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Eng 317
Short Story Rough Draft
20 March 2014

Cherry On Top

My dad is a psycho.

And I don't mean that in an adolescent, rebellious kind of way.

He really is.

He was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder seven years ago.

If you're an enabler, you're probably thinking something like, "PTSD is a sickness. Just like the flu or an iron deficiency. He's not psychotic."

Well. You're wrong. It's a disorder, not a sickness, and he most certainly is.

If you're curious, like me, you're probably wondering what happened that drove him all the way to Insanity City.

It was a shooting.

But the shooting was really just the cherry. Although I don't like to refer to police work as an ice cream sundae. It more accurately resembles a lemon or a really hot pepper.

It's painful.

Before the shooting, my dad had seen a whole lot worse.

I mean, yeah, he shot a man twice. But at least gunshot wounds are minimal mess.

He's pieced faces back together in car accidents.

He's waded through ponds searching for the drowned bodies of toddlers.

And those are just a few examples.

So why did the shooting cause him to snap?

I wish I knew the answer. I'm sure he does too.

But see, the thing I didn't realize about post-traumatic stress until a few days ago, is that it never gets better.

It never goes away.

It never fades or becomes manageable.

It just gets worse.

And all the while, the world goes on.

“Aberdeen. Aberdeen,” my mom shook my shoulder violently. “Wake up.”

I squinted at the clock on my nightstand, then rolled over onto my back and rubbed my eyes. What is she doing? It's five in the morning.

“Dad was in a shooting last night.”

My eyes snapped open and my heart dropped violently into my stomach. WHAT?!

“What?!” I managed incredulously.

“It's okay. He's okay,” my mom reassured me. I think okay means alive. Was he hurt?

Was he SHOT?

“What happened?” I demanded.

“Some guy was off of his medicine and shot at dad,” she explained. “But he's okay.

That's all I know right now. He should be home any minute.”

And just like that, the dad I knew up until that point walked out of my life.

Maybe he did die.

Figuratively, of course.

I was given a new dad.

Figuratively, of course.

A nut job.

I'll never forget the first time I looked into his eyes afterwards.

God, his eyes.

The deep wrinkles.

Swollen, dark bags.

And the color of the eyes themselves.

It was all gone. All sucked away by the pull of a trigger and a smoking muzzle.

Instead they were grey. So, so grey. And wild as a bull.

It was as if the scene was replaying over

And over

And over

And over and over and over.

Right there in his eyes. A black and white film that flashed across them.

If you had never met him, his eyes would just be...eyes.

But I knew better.

I knew the darkness that danced within them.

And so I got used to New Dad.

Sort of.

You really can't adjust to a crazy man.

Because he just goes crazier.

And as he does, the world inconsiderately continues on.

Then there was the time I finally had the courage to ask what happened.

And he told me.

“Fifty-six-five-six-six-two, status,” the dispatcher’s crackling voice on the radio.

“Fifty-six-five-six-six-two, ten-eight,” my dad replied. I learned that in police language, that meant he was ready for action.

“I’ve got a call for disturbing the peace at Mountain View Trailer Park. A resident is peeing off of his steps.”

I picture my dad rolling his eyes at this, “Alright, I’ll be in route.” My dad flicked his lights on and headed to the spot. No siren necessary. This call was kids’ stuff.

When my dad got to the trailer park, the man had already walked back into his house, grabbed his keys, along with a semi-automatic rifle, and left. My dad talked to the man’s roommate, and that was when the call became serious.

“He kept saying that if the cops came after him, he was going to kill them,” the roommate said. “He’s off of his medication! He’s not in his right mind. I’m scared he might hurt somebody.”

At that, my dad returned to his car and began to drive around, looking for the man’s truck. A few miles later, he spotted it, but the man was not cooperating. So began the chase. My dad flicked his lights on and wailed the siren. He put his radio to his lips, “Eureka, fifty-six-five-six-six-two.”

“Fifty-six-five, go ahead,” the dispatcher responded.

“I’m in pursuit. The resident took off with a gun and is apparently off of his medication. I’m going to try to talk to him and see what’s going on.”

“Ten-four, copy.”

The chase only lasted a mile or two. The man pulled back up to his trailer and my dad followed. He pulled up next to him. They were now face to face, and that was when my dad knew. That was when it all became slow motion. That was when there was no sound. There were only mere seconds that manifested into eternities. That was when something snapped. The man reached to his passenger seat, grabbing for his gun. As he raised it to fire, my dad was already one step ahead. He fired twice, hitting him in his shoulder and his arm. The man fired back. A semi-automatic rifle, spewing rounds like an arcade machine spits tickets. My dad slammed his car into reverse and leaned back. “Fifty-six-five, we have shots fired!” My dad exclaimed into the radio. And suddenly, the rounds stopped. The man’s gun had jammed, and because my dad had shot his arm, he couldn’t slam it back into place.

It was over.

My dad won.

Or so it seemed.

But the scene never left him.

And still the world went on.

And my family was forced to accept The Monster.

The one in my dad's head.

The one that grew fast as cancer, and terrorized him into submission.

Until his mind was not his own anymore.

All that remained was this sick, evil character. The one named PTSD.

Who provoked fierce anger and irrational paranoia.

Who screamed at his daughters and belittled his wife.

And destroyed everything he had built.

While the world just spun on.

My dad never denied the fact that he had flown over the cuckoo's nest.

Not even for a second.

He was well aware that there was a screw loose somewhere, he just wasn't sure where.

The Monster was a master at hide and seek.

But the images he saw in his head were unrelenting.

And coping just wasn't an option.

And that's when he became a raging alcoholic.

Granted, 'raging' is probably a little dramatic.

But he certainly harassed the bottle, if that makes sense.

If you are wondering how to worsen a maniac's condition,

Get them drunk.

It will take the whole thing to an entirely new level.

They'll put their hands on other women.

Ones that aren't your mom.

Like, say, the woman you babysit for.

And they'll blackout in strangers' hotel rooms on family vacations.

And security will have to wheel them in a wheelchair to bed.

And they'll destroy relationships.

And they'll tear your family apart.

And they'll justify it all with the mention of four letters. Four little letters that you'll grow to fiercely despise with all that is within you.

PTSD.

And as soon as they are 6 feet underneath rock bottom, they might finally ship themselves to a fancy treatment center.

If you beg really, really hard.

That was three days ago.

Seven years of this thing, and the world had finally found the compassion to stop, long enough for The Monster to realize his madness.

He was re-diagnosed with a far-more-extreme case of post-traumatic stress.

Two days ago.

And his career as a policeman is now over.

And my mom is emotionless.

And my sisters have forgotten compassion.

And I, frankly, shrug my shoulders.

That's what you do when your dad is a maniac.

You simply shrug your shoulders.

Because it only gets worse.

No treatment will ever return the color to his eyes again.

And the world will

Just.

Spin.

On.

Word Count: 1402