

CHAPTER 12

A Domestic Extremist's Origin Story

*How I Became a Domestic Extremist: Slowly,
Then All at Once*

*Those who leave the tradition of truth do not escape into
something which we call Freedom. They only escape into
something else, which we call Fashion.*

— G. K. Chesterton

Domestic Extremists Are Made, Not Born

You think I just woke up like this? Please. It took me many years to chew my way out of the web of lies smart, well-intentioned young women get caught in. We are raised blind, in the dark, and must feel our way out of the woods without even a trail of breadcrumbs to lead us.

Witches and wolves abound. Many end up in their cauldrons and ravenous clutches.

Some of us might be able to retrace an ancient pathway, or locate the faint traces of old ways, or retain faint memories of a long-dead ancestor's teachings. Some may already know how to follow the right sounds, understand which way shadows fall in the woods at twilight, trace the right tracks, and finally escape to a clearing, hungry and

tired, where they glimpse the glowing hearths of a village off in the distance.

These days, most of us will spend our lives in these dark woods. Most of my former peers are there now, only they don't know it. Lost souls. They were born in the woods and will die there, as will any children that manage to survive the ejection seat installed inside their mothers' wombs. They will never know there is a better world—a world that is invisible to them. They've heard it's a bad place, filled with bad people and dangerous ideas.

Of course, you can't see mental freedom. It has no borders, fences, or visible markers of any kind. It only exists in the hearts and minds of those who have tasted it and made it their elixir of choice.

Sometimes the people stuck in the dark woods encounter one of these free men and women. They cautiously approach like one does a wild animal. "How can you live like that," they hiss, "in your terrible minivan and with those terrible mewling children, the ones who demand hugs at inconvenient moments and smear their peanut-butter-covered cheeks onto freshly washed pants?"

They run away, frightened but smug in their decision to only have as many children as can fit into the back seat of a Tesla Model 3.

So how did I find a way out? It was something of a miracle, frankly. I grew up in a secular, atheist household. I attended a progressive private school and a liberal arts university. My parents, however, were mainstream Reagan Republicans. *National Review* subscribers. Normiecons in every way. My mother was a classic boomer housewife and a traditional, feminine lady. She cooked every meal, took care of the kids, drove all the carpools, brushed all the tangles, made our Halloween costumes, and kept meticulous family tree records. She was also a staunch anti-feminist. She thought those hippie broads were nuts. She would tell me stories about going to "consciousness raising"

get-togethers with her friends in the 1970s and getting shamed for choosing to stay home with her babies.

As a girl, I had all the basic ingredients to set me up for success, like a good maternal role model and a general sense of American patriotism and all that that entailed. But as a secular atheist, like most of the other moms in our leafy suburban neighborhood, it simply didn't occur to my mother to sit me down and fill me in on the fine print, like Judeo-Christian morality.

After all, her immigrant ancestors had left their various religions back in the old country, and that's where they'd stayed.

My childhood is proof that raising children illustrates British historian Robert Conquest's second law of politics: "Any organization not explicitly right-wing sooner or later becomes left-wing."¹

This applies to families, too. Feminism, like nature, abhors a vacuum. If you forget or neglect to give a kid proper moral guidelines, bad ideas will fill the void. A child not taught the good rules will soon decide that he or she can make up the rules.

By the time I graduated from college, I was a full-blown feminist and a half-baked liberal. In other words, I knew nothing. For example, I believed abortion was always a woman's choice to make, and that only nerds would wait until marriage. I remember telling my mother that if my younger sister ever got pregnant, I would take her to get an abortion and never tell my mom.

Fortunately, my sister was a nerd, so I was off the hook.

I'm not ashamed to admit this. What did I know? What other message could I possibly have absorbed? I was a victim of omnipresent feminist brainwashing. Abortion was no big deal—*Mademoiselle* and *Newsweek* and my college roommates and the TV all told me so.

When I made my case about abortion to my mother, she surprised me by angrily snapping that under no circumstances would any of us get an abortion and she would happily raise her grandchildren for us.

It was the first time I can remember hearing her opinion on abortion. She was aces at cooking, homemaking, and lavishing us with affection. We came first and we knew it. But as a self-described devout atheist, she didn't provide any specific guidance about how to have a good life. Her natural identity was as a trad, but almost by accident. She somehow lived according to a strict set of traditional values (and still does), but it was tempered with the comfortable lifestyle of a highly educated member of the secular Southern California coastal bourgeoisie. I don't blame her; nobody's perfect.

Including me.

Raised by Wolves

Generation X remains the most together and stable of the post-boomer generations. We managed to put together lives that pretty much resemble our parents', only with smaller houses and a lot less dough. Until college, the only electronic gadgets we had access to were landline phones and VCRs. But despite our blissful lack of social media, we had our own issues. Baby boomers were the first wave of American parents who thought it would be cool to take their hands off the parental steering wheel. The repercussions were immediate.

I was lucky to have had a present and loving mother, but my father was a workaholic professional who had mostly checked out by the time I was twelve. My childhood was notable for his frequent absences. Without any rules in my life or a strong father figure, pop culture and media filled the gaps. Director John Hughes and late-night TV host David Letterman became my real dads.

I don't think I even met a devout member of any religion during my childhood; "religion" simply didn't exist in my world. Every bat mitzvah

and WASP cotillion I attended was an ocean of secular atheists. Over time, like an anchor collecting rust, I collected every bad mainstream feminist rule of living. This received wisdom was uncontested; you didn't even think about it. You simply believed.

My peers and I had also grossly misunderstood the Thoreau we read and internalized in tenth-grade English class. When Thoreau wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life,"² we took this as a call to arms. We were going to the woods, too!

Instead of the woods, however (ew, bugs), we went to the clubs, the frat parties, and the big cities. We got fake IDs. We were going to live *deep*. That was our transcendentalism: to transcend the "boredom" of normal suburban childhood into rollicking young adulthoods.

Which meant that from age sixteen and up, my secular, "sophisticated," "educated" friends and I ran a terrifying gauntlet while our clueless, divorced parents left us completely alone. We had a lot of fun, yes, but all around me, people were getting hit with cultural shrapnel, their psyches shredded, medics chopping in to rescue them from themselves. Friends endured addiction, near-fatal ODs, date rape, repeated heartbreak, and attempted suicide. My younger siblings lost a handful of their classmates to fatal overdoses and actual suicides. I'm sure many people who have gone to progressive private schools—or any secular schools, for that matter—have similar stories. It was like the HBO show *Euphoria*, only without the cell phones.

No adults seemed to notice we were going a little wild. We whined about it less, I guess. Who would we have whined to? We didn't have the Internet or social media, and our parents were none the wiser. We just shrugged and shook it off—at the time, we thought we were cool.

Anyway, our grandparents had to deal with World War II. Who were we to complain?

What my generation of friends and the *Euphoria* generation have in common seems to be the total absence of any moral or religious underpinning. It's one of the reasons I was happy to raise my children as religious fundamentalists; how else to stave off the carnival of horrors ready to swamp them the moment they get a driver's license? I know what awaits young teenagers armed with nothing but their curiosity, their car keys, and their hormones. You can't keep them down on the farm once they've seen Karl Hungus; therefore, you must do all you can to keep them as far as possible from Karl Hungus and the nihilists.³

And yet, despite the decadent behavior around me during my college and post-college years, I never dove all the way to the bottom of the keg.

How did I dodge the cultural grenades long enough to become the domestic extremist I am today? After all, I listened to the same albums, read the same books, saw the same movies, went to the same parties, and survived the same boomer-parent divorce. Why was I relatively unscathed? (Or . . . am I?)

I attribute my ability to evade permanent disaster to the fact that I was raised by a proto-anti-feminist. Maybe the early, limited indoctrination I received from my mother proved to be just enough of a force field to offer me some protection.

Or maybe it's because I witnessed the toll that the Planned Parenthood industry took on young women I knew, tearing open unhealable wounds. It was a stark warning to young Peachy. An abortion? To paraphrase *When Harry Met Sally*, I *won't* have what she's having.

And so it came to pass that in the absence of any counter-liturgy, the Generation X female was forced to construct her own. Our liturgy did not allow for any reflection on future family creation. Are you kidding? Our first commandment was: thou shalt always be raging. As

sophisticated college graduates, our plan was to enjoy life, work at some fake job, and then one day, inevitably, settle down.

The idea of finding a husband in our twenties was ridiculous to us. Sure, that was something we'd eventually track down, but there was no rush. Why bother with marriage when we were in our partying prime? Sometime around age thirty—when we got bored and started looking slightly less youthful—each of us would effortlessly conjure the perfect man for ourselves and live happily ever after. It was not something we worried about, ever.

Children, like the concept of a husband, remained a hazy mirage in my mind. I had nothing against kids, but no overwhelming maternal urge. Babies were foreigners, and I didn't speak their language. I had no young cousins and no family members with small children, so babies were scarce in my daily life.

Sometime down the road, I assumed offspring would simply materialize—sailing out of the clouds carried by a flock of storks—so why bother thinking about it? The main thing was to avoid children, at all costs—especially our own. And then, one day, everything would just magically fall into place at exactly the moment we wished.

Spoiler alert: our dumb plan worked. Most of my childhood friends got married right on schedule (i.e., right after turning thirty), had children, and remain married to this day.

Maybe our youthful excesses didn't ruin our chances at happiness because we were the last generation that still grasped the value of getting married *before* having kids. We were the last generation able to put together fairly normal adulthoods, even though we delayed it a few years too long.

The girls I went to college with made it through, too, for the most part. They are perfectly progressive liberals raising perfectly progressive children. Their youthful libertinism has evolved into magic mushroom microdosing parties for moms who could step smartly into *The Real*

Housewives of Beverly Hills. Their children go to expensive schools where kindergarteners announce their pronouns when they address their class; they're put on the pill the day they get their periods, no matter what gender they are.

These are your elite, America.

Nothing changes.

Not having access to dating apps, of course, was our superpower. We were the last generation forced to meet our spouses in meatspace.

Stranger in a Strange World

Cut to: me in my mid-twenties, single, miserable, living in a rotten apartment I hated and working for a string of overfunded, under-managed chaotic Silicon Valley media startups during the Dot Com boom. My jobs usually consisted of not offending the fabulously wealthy A-list actors who had sunk millions into the ventures and who would occasionally drop by to oversee us peasants for a few minutes. It sounds a lot more fun than it was.

I was in a rut, personally and professionally. All my good friends had moved to Manhattan, and they begged me to move across the country to join them.

I wanted a way out. I needed a change.

Then one day, fate took a hand—in the unlikely form of Osama bin Laden.

The TV show I had been working on abruptly got cancelled by the network as a direct result of 9/11. The entire creative team was laid off—with severance. The A-listers slunk back to their enclaves in the Hollywood Hills and their inpatient rehabs.

Severance check in hand, I did what any normal Generation X American female my age would do: move immediately to New York. Ground Zero was still a smoking pit of rubble, but that would not deter me.

This was during the peak era of the original *Sex and the City* television show, the most destructive—and wildly entertaining—social engineering propaganda ever created for impressionable young women. The streets of Manhattan were paved with Manolos and broken hearts! You get to live alone in the same walk-up apartment for years, crying over infinite breakups, having brunch with friends, while barely doing any real work!

Sounds good, we said. Where do we sign up?

When I told my mother my plans, she was thrilled. “It’ll be just like *Sex and the City*!” she declared. Verbatim quote.

And oh, it almost was. I enjoyed nearly a full week of the carefree Manhattan single-girl life.

Then, plot twist: I met my future husband.

By this point, I was ripe for radicalization. Just months earlier, I had been politically radicalized (thanks again, Osama!). As of dinner-time on September 11, 2001, I had shed my libertarian-ish political apathy and become a newly minted neocon. Many such cases! Still, it’s shameful to admit now. My Reagan Republican parents were relieved I had finally come around to their political ideology, as if by magic. All it took was a massive terrorist attack, four crashed passenger jets, the sight of office workers leaping to their deaths to escape an inferno, and the collapse of two one-hundred-story office buildings full of secretaries and heroic young firefighters to wake me up from my post-war Gen X slumber.

The final turning point came when I watched, live on CNN, a giant mob of proto-Antifa NYU students holding sit-ins and ranting against America in Union Square, just a few subway stops from Ground Zero, that very night. I was shocked to discover that the epicenter of the terrorist attack was also the epicenter of virulent anti-Americanism.

Despite my newfound partial political turn to the right, I clung bitterly to my no-guns, no-religion, pro-choice beliefs. Then, on my third date with the future Mr. Keenan, we got into a heated debate . . . about abortion. Like me, he had been raised by secular conservatives but formed by mainstream liberal culture. He, too, had been a liberal Democrat until his own recent conversion.

He told me he used to be pro-choice until a Christian friend in grad school talked him out of it. I scoffed and thought, “Well, that’s it, I can’t date this pro-life fanatic. What will my girlfriends say?”

He presented this hypothetical. “A young couple gets pregnant after years of trying. They decorate the nursery, plan a baby shower. Then a mugger kicks the woman in the stomach while stealing her purse and she miscarries. Should he receive an elevated charge beyond theft?”

“Well, sure.”

“But she could have walked into a clinic and legally had an abortion. Why is what the mugger did any different?”

I was forced to resort to arguing that it was about “the mother’s intent. She’s the only one allowed to . . .”

“To do what?” Backed into a corner, for a few desperate minutes I tried to argue that yes, abortion does, in fact, mean that you kill a baby, but hey, the mother’s intent is all that matters. Women’s rights . . . to, you know, kill!

I knew that if I budged from my precarious position on this moral precipice, I would be forced to rethink my entire lifestyle, everything my peers and I had believed for years, as not only wrong and misguided but willfully negligent and cold-blooded. Life would not remain a series of social events and parties that led nowhere. There might be real consequences to our actions. The stakes of our “choices” might be actual life and death.

I maintained my flimsy position as long as I could, but it couldn’t hold the weight of my threadbare logic, and down it crashed. The

feminism fell from my eyes, and I looked around, blinking in the bright sunlight. “Hey, where did this road to Damascus come from? I thought we were in the East Village!”

And just like that, as Carrie Bradshaw might have said if Aiden had successfully persuaded her to be a cabin-dwelling tradwife, I had found my way out of the darkness.

Defense of abortion is the last and most difficult barnacle to pry off a feminist, but this unusual new boyfriend had succeeded. I suddenly discovered that there is something very *attractive* about a man who wants to convince a young woman that babies—*her* future babies, perhaps even babies he wants to have *with* her—are precious and must be protected. It was a display of confident masculine energy I had rarely encountered among the skinny-jeans hipsters, waxed metrosexuals, and louche Ivy League grads I was used to dealing with.

This man wanted to protect children . . . *my* children . . . *our* children. Swoon!

Forget Mr. Big: here was my Mr. (Far) Right.

A man willing to risk his new chick walking out the door because he defended a child's right to live is a man who will defend his own child. By the time we got married the following year, I was already dabbling in domestic extremism and planning to have children as soon as we could.

These days, I don't understand how any woman could be attracted to a man who doesn't defend a baby's right to live. It was my husband's secret trick to getting my attention—and me. (It also helped that he was handsome and funny.) He'd cracked the code!

Postscript: My grandparents met while both served abroad during World War II; I met my husband thanks to 9/11. I sometimes remind my kids, “The only reason you're alive is because of Hitler and Osama.”

Hey, always look on the bright side of life!

Men: You Can Fix Her

See how easy it was for my future husband to “red pill” me, in the parlance of our times? Gents, if she likes the cut of your jib, she will at least hear you out. Fellas, if she is into you, she won’t run at the first sign of your own extremely domestic impulses. Besides, red pills go down much better when treated as aphrodisiacs. They are a magical elixir of romance! Many a progressive damsel who feels “oppressed” has been shown the light by the right man, and the right persuasion. It worked for me!

The pro-life man who wants to date you has an enormous advantage over other men: he is telling you, “If I get you pregnant, I would be a father to your child.” If Timothée Chalamet (I’m guessing he’s their type, but feel free to insert Pete Davidson into this hypothetical if you prefer; lots of women seem to not mind inserting him into *their* hypotheticals) walked up to one of the lumpy, shrieking fiends at the pro-abortion march and said, “Hey, beautiful, I want to have a baby with you,” chances are she’d toss her protest sign and her diaphragm into the nearest recycling bin and run off with him.

Here are some easy conversation starters for men trying to woo woke women: “I take care of my body, and I can tell that you do, too.” “Your name is [her name]? That’s really pretty. I want to name my firstborn daughter that.” “No, I don’t use dating apps. Never had to.” Drop subtle hints that you’re not like other guys—you know, like their male feminist allies who rely on high-dose intravenous Viagra when it’s their turn in the nonbinary polyamory house to service one of the housemates with a front hole.

Try it! Locate a fresh-faced lass who looks like she still identifies as female and has most of her original body parts intact. You might find her gawking at a campus Slutwalk, or parading in the nearest Women’s March, or at a Lizzo concert. Approach her. Compliment her. Woo her.

If enough good guys deprogrammed enough fertile young feminists, I wouldn't have had to write this book. Would have saved me a lot of trouble, believe me.

Achieving My Final Form

It took a first pregnancy to transform me into my final domestically extreme form. At just seven weeks gestation, I was stunned to hear the galloping hooves of a tiny heart beating in the obstetrician's office. The little peanut on the ultrasound machine bounced and wriggled. Where was the "clump of cells" I'd been told about for years? How could a clump of cells have little arms and little legs and a heart—that beats!? What sorcery was this?

According to feminist hero Stacey Abrams, the "heartbeat" I heard was fake, a manufactured sound that was part of a hoax my evil doctor orchestrated to trick me into thinking the fetus was alive.⁴

By my 12-week ultrasound, we had a name picked out, and I'd started a baby scrapbook, filling it with every single one of the grainy black-and-white shots of the peanut. It was like being in a dream. Both of the peanut's grandmothers were already knitting outfits for what would be the first grandchild in the family.

The doctor fiddled with the knobs on the ultrasound machine. We waited to hear the now-familiar galloping hooves. I looked at my peanut, who had doubled in size since the last visit. I suddenly noticed its little heart was not pulsing like it did at all the earlier ultrasounds. Where were the galloping hooves?

The doctor kept fiddling with the knobs, but only tense silence filled the room.

Then I saw his face, and I knew it was over.

None of my friends had kids yet. No one had warned me this could happen. I was only on Chapter 1 of *What to Expect When You're Expecting*! I barely knew what a miscarriage was.

But I found out what it felt like on that ultrasound table. It feels exactly like getting a sledgehammer to the head. With dawning horror, I realized someone was going to have to get the dead peanut out. In total shock, I asked the doctor if I had to have an abortion . . . of my dead baby.

“We call it ‘dilation and extraction,’” he explained.

They don’t talk about that in Chapter 1 of *What to Expect When You’re Expecting*, either.

Endgame

A few months after the miscarriage, I got lucky, literally and figuratively. This time the kid stuck, and we finally became parents. It was my first close encounter with a newborn since my little sister had been born decades earlier. No one had told me how magical newborns are—especially your own. Why had this been kept secret from me? I was instantly hooked.

We soon had three children, all under three years old. Three kids in diapers, folks. I (fortunately) don’t remember much from this era, which is why, after a short break, we kept going and had even more of them, eventually requiring a car with three rows of car seats.

After baby number four, I finally converted to Catholicism. My husband, a fallen away Catholic, had gone back to the Church after the miscarriage. I waited a bit, but I eventually found my way there. I would have done it earlier if I’d been able to find matching shoes.

I admit that one of the reasons I was open to becoming Catholic after decades of bleak secular nothingness was my desire to rebel against the pushback I kept getting for daring to procreate. “Oh, you think I’m bad for having all these kids? That’s nothing—just wait until I am a religious fundamentalist. You mad?”

With just three measly kids, I had already become the target of eye-rolling and public shaming for my unfashionable fecundity—at preschool pickup, at the store, in the mall, at kids' birthday parties—how dare I have more than two! Didn't I know the *rules*? Such is life in a deep-blue suburb. It's hard to lay low when the shameful evidence of your right-wing extremism is sitting smack in the grocery cart, staring at the other customers and drooling.

But as a Catholic, I could finally lean into my full rejection of anti-natalist social pressure. “Why yes, I am a fringe weirdo, now leave me alone and go feed your cat before you get a contact pregnancy from my powerfully fecund aura.” Freedom, at last, was at hand.

A few years ago, I realized with shock and deep regret that I might have been able to request the remains of my tiny first child. I have Catholic friends who have had funerals for babies they miscarried at five or six months. One family I know requested the fallopian tube containing an ectopic pregnancy so they could baptize it.

But in my early non-religious days, I didn't know any of that stuff. None of it was explained or offered by the doctors, and I didn't think to ask. Request a medical waste bag containing bloody bits and pieces of whatever had been “extracted”?

That had *not* occurred to us, Dude.

I have since prayed for forgiveness for leaving the remains to be crudely disposed of and incinerated with the rest of the medical waste. Once I converted to Catholicism, it occurred to me that maybe I would actually meet this vanished child one day, in the beyond. After all, she or he had existed. That tiny heart had beat for three months. One day, will I get to solve the great mystery of whether it was a boy or a girl?

We foolishly named her when we found out I was pregnant, certain she was a girl. Will I greet her by name when we meet?

This kind of weird theological thinking gets you in big trouble. No wonder secular atheists can't spend too much time debating these issues

rationally. Because if you believe in heaven, and that souls are formed at the moment of conception, and that innocent children who die become saints, then all aborted children must go to heaven, too.

Where do the souls of the mothers who killed them go? Is heaven filled with millions of orphans? Fifty million children a year are aborted worldwide. Oh dear.

And that, kids, is how your mother became a domestic extremist.