established a fan base. Apparently, they liked the David vs. Goliath twist to the games. Still, I felt that the commission didn't like me and future contests might be stacked against me.

The next contest was once again inside the ring. This time, no weapons were allowed. Just me and Mr. Brute #2. I had no intention of being beaten senseless. When the bell rang, he advanced toward me. I just skated away from him. This continued for the next ½ an hour. My former built up marathon endurance was still there. Mr. Brute #2 was tiring. I would let him almost grab me, then dance away again. When I thought he had slowed down enough, as he got close, I gave him a hard kick in his leg. This infuriated him and made him chase me harder. He was falling right into my trap. I kept this up, alternately kicking him, then running away again. After 4 hours of this, he was breathing heavily and could hardly walk, let alone chase me. He just gave up and asked to be let out of the ring. I had won again without being touched.

The commission was once again angry at me. No blood had been spilled. They couldn't kick me out due to my growing fan base.

I wondered what trick they would come up with next.

A week later, I was back in the ring. I am really getting to hate the ring. This

time they threw me a real curve ball. Brute #3, me, and a young girl. My challenge was to protect the girl. If either she or I became unconscious, the girl and I would lose.

Running away would not work this time. Brute #3 right away started for the girl. At least she was nimble and not easily caught. I had to attack. I advanced toward him and slid down low. I caught his calf with a hard kick. He hardly noticed. I had to scrabble backwards to avoid his grasp. Once again he moved toward the girl. I quickly put myself between him and her. I faked a low kick and instead performed a classic snap kick to the head. He took notice of that one. At least he is not a robot. I told the girl to keep running away from him. Each time he got close to her, I would step in and place a well aimed kick to a different location on his body. We kept this up for ½ an hour. I could see that the girl was getting tired. This worked up until I made my first mistake. One of my kicks completely missed and I fell down at his feet. He jumped on me and started to pummel me hard. I was protecting myself as well as I could, but enough of his punches got through to do me some serious damage. If this kept up, I would be knocked out. Just as I was starting to black out, he suddenly jumped off of me and howled. The girl had jumped on his back and bite off his ear. He turned around to retaliate and that was all I needed. I swung my leg as hard as I could and connected with the side of his head. It was lights out. We had won.

The commission was pleased. My face was a bloody mess and Brute #3 was still bleeding where his missing ear used to be.

The girl's name was Deana. As far as I was concerned, she was the hero of this match. I didn't know it at the time, but she and I would be partners again in a future challenge. So far, I had won \$3000 to help my family.

### **The Money Game** (Chapter 4)

After my last challenge, I ran into Deana on my way out of the studio. I told her that she had saved me from serious harm and perhaps death. She said that in her book, I was the hero. Keeping the opponent from getting to her.

The same fate could have happened to her. I said, how did you get into the Money Games business? I was trying to help my family. Seems like we have that in common. How about letting me buy you dinner? After three successive wins, I have some pocket money.

So that was a side benefit to the danger of The Money Games. We saw each other almost everyday after that. She said that she wasn't in the whole game venue. She was only used on certain occasions, like the one in the last arena. I told her that I was in it all the way. I would keep going as far as I could and hope that I wasn't killed or disabled along the way.

I also gave her more background on where I came from. I grew up in a more prosperous area than I lived in now. After my father passed away, due to an industrial accident, times turned tough for me, mom, and my sister. Eventually, we had to move to a favela, one of the worse areas imaginable. If you ever watched the movie “City of God”, you would know what I mean.



The poorest slums are within viewing range of the famous statue of Jesus called “Christ the Redeemer” in Rio de Janeiro. Tijuana, Mexico has similar shanties just across the border from the prosperous city of San Diego.



This is an area controlled and run by criminals and even the police are afraid to enter. Luckily, my cousin is one of the kingpins. He provides protection for us. Besides earning money from the games, there is something sinister going on there with these commissioners dudes. Part of my reason for entering is to find out more about how they operate. Who are these commissioners that make up the board of the games? They are playing God with our lives.

The forth game:

There are ten of us all dressed in some kind of game suit. The suit has a target on the front chest area and one on the back. In the middle of the stage was a pile of guns. We were never given any instructions on how to use them or what their capabilities were. My guess is that this was going to be some kind of laser tag. As a kid, I had played paintball and I was not very good at it. I usually got eliminated early. There were some structured shields arranged around the stage area presumably to provide some kind of protection from fire. When the bell sounded, all made a dash for the gun pile. I grabbed one and immediately headed for a shield. It looked like several of the contestants formed an alliance. They aggressively advanced and together eliminated other contestants. When the laser beam hit a target, it looked like he or she was electrified. They immediately fell to the ground and didn't move. I did not know if they were dead or just immobilized. I remember reading a book in my youth called "Ender's Game". He never lost a battle. I took a page from that book. I exposed myself, but covered the target with my

arm. I was immediately fired upon. I should have gotten an academy award for my faked dying performance. I fell to the ground and did not move. The battle raged on. I could hear what was going on. Finally, there was a victory shout as the lone survivor claimed victory. I then rose up and shot him in the back. I went around and fired into all the targets of the fallen contestants, least one of them used my same tactics.

The commission called me up again in front of them. You cheated! I said, as far as I was concerned, there were no rules. My voting audience saved me once again. As I left the commission office, I gave them the one finger salute.

### *The Money Games* (Chapter 5)

During the week between games two important things happened. I was contacted by one of the former contestants. His name was Shaun and had been the most celebrated contestant of the games. He had advanced further than anyone else before him. What he told me shocked and scared me. He said, you have little chance of going much farther. I have been watching your progress. You have humiliated the commissioners and they will come up with some contest that you have little chance of surviving. I noticed that he was handicapped. He could barely walk. He said, if they knew I was talking to you, we both would be eliminated, as in, disappear from the earth.

I had formed a plan to deal with the commissioners, but I wasn't quite ready to implement it. That meant I needed to do at least one more game. Deana and I had progressed from friend to a couple. She pleaded with me to quit the games. Maybe she was right. In view of what Shaun had told me, I had better quit while I was ahead.

The next day I asked for a meeting with the commissioners. I told them my desire to quit. They all just laughed. Did you not read the fine print of your contract? The only out for you is to be killed or maimed beyond your ability to participate. Just as I had feared. Shaun was right. I had no choice.



Let the games begin:

So I was back in the arena. But there were no brutes present. There was what appeared to be a glass water tank 4 feet square and 10 feet high. At the bottom were 16 black boxes spaced all around the perimeter, 4 to a side. In addition, there were a dozen females lined up against the wall. Deana was one of them. They told me I could choose one helper. Of course I chose Deana. She was the only one I could trust. I still did not know what the challenge would be and it seemed like they weren't going to give me any clues.

They instructed me to enter the water tank. Near the top was a metal ring. They handcuffed me to the metal ring. This was not going like I had hoped. I didn't like feeling helpless. Next, they fitted a breathing apparatus over Deana's mouth. It was small and lightweight, not like scuba tanks. I guessed it would last at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour. They put Deana in the tank with me. They said in one of the black boxes was a key to release the cuffs. All she needed to do was get the right one and free me. Sounded too easy. Outside the tank was a big clock set to zero. They closed the tank door and the clock started to tick away. The television audience could see the clock and both Deana and me. Deana didn't waste any time. She immediately retrieved one of the keys. Only trouble was, she couldn't reach up high enough to put the key into the lock. Someone turned on the water and it started to fill up the tank. Now I could see the danger and problems we faced. I told Deana, get as many keys as you can hold and wait for the water to rise up. Then you can swim up and reach the lock. She did as I asked. The water was rising at the rate of 1 foot per minute. It would take at least 8 minutes before the water was deep enough for Deana to float up toward me. At eight minutes, she tried the first key. No good. None of the keys she tried opened the lock. I started to think maybe this was the end. Maybe the commissioners never put the correct key in any of the boxes. Deana swam down to get more keys. Only this time, she had trouble reaching the bottom because she was too buoyant. She returned with three more keys. By this time, I was underwater. Before I became submerged, I practiced taking deep breaths. At the last minute, I took in as much air as my lungs would hold. I could clearly see the clock outside. It was at 10 minutes. That means, if I could hold my breath for 4 minutes, she

had a chance to find the right key.

Author's note:

As a teenager, I had a friend who had a swimming pool. We had a contest on who could swim the most laps of the pool underwater without coming up for air. I won. I swam four laps underwater, but at the end of the forth lap I blacked out and woke up standing at the pools edge. I think I had held my breath for almost 4 minutes.

To continue:

So far none of the keys worked. The clock was at 13 minutes and 30 seconds. There were still 3 keys left. She returned with two of them. But, by that time, the clock was at 14 minutes. There was only one key left. I was out of time and I could feel myself blacking out and I did. The next thing I knew, I was standing in a half empty water tank freed from the handcuffs. Deana had taken her air mask off and put it on my face. Then she swam down and got the last key and it worked. I had beaten the game once more, thanks to my girlfriend's quick thinking.

It was time to quit risking my life. I was sure the next time would be fatal. I had another week before my next game day.

So I was now in possession of \$5000, minus the amount I spent on medicine and buying Deana dinner. In the favela this was a fortune. I went to Eddie, my cousin, and told him about my plan. He arraigned for several of his top capos to aid me. The next game day was going to be different.

The game commission had promoted the next episode to be the best ever. They were not wrong. After the viewing, the ratings went through the roof. Although, things did not go quite how they had planned.

**The Money Game**  
*(The Final Game)*

In the beginning, I told you I had four talents. I used my kick boxing skill to help me win in two of the challenges. I used my “four minute hold my breath

talent” along with Deana's quick mind to win the last one. I still had my smarts left. If the commissioners thought that I would give them another chance to eliminate me, they were wrong. When I had applied for the games, they did a background check on me. It only showed my life before I entered the favela. So they all thought I was an easy target. When you lived in the favela, you essentially fell off the map. So it wasn't “lived a soft life of luxury Danny” that entered the game studio that day, it was “lived a hardened life in the favela Danny” that came to play.

Danny and his associates snuck into the arena stadium before the game was televised. They had prepared a surprise for the commissioners. I am not sure what they had planned for my demise, but it wasn't going to pan out that way. Right before the game was to start, we hijacked the commissioners and led them into the arena. We had one of the announcers read a prepared script before the games started.

“Today, the commissioners want to thank all the former contestants and especially the viewing audience for their continued interest and support. With that in mind, the commissioners are going to participate in today's games.”

In the middle of the arena was a table with 12 guns and a variety of knives and axes. Instead of keeping them in the dark, like they always did me, I told them the rules of the game. When the bell rings, you are all to advance toward the table and grab a gun and or blade. The guns only have one bullet in them. The name of this game is: “Only the Strong Survive”. Only one of you will walk out alive. We have all the exits guarded. Anyone trying to escape will be shot, unless you are the last man standing. I told them, you have been watching these games unfold for many months. You never had the pleasure and fun of being a participant. Now you will get the chance.

For the audience's added viewing pleasure, my colleagues had brought several bags of ravenous rats from the favela. These were the size of small dogs and large cats. When the bell sounded, they turned the bags upside down and the rats emerged ferocious and hungry. If it had been me in this

game, I would have grabbed a gun, organized by fellow gamers, killed the rats, grabbed the blades and fought my way out. The commissioners were not of that ilk. They were egotistical, soft, unethical, selfish, over privileged worms. Have I used enough adjectives for you to get the picture? What took place next, could only be described as the most ghastly and brutal scenes ever shown on live TV.

Some were so horrified that they used their single bullet to kill a rat. Then they were gunned down by their fellow associates. After all the bullets had been expended, it was knives and axes in play. When faced with kill or be killed, even the most timid rose up to the occasion. There were arms and legs being severed. Heads being chopped off. Blood ran like a river on the arena floor. One guy just sat in the corner and screamed as two rats chewed on his leg. The rats were feasting on the fallen. This could have been a scene from “The Walking Dead”. Things happened so fast, that the shocked camera men failed to turn off the cameras.

A couple of the contestants tried to exit out of the side door. They were shot as promised.

Toward the end, there was only one man left. One of the camera men had the whereabouts to display this prepared message. “The Money Games have been canceled until further notice.” This was the understatement of the year. Too bad, because the hungry fans were clamoring for more shows just like that one.

Due to the mass carnage in the arena, and the lost lives of the influential commissioners, I was accused of masterminding the whole thing and labeled a criminal and felon. The police posted a wanted poster with my name and face on it. So what, I had disappeared back into the favela. I took Deana with me. I figured they would somehow involve her as a co-conspirator. She went willingly with me.

Actually, life in the favela was not as bad as you might think. There were no taxes. No crooked politicians. Maybe our lives would not be as long and luxurious as those outside, but we knew how to love and live. Deana and I

actually got married. We had children, cooked delicious food, drank as much as we wanted. As long as we didn't cross the Mafioso, we lived in peace.

Six months later, I heard they were going to start up the Money Games again. I would keep a sharp eye on how they conducted these new games. If they resorted to their old style, Gameboy might have to make a return appearance.

After all, I beat out Shaun for the longest running contestant who never lost a game.

**The End**