

Hillbilly Elegy- JD Vance

“The coolest thing I’ve done, at least on paper, is graduate from Yale Law School...but about two hundred people do the same thing every year, and trust me, you don’t want to read about most of their lives... I wrote this book because I’ve achieved something quite ordinary, which doesn’t happen to most kids who grow up like me.”

“I always distinguished ‘my address’ from ‘my home’”

“When the driver—nicknamed Big Red because of his size and hair color—repeated the insult, Uncle Pet did what any rational business owner would do: he pulled the man from his truck, beat him unconscious, and ran and electric saw up and down his body. Big Red nearly bled to death but was rushed to the hospital and survived. Uncle Pet never went to jail, though. Apparently, Big Red was also an Appalachian man, and he refused to speak to the police about the incident or press charges. He knew what it meant to insult a man’s mother.”

“The only thing Bonnie South recalled was that, at some point in 1946, Papaw cheated on Bonnie with her best friend—Mamaw. Mamaw was thirteen and Papaw sixteen, but the affair produced a pregnancy. And that pregnancy added a number of pressures that made right now the time to leave Jackson\.”

“Without the baby, would she ever have left Jackson? Would she have run off with Jim Vance to foreign territory? Mamaw’s entire life—and the trajectory of our family- may have changed for a baby who lived only six days.”

“Mamaw and Papaw may have failed Bev in her youth. But they spent the rest of their lives making up for it.”

“By the sixth grade, we wanted to be veterinarians or doctors or preachers or businessmen. But not steelworkers...we never considered that we’d be lucky to land a job at Armco; we took Armco for granted.”

“Mom believed deeply in the promise of education. She was the salutatorian of her high school class but never made it to college because Lindsay was born weeks after Mom graduated from high school.”

““During one trip we went to the Castro District of San Francisco so that, in the words of my older cousin Rachael, I could learn that gay people werent out to molest me.”

“The moment I learned that ‘half sister’ had nothing to do with my affections and everything to do with the genetic nature of our relationship—that Lindsay, by virtue of having a different father, was just as much my half sister as people I’d never seen—remains one of the most devastating moments of my life.”

“To this day, being able to ‘take advantage; of someone is the measure in my mind of having a parent.”

“Drug addiction was a disease, and just as I wouldn’t judge a cancer patient for a tumor, so I shouldn’t judge a narcotics addict for her behavior. At thirteen, I found this patently absurd, and Mom and I often argued over whether her newfound wisdom was scientific truth or an excuse for people whose decisions destroyed a family.”

“Her life was a clinic in how to lose faith in people, but Mamaw always found a way to believe in the people she loved.”

“vibrant but fragile.”

““learned helplessness; when a person believes, as I did during my youth, that the choices I made had no effect on the outcomes in my life.”

“After one year and eleven months at Ohio State, I graduated with a double major, summa cum laude.”

“I ordered a chardonnay, not because I didn’t know what sauvignon blanc was (though I didn’t) but because it was easier to pronounce.”

“In the eyes of the law, my grandmother was an untrained caretaker without a foster license.”