



You Do Not Need to Escape to Get the Life You Want

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

I love sports cars. For as long as I can remember, I have been unable to drive by an exotic car dealership without stopping, going inside, and looking at the cars. My wife hates this about me, and she generally stays in the car. In most big cities there are dealerships that sell Ferraris, Porsche's, Lamborghinis, and so forth. Whether I have been living in Detroit, New York City, or Los Angeles, I have generally found these dealerships and have gone inside to look at the cars.

When I was 27, I bought a used Porsche for \$28,000 from one of these dealerships; however, I quickly realized after having the car, I would be dead pretty quickly if I kept it. Driving to work became like a video game, and I regularly hit 100 miles per hour on the freeway while weaving in and out of traffic. When I moved out to Los Angeles from Detroit, I received a ticket in Iowa for going 120 miles per hour. I was going so fast that when the policeman finally caught up with me he told me he had been trying to do so through four counties. The policeman was pretty cool and asked me a lot of questions about the car before handing me a ticket for what was around \$600. I eventually sold the car on eBay and bought the biggest truck I could find, to protect me in the event of a crash; I have driven trucks for the past decade to keep myself as safe as possible. Today I drive a Ford F450 that has four wheels on the back and is as slow as molasses.

Since I sold my Porsche, I have not bought anything new and I mostly just look around in dealerships these days. One of my favorite pastimes is talking to salespeople inside of the dealerships about the cars. In addition to learning about the cars, my real interest is learning about the sort of people who purchase them. For example, what sort of person would purchase a sports car for \$500,000 to drive around in? I personally have never met someone who owned a \$500,000 sports car -- but they are out there. There are Porsche's that cost like \$1,000,000. Who are these people that decide to make such a lofty automobile purchase? Maybe you are one of them. If so, I'd love to interview you...

The most interesting thing I often hear about the purchasers of these cars is that sometimes they may spend \$500,000 on the car, and keep it only for awhile. Of course, there are many people who purchase extremely expensive cars and then hold on to them for a long time. This is a little rich for my blood but I can understand why someone might want such a nice car. But on the other hand, I always seem to encounter trade-ins of these expensive \$150,000+ sports cars, which people have purchased and driven for a few months, only to decide soon thereafter that they want a different car. You will find these in every dealership in every single city you visit around the United States. Not only are there a lot of people who purchase \$150,000 cars -- a high percentage of these people purchase and then trade them in after 2-3 months, for a lot less than they paid.

"What's the story with that Ferrari with 1,100 miles on it?" I might ask the [sales person](#).

"That belonged to a doctor. He decided that he wanted a new Porsche instead and traded it in," the salesperson might say.

"How much did he lose on the trade?"

"He paid \$285,000 for the car and we gave him \$215,000 on the trade. It cost him \$70,000+ taxes to drive the car for 8 weeks. But we gave him a great deal on the Porsche. The car is a great deal if you want it and we'll sell it for \$250,000."

And so it goes. There are cars like this in every exotic auto showroom around the country, "gently used" sports cars that some big shot had purchased and then quickly traded in for a new ride.

At first I thought this phenomenal recurring story might really just be a sales tactic to move used merchandise in exotic car showrooms, but now I do not think it is. Hang around an exotic car showroom for a few hours and one of these rich guys will pull up with his new sports car, and start looking at other cars, looking to discuss a trade with the sales person. I have witnessed this several times.

I cannot even freakin' believe this happens.

What do you think is going on here? There is something significant in this, and it involves you even though you do not think it does. In fact, the lesson of these people turning in their cars relates to you directly and it is something that may be controlling your entire life.

I will come back to the story about rich men trading in their ultra-expensive sports cars in a moment, but before I do, I want to share another personal story with you:

Several years ago I purchased a new house with a large yard and a pool and several bedrooms. My wife and I were "nesting" and we purchased a house that was big enough for us to start a family in. For years I had lived in various small houses with no yards and no room for the kids my wife and I were planning. My dream had always been to have a large yard and a pool.

From the time I was young I had always wanted a house in which I could raise a family and still have some room to move around. While growing up, my family experienced one financial setback after another; I was always moving around between homes and apartments and to smaller homes and smaller apartments. Since my parents were divorced, and I lived with both of them, you can imagine this involved a lot of shuffling around. So as an adult, I wanted to get a house where I felt I could raise a family, and where I could walk around in the yard. This had been my goal for a very long time. The main thing I sought was stability.

I remember the day I moved into this new house, which represented what I had wanted and dreamed about for so long. I put a lawn chair outside and sat down in the yard. Instead of feeling good about having a yard, I had a strange empty feeling inside of me. Suddenly my thought was, "Is this all there is?" The yard was a good size and a big yard was something I had dreamed about in one form or another since I had been a young boy. Here I was sitting in my big yard and a strange sense of emptiness came over me. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the emptiness I felt was more akin to a sense of

depression. I had wanted something but in getting it I realized that my life was really no different than it had been previously. The house had not changed my life really, and I saw that I was the same person I had always been.

I think the worst sensation is to strive for something and, upon achieving it, to discover that it is empty for us.

We all want the superficial outcomes.

A house is a superficial outcome. A Ferrari is a superficial outcome. However, a car does not make you cooler and a fuller person. A house also does not make you cooler and a fuller person. What happens is that in seeking these things our brain tries to convince our subconscious that the trivial stuff matters. This ends up creating an internal struggle that really inhibits your ability to ever get anywhere. Most of us are continually seeking one superficial outcome after another, but none of these things really change our life or lead to the sense of fulfillment we are really seeking.

We do not really crave *things*. What we crave, rather, is the *experience* that things give us. The doctor who purchases the Ferrari and returns it two weeks later, loses \$50,000 and purchases a Porsche as a replacement, is craving the experience he thinks the Porsche will give him. He realizes that the feeling the Ferrari gives him is short lived, so he tries a Porsche -- only to discover the same thing. He continues to chase after the experience and a perceived sense of fulfillment, which leads him to keep purchasing new cars.

I want to go a little deeper with you to help you understand something that is quite profound in my opinion. Think about a family shopping for a house. What are they really seeking? It is not just that they are looking for a house. When they are looking at a new house, they are looking at what is essentially a new life for them. They are thinking about what their life will be like once they move into a new house together -- who they will be and who they will represent.

The dentist who looks at teeth all day, who purchases the \$200,000 car, and then trades it in a few months later for another car is not just purchasing a car. Rather he is purchasing what he believes the car will make him, and what he will represent by driving it. He wants to be James Bond or some sexy sort of guy. He believes that something outside of himself -- the car -- is going to make him that person. He wants the car to make him that person. He does not want to be the guy in a lab coat standing over some middle-aged guy with rotting teeth all day looking inside mouths. He does not want to be the guy scraping plaque off the teeth of the housewife. He does not want to have to be fitting a mouthguard. This is not how the dentist wants to see himself. He wants to see himself as a hip and undeniably cool guy in a Ferrari. In this example, this dentist will be continually seeking this feeling, and will attempt to fill his void with *things*, because he is unable to feel this way in his career.

I was watching the news on a flight back from New York this week and there was a news crew at Bob's Big Boy in Burbank, California. For 30+ years every Friday night various people with old American muscle cars have parked their cars outside this restaurant and sat alongside them in lawn chairs. People hang around the parking lot and look at each others' cars all night. Some men or women wear tee shirts with their various car logos on them; these people take a tremendous amount of pride in the cars. I watched this news report with some amusement because to me it seemed odd that people would so religiously gather around these old cars each week, and keep them in such pristine condition. As the camera panned the parking lot of the Big Boy where all of the cars were collected, I could not help noticing that the production years exhibited within the collection of American cars seemed to stop dead in its tracks around 1980. It was as if the manufacture stopped in 1980, and no good cars had been made after this time. For example, people were not showing a 1989 Trans Am. The collectors had no interest in the more modern American cars.

When I was young and growing up in the 1970s, American cars like Cadillacs, Buicks, and others were very original and each one was like a fashion accessory. They were very stylistic and they were all different. Some of the cars had fins on the side. Other cars like Cadillacs in the 1970s had really cool little digital temperature controls when no other car had any digital components. There were giant hulking convertibles, and almost all of the cars had a lot of chrome to get your attention. I can remember when American cars used to be really "cool," and when a large portion of peoples' lives really revolved around their "fashion statement" of a car. It was a different era in America and people truly loved their automobiles.

I got back from New York on Saturday night. On Monday I picked up the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* and began reading about General Motors and their bankruptcy. I read several times about various cost cutting measures the company had started in the 1980s, when they combined car brands on the same platform, began using more plastic and so forth, and the cars became cheaper. A lot of this was motivated by their desire to please shareholders and to make sure their bottom line looked as good as possible. Unfortunately they sacrificed their brand and reputed quality in search of short-term profits, which ultimately ended up driving the company towards bankruptcy.

Incredibly, in the 1980s, GM even took its cheapest car, the Chevy Cavalier, put a Cadillac name badge on it, and then called it a Cadillac. American cars stopped being fashion accessories and became commodities - plain, bland look-alikes, and things that the American public quickly lost interest in. The cars had lost their romance. With the romance gone, the cars no longer made people feel like they had before. Because the cars did not make people feel the same about themselves, people turned elsewhere, to foreign brands like BMW and others, which gave people a special excited feeling. Whatever it is that people strive for in their lives was suddenly gone and missing from American cars and thus began the industry's death.

Each and every one of us is seeking something. We are seeking to be someone and to represent someone or something. We all want a new life and we are seeking this constantly.

When I was growing up, my stepmother was very overweight, having really let herself go. Each week she would read at least a couple of cheap romance novels. She would sit there every night reading a romance novel until she went to bed. When she finished one book she would immediately start another one. We had several bookshelves dedicated to all of those romance novels. I am sure you have seen the covers of these novels; they are all pretty much the same. They typically feature a beautiful woman in the arms of a muscular man, who embraces the woman in a passionate grasp. The covers look as steamy as you can imagine. Lots of women enjoy these books.

In truth, I think my stepmother was living vicariously through the lives of the women in the novels. Through these stories she was escaping and living another life. I am sure that deep down she wanted to be beautiful and young and to be held in the arms of a muscular and handsome man. But this situation did not even remotely resemble her life. Being overweight, divorced, unhappily remarried, with a dead-end career, and an onslaught of other problems, it is no wonder my stepmother wanted to escape into the world of fantasy. The second she picked up one of these romance novels and started reading, she was able to live another life altogether. They made her feel like a different person. Of course, my stepmother never told me any of this, but it seemed pretty obvious to me what exactly had been going on, when I thought about it years later.

What we all really want is a new life for ourselves.

We are all trying to move towards a different identity and we try to accomplish this by obtaining things outside of ourselves -- whether it is cars, houses, or even books. This fact is what keeps us moving towards our goals, and it is a constant in everyone's life. We all seek to fill a void that resides inside of us. You may recognize the following thoughts:

- When I get a promotion everything will be better.
- I will be happy when I do not have to work anymore and am retired.
- I need to be in a different relationship because this one does not make me happy.
- I need a [new job](#) and I will be happy in the next one.

In my line of work I see people who have been moving between one job and another for their entire career. It is a chronic situation. They will start a job and like it for some time, deciding that the job makes them happy. Within six months or so, however, they find reasons to not like the job and to become very unhappy with the work. At that point they spend the next several months telling those around them why they do not like the job, looking at [job openings](#) and planning their escape into something else.

It is like the cars, houses, romance novels, and everything else... Everyone is always escaping, or planning their escape and trying to live another life.

Are you planning an escape?

Well if you are planning an escape and seeking a new life, the chances are great that you are never going to find it in the way you are going about it. I read recently that the talk show host Larry King has been married eight different times to seven different women. What do you think he is seeking? He must be seeking something because I am sure it is a lot of work to be married (and divorced) that many times.

The doctor who purchases a different car every few months, the person who chronically switches jobs, the person who moves between numerous relationships and marriages, the woman who reads romance novels every single night, the person who switches houses all the time: They are all seeking a different life.

But here is the secret: These people seeking a different life are all going about it the wrong way. They are using objects and circumstances outside of themselves to feel complete. This makes no sense and the exhilaration they attain can never last. *Happiness and being complete need to come from within and not from without. You need to find who you are inside of yourself and not outside of yourself.*

Once you understand this, you will not need to manipulate the world and circumstances around you because everything you do will come from within. A year or so after purchasing that big house with the big yard, I moved into a much smaller house with a smaller yard. The house I had bought was really way too big and it made no sense. I no longer cared about the yard or the size of the house because I realized that I had a happy and stable family. The house could not bring me that; the happiness I sought came from within and was all around me. Now I do not think about changing houses any longer. When I was practicing law, I did not like the fact that I could be fired at any moment. This scared the hell out of me because I saw a lot of people I worked with get fired. I was always planning my escape before I got fired too. Always thinking about the next job. What I really wanted however, was a job with security, wherein I would have more control over what happened to me. It took stopping the practice of law to get this. When I bought my Porsche I wanted to feel like I was a cool and stud guy. Now I can feel this way no matter what I drive. My car does not give me this feeling; it has to come from within.

Your decisions need to be grounded in reality and you need to be the person you really want to be. The guy purchasing all the cars needs to be James Bond instead of a dentist if this is what would make him truly happy. The woman who has let herself go needs to get herself together and be the woman in the romance novels if this is what will bring her a fulfilling life. The man changing wives every few years, probably enjoys the thrill of the chase, and feeling loved, and validated; he needs to be in a relationship where he always feels loved and validated. In your life the most important thing you can do is *become the person you are trying to be*, instead of trying to get a different life through things, people, and circumstances outside of yourself.

I know you want a different life. Most people do. If this is really what you want then you need to go out there and get that life. You can achieve your dreams; just remember to look within yourself first, in order to assess what is truly important to you and your happiness.

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