

bmx practice

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Honorable Mention, Short Story

I TOOK A QUICK INVENTORY of my body. A glance at my left shoulder showed me that most of my skin had been scraped off, and it was covered in a mixture of blood, dust, and small rocks from the dirt track. There are parallel ridges and grooves where the gravel tore through the skin as I slid. *"That's bizarre...should hurt like hell, but I don't feel a thing. Wonder who took my shirt off"* Someone had pulled up my pants legs to reveal both knees covered in "road-rash" as well. Blood oozed out of the scrapes and was smeared down my shins. *"That'll add a few new scars to my legs."* My head felt like it would explode, and the left side of my face burned as if it was on fire. *"I need at least four Extra-Strength Bufferin."*

"Where'd I crash?" I asked.

"Goin' into the first turn. You cased the jump and your tires skidded in the turn. You shoulda seen yourself flyin' over the bike and hittin' the berm," replied Rob. "You knocked yourself out when you hit."

His mouth was moving, but nothing was registering in my mind. I felt like a fog had rolled into my brain, and nothing could penetrate the thickness.

"What's happening to me? Why am I sitting here in the track office surrounded by a crowd? Think Kyle, think. Okay, I'm at the track...was racing. Gate dropped...beat David out of the gate for once...jumped the step-up... Then what? Don't know."

"Ow! My shoulder."

"Sharp pain now like a knife in my shoulder. This sucks!"

"Kyle, try not to move it too much, it may be broken," said Sherri the track manager. "Is it the same shoulder you broke before?"

"I broke my shoulder?"

"What? I never broke anything. Why do they keep asking me? My eyes hurt...won't focus...who's here?"

"Where'd I crash?"

"Dude, you keep askin' the same thing. It was in the first turn," Matt replied. Again, I couldn't focus on the answer. Sounds drifted around me, but none of them formed into words.

"Kyle, your Mom is on her way. Does anything else hurt besides your shoulder?" asked Sherri.

"Uh, don't know. Guess my knees ache some...kinda stiff...pounding headache and hey, I can see my left cheek. What's with that?...shouldn't see it...Where'd I crash?"

"Laughter? Why? Just want to know where I crashed...confusing."

"You crashed in the first turn Kyle," said Sherri. You're pretty banged up. Even though you were wearing your full-face helmet, you dented it. You hit on your head and shoulder first, so that's why you have such a headache and so many scrapes.

"Yeah, you're messed up Dude," added Matt. "Your face is bleeding and bruising. it's already turnin' purple. Maybe you'll have a black eye."

"Oh," I managed. *"...face feels swollen and tight like the skin is stretched out over the bones."*

"The first turn...don't remember that...jumped the step-up. Why can't I see the first turn?"

"Kyle, look at me. Focus on my voice Kyle." I stared at my mom kneeling in front of me about a foot away. Her face was directly in front of mine, and she held my gaze. *"Finally, someone who will help me instead of just laughing and giving me confusing answers."*

"Where'd I crash?"

"Kyle, you are at the BMX track. You. Crashed. Your. Bike. After. The. First. Jump," enunciated my mom.

"Can't remember."

"You were knocked out, Kyle."

"How long was I out?"

"About two minutes. We thought you were dead or something when you didn't move," said Rob.

"Yeah, I thought maybe I'd be gettin' a new bike, then you woke up," laughed Matt.

"Did you hurt the same shoulder that you broke before?" Asked mom.

"I broke my shoulder...when?"

"Kyle, you broke your shoulder at a BMX clinic the week before we left on our cruise."

"We went on a cruise? Where?"

My mom glanced at Sherri and arched her eyebrow up in question. For a brief instant, mom's calm demeanor crumbled slightly as she realized I was clueless. Sherri replied with a nod. I overheard their whispered phrases.

"See...doesn't remember anything...has a vacant look...stares into space...same questions over and over...to the hospital."

"Yes, we went to Disney World and then on a cruise to the Bahamas. Do you remember that?" Mom said.

"No."

"Let's get you to the emergency room, Kyle. The doctor can check you out, and we'll help you remember more later."

"No...can't stand up. My knee stings too much...wait here till I'm better."

"Kyle, you walked up here from the track."

"I did? I don't think so."

"Yes, you did. Listen Kyle, we'll help hold you up, and we'll go slowly, but we need to go now," mom said.

I didn't think I could get up, but with Matt on one side and mom on the other, I stood. With each step, I became aware of new injuries. *"It feels like my whole body has been beaten by a wooden baseball bat."* I stopped and began to crumple as everything went white. The pain was excruciating as my vision slowly returned, and I limped to the car. I could feel the fabric rub and pull against my skinned knees as my pants legs slid down and adhered to the bloody wounds.

"Stop! Get my pants legs down over the knees." As mom straightened them, I saw the gaping holes in the denim of my brand new Dickies. *"Wow, I can feel a cool breeze blowing on my knees through the open holes. Weird."*

"Great, another new pair of pants ruined."

"The rest of you didn't fare too well either Kyle," my mom joked. "You look you've been on the losing end of a gang brawl-ripped up pants and shirt; contusions, dirt and blood from head to toe."

I caught my reflection in the tint on the car window. *"Whoa! I'm covered in dirt and blood. Matt's right...gonna have a black eye...swelling."*

"Where'd I crash?" I wondered aloud again as we drove to the hospital.

