

# I was born James Theodore Parkin

(Preamble) – So we were doing some renovations at home and I found this sheaf of papers in a little safe in the wall? Didn't realise it was there... Anyway, see what you think. It's... er... just a little bit too on the nose for my liking...

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My father once said that newspapers are there to sell newspapers, not to report the news. And what sells? Fear. Don't travel, that country's dangerous. Don't go outside, you may get sunburnt, or cancer, or lynched. Don't feel happy, because that always precedes something awful happening. Fear and powerlessness. It's a choice.

My father also once said, "Blessed are the storytellers, for they shall create reality." Well, it's true, isn't it? Storytellers are the most powerful people in this reality.

This is my story

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. I attended the prestigious Edinburgh Academy: with its Doric frontage, quaint customs and endemic bullying, joining the ranks of 'Accies' or Academicals – the old boys – alongside such luminaries as RM Ballantyne, Magnus Magnusson and Robert Louis Stevenson. From there, to St John's College, Oxford reading Law. A job in politics was available, had I wanted it then, but I felt called to the bar and became a lawyer.

By the time it all ended, I'd had a good career. I was eloquent, tenacious and fought for the rights of people like me against those who would take them away. I watched the disturbances unfold with a sense of shock: I'd had no idea that such things were possible in this day and age, and when the news came that nuclear war had started, even after the pandemic and everything else, I was horrified. The Labour government in England, brought in on a wave of hope after 14 years of Tory rule - only to continue with more of the same, pulled up all the ladders once the food riots began, leaving me and my family to be robbed, beaten and strung up as 'facilitators of hatred'. I looked into my wife's eyes as the life drained from mine.

Strange how when we do what society says is good – to have a good job, a loving wife, children, a mortgage – all of it meant nothing in the end. I just did as I was told, I followed the rules and kept going – until everything that we called society crumbled.

And that's something important really – society is something we all agree on. It's a fiction designed to make sure everything keeps moving, stays somewhat together. Reality is just what we all judge to be there, what we pass on to our children. Is it actually what's real? No. Especially when what I thought to be life restarted.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. In my childhood I had glimpses of a former life, a life where I'd done the right thing, through the bullying, the weight of parental expectation and society's norms. At the age of six I woke my parents up, having had a nightmare about being lynched whilst rioters brayed around me in an apocalyptic wasteland. The nightmare persisted past the point of being taken to a therapist, and ended with me spending time in an institution, hidden away from polite society. They called it boarding school – I called it St Philip's, a home for disturbed youngsters. I was there for five years.

At the age of eleven I returned to Scotland to take a place at the Edinburgh Academy, my family convinced that all was well. My time 'away' had not given me a great grounding in Latin, mathematics and debating, but I was able to read and write to a level where the school could be paid enough to let me in. When I stood up to the bullies who were calling me a 'deranged freak' by breaking their jaws, I was then sent to a different school for boarders. In Singapore.

The time away from the stuffy confines of familial life worked wonders, and I got to see life from an Eastern perspective, rather than solely fed by media billionaires. The internet over there was light years ahead of what we had at home, and once I turned 18 I travelled across East Asia. By that point I'd learnt enough that I could see the dreams for what they were – a tangent from my life, another version of me, another story with different parameters.

I spent time in India, relaxing in the Lake City of Udaipur, I crossed into Nepal, climbed Everest, ventured to Tibet before the borders became more hostile to foreigners. As tensions began to rise again in the West, I watched as China became more paranoid towards Taiwan, and I saw the South China Sea become a flashpoint for violence. As North Korea bunkered down for a missile-slinging contest with Japan and America, I realised that I had seen some of this before. My dreams had prophesied this, and the coming nuclear holocaust. They were right. The bombs came again, and my vantage point from Taiwan was a flashpoint between the two superpowers of East and West.

I died, in a cruel twist of irony, in the arms of a policeman in 2/28 Memorial Park in Taipei. A park to commemorate a brutal governmental police crackdown on protestors in 1947.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. As a child, I had the nightmares, but also the knowledge that this was somehow normal. There were no nightly screaming fits – beyond what can be considered normal for children. I attended the prestigious Edinburgh Academy, excelling in all my subjects due to the two lifetimes of accrued knowledge that were seeping back to my conscious mind. My last life left me with a knowledge of Cantonese, Mandarin and Taiwanese, and I built on these by studying them in my spare time as a teenager.

Accepted to Cambridge at the age of fifteen, I matriculated in the autumn of 2000 at Peterhouse College, reading PPE – Philosophy, Politics and Economics, the standard degree for anyone who wants to get into government.

The idea of a fifteen-year-old at university may well seem utterly bizarre, but my peers could be convinced that I was old beyond my years. In some ways, this was not a bonus – some people indulged in the reverse snobbery of a spotty teenager being able to converse in 6 languages with a knowledge of the world that far surpassed them, but after a short while I learnt when to keep my mouth shut.

Whilst at university I spoke to the right people and by 2005, found myself as special adviser to one of the new crop of Conservative MPs representing a prominent southern constituency. I worked my way up, I campaigned vociferously to Remain in the European Union to try and change the outcome of the referendum, but no dice. I was reshuffled, demoted and cast out, serving my remaining time on the earth trying to find the right ears to shout into that the world was about to end. The Brexit talks collapsed as they had done two lifetimes previously, illness swept the world and I was again lynched by rioters as the bombs fell again, hanged as a traitor to the common folk. The slogans etched into my body, the spitting of the phrase, "All in it together" – all left an indelible stain on my psyche.

I had lived three lives, died three deaths and hoped to whatever deity might be listening that I wouldn't have to do it again. You can imagine my frustration when the wheel turned a fourth time.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. This time the memories reformed much earlier, and my consciousness resurfaced whilst still a baby. My frustration compounded when faced with a small body that didn't do what I wanted it to, and the demeaning feeling of having my nappy changed for me was almost unbearable. I had lived over a century by this point, and I was stuck inside a cage being gurgled at.

I knew that cot death was a possibility, and worked out how to do it by turning over to sleep on my stomach, and lifting my head enough to drop it into the bars of my cot. It worked, and death came swiftly.

I didn't wake up, so much as rediscover consciousness, only to find myself in blackness. At first the cool emptiness was a balm to my soul, but as I rested, alone and trapped, I think I may have gone slightly mad. My internal senses of time marked minutes, hours, then days, all the while in a haze of senselessness. Months became years, and I slowly but surely came around to the idea of using my state as a form of sleep to reorder my first three lifetimes' worth of experience and plan my next one – if, indeed, there was another one.

More years passed, and I cursed every single one of them. I could put up with the indignity of nappies being changed if it would mean that I stayed alive. I evidently wasn't meant to leave life any sooner than my allotted time. I laughed, I cried, I railed, cursed and broke down in ecstasy. I plotted soberly, meditated and waited. Forty-one years I waited. Forty-one years, until my time should have been up, and then, with the glacial movement of time the tunnel of light appeared, and I found myself back in the world again.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. I drank in the colours, the smells, the bright lights, and I laughed internally for the sheer joy of the senses. As the umbilical was cut, I felt a freedom that I had not felt before. Suddenly my life was my own, despite having to get through the ignominy of being a baby again. I didn't care. I was alive.

This time round, the cot couldn't hold me. When I was 4 I convinced my parents to take us to the Vancouver Olympics – you won't get very far in politics without being able to make people think that your ideas are theirs – and then we took a trip across the border to Seattle to visit family. Travelling within North America was much easier in the 80s, and I was waved through on my mother's passport. Thankfully, guns are so much more accessible in the States, and you only need to look at the headlines to know that toddlers can get their hands on firearms far too easily. My parents became statistics, and I was finally free. I faked an accent, used my knowledge to be in the right places at the right times, and eventually as the years passed found my way to California and got a job at Apple within the design team, again trying to leave a trail of crumbs to warn anyone of the impending disaster.

Of course, I didn't just work there – I was independently wealthy, I wrote articles under a pseudonym, stories and so forth. I travelled the world learning about the places that I remembered as being flashpoints. I studied human events so that I could remember them in case I had to live through them all again. As the time came round for the bombs to drop I used my wealth to build a shelter in New Zealand and simply to hide away. I'd done enough for humanity, hadn't I? I had tried.

As the bombs hit, and the world groaned, I suffered a fatal heart attack, feeling the crushing of my chest, and my hopes. Maybe I wasn't meant to try to save humanity. It wouldn't surprise me if that were the case. But that time I felt like I'd almost made it, so I decided that if I were to be reset I would find my way to America in much the same way, then get into government instead. If I couldn't stop the horror from without, maybe I would be able to from within.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. Once in America with parents duly despatched, I took to finding an identity, then being taken in by a refuge. To them, I became William Marconi from Hoboken, New Jersey, fleeing abusive relatives, hence ending up in Seattle. I was fostered by a lovely couple in Tacoma, WA, who sent me through grade school and then to college. I studied law, and then joined the Democrats. Duly elected and working with the Obama administrations, I worked within international law to try to diffuse tensions and stop issues before they became flashpoints. I worked for peace, and worked damned hard.

This time I felt I had actually achieved something, changed the course of human history by stopping conflicts across the globe. Syria and Libya were no longer as much of an issue, and my fluency in Asian languages meant I was an effective diplomat for the Chinese government. But, of course, when the new administration came into power in 2017, I found myself secretly arrested as 'a Chinese spy' on a trip back to the States. I languished for several years in a military jail in Virginia, kicking myself for keeping my eyes abroad and not on the domestic situation. I missed the crucial bits of inequality, greed and discontent that fostered hatred at home. China continually asked where its envoy had gone but eventually they stopped. My work was undone. The bombs came again.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984, again, and again, and again. I have been many things: actor, artist, diplomat, creative, artisan... I have watched humanity grow and stagnate in its distractions: its phones, fakery and celebrity 'culture'. I have journeyed across the world and within myself. This literary journey has been a wonderfully cathartic recapitulation in itself, and has prepared me for what comes next. Humanity has run its course, and I am positioned perfectly to make sure I reap the peace I deserve.

So use your last few months wisely, humanity. Society has nothing to offer you save the slavery of consumerism, the attention-sapping of mindless games and the energetic wasteland of playing one side against the other.

I was born James Theodore Parkin, just outside Edinburgh on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1984. And next year, I shall bring about the destruction of humanity, and then my heart will sing.