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Broken Crown

by Richard Lewis

The scar ran deep within his being and Jack wore it with pride. It was the reason people noticed him.

Prior to the accident he had felt invisible. One of six children he would have to fight to get attention and he was no fighter. It was much the same at school, being short for a twelve-year old he was vulnerable to being bullied. In class, it was impossible to concentrate and he lived in fear of being humiliated, and ruined by taunts that he was stupid.

On the day of the accident he was playing with friends on a building site after school. He had crawled inside the section of a huge concrete drain pipe and the friends were jumping on top, rocking it from side to side. This started off as fun and Jack imagined he was clothing, spinning in a tumble drier. Due to a crack in the concrete, the section of pipe suddenly collapsed, landing on top of Jack. The rough edge crashing into the milky flesh of his forehead, causing an ugly, jagged gash and fracturing his skull.

For a while It was touch and go but after weeks in hospital he was finally allowed home and back to school, sporting a large turban like bandage. This was mainly for protection but it made him look like Gunga Din. Jack had seen the film taken from Kipling's poem. He felt heroic like the character in the film, marching into the building, akin to an actor walking on stage.

Everyone asked him how he was, wanting to know about the scar. This amazed Jack, others actually showing an interest in him, having been used to fading into the background, unnoticed.

Jack found that he drew strength from the scar, he saw it as a badge of honour. It reminded him that he existed and mattered.

Jack's broken crown had somehow fixed the fault inside. With his fragile self-esteem bolstered, and the ugliness in clear view, he no longer needed to hide.

Strange that the breaking of that drain could somehow mend a splintered soul.