

PERMANENT SCARS

I Knocked on the Door and Hell Reignied In



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Preface

“Writing is magic, as much the water of life as any other creative art. The water is free. So, drink. Drink and be filled up.”

-Stephen King

"I do not carry such information in my mind since it is readily available in books. The value of a college education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think."

-Albert Einstein

“The more sensitive you are, the more certain you are...”

-Marlon Brando

“Bipolar 1 should be called a brain disorder.”

-Marlene Cordero, MD

No AI was used in the writing of this novel, other than to assist with the copyediting.

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Part 1: The Beginning

Oto was 14-months old.

He calmly stood up and walked across the large room without falling.

Ana, his mom, couldn't understand it, unless somehow, he was practicing on his own in his crib, and surely that wasn't possible.

When he was four-years-old, Oto had a dream that hairy monsters would grab him.

They would always take him underneath his bed, down to what seemed like hell, to torture him.

One night in real life, Oto was going to sleep, and in a dream, he picked up a baseball bat.

When the hairy creatures tried to grab him in his dream, he beat the hell out of them, as they surrounded him in his bedroom.

The monsters never came back for him again.

Oto was five-years-old, and he was already saving pennies and nickels in a plastic Pinocchio from the top shelf in his bedroom.

When he reached up to grab the "bank", he was standing on the bottom shelf, reaching up to the toy that contained all the coins he had managed to save up.

The top shelf couldn't support his weight.

The bottom shelf fell off its brackets, and he fell onto his bed below, but not before yelling out in pain as the top shelf crashed down onto his bed.

Before landing on his bed, the shelf hit him right above his left eye.

To this day at the age of 40 he can still see the scar.

Oto was five-years-old when he caught his first small trout in a stream with nothing but a short fishing line that was tied to a long stick, and a hook with a bloody worm impaled on it.

He pulled the small fighting fish out of the stream, and it landed on the river bank.

When his stepdad took the fish home, he showed Oto how to bash its brains out on a rock, gutting the small limp trout by ripping out its organs.

They then fried up the delicious trout meat and devoured it together.

Chapter 1: The Crash

Oto was 11 years old on that beautiful Spring Day in May in Georgia when his stepdad crashed his Pitt's Special into the ground due to exhaustion (not suicide). He was practicing to be featured in the Georgia State Fair, but he flew cargo jets for Hawaiian Airlines. Oto felt guilty because he had a love/hate relationship with his stepdad.

Oto stepped off the bus, driven by an old lady with purple hair, and into the warm sunshine. He opened the front door to the house when the yellow phone on the wall began to ring. He picked it up, and his good friend Nolon was already quickly talking before Oto even got the receiver to his ear.

"Oto, your dad crashed his Pitt's Special in the field across from my house."

There was a slight pause on the phone.

"I ran over and in the cockpit your dad was slumped down in the seat."

Oto wasn't sure that he was actually hearing the words coming from Nolon.

"There was a piece of metal sticking out from his head and his brains were dripping down into his lap."

Oto dropped the rotary dial receiver and ran to the nearby garage, and opened it.

The Pitt's Special wasn't there, and Oto hadn't seen his stepdad for weeks. He suddenly felt like vomiting, as he raced back and hung up the phone on Nolon.

Oto walked into the living room and looked out the large windows facing the front of the house.

He saw with horror several cars pulling up into the driveway and couldn't look away as they parked and people he didn't know got out of their cars.

He opened the front door right before a man and a woman he had never seen before were about to knock.

They asked him if his mom was there, and one man whispered to the woman not to tell him that his dad was dead.

It wasn't long before strangers filled the living room, and Oto knew for sure now that what Nolon had described to him was true.

He sat in the living room feeling guilty because he couldn't cry.

He remembered how his stepdad began building the motor for the bi-plane in their garage back in Michigan, when the icicles were so long in the winter that he would use a snowball to break them off and eat them like an ice cream cone.

He also remembered how months earlier, in the living room, his stepdad had been taping the wings of the bi-plane that he later painted out in the garage.

Other memories started flooding in on Oto.

He walked out the front door and saw his mom, Ana, in the car, pulling into the driveway. She had just come back from a shift of waitressing at a fancy burger restaurant.

In slow motion, he saw his mom park the car and look the stranger that Oto had never seen before right into her eyes. Oto thought he heard the woman whisper something to his mom.

Ana yelled out in what seemed like pain, and it was the most god-awful sound Oto had ever heard in his life.

She burst into tears before screaming once or twice more.

Oto walked back into the garage and saw his model airplane with broken wings lying on the ground in the corner.

His stepdad had walked him through every step to create the masterpiece, and it was a model, much like the Pitt's Special, in a way, with stretched cloth for the wings and a small gas tank that held high-end fuel.

The plane had two wires and a handle attached to it, and on a winter day in Georgia, his stepdad had started up the little engine by putting pressure on the propeller.

His stepdad stood in the field where he usually started his own Pitt's Special from, turning the speeding model plane around in circles, flipping the loud toy upside down by maneuvering the handle in his hand.

The plane moved up and down with a slow rhythm that mesmerized Oto. His stepdad asked him to step in close and join him in the circle, smiling as he handed off the loud plane to him.

Oto panicked, quickly crashing the small plane into the grass, breaking the wings in half.

The day of the funeral arrived, and Oto was so happy riding in the limousine.

Due to the state of his stepdad's body, he was told by Ana that it would be a closed coffin.

Oto was laughing at the police escort that, for some reason, was blazing a trail for them in the limousine, even though it disturbed his mom.

He had never been in a limousine before, and he couldn't believe how the motorcycles with men in uniform providing the escort would pull up to red lights, rev their engines, and stop cars before speeding their shiny motorcycles through the intersection.

It wasn't long before they arrived at the big funeral hall that was filled with people.

Oto sat off to the side next to his uncle, whom he had once watched The Wizard of Oz with.

The two things he could remember about his uncle were how, at Denny's, he flirted with the waitresses and could use a fork to catapult a spoon into a jar of jelly.

He also recalled how his uncle was running once in the Arizona desert and ran into a sequoia cactus, screaming out in pain as the needles pierced his skin.

Oto listened to the music drifting around him, back near that closed coffin. Finally, he let go, and the tears rushed over him in waves.

Later that night, Oto tried to go to sleep. He remembered all of the different memories of his stepdad.

As he shifted around in his bunkbed, he recalled the times when he felt like he hated him.

Once he had found some matches. He tried to burn a dead bird on the ground to give it a mini funeral, but the nearby field caught on fire.

He jumped up and rode his bike away from the flames.

Luckily, a nearby neighbor had been mowing his field with a big riding lawnmower.

The old neighbor drove over in the lawnmower, and mowed a fire line that prevented the flames from spreading to the nearby houses.

The news traveled fast in the small community where he lived.

As Oto pumped the pedals on his bike, the muscles in his legs started burning, and they felt heavy as he rode home.

Somehow, his stepdad had already heard about the field.

As Oto opened the front door, he saw with horror his stepdad standing there waiting for him.

He had a smile on his face and a dark black belt in his hands.

Oto was ordered to bend over as his stepdad whipped him with it over-and-over again.

By some fortunate amount of luck, Oto had a wallet in his back pocket, so the blows didn't hurt so bad.

His stepdad figured that out and ordered Oto to unzip his pants and drop them with his underwear to the ground.

The lashes then left deep red marks, and the pain was intense. Just like when he had crashed the toy plane that Oto had built with his stepdad, the tears now flowed down Oto's cheeks.

Back in his bunkbed Oto cried, remembering the intense pain from that day.

Just like when the toy wings had broken in half, he was so upset with himself, but he managed to smile before he went to sleep.

It was at least a year before the funeral that Oto lay out in the dry grass near the runway that was not far beyond the trees on the property of their house in Georgia.

He loved watching his stepdad in the Pitt's Special way up in the clouds, spinning and diving in his bi-plane before stalling out and pitching the plane straight down toward the runway, before buzzing the small field, shaking the ground that he was lying on.

On one of those passes, his stepdad flipped the loud bi-plane upside down, flying close to the ground before soaring back up to the clouds.

That was the day that Oto broke his arm playing football with the neighbors, not far from where he had burned the field to give the poor dead bird his own funeral.

For some reason he thought he could cremate the beautiful, unmoving wings.

Oto was one of the youngest players on the line, where he was playing as a wide receiver.

He only knew what he had been told.

He was supposed to run out and catch a football and make it into the pretend end zone.

He never forgot what happened next.

He managed to catch the ball that was a perfect spiral from his friend.

He then sprinted toward what he thought was the end zone, and his legs were pumping so fast he couldn't feel them.

One of the older kids ran faster than him and slid into Oto's legs, sending him down so hard onto the field that he had the wind knocked out of him.

Not wanting to cry and be called a sissy, Oto jumped back onto his feet, but his right arm was tingling.

Oto shook his tingling arm, thinking the fall had just bruised it. But it wasn't long before the bone in his right wrist snapped and was scraping against the inside of his skin.

There wasn't any blood, but Oto went immediately into shock and was transported by his friend's mom quickly to the hospital.

Since his stepdad was up in his plane and his mom was shopping in a nearby town, he couldn't be treated for the intense pain.

He did remember lying on a gurney in the hallway of the hospital, drifting in and out of consciousness for a couple of hours until his mom finally showed up.

He was given a shot in his exposed butt and didn't remember much after that.

Given the compound break in his wrist, Oto had to be rushed off to the emergency room.

But first he watched as the needle sank into the same right arm to pull out the blood that they needed to use for the surgery.

He recalled being up in a cold room with bright lights as a doctor looked at him and told him to count backwards starting at 10. Oto didn't make it past 7.

He later woke up in the same cold room alone and looked around, but nobody was there.

He noticed the hard white cast that started on his fingers and ran all the way up just underneath his right shoulder.

He was later put into a separate room, and his mom looked down at him with some tears in her eyes, watching a nurse tie his cast down to the bed, where Oto would later fight to go to sleep.

It was eventually morning and the cuff was removed from his cast, but he cried out loud when noticing how his favorite shirt, cut in half, was hanging from his neck.

On the way back home, his mom stopped to get donuts.

Oto looked up and just happened to see the Blue Angels ripping through the air with a speed and sound that amazed him.

His friends met him back at the house.

He was shocked to find out that he was now a hero.

They all signed his cast with a Sharpie as they munched on the donuts.

The cast stayed on his right arm for six months, and at school, he had to learn how to write with his left hand, which was not easy to do.

He did manage to figure it out, though, and eventually he went back to the same hospital where he had the surgery so many months before.

The doctor came in, cutting off the cast, and asked him to put his arm up on a “table” where the X Ray would happen.

Oto was telling his arm to move, but the muscles couldn’t respond after so many months of non-use.

The results of the X Ray showed that Oto’s bones had healed.

The doctor gave him a small black ball that he was told to squeeze over-and-over to build the muscles back.

It hurt like hell whenever he used it, which wasn’t often.

It was a few weeks after Oto’s right arm and wrist were completely healed.

He couldn't believe that one afternoon he opened the garage door, only to see a new minibike that his stepdad gave him as a gift.

There was a red bow stuck onto the handle bars of the minibike that simply said, "Don't crash."

Like the model airplane, Oto was afraid to ride the minibike at first, but his stepdad explained how to use it.

Unlike with the toy plane that Oto had slammed into the grass on that Spring Day, he wasn't scared this time.

It wasn't long before Oto was racing up and down the road on his new minibike outside their home in the street that was almost always empty.

He found the narrow trails in the nearby woods and raced through them, yelling out at the top of his lungs.

When they lived in Michigan, one year before moving to Georgia, his stepdad came home one day with a BB gun.

Oto was lectured about how he had to be so careful and never shoot any animal or anyone.

He set up the targets in the basement, practicing for weeks until he could hit the middle of the target most every time.

He learned how to load the BB's into the small gun, but he felt a little guilty when he broke his promise once they were living in Georgia.

There were lots of squirrels in the woods, and he shot them from a long distance away.

The BB's never penetrated the skin of the jumping squirrels, but he couldn't help but notice how it hurt them.

They would quickly jump from branch-to-branch scrambling to try and dodge the small BB's that would whiz by them.

One time Oto was shooting some squirrels high up in the trees out in the woods behind his house.

His best friend was beside him, and he had a pellet gun that he would pump up and then kill the squirrels, watching as they dropped to the ground before he picked them up and bashed their heads on nearby rocks.

His good friend showed Oto how to skin the dead squirrels.

He would then rip out their guts, dropping them into a plastic bag.

They tied up the bubbly warm bag and swung it around.

Somehow, they managed to get the bag to “sit” upon on a nearby power line that ran across the road from his house.

They used the rotting bag full of hot guts as target practice as flies buzzed around it.

Oto and his friend hid behind a nearby tree and couldn't believe it when a car drove under the bag, and it somehow dropped onto the windshield.

The car immediately lurched to a stop as the warm blood was wiped away by moving windshield wipers.

They ran as fast as they could back into the woods and never saw the car or the driver again.

Two weeks after the funeral, Oto decided to go back to school, even though he didn't have to because there were only a few weeks left before summer break.

The old yellow school bus turned around in the cul-de-sac near Oto's home, and the brakes squealed as it stopped outside.

Oto recognized that awful sound as he sat on the couch in the living room.

He grabbed his books and hurried outside, boarding the bus to take the one-hour trek to school.

It was the last day of school, and he had been up late the night before, working and reworking a poem that he wrote about his stepdad's death.

The poem wasn't too long, and he wasn't confident that it was even a poem.

He had written it down on an 8x5 piece of paper, and was sure to stay inside the lines with his black pen.

Once he was sitting safely in his seat, he took out the poem on paper, reading it many times over-and-over before arriving at his elementary school.

After pulling up to the curb, Oto stepped off the bus and into the morning sun.

As Oto went through the doors to his class, he ran into Nolon who had called him that day on the phone. Nolon had dropped his math book onto the floor, so Oto picked it up for him.

Their first class was English, and Oto was nervous, and made sure again that he had his poem ready.

As soon as it was his turn, he stood up and was shaking as he did his best to keep the paper still.

He launched into his first line and the once noisy class went silent.

It only took him a few minutes to get through it before he sat back down.

His heart was pounding, and he stuttered a little on the second line because he was so nervous.

The last line of his poem ended with the line, “and his brains were dripping down into his lap.”

Once he was safely sitting back in his seat, he was surprised to see all of his classmates staring at him without making a sound.

As Oto stepped off the bus and into his yard after reading his poem in class, and also playing his snare drum with his good friend Nolon, he was enjoying sitting out on the front porch. This would be the very last day that he would attend his school in Georgia.

The next morning, they would all be in a car, heading across the country and to California, which he wasn't sure if he was looking forward to or not.

It just so happened to be the last day that he would write a poem until he was 17 years-old.

The next morning arrived soon enough, and Oto sat in the back seat in their maroon station wagon.

He didn't even mind not sitting in the passenger seat that was occupied by his mom's good friend Enne.

Enne had flown out to join them and help drive across the country from Georgia to California.

It was hot and muggy in the car, and the air conditioning barely reached Oto in the back seat.

He had been given a Rubik's cube by his stepdad the Christmas before the crash, along with a small "manual" that had some hints on how to solve it.

The trip would take many days, and he was so focused on solving the "puzzle" that he even managed to ignore his sister sitting next to him most of the time.

They would, of course, make many stops along the way, staying in motels and eating in the cheapest restaurants they could find.

Oto was so absorbed in his Rubik's cube that he managed to shut the world out around him.

He even managed to let his sister shove him to the side now and then to keep him from crossing the invisible line that she had drawn in the hot back seat of the car.

Somehow, he solved the Rubik's cube before they arrived at his grandparent's house in California.

He really couldn't recall what happened to it.

But it was the last time he picked one up.

He couldn't even guess how many of those plastic squares he had turned over-and-over until all of the colors lined up.

Oto had plenty of time to just think as they made their way across the U.S.

He had not told anyone that he saw the wrecked plane twisted on sitting on a large trailer in a nearby driveway on the afternoon of the plane crash when his stepdad was killed in his Pitts Special.