



Raise My Ebenezer

Richard Gerald Shrubbs

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In the psychological novel Raise My Ebenezer, a troubled man is spurred to act against the crooked power dynamics in sex, wealth, and politics.

In Richard Gerald Shrubbs's psychological novel *Raise My Ebenezer*, a man toils for justice while reckoning with violence, sexuality, and his personal beliefs.

In a Louisiana restaurant, Anthony, who was once a professional hitman, witnesses his waitress being attacked by a man in the parking lot. Anthony leaps into action, subduing the man until the police arrive. He's arrested himself and is tried for assault. He's assigned a therapist who is supposed to help him curb his emotional outbursts.

Written in the form of Anthony's therapy diary, the book covers his social upbringing in Ohio, which influenced his actions and values surrounding women. He writes that his large physical build and toxic family life made him feel singled out and attacked, and recalls how his father had an affair with his eighth grade teacher that affected his education and home life. But he also expresses fascination with women's genitals and sexuality, discussing how a stack of pornographic magazines that he encountered while young left him feeling allured by the subjects' confidence.

These themes dominate the entries, which also cover a string of girlfriends and women companions, many of whom had survived sexual abuse. His conversations with them, and the drama of their relationships, result in a sense of fear and confusion. But Anthony doesn't grow far beyond typical codependency: he tends to view these women as symbols, rather than as individuals, and he compartmentalizes the motivations and desires of others to bolster his own drive for violent justice.

More compelling is the fact that the journal entries, which weave through various periods of Anthony's life and are made to relate to one another, are framed by quotes from Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*; and the fact that Anthony adopts a psychoanalytical approach to discussing his experiences, as well as to discussing the personal beliefs that rose from them. Psychological epigrams are prevalent throughout—like the recurring idea that the higher the expectation, the more extreme the letdown will be.

The book becomes most about Anthony's understandings of human dynamics, which reflect both instability and empathy. He surveils others as well as himself, afraid that he could snap at any moment. He attributes his criminality to his sexual affairs and personal drive for justice; still, even in the midst of expressing his dedication to his goals, he acknowledges his feelings of terror over humanity's complexity. His explanations of his violent purposes come to seem intelligent.

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ALI ORTIZ (January 7, 2022)

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