

Hello, everyone, and welcome back to an old guy who knows shit. Stluhdog here.
this is

Episode 3

The Origin Story, Part I

LR Hults

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For those of you who are dying to know what happened with Richard, I'll give you his full story after this necessary but I do not think will be boring - exposition.

This is the story of the origin of my quest to figure it all out. This particular story does not really have any actual supernatural experiences in it, but it is the important exposition that you need to know in order to really wrap your brains around how I felt as I began my quest and shit started happening. It's a bit long, but as it is actually two stories, we'll knock out this baby in two 15 minute shorties, then we'll get back to Richard.

So I started out Catholic. Roman Catholic. My mom was a devout Catholic. My mom was so Catholic that her marriage to my Dad, outside of the Church, tortured her conscience. She could not go to confession or communion for something like 15 years, but she sent us to Catholic school and took us to church, and it was a big day after my dad left when she came back to the church and went to confession.

I don't want to suggest that I had no respect for her or her Catholic faith, on the contrary, I had tremendous respect for her faith, particularly in light of the fact that she seemed to actually live the principles that the Catholic church espoused - whereas the church itself did not. And, I must point out, to this day, that church continues to demonstrate its true principles in the Supreme Court of the United States, where they actually stuck their nose in with amicus briefs arguing that they absolutely must have the freedom to oppress anybody whose sexuality they judge deviant. An excellent example of the Catholic version of compassion. Poor Jesus would be turning over in his grave, except of course, yeah, well, you know....

But I went to Catholic school from 2nd grade on, and was an altar boy from roughly 1958, which was still the Medieval Latin mass, through roughly 1966, which was right after the 21st Ecumenical Council changed everything. So I was the last class of old school, medieval altar boys.

Catholic grade school was difficult for me. I was definitely at the bottom of the heap, shall we say, but early on I found a friend, the previous bottom-of-the-heap until I came along, and we bonded very quickly. He became my brother, profoundly in spirit if not in blood. We were pushed together by being the two unchallenged scapegoats in the class. Well, we teamed up, didn't need any of them, and went on one of the most fantastic journeys of our lives. We lived in one imaginary world after another, and it gave us what we needed to be happy in

spite of the bullies. Probably the most popular of these imaginary worlds was variations on the theme of war. Either we were soldiers lost behind enemy lines, or on a special scout mission, or we had been thrown back in time and were fighting dinosaurs and trying to find a way to get back to our own time. We would enter these worlds utterly and completely. The one common element of them all was that we were always allies fighting an imaginary enemy, so there was never any of that “I got you” “No I got you first” crap. He lived next to a golf course with a creek running through it, and I lived near a park with a creek running through it, so no matter who was where, we were always in woods, following a creek bed, completely immersed in an imaginary world that could last for days. One summer I spent four days at his house, and we were spies behind enemy lines the entire time. We somehow got rid of these two kids (us), and then impersonated them, somehow fooling their (our) parents into thinking we were them, spent every moment dealing with them “under cover.” We turned the bedroom into a fortress each night, and embarked each morning into a different part of the creek to spy on high level operatives who were playing golf. There was another time when my friend got killed. There was a very dramatic death scene in the middle of a battlefield, very emotional, and then an attack forced me to leave him, and I did, remaining completely in the world we were inhabiting, and wondering what the hell I would do now, all by myself. Half an hour later, he caught up with me – a different guy, lost, and a whole new relationship began. After that, one of us would get killed at least once every game. Nothing is more fun than dying, and how well you died would be a topic for discussion afterwards. Also, how cool a name you came up with. The point is, we were seriously happy kids, our imaginations were raging wildly, and no matter how bad it got at school, we were always able to shake it off and realign ourselves in our imaginary worlds.

Meanwhile, somewhere in there, around age 8, I discovered that if I scrubbed my penis really well and got it really clean – well, it felt really good. It was delightful, and cool, and I thought nothing of it, except that bath time from then on was a whole lot more fun and relaxing. Somewhere around here I also felt what now seems like a very strange compulsion - I used to climb out of my window at night, down the porch roof, and go into the woods and field on the other side of the street. I would take off my pajamas and run around naked. Roll in the grass and the dirt. Down the trails through the woods. Just run around naked in the dark. It was exhilarating. I didn't question any of these things, didn't ask myself why I looked at those woods out my window one night and wanted to run around naked in them. I had no actual “sexual” thoughts yet whatsoever. I shared dozens of intensely real imaginary worlds with my friend, got good grades in the midst of agonizing torment, played my freakin' heart out, both with my friend and alone, had no clue what “guilt” was, and by golly I was a really happy kid with a really clean penis.

Well, as you have probably already guessed, this innocent heaven could not last forever – not if this kid is Catholic. You would be right.

So in the 7th grade, when I was around 12, there was a big deal one day. They were separating the boys from the girls and we were going to have sex education. WooHOO! So we get separated. My class was the home class for the boys, so I didn't have to move. All the girls got up and marched out, and then the boys from the other class marched in and took their seats. So we were all sitting in our assigned seats, but suddenly the girls had become boys, and everybody was sniggering and Sister Mary Barbara had to slap the desk a few times with her ruler. SMACK-SMACK-SMACK. She didn't hesitate to use that ruler on our knuckles. And trust me, I know. So we all settle down, and she announces that we have a guest for religion class. The Monsignor was coming today. And we all knew what that meant. The good Monsignor was a hundred and two if he was a day. He could barely walk, needed to be assisted everywhere. He had that old-man hunched back and so he always talked into his lap. And he fell asleep randomly. So when The Monsignor came to teach a class, Sister Mary Barbara always assigned a student in the front row to sneeze or cough or something when he fell asleep. You know, to wake him up. It was something of a joke, but it was a Catholic class governed by a ruler to the knuckles so we pretty much did what we were told. Somebody'd snicker, maybe, but that was it. Because Sister Mary Barbara might not be in the room, but somehow she always knew when we had been disrespectful. So on this particular day she assigns a new boy to do it because the usual one to do it was a girl. This is a boy who had never done it before. So Sister Mary Barbara helps the good Monsignor up to the desk, gets him settled in it, where he is looking at his lap, and all we can see is the top of his head. And she leaves the room. And he starts to talk into his lap. One of the first words out of his mouth was "sex", which was a word you NEVER heard a religious person say, so you know we shut up and perked up our ears. And then he started talking about the holy institution of marriage, and how some things happen in a marriage that are special and unique, and that those things can and should only happen in a marriage. In a marriage, the "act of holy union," I think he called it, the act of holy union was a beautiful and wonderful thing God had given us for the procreation of the race, and he kept talking on and on about the beauty of having babies and how that is what the act of holy union is all about and he goes on and on and on and on and pretty soon he's starting to fade, when his voice rose a notch and we all heard "so what this MEANS . . . is that any time you touch yourself . . . *there* . . . for any reason . . . [he's starting to nod off now] other than . . . to scratch . . . or wash . . . it is a *mortal sin* . . . and you will . . . zzzzzzz . . . burn in hell . . . zzzzzzz . . . for all eternity SNORE!

I swear to God you could have heard a pin drop. And you know we're all thinking the same thing: Oh my God I'm going to burn in hell for all eternity. And the kid who was supposed to cough or sneeze was so rattled that he totally forgot he was supposed to cough or sneeze, and so this deathly silence falls on the room. And then the Monsignor snores. SSSCCCKKKGGGK!!! Nobody moves. Our lives have all just been utterly changed. We're paralyzed. The Monsignor snores again. SSSCCCKKKGGGK!!! Nobody moves. But this snore got our attention. And at the very instant when the Monsignor started to draw in the third snore SSS--! every kid in that room coughed or sneezed at the same time. And it was

so loud that the Monsignor jumped straight up, literally blubbering, and then almost fell trying to get back into his seat. Nobody moved to help him. He was on his own at that moment. We laughed. It broke the tension. We laughed, he half tried to look around, clearly confused, but he could not lift his head and it was totally useless, so finally he signaled a kid to go get Sister Mary Barbara, and my sex education was over.

I knew all I needed to know about sex.

And that concludes part 1 of the Origin Story. Be sure to join us next episode for part ii, the conclusion of how it all began.

Till next time, this is an old guy who knows shit signing off.