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The Adventures of Superfreak: My Childhood on the Hippie Trail

by Caleb Dardick

1. Book Information

Title: *The Adventures of Superfreak: My Childhood on the Hippie Trail*

Author: Caleb Dardick

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2. Short Description (70 words)

In 1970, five-year-old Caleb Dardick crossed continents with his disabled activist parents in search of hashish — or enlightenment — whatever came first. Traveling overland from Amsterdam to India in a VW bus, the family chased freedom across Europe, North Africa, and South Asia. Told through a child's eyes, this memoir explores wonder and instability, attachment and abandonment, disability and interdependence, family resilience, and the self-invented superhero identity that helped Caleb belong inside an extraordinary journey.

3. Full Summary (185 words)

In 1970, Caleb's family hit the Hippie Trail from Amsterdam to India in search of nirvana — or hash — whatever came first.

Caleb's disabled parents, Sam (a city planner and former Washington University lecturer who used a wheelchair) and Carol (a frustrated feminist with an undiagnosed bipolar disorder), dropped out of mainstream society to travel overland in a VW bus with three little kids. Caleb was the oldest at five.

Sam and Carol promised the journey would be a great adventure. But familial unity was not something Caleb took for granted. He trusted his rock of a dad, but braced himself for Mom's swinging moods and sudden disappearances as their 20,000-mile ride took the family through Europe, the Canary Islands, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and finally India.

To cope with constant upheaval, Caleb transformed into “Superfreak.” Donning his Superman costume, he summoned all his hippie-in-training bravery to survive a chaotic family life of abundant psychedelics and free love, cross-border drug smuggling and jail breaks, sages and charlatans.

The Adventures of Superfreak is a propulsive family drama revealing the complexities of attachment and abandonment amid a period of tumultuous cultural change.

4. Advance Praise

Tony Wheeler, Co-founder, Lonely Planet

“The hippie trail? It’s only a minor interruption in six-year-old Caleb’s freewheeling kaleidoscope view. This is a road trip story spirited along by sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll, and a dash of enlightenment.”

Zara Houshmand, author of *Moon and Sun*

“With the superb charm of a natural-born storyteller, Caleb takes us along on a wild two-year trip from Amsterdam to India. But beneath the dazzling journey, he reveals a much deeper story: about disability — both physical and emotional — the meaning of family, vulnerability, and love. It’s an unforgettable journey, and profoundly moving.”

Elizabeth Scarborough, author of *My Foreign Cities*

“In this story, there are surprises around every corner — some harrowing, some wonderful, some dark. But with Superfreak as our narrator we are in excellent hands, and we’re rooting for him every step of the way. Dardick is a gifted storyteller, and *The Adventures of Superfreak* reads like a novel, sweeping us up and entertaining us, while shining its light on life’s complicated truths.”

Joshua Safran, author of *Free Spirit: Growing Up On the Road and Off the Grid*

“Caleb Dardick captures, with humor and heartbreak, what it was like to grow up chasing freedom across continents — in VW vans, through hash dens, ashrams, and family implosions. It’s wild, funny, and tender all at once — a coming-of-age story for anyone who ever tried to make sense of love, chaos, and the dream of a better world.”

Rachel Howard, author of *The Risk of Us*

“Superfreak ranks among the wildest childhood memoirs I’ve ever read. I wanted to judge Dardick’s spiritual hippie mother for her selfishness — but like Dardick himself, I couldn’t help getting sucked into her mission of radical freedom. This is a rollicking and often heartbreaking story about an unforgettable family.”

5. About the Author

Short Bio (120 words)

Caleb Dardick is the author of *The Adventures of Superfreak: My Childhood on the Hippie Trail*, a debut memoir about growing up in the American counterculture with activist parents with disabilities. At age five, he traveled with his family along the Hippie Trail from Amsterdam to India — part of a generation’s sweeping search for freedom.

His career has included public service, community engagement, environmental advocacy, and disability-related projects, with roles in the Berkeley Mayor’s Office, UC Berkeley, the Ed Roberts Campus, SYRCL, and Nevada County government. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Caleb is also a leadership coach and storyteller who has performed at the Sierra Storytelling Festival and Beyond Borders in San Francisco. He lives in Northern California with his wife.

Long Bio (196 words)

Caleb Dardick was born in St. Louis in 1965 and came of age inside the upheavals of the American counterculture. In 1970, at five years old, he traveled overland from Amsterdam to India with his disabled parents and two younger siblings, joining the stream of seekers on the Hippie Trail. His father, a city planner and former Washington University lecturer who used a wheelchair, and his mother, a charismatic feminist later understood to have bipolar disorder, had sold everything and “dropped out” in search of freedom, belonging, and a different way to raise a family.

Dardick writes from the vantage point of the child he was — observant, loyal, improvisational — and from the adult who has spent decades reckoning with that inheritance. His work explores attachment and abandonment, disability and independence, and the complicated legacy of a generation that believed it could reinvent the world.

A lifelong storyteller, Dardick has performed at the Sierra Storytelling Festival and at Beyond Borders in San Francisco. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Caleb is also a leadership coach. He lives in Northern California with his wife.

The Adventures of Superfreak: My Childhood on the Hippie Trail is his first book.

6. Suggested Interview Topics

- A child’s-eye view of the Hippie Trail and the 1970s counterculture
- Wonder and instability inside an unconventional family journey
- Growing up with disabled parents before modern accessibility norms

- The creation of “Superfreak” as both coping mechanism and connection to the journey
 - Memory, family storytelling, and writing memoir from a child’s perspective
 - Disability, interdependence, parenting, and family resilience
 - The promises, contradictions, and blind spots of the 1960s and 1970s
 - Why the counterculture’s legacy feels timely as the 60th anniversary of the Summer of Love approaches in 2027
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7. Contact

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