Forword

Rainbow Reflections: Part 2 by Rex Malik is a chronological memoir chronicling his life from childhood through 2026. Told through his own memories, reflections, and personal photographs, the book explores his journey as a gay South Asian American man navigating cultural identity, mental and physical health challenges, housing instability, family dynamics, and the ongoing search for community and belonging.

Detailed Chronological Summary

1. Early Life, Immigration, and Coming Out (1980s–1990)

* **Immigrant Roots:** Born in South Asia, Malik immigrated to the United States with his family in 1984 after being sponsored by his uncle. After a brief stay in Maryland, his family settled in Northern Virginia (Alexandria and later Springfield), where he experienced significant culture shock.

* **Discovering His Identity:** Around age 10 or 11, Malik realized he was attracted to boys, though he did not yet understand what it meant. During his shy, introverted high school years, he developed his first unrequited crush on a classmate named Chad, slipping anonymous love letters into his locker.

* **Finding Solace and Coming Out:** Pop icons like Madonna and soothing instrumental music helped him cope with adolescent isolation. At age 16, he casually came out to friends and family—receiving indifference from peers and quiet, reluctant tolerance from his family. He graduated high school in 1990 with an advanced diploma and overcame aquaphobia through persistent swimming lessons.

2. College False Starts, Depression, and Graduation (1990–2000)

* **Towson State & Early Adulthood:** Malik briefly attended Towson State University in Maryland in 1990, where he enjoyed swimming and visiting gay clubs in Baltimore, but dropped out after one semester due to academic disengagement and difficulty balancing his closeted life with straight roommates. Returning to Virginia, he worked low-paying temp jobs, joined LGBTQ activist groups like ACT UP and the Human Rights Campaign Fund in D.C., and had his first romantic relationship with an Army recruit named Mike.

* **Mental Health Struggles:** In the mid-1990s, unrequited feelings for a neighbor ("Joey"), family tension, and unsympathetic healthcare providers contributed to severe, unrecognized depression.

* **George Mason University (GMU):** Seeking a fresh start, Malik transferred to GMU in 1996. Living in single dorms and driving a teal Toyota Celica, he found academic footing—particularly in philosophy and communication—and began publishing his essays online. Despite facing an anti-gay harassment incident in his dorm during his senior year, he graduated in the summer of 2000 with a B.A. in Communication.

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3. Coast-to-Coast Searching & Housing Instability (2000–2007)

* **California Dreams & Hostel Life:** After graduation, Malik traveled to San Francisco and immediately fell in love with its vibrant LGBTQ culture. However, dragging heavy luggage between temporary hotels gave him chronic plantar fasciitis, and a lack of income forced him back to Virginia. Over the next several years, Malik bounced repeatedly between Northern Virginia, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

* **Navigating the System:** Relying on state rehabilitation programs, subsidized housing vouchers, and legal aid, Malik endured frustrating bureaucratic runarounds and long waiting lists. While unhoused or between leases, he spent months living in hostels, where he formed meaningful bonds with international travelers (such as Tommy from France and Chris from Chicago).

* **Life in the Castro & Travels:** By late 2004, Malik secured an apartment at San Francisco's Fillmore Center and immersed himself in the Castro District's nightlife, community centers, and brief romances. Financial strain and domestic disputes eventually pushed him out of his lease in late 2005. He subsequently traveled to Hawaii, Montreal, and San Diego—often feeling lonely or out of place despite the scenic destinations.

4. Stability, Digital Media, and Family Relocation (2008–2018)

* **A Turning Point in 2008:** Back on the East Coast in 2008, Malik committed to mental health recovery through an Adult Day Treatment Program and joined *Triangles*, a local LGBTQ social group. He embraced digital photography, landed work

in web publishing, and later earned a Web Developer certificate.

* **Family Move & Loss of His Parents:** Following his brother and sister, Malik and his elderly parents moved to Northern California in 2014. Life there proved isolating, prompting Malik to temporarily return to Virginia to drive for Uber/Lyft. Tragedy struck when his mother, Zubaida, was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer in 2015 and passed away in February 2017. After a grieving trip to Bali with his father and sister, Malik's father, Sultan, passed away from heart complications in October 2018.

5. Returning East, the Pandemic, and Building a Home (2018–2024)

* **DMV Community & COVID-19:** Returning to Northern Virginia after his father's death, Malik rebuilt his social circle through *GoGayDC* and *Dulles Triangles* meetups hosted by his friend TJ. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, isolation took a heavy toll on his mental health, though he found relief through outdoor visits, pandemic travel to Tampa and Miami, and getting vaccinated in 2021.

* **Meeting David:** In December 2021, Malik received fan mail from David, a writer and history enthusiast who had discovered Malik's books on Amazon. The two developed a close bond, and in July 2023, they moved into a high-rise apartment together in Alexandria, Virginia (the Meridian at Eisenhower), later adopting a kitten named Sasha.

* **David's Cancer Diagnosis:** In December 2023, shortly after they hosted a housewarming party and took a holiday trip to Baltimore, David was diagnosed with aggressive Stage 4 metastatic melanoma that spread to his lungs, liver, and brain. The book includes a firsthand medical account written by David detailing his emergency room visits, immunotherapy, and CyberKnife radiation treatments.

6. Dual Tragedies, Legal Battles, and Moving Forward (2025–2026)

* **Brother's Sudden Death & Probate Dispute:** In July 2025, Malik's beloved brother Nauman died unexpectedly in California. Because Malik's health prevented him from flying, he attended the funeral via Zoom. Shortly after, a bitter family rift erupted when Malik's niece and her attorney attempted to file Nauman's estate as *intestate* (claiming no will existed), despite Nauman having left two wills. Malik hired a California probate attorney to defend his brother's wishes, resulting in his sister and

niece cutting off all contact with him. A life insurance payout from Transamerica eventually provided Malik with financial breathing room.

* **David's Passing:** Simultaneously, David's cancer worsened in late 2025, requiring frequent 911 calls and hospital stays where Malik served as his primary caregiver. Unable to manage David's care alone as their lease ended, David returned to West Virginia with his father and passed away in hospice in October 2025.

* **Resilience into 2025:** Malik moved into his own apartment, invested in self-care (including completing Invisalign treatment in 2026), and continued attending D.C.-area LGBTQ socials. He closes the memoir reflecting on his ongoing health management with the motto: *"recovered but not cured."*

***The Search for the Trust (Late 2025): The author's power of attorney (Karina) located their late brother Nauman's 2018 Trust, but a California attorney named Serry refused to release it without a court order. A court order eventually revealed that Rajiv Chadha (a tax accountant friend) was named as the Trustee.

***Court Battles and Delays (Early to Mid-2026): Rajiv delayed taking official action and wanted the news published in newspapers, while another person (Seher) unsuccessfully tried to become the executor. In April 2026, Rajiv was officially named executor and trustee, but probate was further delayed while he waited for a state bond and official letters of administration.

***Communication Breakdown: Once Rajiv officially took over, he stopped communicating directly with the author and their sibling (the only two beneficiaries), instead referring them to his hourly-paid attorney, Courtney.

***Frustration Over Questions (Late 2026): In October 2026, the beneficiaries received confusing questions from Rajiv's attorney about Nauman's properties, mortgages, and debts—information the beneficiaries felt the Trustee should already know or easily find through tax returns and credit bureaus.

***Current Concerns: With probate just getting underway and formal asset transfers months away, the beneficiaries are left feeling ignored, stressed about their financial future, and doubtful of Rajiv's responsiveness.