

Drama

Excerpt 1: First Brush with Death

A curse, an unquenchable lust taunts an unsuspecting victim once he or she has made a serious attempt at self-termination. That haunting line where life and death dance, once crossed over, exposes your newly addicted soul to the rarely attainable yet coveted playground between living and dying. The consequence is similar to a ravaging dog having first tasted blood. You obsess until you get more. The unforgiving enticement to play with death screams through your veins like ice water, forever longing to be warmed. Having tasted the sensation of death once, the ravenous craving never really vanishes; instead, it beckons as an insatiable appetite, luring your thoughts, passions, and behaviors back toward devouring it again, until you finally fall prey to the deadly temptation from whence there is no return.

I had stepped over that line of no return, and there was no looking back. I had banished myself from the virgin territory of ordinary life where, for the most part, the soul enjoys a singular desire to live. I had become an adulterer whose mistress was the face of death. My death warrant was signed the moment I swallowing my first jowl full of pain medication.

Excerpt 2:

Rising at dawn this particular Saturday morning turned out to be more palatable than I had imagined, probably because I was on a quest to talk to God. With a full tank of gas and a half dozen energy bars, I began my journey. The air was crisp, and the early morning dew accentuated the springtime fragrances, announcing the vibrancy of life.

While driving westward on Highway 64 toward a predetermined spot in the mountains, mentally engaged in weighing the pros and cons of adoption or becoming a dad, I was suddenly thrust back into reality and the immediacy of the moment. I rounded a bend along the highway and came upon a horrendous traffic accident. Two vehicles were involved: one was an old, red Ford half-ton pick-up truck, and the other was a newer, black Cadillac. Both were to my right in a gully partially full of water, the big old Ford overturned on its side. The accident must have been fresh because the police had not yet arrived and, upon scanning the area for help, I saw there was no one else around. I slammed on the brakes and pulled my car as far off the steep embankment of the highway as possible.

Instinct kicked in and I ran through the mire to the first vehicle, assessing the situation. One person had been thrown from the truck and lay unconscious, face up in a cluster of foxtails and foot-high grass, about ten feet from the pick-up on the other side of the gully. Obviously the truck had flipped several times. The roof was completely caved in, and the sides were smashed beyond description. The truck managed to come to a halt lying on the driver's side. The person in the reeds, I assumed, must have been the driver of the truck and inside the Ford, dangling in midair on the passenger's side, was a man struggling to free himself from his seat belt. As I darted toward the motionless individual in the grass, I caught a glimpse in my peripheral vision of something much more alarming.

Black smoke had erupted from under the hood of the Cadillac. An elderly woman, pinned behind the steering wheel, sat lifeless. Her head was flopped back against the driver's side window, blood trickling from her left ear and nose and flowing profusely from a gash across her left cheek. The flames were now visible, and I knew I had to work fast. To pry the driver's door open would require the jaws-of-life. Racing to the passenger side of the car, I checked that door and found it locked. I kicked out the passenger window, reached inside to unlock the door, and then dove into the vehicle in a desperate attempt to get the woman out.

Extraction was not going to be easy. With the steering wheel braced tightly against her belly, I couldn't budge her at all. Sweat poured from my forehead, exacerbated by the heat from the flames just a few feet away. I sat on the seat beside her, propped my feet up against the steering wheel, and heaved against it, hoping to bend the wheel back up and out of the way. The adrenaline pumping through my body may not have been enough to rip open the driver's door, but it was enough to slowly inch the creaking wheel up toward her window and away from her abdomen. I now had enough room to work. I eased my left arm under her head and wrapped my right around the front of her torso, clasping my hands under her left armpit. I jimmied her along, inch by inch, until I was able to pull her out of the passenger door and then drag her at least twenty feet away from the flames.

Highway patrol car sirens blared loudly as police began to arrive. The first officer radioed for an ambulance and backup, then darted toward me, frantically asking a million questions. The man caught in the pick-up had managed to crawl out of the passenger window and doddered over to the victim on the hillside, who was still out cold. He wailed the name Martha and repeatedly hollered for help. The RCMP's attention was temporarily diverted toward the couple. He ordered me to stay put and bounded in their direction. While he performed CPR on the unconscious woman, I hopped in my car and made my getaway.

I had an appointment to keep.