



A Bum Deal: An Unlikely Journey from Hopeless to Humanitarian

Rufus Hannah, Barry Soper

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I was supposed to give a speech when I got the award, but I had no idea what to say. Given what my life had been like in recent years, I felt as if this were some kind of bad dream. I thought about being born in a small southern town, beginning my life by drinking beer from a baby bottle, getting kicked out of school, the whole army disaster, the crazy van trip out west, train jumping-and then, all those years I spent as a homeless drunk.

And, of course, the Bumfights-when I risked life and limb for booze while some kids filmed the whole damn thing. Looking at all this on paper, I wondered how any man could have survived.

And I noticed my hands. Even after a number of painful and expensive laser treatments the letters were still there, tattooed across my knuckles: B-U-M-F-I-G-H-T. I thought about the damage these hands had done-to me, and even worse, to my best friend...

The last thing Rufus Hannah expected the morning he climbed into an alley Dumpster was to have his life completely changed. It was the last thing Barry Soper expected either, when he spotted a homeless man sifting through the trash outside his apartment complex. But in that moment they'd join on a path of triumph and defeat, despair and salvation.

Rufus Hannah is regrettably known to millions around the world as "Rufus the Stunt Bum" because of his participation in the infamous Bumfights-an underground video series in which homeless men were given booze and cash to fight or do bone-shattering stunts. But his story doesn't begin or end where the videos do...it is a story of incredible pride and perseverance, and a recovery no one-least of all Rufus himself-could have imagined.

A Bum Deal is a story of our personal demons and a journey from the depths of despair to recovery and rebirth, and the ordinary man who risked everything to help this stranger survive against the most unimaginable cruelty.

Rufus Hannah is an advocate for the homeless, and currently an assistant manager of a townhome development. He was formerly featured in the infamous Bumfights videos.

Activist and businessman **Barry Soper** is chairman of the board of Oak Grove, a nonprofit educational and residential treatment center serving 160 children, ages five to eighteen. Soper has served on the board of St. Vincent DePaul Village, a key center for San Diego's large homeless population.

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