



ZORO THE DRUMMER



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by Bruce Adolph
photos by Mick Waller

Amid the world's chaos, confusion, and division, quite a story pierces through the darkness with love, hope, and imagination. Yes, Zoro may be one of the most interesting men in the world today.

He met Lenny Kravitz on the lawn at Beverly Hills High School while pretending to be a new student, introduced Whitney Houston to Bobby Brown, and sat on a plane next to Frankie Valli when the icon shared his "Jersey Boys" vision. He traveled with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen on his Octopus, the world's most expensive privately owned yacht, held court with Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5 for twenty minutes and was honored at the White House. Jimmy Fallon sang Happy Birthday to him on the set of "The Tonight Show."

But before Zoro became one of the world's top drummers who played for everyone from Lenny Kravitz, Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons to Bobby Brown, New Edition, and Lincoln Brewster, he was abandoned by his father at six months of age. As a young boy growing up in the impoverished streets of Compton, California he helped his family move from one apartment to the next with his Radio Flyer wagon. In rural Oregon, he lived in a car and tent with his immigrant mother and six siblings, showered in city parks, rummaged through Goodwill drop-off boxes for his clothes, experienced extreme racism, and raised exotic chickens.

He wanted to play the drums so badly he played with his hands on a cardboard box for his elementary school talent show. But his fate changed while working an after-school job as a janitor at his high school. One day after cleaning the band room he jumped on the drums and secretly wailed away. Unbeknownst to him, the band director who was working quietly in his office recognized his talent and invited him to join all the school bands. That day, a future drumming star was born.

How did Zoro defy the odds? Faith in God, hard work, and the incomparable love of his immigrant mother, Maria, who raised seven

children alone. When Zoro was seven, she knelt beside him, tied her orange silk scarf around his neck, and whispered, "One day, my precious son, you will do something fantazmical with your life."

I do believe Zoro may be one of the most interesting men in the world, with the most amazing stories. But he is so much more. In addition to his illustrious music career, he served as a staff pastor at Bayside Church for five years and has ministered the Gospel of Jesus around the globe in every place imaginable for the past forty years. From San Quentin Prison to Grammy and Oscar parties, Zoro is a radical evangelist and teacher who knows his calling and carries it out unashamedly with love and great expectation. I know him to among the most inspiring, encouraging, and passionate people I have ever meet. His story of overcoming is for a time such as this.

[WM] Your new memoir is called, *Maria's Scarf*. Tell us how it came about?

[Zoro] Over the years, I've entertained friends, fans, celebrities, strangers, and even royalty with the adventures and misadventures of my boyhood. Their response was always the same: "Your story would make a *New York Times Bestseller*, a blockbuster movie, and hit television series." Prompted by their enthusiasm and encouragement, I initially thought I would tell my story to a writer voilà, that would be it. That's not what happened. I realized the book would never have my voice or heart unless I wrote it.

Before writing *Maria's Scarf*, I had written two motivational books, *The Big Gig: Big-Picture Thinking for Success* and *SOAR! 9 Proven Keys for Unlocking Your Limitless Potential*. Before that, I wrote *The Commandments of R&B Drumming*, a series of drum instructional books. Still, I knew writing a memoir was more complex, requiring a higher degree of skill I did not possess. But I knew that sharing my story was the best way to inspire others and that's what I wanted to do more than anything.

That burning desire led to me studying the craft for several years. I immersed myself in over 300 books on writing and worked extremely hard to hone my writing chops.

But I guess you could say I was destined to write it because, in one way or another, I've been writing it all my life. At ten, I started a diary that I kept writing in through early adulthood, having no idea I would one day use its contents to pen a part of my memoir.

What began as one-line diary sentences over 50 years ago morphed into short paragraphs and vignettes, then into skeletal chapters that turned into the book. Like all worthwhile endeavors, it was a labor of love that evolved over time. Most importantly, there has been enough distance from the events depicted in my story to see them from the proper perspective. With the passing of decades came the freedom to write with transparency and vulnerability.

[WM] How did you remember so many vivid details from your childhood?

[Zoro] My mother was sentimental and loved to share stories of her life in Mexico. Because she treasured nostalgia and memories, I came to value those same ideals. My siblings and I kept our stories alive through continuous reminiscing, a family passion, and a pastime.

I am also fortunate that my brother Bobby has an astonishing memory, recalling details with an uncanny accuracy. So does my older brother, Ricardo. Along with Bobby and Ricardo, I have four other siblings who contributed to retelling the events in the book.

[WM] What kind of research did you do to write the book?

[Zoro] Memories have memories of their own. To ensure the story was as close to the truth as possible, I revisited every place mentioned in the book numerous times, stirring up the shadows of my childhood and formative years. Each visit brought more clarity. In addition, I



interviewed many of the people who were a part of my story. I also conducted meticulous research to ensure the historical references were accurate.

I kept detailed notes, logs, ledgers, letters, sketches, report cards, catalogs, brochures, certificates, and countless keepsakes documenting every part of my life. I've also sifted through decades of family photos, Super 8 footage, cassette and video tapes, diaries, and letters from my mother and siblings. All this source material helped bring the book to life in a vivid and immersive manner.

Day after day, night after night, year after year, until my eyes grew weary, I've poured my heart and soul onto the pages of *Maria's Scarf*, rendering my story as best as I could.

[WM] What was your motivation for writing it?

[Zoro] My mother, Maria, taught me the rhythm of battle, the march of audacity, and the cadence of persistence until I could finally climb out of our beat-up coupe where we lived for a time and onto the world stages. I promised her I would write a book to honor her one day. It took me 15 years, but I fulfilled my promise.

Though my mother never achieved fame in her lifetime as the actress she had hoped to become, my goal is to make her famous posthumously for something far more important – being a mother—a noble task that doesn't garner the praise it deserves. We live in a culture that worships fame and celebrity and places little value on the character traits responsible for our survival and thriving.

My mother was undoubtedly my hero, but other heroes deserve recognition. Countless mothers, fathers, grandparents, and caretakers lay down their lives every day for the children

and people they love. Through their mostly unseen acts of sacrifice, these people do most of the honest loving in this world, the emotional heavy lifting, and the shaping of lives. They are the gatekeepers of our well-being, the guardians of our souls.

Theirs is the noblest work on Earth, yet it's a thankless job for many. Let me encourage you if that touches an unspoken sadness in your heart. When no one seems to appreciate you, don't lose heart. God is watching. So are the children you watch over. Ultimately, nothing will go unnoticed. Even now, some twenty years after my mother's passing, I'm discovering deeper dimensions of her love.

Everything you plant in the lives of others will grow. So be mindful: sow the seeds you wish to see in full blossom. In time, you'll reap a harvest from those hearts, and the world will be a better place—those you've given your life

to *will* remember. Then, one day, they'll come to see you as their faithful champion. Theodore Franklin summed it up best when he said, "It is better to be faithful than famous." And I concur.

[WM] What do you hope people will gain from reading *Maria's Scarf*?

[Zoro] Throughout my memoir are some of the most heartbreaking, heartwarming, hilarious, and hopeful moments that have taken a boy from the slums to the spotlight. But my story is not for drummers. It's for dreamers and all who have a desire to do something significant with their life. Through the love story of a family, a mother who gave her very best, and a boy who refused to give up his dream, I hope to touch the hearts of all and inspire people not to give up in the face of adversity. Life is tough for all of us, but I remain grateful for the fiery trials that forged me into the man I am today.

By sharing our struggles, we discover how similar our battles are. We find strength, courage, and solace in the stories of people

who have endured, overcome, and succeeded. Those true-life tales of victory become arrows for future battles. They remind us that even in the face of great travails, we must never abandon hope—for it is the very thing that *can* change our destiny. My dreams kept me hoping against hope, and *Maria's Scarf* is yet another dream come true. I hope my story leads every reader toward a glorious light of their own. One early reader had this to say after reading it, "Your memoir makes me want to dream again. Go for the unthinkable. Unattainable." That has always been the goal; to inspire people to dream again and go for it and trust God for an unimaginable outcome. *Maria's Scarf* is a ticket to a fantasmical excursion that will lift your spirits and inspire you to reach for the stars by showing what's possible when we dare to dream and refuse to give up.

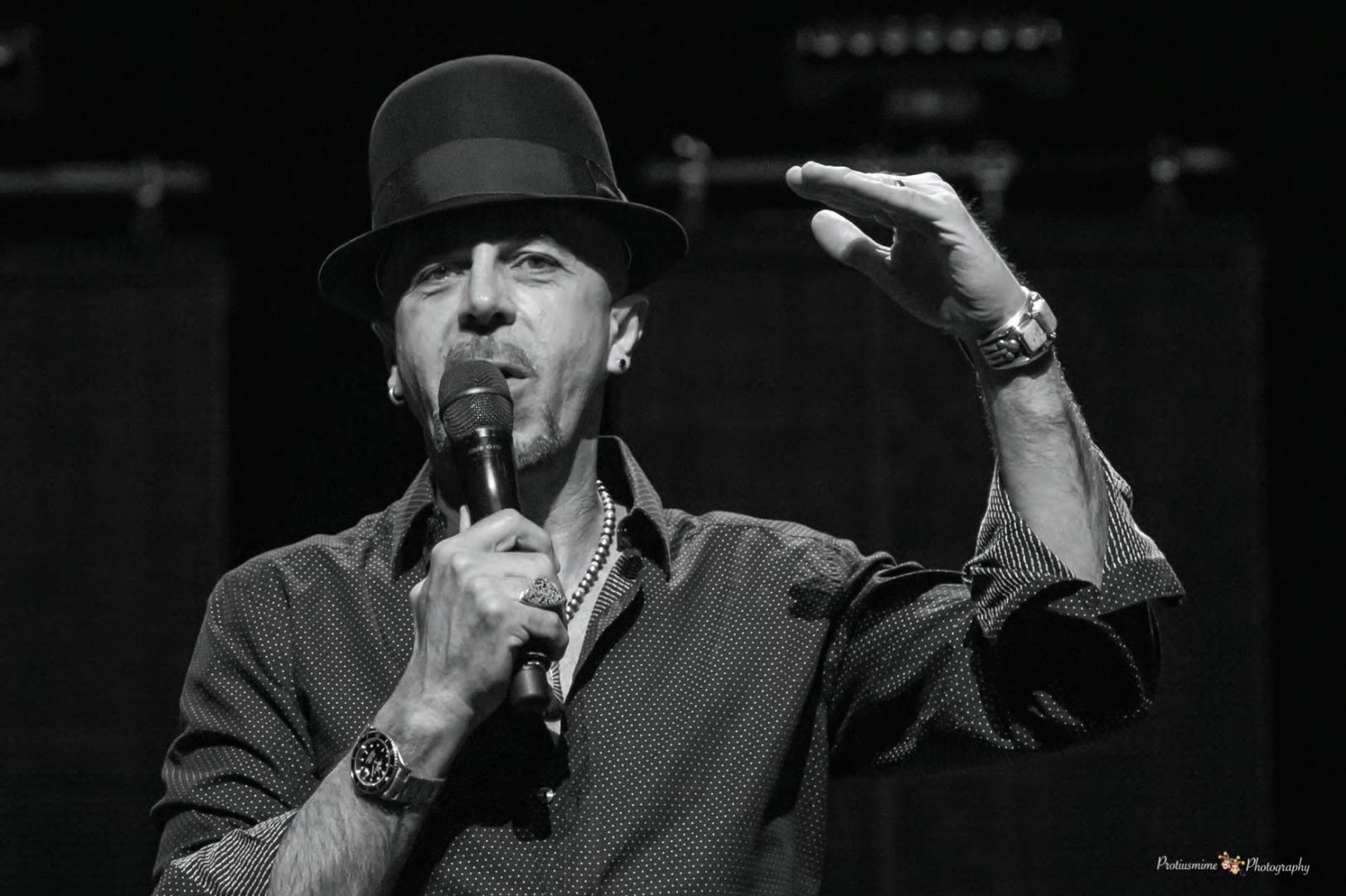
[WM] What advice would you give others trying to live out their dream?

[Zoro] Count the cost. There's always a price to pay and nothing great comes easy. It takes

guts to get to glory, but I'm convinced there's a hero inside each of us. The pressure that mounts from our seemingly insurmountable obstacles, if channeled correctly, gives birth to that hero, and that hero with the help of God, has the power to accomplish the impossible. Toward the end of my memoir, I share some of the highlights of my career, not to boast but to remind readers that anything is possible. I'm no more special or talented than anyone else in this world. If it can happen to me, it can happen to *you*.

To realize your dream, however, you must pursue it with childlike faith, one courageous step after another, until it manifests. Don't give up. It's never too late to bring that hero to life. But remember the Holy Spirit is the helper not the doer. We must get after it with all we've got, then God will do what only he can, and don't forget, he did create us to dream. I'm still dreaming big dreams, trying my best to be a hero to someone, somehow, still attempting to scale higher mountains.





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Most importantly, when you arrive at the top of *your* mountain, stay humble and temper your success with a spirit of gratitude. You'll help more people reach their summit that way and honor God in the process. Mama always told me, "Nobody owes you anything and if anyone goes out of their way to help you, express your gratitude in some exemplary fashion." She was right. The world owes me nothing. But I owe the world to her and to those who have helped me, which are legion.

[WM] Tell me about how your Christian faith influences how you live?

[Zoro] Since I was a young boy, my faith in Jesus has guided all my important decisions. It has been my compass in every storm and given me a sense of purpose. Because Christ dwells in me, I live with the intention of making a difference everywhere I go. My faith enables me

to dream and not give up; to trust in God and not in circumstances. It gives me a vision that is beyond the temporal but rather established in the eternal. My faith grants me the grace to make mistakes and assures me I'll be forgiven and spend eternity in heaven. I can think of no better way to live than having the peace that comes from being grounded in these truths.

[WM] What are you passionate about these days?

[Zoro] The deeper mission of my life grew out of the paradox of my childhood. At times, it was miserable, yet amid the heartache and the struggle was a sense of great love, expectation, and adventure. It was life in all its fragmented glory. Still, I maintain a sense of gratitude for the painful conditions that birthed within me, the spirit of a motivator who loves to encourage people to love extravagantly, live hopefully,

and believe there is a destiny awaiting them that is bigger and more beautiful than they could ever imagine. Inspiring others is my passion, purpose, and place where I find my significance. I do that through my drumming, speaking, teaching, writing, and mentoring, all of which I love immensely. But these days I have a burning desire to share my story at churches, conferences, conventions, and wherever people gather!

[WM] As a self-described underdog, how has overcoming adversity through perseverance helped shape your journey?

[Zoro] It gave me character, compassion, drive, determination, and passion. Everything I undertake I do with a sense of urgency, as if it were the most important thing in the world and my very life depended on it. I believe all that passion and fire came out of my desperate

childhood and those experiences made me value everything, everyone, and every experience. It cultivated an attitude of gratitude within me because everything is a bonus compared to where I started and what I had to overcome. But I wouldn't trade my trials and tribulations for anything because without them I would be useless.

[WM] I know you had a tough childhood and lots to overcome. What is your advice for overcoming the pain of one's past?

[Zoro] There are things that happen to us in life, things that can permanently scar us. For each of us, the wounds are different. So is the salve that helps us manage the pain. But pain management is a lifelong undertaking, so remain open to what purpose might derive from that suffering because God will use it to serve a greater purpose if you are willing. Life is doled out in increments, some of which make us who we are. So don't waste anything. Use the good, bad, and ugly to make a difference in the lives of others who struggle with similar issues. This will bring meaning to your life that could not come otherwise. The greatest use of life is to spend it on something that outlasts it. I can't think of a better way to spend our lives than to help, encourage, and inspire others. It will be our only accomplishments that will have eternal impact.

[WM] Zoro, you always have encouraging words for me personally and also for our readers. Thank you!

[Zoro] Thank you, Bruce. ◇

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