



One Day It'll All Make Sense

By Common

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From the hip hop icon, Hollywood star, and “a true artist and writer of deep talent” (James McBride, author of *The Color of Water*)—a candid, *New York Times* bestselling memoir ranging from his childhood on Chicago’s South side and his emergence as one of rap’s biggest names.

Common has earned a reputation in the hip-hop world as a conscious artist by embracing themes of love and struggle in his songs. His journey toward understanding is rooted in his relationship with a remarkable woman, his mother.

Common holds nothing back in this gripping memoir, both provocative and funny. He tells what it was like for a boy with big dreams growing up on the South Side of Chicago. He reveals how he almost quit rapping after his first album sold only two thousand copies. He recounts his rise to stardom and talks about the challenges of balancing fame, love, and family. Through it all, Common emerges as a man in full. Rapper. Actor. Activist. But also father, son, and friend. His story offers a living example of how, no matter what you’ve gone through, one day it’ll all make sense.

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Editorial Review

Review

Common distinguishes himself here as a true artist and a writer of deep talent. This book is the story of an artist in constant evolution, one who embodies the strength of the brilliant woman that raised him, the love of the Southside Chicago land that spawned him, and the raw spirit of the pro basketball player who fathered him. I've always heard that the people of Southside Chicago were special. I'm glad their native son Common shows us why. --James McBride Author of *The Color of Water*

"Common has written a magnificent memoir. It states that it is a book about his fascinating life. That is true. More importantly, his story is the story of all young people trying to grow up. His saga reminds the reader that love liberates and poverty cripples. Common writes beautifully, like the poet he is."

—Maya Angelou

"Common is a 360-degree human being, and I don't say that about many people. He never needed to "pimp the hood" to achieve his deserved success. He is an eloquent and honorable role model and his memoir is a perfect example of his depth as a human being. In addition, reading about his childhood and upbringing in Chicago is really a trip - because we went through so many of the same experiences albeit decades apart. Chicago is still the roughest and primary "Institution of Hard Knocks," and if you can make it there, you can truly make it anywhere!" —Quincy Jones

"Raw in its honesty, profound in its insights, *One Day It'll All Make Sense* establishes Common as a voice that is as compelling on the page as it is on a record. This is not simply the story of an individual artist but a crucial page the history of hip hop itself." —Jelani Cobb, author of *The Substance of Hope*

"A powerful memoir that speaks to all audiences." —Queen Latifah

"A thoughtful and beautiful book that tells us much more about Common... His mother's perspective takes this to another level." —Touré, author of *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness*

About the Author

Common

Common is a film and television actor and award-winning music artist. He lives in Los Angeles. An independent publisher/author of books for children, including *The Mirror and Me* and *I Like You but I Love Me*, he is also the author of a memoir, *One Day It'll All Make Sense*, which was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Adam Bradley

Adam Bradley is a scholar of African-American literature and a writer on black popular culture. He is the author of *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* and the co-editor of Ralph Ellison's *Three Days Before the Shooting...*, and *Yale Anthology of Rap*. Adam is an associate professor of Literature at the University of Colorado, Boulder and lives in Boulder with his wife.

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PROLOGUE

Dear Reader:

When I was eighteen months old, my mother and I were kidnapped at gunpoint. My father held the gun.

At least that's one side of the story. I first heard about it all from my aunt long after it happened, when I was already a grown man. I asked my mother, and she told it to me one way. I asked my father, and he told it to me another. The story I'll tell you begins where my mother's and my father's tales come together and continues past them into the separate corners of my parents' truths. Somehow in telling it, the story becomes my own. Somehow in telling it, it all starts to make sense.

My father, Lonnie Lynn, was a Chicago playground legend. They called him the Genie because he'd make the basketball disappear right before your eyes then make it reappear at the bottom of the net. At six foot eight, he had NBA size and the skills to match. He was nice around the rim and had a sweet stroke from inside eighteen feet. But he talked back to coaches. He missed practice. He developed a habit. He was out of the league before his career really began. For all his gifts, he played just one year of professional basketball, for the Denver Rockets and the Pittsburgh Pipers of the ABA.

Around the same time, his relationship with my mother was falling apart. He was getting high, keeping drugs right out in the open on the nightstand. He'd react to the slightest provocation. One time my mother locked him out of our apartment, and he shot out all the windows. When he was sober, he was a loving man, but when he was high, he was somebody else.

“I was out of basketball,” my father later told me. “I was struggling. My lowest point came in December of 1972, when you were nine months old. I weighed one hundred ninety-five pounds, less than I had coming out of high school. That’s what the drugs had done—or, rather, what I had done with the drugs. By the time I got back to Chicago, I was back near my playing weight at two hundred thirty-five pounds. I was ready for my last chance.”

His last chance came with a tryout for the Seattle SuperSonics. They knew about my dad’s past troubles, and they were concerned. They wanted to know he was a family man. Problem was, my folks were separated, heading toward divorce. So, early one morning, my father packed everything he owned into the backseat of a rented Dodge Charger and drove to Eighty-eighth and Dorchester in Chicago’s South Side, where my mother and I lived.

Here is where my parents’ stories diverge. “He took us out of the house at gunpoint, handcuffed me to the front seat, put you in the back, and started driving across the country to Seattle,” my mother says.

“You and your mother got in the front seat with me,” my father recalls, “and we started out on Interstate 90 heading west.”

I can imagine my mother seething inside—not panicked, not defeated—waiting for her moment. My father must have known this too. Part of him might even have feared her, a strange thing since he was the one at the wheel. She had this indomitable spirit; it only grew stronger when she felt her child was in danger.

What could she do? When we stopped for gas, she says he handcuffed her to the steering wheel. When she needed to use the restroom, she says he stood outside the door. The situation must have looked hopeless to her.

My mother escaped with me early one Sunday morning. She recalls my father pulling off the highway to get gas; there were no plans to stop for food, no plans to sleep. She complained of a headache and asked my father to bring her something for the pain.

He came back to the car with a bottle of pills. My mother took two like the container directed then somehow managed to put the rest in his can of Coke as he gassed up the car. When he got back in, he took a big swig of soda then threw the can out the window. It wasn't long before he started feeling the effects.

"Did she drug me? I don't know," my father told me later. "All I know is that I made the decision that it was better to sleep during the day and drive at night while you were sleeping."

We stopped at a roadside motel on the outskirts of Madison, Wisconsin. I wonder what people saw when they looked at us. A beautiful family on a cross-country trip? A doting mother holding her child? A loving husband clutching his wife close by his side? Did they see the family we were or the family we might have been?

My mother told me that my father had just enough time to handcuff her to the bed, sit me on the couch, strip off some of his clothes, and fall onto the mattress, his feet dangling off the edge. Soon he was snoring away. Once he was fast asleep, my mother says she started working her small hand against the cuff, folding her fingers in on themselves and pulling until metal scraped skin.

"Rashid," she said in a stage whisper. "Rashid, baby, go outside and play. Mommy will be there soon."

Something in her eyes must have told me, young as I was, that this was no time for games. I followed her instructions and slipped out the door. Her hand finally free, my mother followed after me. She made it to the lobby and told the man working there to call the police.

"Next thing I know," my father now says, "I wake up and there are two policemen standing over my bed. One of them's got a shotgun on me. The other's pointing a pistol. I raised my hands up above my head and turned my eyes to the sky. I can remember seeing a teardrop of water falling down from that low, low ceiling. That's when I cried out: 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!'

"It was all over the radio, the television, the newspaper. 'Kidnapping,' in capital letters. But I was in jail only overnight. They released me the next morning without charges."

Madison, Wisconsin, is one hundred sixty-three miles from the South Side of Chicago and nearly two thousand miles from Seattle. The road trip, the kidnapping, my father's dream—whatever you call it—it was over almost as soon as it had started.

Can a story you've only overheard somehow still give shape to your life? Can other people's stories also be your own? Hearing this was like discovering a lost piece of my past, like having my life told as legend. Could it have really happened? Part of me figured that when I asked my parents about it, they'd deny it. But when I asked each of them, they confirmed it—even if they told their stories in a different key.

They say trauma always accompanies birth, the beginning of new life. When I think about my parents and me driving toward my father's dream, I think about what it means to bear the legacy of these two people who were estranged from each other before I was born but remain tied together because I was born. It speaks to me about connections, willing and not. It speaks to the fact that when you try to tell your own story, you can't help but tell someone else's along the way. This is my life, my story, but it's their story too.

I think of my mother, a young woman with a child at the time threatened by a man she still loves. Maybe that's why she's always loved me so hard, like she could lose me at any moment. Today she is a mother, a grandmother, my best friend.

I think about my father and how his inner pains and self-doubt sometimes expressed themselves in ways he couldn't control. What possesses a man to aim a gun at the woman he loves and the child he helped conceive? If not the gun, then what possesses him to pursue a dream past all consequence? Today he is a thinker, a dreamer, a complex soul.

Who knows the truth of the story? My truth is this: I inherited love and trouble, joy and fear. I experienced all of these things before I could even put them into words. The story I have to tell you is one of inheritance and identity, of the values my mother passed on to me that I hope to pass on to my daughter, Omoye. The story is of making myself into the man that I want to be: an artist, a father, a child of God.

When I was given the opportunity to write this book, I had some misgivings. Had I lived enough? Would anyone want to hear my story? When I think of memorable life stories, I think of great men and women looking back over the decades. I think of Malcolm X and Assata Shakur. I think of Maya Angelou and Nelson Mandela. What story does a kid from the South Side of Chicago have to tell?

So I talked with friends. I talked with my mother, my father, my grandmother, my daughter. We laughed, we reminisced, we even shed a few tears. At a certain moment, I took in a breath, I breathed it out, and I knew that I had lived a life I wished to share. I knew that if I dedicated myself to writing about my life, it might all start to make sense.

I've always loved to write. It must have started with my mother. She still has a note I wrote to her when I was six or seven years old about leaving the key so she could get in the house and how I didn't want to get a whippin'. She tells me that's my first letter.

In school, I'd write love letters to cute girls in class. When I first started rapping, I'd write my lyrics in a composition book. As I grew older, I'd write my hopes, fears, and dreams in a journal. I still write to this day, even to people who are part of my everyday life—my mother, my daughter, my friends. I may be a talker just like my dad, but I love to express myself through letters. Maybe I write because I've learned to show certain parts of my heart on the page that I still struggle to capture in speech.

That's why I've decided to begin each chapter of this book with a letter. In these pages, I've written to my mother and to my daughter and to many others—to you, to lost friends, to distant lo...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jonathan Nelson:

The book One Day It'll All Make Sense gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem with your subject. If you can make looking at a book One Day It'll All Make Sense for being your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like available and read a publication One Day It'll All Make Sense. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this publication?

Hazel Reinoso:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book which improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want get more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want feel happy read one with theme for entertaining like comic or novel. Typically the One Day It'll All Make Sense is kind of publication which is giving the reader unstable experience.

Heather Wade:

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