Chapter 16: Being My Own Boss

**Setting:** Paul’s job, Toastmasters club, Florida, his home, the National Aphasia Association

Paul’s company fires him. He did not like his job, but is angry that he was fired. He writes: *After all the years of therapy, and the anticipation of returning to “normal” when they hired me, I had crashed again. Disabled, unwanted, angry at them, angry at myself.*

A friend tells Paul to join Toastmasters to practice speaking for job interviews. His first speech is hard. His voice sounds different. He wants to win the ribbon for “best speech”, but he does not win.

Paul looks for a new job but is frustrated by the many unsuccessful interviews. Stephanie suggests that Paul visit his parents in Florida. This is his first trip alone since his stroke and it goes well. Paul is elated and for a short time, forgets about his job search difficulties.

While Paul is in Florida, Stephanie finds him a new job as a computer graphics subcontractor. It is frustrating to work on the computer with only his left hand, so Paul buys a new keyboard. He likes his new job, but the tasks are difficult for him and there is little support as a freelancer.

Paul volunteers with a local group interested in the space program and lobbies Congress for funding. He and Stephanie also visit the National Aphasia Association and they are invited to join the Board.

Chapter 17: Choosing My Future

**Setting:** a university

Paul takes classes at a private university to learn how to produce CAD drawings (computer-aided designs) on a computer. His instructor helps him to succeed and suggests alternative equipment and drafting tools. Stephanie hires a tutor (Glen) to help Paul with his homework. Glen helps Paul and Paul gets a good grade on a difficult project. Paul’s report card still says “behind”, but his instructor tells him he will catch up.
Paul and Stephanie celebrate their 15th wedding anniversary.

Chapter 18: Taking a Different Road to Success  
**Setting:** a university, new jobs, Toastmasters club

Paul works very hard to pass his classes. Stephanie hires an engineer (Dave) to teach Paul. Paul has a new instructor who does not help him. Stephanie and Paul advocate for accommodations for students with disabilities. Paul graduates from his program! He writes: *I wished that I could’ve shown the evaluators at the Department of Rehabilitative Services how wrong they had been when they said I’d never work! Maybe I should thank them, because their negative attitude played a part in motivating me to get to this point.*

Paul finds a new job with civil engineers, but is fired again. He finds another job with a small company as an entry-level CAD operator. Paul likes it: *I’m still a little mad at the people along the way who made it harder for me to achieve my goals, but I’m proof that you don’t have to surrender, just take another route to success.* Paul gives a speech on “How I Cope With Aphasia” at the National Aphasia Association meeting. Beforehand, he practices the speech at his Toastmasters club and wins the ribbon for “Best Speaker.”

Chapter 19: Giving Back  
**Setting:** jury duty, American Speech Language Hearing Association convention, Ohio Speech Therapy Association meeting

Paul serves jury duty and he is happy he can give back to the community. He takes a walk and sprains his ankle. He is upset, but still attends the national meeting of the American Speech Language Hearing Association. He has a booth and gives brochures about his book. He attends a special awards ceremony and remembers winning the Individual Achievement Award the year before. He gave a speech, and met John Glenn, Paul’s hero, and a former Senator and astronaut. He also met Joe Krebs, a local news anchor. Joe Krebs interviewed Paul and Stephanie. Other people interview them too. Paul writes: *I felt that my message was finally getting attention—that after a stroke people can live full lives and follow their dreams.*

Paul gives a speech at the Ohio Speech Therapy Association’s annual meeting. His speech is supposed to be “light-hearted,” so he decides to select a few humorous anecdotes from his life with aphasia. Paul’s speech goes well and he tells the speech therapists: *Laughter conquers the world!*

**Epilogue**

Paul writes: *You can’t let your stroke keep you from living a full life.*