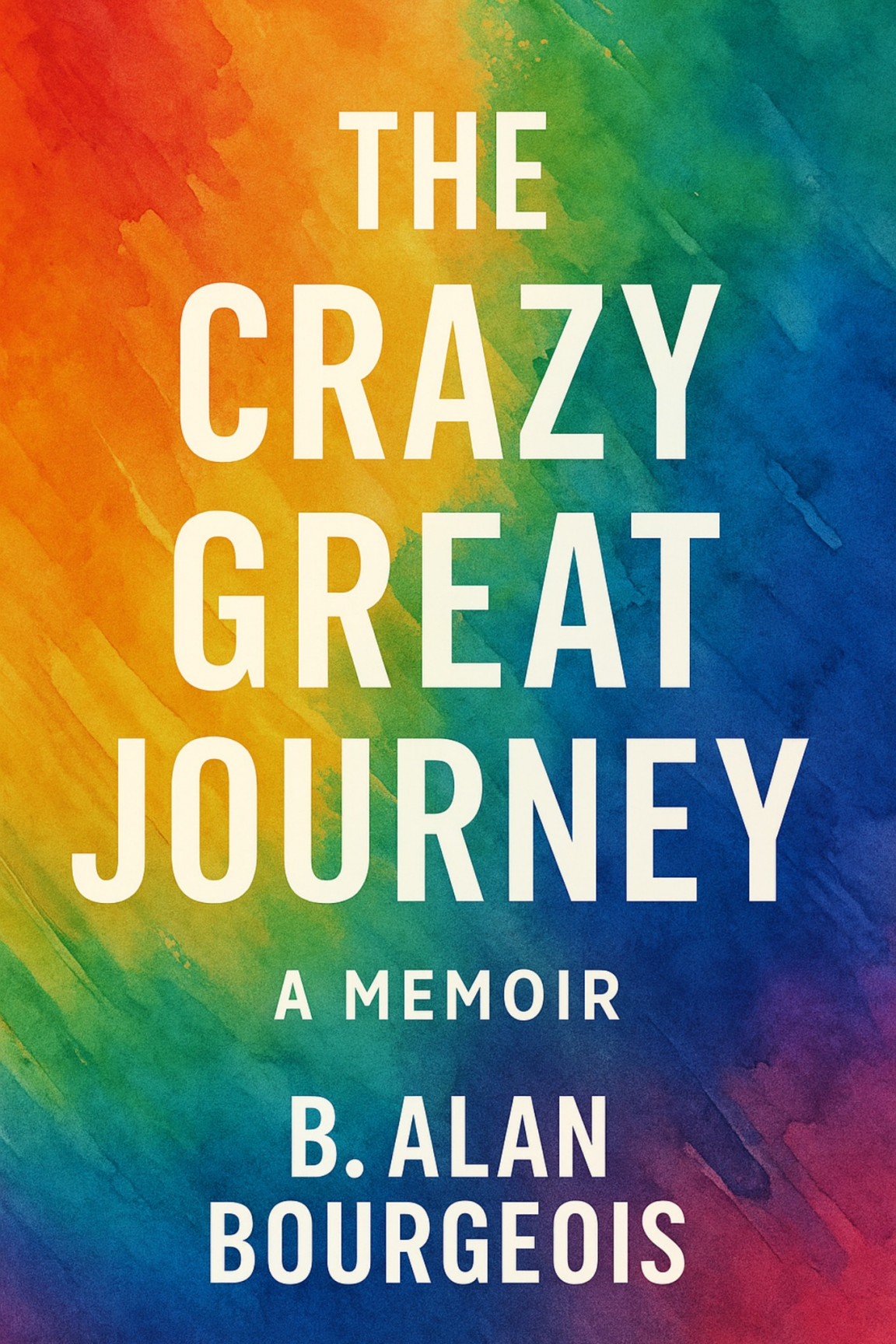


The background of the entire cover is a vibrant, abstract watercolor wash in the colors of a rainbow. The colors transition from deep red and orange at the top left, through bright yellow and green in the center, to deep blue and purple at the bottom right. The texture is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and color blending.

THE CRAZY GREAT JOURNEY

A MEMOIR

B. ALAN
BOURGEOIS

SAMPLE CHAPTER

The Crazy Great Journey

A Memoir

B. Alan Bourgeois

Chapter One preview from the eBook edition.

Chapter One: The Spark and the Shadows

It started with *Jaws*.

Not the movie—though I loved film and television—but the book. I was fourteen, more interested in visuals than words, but my mother had other plans. She handed me a copy of Peter Benchley’s novel and said, “Read this.”

I didn’t want to. But I did. And then I couldn’t stop.

There was something magical about how the story pulled me in—how it slowly reeled you closer until, before you realized it, you were submerged in its grip. It wasn’t just the shark or the blood or the terror. It was the pacing, the tension, the way each page tugged at the next. That was the moment I discovered the power of storytelling.

I didn’t become a reader overnight, but I became a dreamer.

I started imagining stories of my own. Scenes would play out in my mind like movies. Dialogues. Twists. Tension. Resolution. But when I shared this creative spark with my mother, hoping she’d be proud, her response was pragmatic: “Writers don’t make money. You’ll need a real job.”

She didn’t mean it to crush me. She wanted me to have a stable future, to go to school, get a degree, earn a living. But even with her best intentions, that statement dimmed my fire. I tucked away the stories, pressed pause on my dreams, and tried to follow the path expected of me.

But the stories never left.

They waited—quietly, insistently—for the moment when I would need them most.

That moment came in 1989, behind the cold, locked doors of a California prison.

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I won't dress it up or hide from it: I was incarcerated. I was also gay, and while California was slowly becoming more tolerant, prison was not. Being gay inside was a sentence of its own. There were threats, propositions, assumptions. One day, I was propositioned outright.

I said, "Sure. You want me to be your bitch? Then you'd better put \$200 on my books."

Nobody ever did. But the line stuck.

It became the title of my first piece of prison writing: *\$200 Alan*. I wrote it during a creative writing course offered by a local community college. The instructor encouraged me to submit it to the campus paper. And in January 1990, it was published.

That small byline—just my name under a story—did something profound. It validated a part of me I had long buried. It reminded me that I wasn't just surviving—I was creating. I was seen. I was heard.

I showed it to a man I had a quiet crush on, and he smiled. "You're a good writer," he said.

It was the first time I believed it might be true.

From there, I began writing short stories for gay magazines after my release. Each acceptance was like a shot of oxygen to my spirit. But there was always something holding me back—some inner whisper that said: don't go too far. That whisper grew louder after the Olympic Park bombing in 1996. The same bomber attacked a gay bar shortly after. I was horrified by the violence, but more enraged by the silence that followed. Within hours, the news disappeared from national coverage—as if our lives mattered less.

Fueled by anger and grief, I began writing my first novel. I poured out three-quarters of it in just a few weeks. Then I stopped. Sat on it for four years. Not because I didn't know how it would end—but because I wasn't ready to face what finishing it might mean. I had faced public scrutiny before, in 1995 after a failed event I had planned, and I wasn't ready to stand in that spotlight again.

There was still shame in me. Still fear. Still the scars of rejection—of being gay, of being an ex-con, of not being enough.

But the stories... they didn't care.

They kept rising in me like tides, unstoppable and patient. And I knew eventually, they'd have to come out.

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Not long after that, I started a small publishing house—not because I had a grand vision, but because I wanted to help myself and maybe a few others get their words into the world. That seed grew. From 2006 to 2011, I published 60 books for authors around the world.

The spark was back. And this time, I was going to feed it.

But first, I would have to face something darker than rejection, deeper than doubt. I would have to face complete collapse.

That part of the story—how I lost it all, how I rose again—is coming. But first, let me take you back to how I started building something bigger than myself... a bridge for others to cross.