

A true story of violence and  
corruption at the heart of surfing

# WELCOME TO PARADISE NOW GO TO HELL



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*A writer can't be honest with himself, but sets out to become famous by telling the truth about everyone else*

**An irreverent and hilarious true story, uncovering the violence and corruption at the heart of surfing**

**In the style of The Big Short**



# WELCOME TO PARADISE, NOW GO TO HELL

A TRUE STORY.

Chas Smith lives in Los Angeles with his wife and collie dog, but dreams of becoming a fabulous writer like Norman Mailer or Joan Didion. He is in Lebanon, writing trashy stories for web magazines, when he is captured by Hezbollah. He imagines he might be beheaded on Youtube and become famous that way, and then he frets that it won't be suitably glamorous. His jeans are not skinny enough, his hair is too short. *"For god's sake he look like Ellen Degeneres"*. If he gets out alive he decides to become a surf journalist instead. It'll still be adventurous and glamorous, just less dangerous.

Hezbollah let Chas go. He's no use to them. He's not even Jewish.

Back in LA, Chas tells everyone who will listen about his new plan and when Derek, a hip Australian surf-magazine editor, asks him to write about an ice-dealing pro-surfer in Santa Cruz, Chas immerses himself, gonzo-style, in the assignment. *"Methamphetamine is the most awesome drug that I've ever, ever heard of. Ever. You can make it in your fucking bathtub. All you need is some Sudafed, Drano and a "can-do" 'tude"*. The article's irreverent tone and 'honest' reflection of surf culture resonates with the surf audience. Click-counting Derek loves it and encourages Chas, *"It's not trash man. It's Trash-Prose"*.

Derek asks Chas to cover the World Surfing Tour for his magazine and Chas thinks his Hezbollah-dungeon dreams are coming true. He dumps his far-more-sensible-than-he-is wife and heads for Australia and the first event of the tour.

The surf tour is a bummer. The surfers are tanned, healthy and beautiful, but don't seem to want to fulfil their glamorous potential. Chas stands by in his fashion magazine clothing and accessories, mercilessly poking fun at their fashion faux pas. *"Mick Fanning is boring. His surfing is boring, everything about him is boring, even his drunken alter-ego Eugene - which sounds interesting - is boring"*. The pro-surfers are pissed off but, needless to say, Chas adores the attention. He and Derek laugh and laugh at all the trouble they are causing. When Chas is confronted by the all-powerful surf brands, he ridicules them too!

The final leg of the World Surfing Tour happens on the famed beaches of the North Shore of Hawaii. Chas imagines a paradise, but it's a shithole too. It's full of violence and corruption and even more dangerous than the Middle East. Chas can't believe he didn't know, and starts his own research.

He hears about the **'Black Shorts'**, the Hawaiian locals who viciously police the waves and beat-up mainland surfers for fun, who extort the surf brands and magazines for hundreds of thousands, in exchange for holding surf contests and allowing their sponsored surfers to safely surf there. He hears about Eddie Rothman, a mysterious spectre, who is only spoken about by the surfers in whispered tones and with a quick look over the shoulder. Chas follows this violent thread back to annexure of Hawaii by the US, to the death of Captain Cook, and then even further back to the debaucherous Polynesian customs and to the birth of Hawaii itself - a volcano which grew from the deep Pacific Ocean floor to create islands and the most powerful, beautiful and dangerous waves on the planet. Violence has always been a part of Hawaii. It never was the holiday Waikiki version sold to Americans as an escape from their endless emasculating taxes and bills.

Mick Fanning wins the title that year and, when Chas is introduced to him for the first time, a drunken Mick calls Chas a 'Fucking Jew'. Chas is thrown out of the party, narrowly escaping his long overdue beating. Driving away through the moonlit evening he is ecstatic. He can't wait to write about the incident. THIS is the article which will make him famous!

The story is a huge hit and the controversy reaches the global mainstream media. Mick has to publicly apologise to the Jewish community and all the surf brands remove their advertising from Derek's magazine. Derek refuses to fire Chas, but they have stopped laughing and the work and money dries up.

Chas is back in LA again, his unshakeable ego shaken, when Eddie Rothman, who is actually a Jew from Philadelphia, rings to tell him that he 'slapped' Mick for him. Chas can't believe it! He saves Eddie's number in his phone so he can show it off to other surfers and, re-inspired, decides to go back to Hawaii to write a book about the violence and corruption at the heart of surfing.

Exactly as he lands in Hawaii, Eddie enters the house of multi-millionaire surf executive Graham Stapelburg and beats him, and the whole house, up. True to Chas's hypothesis, nobody reports anything. The next day is Pipeline. The ground-shaking waves thunder onto the beach as Chas hears the rumours and instantly knows he has his hook. He can't find Graham but visits Eddie, who tells him the story; about his troubled upbringing, life as an international standover man and debt collector, how he beat the FBI, and why they started the feared Hawaiian 'Black Shorts'. How did a Jew from Philadelphia become part of the Hawaiian crew? *"I don't talk good like dem, so dey thought I was one of dem."*

Chas is ecstatic again. Like Captain Willard in **Apocalypse Now** he has journeyed into the heart of darkness, but he still feels like he's missing something. He asks himself, What did Colonel Kurtz/Marlon Brando say? *"It's judgement that defeats us"*. Chas realises his addiction to glamour is holding him back somehow. Maybe he is wrong and the North Shore is a paradise, just a paradise with a good crack in the head as part of it? He's not so sure, but knows he has to go back again.

It's evening when Chas returns to Pipeline to interview another feared and muscled leader in the Black Shorts, Kaiborg. Kaiborg is a giant brick of a man, but explains to Chas that he's just trying to be a little more friendly, to be a good role model for the kids. *"We didn't have homes and parents to show us how to live, we only had the waves and had to create our own family"*. Chas is humbled. He did have it all wrong. As he watches the sun set over the giant Pipeline waves he begins to think that here, the North Shore of Hawaii, was the place he'd been looking for all along.

He returns to that night's 'Local Hawaiians' party and instantly realises that he doesn't belong here at all. What was he thinking? If he stays he'll probably get beaten up and can write another hit story, but he isn't a fabulous war journalist or famous writer, he's a surf journalist. Chas slips away, as night falls over the thundering Pipeline waves.

### **Real Life Montage.**

Real Chas' book is well received. He and Derek have started their own surf magazine called BeachGrit. They write comedic shit-stirring articles about COVID and the latest World Surfing League debacles. He has married a rich woman and never needs to work again.