

My Invisible Scar

by Richard Rewell

I always thought it might be cool to have one of those visible heroic scars. Something on the side of my face, neck or arms, attained in some glorious act of bravery. But no. Mine was not visible. You could not see it. It was deep in my mind and very unheroic.

These days my scar manifests itself every now and then. But once, it was with me every minute. It's like a mist clearing to reveal a piece of surgical gauze that slowly splits and from the resulting gap the memory, a viscous sludge, drips into my mind and I shake, I sweat, and I weep.

Twenty years ago, I was driving my wife, little daughter and baby son home after lunch at my boss's house. My wife was not pleased that I had not been promoted and was bitching at me, alluding that we should try a break from each other. It was getting dark and rain began to fall.

"You're useless. How are you we going to keep up with the mortgage and my health spa subscription. Have you no thought? And God I need a better car. Mine's nearly two years old" screamed my wife as I slowed to negotiate a humped back bridge. "I need a Range Rover. Like the other Mums have got," she demanded.

"Daddy, Mummy Jamie's undone his seat belt," shouted my daughter.

"Just let me get over the bridge," I said.

I didn't see the oncoming car showing air, as it leapt over the bridge, until too late, their lights were not on. I braked, swerved. We collided. And my son was propelled through the windscreen.

My son died, my wife divorced me, I was denied access to my daughter, I lost my job and became homeless losing touch with all who knew me.

It was my daughter who found me. It took her fifteen years of searching.

“How’s your mother love?” I asked entering her flat a few hours after discovering me in a soup kitchen.

“Dead. Suicide. The crash was reviewed, and you were totally exonerated,” she smiled, “mum was guilt-ridden.”

I started to shake, to sweat and began to weep just as the gauze appeared in my mind, but my daughter put her arm around me saying, “no Dad it was Mum’s choice to end her life. And you couldn’t help Jamie’s death.”

In my mind no gap appeared in the gauze. And no viscous sludge dripped out. Perhaps the scar was healing.