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Season 06. Episode 13

## Podcast Title: Bruno J.'s Journey to Hell - Part 2

This is episode 13 (Part 2 of 2) of season 6.

In Part One, I shared my early life and how my attitude about wanting to evade the consequences of my actions set me up to abuse drugs and alcohol for many years to come.

In Part Two, my journey covers my married home life and my career that eventually took me to New York for a decade of insane highs and lows. Then the fall from grace, from the 26th floor of 1515 Broadway to the streets, then to my wakeup call in Milwaukee.

I spent the first ten years of my job as an ad agency account executive in Chicago where I learned to drink with the best of them. It was great fun and drama much of the time.

The Mad Men TV series feels like a time-compressed version of our reality at the time. The ad business was like that, it really was. The

spineless bigmouths, the insecure and arrogant creative types, the tyrannical insecure bosses and clients - it was like that.

Then we had to go home to our families. I recall one night early in my career, coming home extremely late and very drunk, when my wife of just a few years bitterly said: "Oh, you're just an alcoholic like the rest of them!"

That behaviour accelerated. I travelled to Baltimore, New York, Los Angeles and many other cities, chasing the almighty dollar. I left the ad agency in Chicago for a global agency in New York, following my lust for a younger woman after my wife decided she had had enough. She left me after twelve years of drunkenness, infidelity and neglect of family, which by then included a beautiful daughter five years old.

As I rose in stature in my firm, I also managed to alienate my colleagues and boss with my arrogance. So, my boss fired me after we were acquired by a British combine. I lost the equivalent of about a half- million dollars in today's money because I was paid out at book value instead of acquired value.

I spent the money I had left by taking the summer off on the Jersey Shore, renting a huge beach house with people I sort of knew, drinking beer all day long and smoking some weed, but not too much. I do not know why I moderated on weed.

I leased a Mercury just because I wanted a big car.

When the money ran out, I met a young consultant who owned a small ad agency in New York, and I became a "partner". Little did I know I would end up working for a sociopath who proceeded to, slowly but surely, rob me by not paying his share, or mine, of taxes to the feds. That led me to owe taxes on most of what I earned over two years.

Of course, I played the biggest part of that problem, as my greed had kicked in and I was looking for the big score all along.

My partner fired me after I said some very crazy things while in the hospital for eye surgery. That storm was a long time coming, after many incidents of abusive behaviour both ways. I had become as insane as he.

The drinking was over the top. I could easily find a female drinking buddy any night of the week and would often wake up at her place in Brooklyn or Queens or somewhere in New Jersey across the river.

I used a "head-hunter" to land a great job in Milwaukee after traveling all over the US on job interviews, including San Francisco, Austin, Dallas, Houston and Columbus, Ohio.

I drank my way out of that job, too. At first, I was a star. I did bring in some fresh thinking and energy in my first year there. It started to sour in year two. By the end of my third year, I was a catatonic, frozen mess.

In the middle of this, I pursued and fell for a married woman over whom I obsessed.

I was diagnosed with a long list of psychiatric disorders, including OCD and severe anxiety disorder. I did not tell my kind doctor anything about what I was really doing until the very end when I "accidentally" disclosed that I was drinking my brains out and taking opiates just so I could sleep. This had been going on for three years, every weeknight and all weekend long.

I had by then ingested huge amounts of alcohol and opiates, chasing the elusive high and trying to deaden the shame of the kind of person I had become.

The week they finally fired me, I checked myself into Milwaukee Psychiatric Hospital. I was done. I surrendered and surrendering

became the best decision of my life. I had found the path back to sanity, after all.

What we learned from Bruno J.'s journey to hell is that:

1. This is a classic tale of looking for the geographic cure, that "wherever you go, there you are". We can't outrun the disease.
2. This is a progressive disease that accelerates in its downward trajectory. It never stops unless arrested.
3. Denial is a major characteristic of addiction. The alcoholic/addict is incapable of making the connection to his many symptoms of insanity and his substance abuse.
4. Toward the end, if there is an end, the abuser uses drugs and alcohol to deaden the feelings of intense inferiority and shame over what kind of person he has become.