



Why this stubborn cosmetics tycoon will make you root for a millionaire

Description

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Mark Constantine and Jeff Osment talking at the book launch. In the foreground is a stack of the book 'dear john'.

I don't usually root for millionaires. In fact, I would say I have a visceral hatred for them. Most corporate biographies offer nothing but exploitative tales of untouchable oligarchs hoarding wealth at our expense. Yet the wild, radical journey of LUSH co-founder Mark Constantine [breaks this mould entirely](#). Hearing about Mark's humble beginnings, how he experienced homelessness and sleeping under hedges, resonated with me from the start. I've been on the streets, and I know how hard it is.

The laughter at the launch

On Thursday, 28 May, I attended the [book launch](#) of *Dear John* inside the stunning LUSH studio on Beak St, London. The event was small, intimate and hosted by James O'Brien. Attendees mixed cocktails while making their own bath bombs as we chowed down on cupcakes emblazoned with Mark's face. Speaking directly with Constantine and his lifelong friend Jeff Osment, I found the tycoon warm and welcoming.

I still sometimes struggle with being invited to these events. A large part of me still carries that homeless mindset. Yet the absolute openness in that room proved that we made the right eclectic and headstrong man, famous. He's a star of industry who never forgot his roots. Throughout this book, the backdrop is of a lost boy searching for his father, whom he never knew. The book is named after the perfume Constantine created as an ode to his father. Banging scent, by the way.

Supported by his wife, Mo, who frequently acted as the breadwinner, Mark was a seed who took a little while to sprout. With a little watering from his wife and friends, his relentless passions in natural skincare propelled him to international success. But this is a profound rags-to-riches story without the usual corporate greed. Mark didn't just line his pockets; he took his money and chose to share it with whoever and whatever he could. He used his £1bn empire to fight state power, fund radical animal-

safety campaigns, and rock the corporate world.

LUSH â?? Moving past corporate crap

When I say I couldnâ??t put this book down, I mean it. This expanded second edition by HarperCollins brings the history right up to date, and itâ??s a wild ride. The new chapters bring to light the brutal realities of navigating a collapsing high street. LUSH has survived pandemic closures and Brexit-related staffing issues and has navigated the challenges of managing 50 regional shops directly in the [Ukraine warzone](#). And permeating through the pages was the message that corporate survival relies on community, rather than balance sheets and board meetings.

Constantine always rejected chemical-heavy industry standards. Working from a small, cramped room in his and Moâ??s marital home, the young couple mass-produced natural, herbal formulas for The Body Shop. He stubbornly followed his passions, whether it was securing a community allotment with his closest friends or taking up beekeeping to intimately understand the ingredients he used in his concoctions.

His deep love for the land and for wild things directly shaped his legacy. When his company *Cosmetics to Go* ultimately folded, Constantine didnâ??t give up. Instead, he pivoted to recording birdsong and authored two books on it. And using this love of life, he turned his new project, LUSH, into a powerhouse of activism. The business has backed so many important movements that other corporate entities are shit scared of.

Most notably, Constantine launched a fierce, decades-long war against animal cruelty. He sent two of his trusted employees to climb Mount Kilimanjaro to protest lab testing and established the annual global LUSH [Prize](#). The fund has dished out nearly [Â£3m to scientists and activists](#) working to replace animal safety trials. Constantine has reached even further, financing anti-blood sports campaigns and donating tens of thousands directly to the Hunt Saboteurs Association through dedicated products such as the *Fabulous Mrs Fox* bubble bar.

LUSH â?? Upsetting the establishment

This willingness to fund radical, direct action has landed Constantine in hot water. Come on, itâ??s not normal rich folk behaviour. And the establishment hates it. Rather than hoard wealth like some lovely-smelling dragon, Constantine used LUSH windows nationwide to launch the massively controversial [SpyCops campaign](#). Partnering with Police Spies Out of Lives and the Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance, his [shopfronts](#) were covered in fake police tape, crying out that the police had crossed the line.

The campaign was fearless in exposing the human rights violations committed by undercover cops. LUSH called out the targeting of women in particular who had been coerced into long-term and intimate relationships. Constantine faced [massive online backlash and](#) calls for corporate boycotts from the Police Federation, but Constantine refused to back down.

Co-founding LUSH on 100% cruelty-free, ethical terms, he built the brand into the giant it is today. And he built it as a weapon to help fight for global wealth redistribution. And they have backed everything from anti-war efforts to local community food projects.

One of my favourite tales in the book, which perfectly embodies Mark, is the story of how he [took on Amazon and won](#). When the internet retail giant began using the trademarked word "Lusha" to direct search traffic towards crappy rival cosmetics, Constantine did not take it lying down. He sued the corporate giants and won a stunning High Court victory. And in a beautiful display of stubbornness against Amazon's pushback, Constantine trademarked the name of Amazon's then-managing director. He threatened to release a LUSH shower cream called *Christopher North*, described as being "rich, thick and full of it".

Weirdly, Amazon backed down.

The end?

And guess what? Constantine finally found his father, with the help of Jeff. But *Dear John* is about more than that. This book is a powerful testament to human resilience and proves that, with the right people around you, grassroots solidarity can build a global empire. And you don't have to sell your soul.

Mark Constantine stands as rare proof that wealth can be used as [a weapon for change](#). And I cannot wait to help them achieve that.

Dear John is out on Thursday, 4 June, and launches at £25. Pick it up in LUSH stores, online at LUSH, or in bookshops nationwide.

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By [Antifabot](#)

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