

Autumn Snow Prologue.

Scott Brandt was on his way home when it happened. He had not been there in years – not really. Oh, he stopped in, but his heart wasn't there. But now he was excited to be really going home.

Then it happened.

The world before him was dreamlike and unclear—the cars emerging eerily from the snowflakes of an early autumn snow, like wisps of ghosts floating by on their way to haunt someone else.

He remembered trying to avoid the cars that seemed to appear from behind a curtain of snow. He remembered the sensation of sliding on a thin layer of ice. He remembered striking a tree. He had seen the front end of his car collapse as the impact jolted his chest and head against the steering wheel. Then he must have lost consciousness for a while. Was it his imagination or did he also remember awakening when he felt the needle prick his arm? A hand reached through the broken glass of the window and squeezed the contents of a syringe into his arm—or was that, too, part of a nightmare vision of something that had never happened? He groggily observed the hand searching his pockets and was glad that he had hidden the pictures well.

The accident had not only severely injured his arms, legs, and ribs, making any movement difficult and painful, but it had jammed the doors locked, trapping him inside. A stab of pain shot through his arms as he tried to move them. He felt more than one broken bone – the pain was so intense he could almost hear the grating of bone fragment against bone fragment. Had a drug really been administered, or was this just adrenaline and endorphins coursing through his body?

It was hard to stay conscious, but Scott fought to keep his mind awake. He didn't know if the injection had hit a vein. Even with skin-popping, it wouldn't take long to reach the brain. He focused on the idea of the drug, trying to diagnose himself, and to identify the possible concoction: a speedball, perhaps? – that effective combination of heroin and cocaine. It was one he knew well. The heroin would slow down his bodily functions. The cocaine would cause his heart to race, speeding him up. Yes, Scott thought. It might have been a speedball.

Was there someone nearby? He couldn't see any faces. He knew that a number of people wanted to harm him. He wondered if they would kill him or merely disgrace him.

Scott had worked very hard at getting clean and sober. What would happen now? He didn't have to wait long for his answer. Almost immediately, the pungent odors of gasoline, and then smoke, filled the air. Scott yearned for the sedative effect of the heroin and the numbing effect of the cocaine. The flames, unchecked, began to lick at his body.

Finally, his brain, perhaps even his soul, gave up and fought against him. His mind was blacking out from shock and the drugs—and he was now convinced someone had given him drugs—and he felt dissociated from his body, as if he were someone else watching from above. He knew he had to prioritize. He wanted to stay alive, but first he had to protect the pictures, and after all his work to stay sober he wasn't going to give up until his family and friends knew he hadn't caused this overdose.

He moved his head close to the broken window and inhaled the cold, moist, snow-laden air, breathing life back into himself. He beat at the flames now burning his clothes

and resulting sharp pain reminded him of his injuries. He tried slamming his body against the car, door but it was no use.

To stay alert, he began to criticize himself, he was very good at that. He had learned it at an early age from his father, who also excelled at it – at least until he got sober. Like his father, Scott had resisted recovery, and had fought against sobriety. Now, when he had finally taken the chance to recover, this happened. He asked himself, “Why didn’t I see this coming? How did I let my guard down? Why is this happening now?” The questions raced through his panicked mind.

He thought back to a year earlier, the last time someone had tried to hurt him. If there was one thing cocaine had done for him, it had made him paranoid, and he’d been ready for trouble. It was different this time. Were these the same people—his old “friends”? Could he have made new enemies so quickly?

How had things in his life gone so terrible wrong? He realized that he had begun to feel too safe in his new life without drugs and dealers. He thought of the children he taught and of their innocent faces; how he wanted to protect them from harm, even though many of them had already been damaged by drugs, abuse, and disease.

His mind wandered back to that day a year earlier. It was clear and sunny and started out as one of the best days of his life. He had been running on the football field avoiding tacklers, but by the end of the evening he was running for his life. There had been people then who wanted to kill him, or at least teach him a lesson he wouldn’t soon forget. He thought that was probably the same night he had begun his recovery, but like a camera you take along on vacation and then stick in a drawer, the recovery took a long time to develop after that. The roll of film wasn’t finished yet. Still, a picture of that night—the night when he had played his best game—fill his mind. How had he ended up under a pile of leaves.

Suddenly, he noticed a new cloud around him even denser than the smoke from the flames. Then another pair of hands reached through the cloud and into the broken window next to him.

The voice echoed hauntingly in his own head, as if he had merely imagined it: “I’m Officer Teller. Lucy Teller. Don’t worry. You’ll be all right. You’re safe now”.

That’s when Scott fainted.

Witch of Winter Acknowledgements

Once again, we would like to thank the Menominee people, especially the historical society, members of the tribal police department, and the staff Maehnowesekiyah. Maehnowesekiyah is a real treatment center and we visited it to get information about treatment. It would be impossible in our brief visit to learn all the aspects of treatment; therefore we do not even pretend that what is described in this book is what actually transpires there. Plus, it should be noted that most treatment centers have moved away from the cookie – cutter approach of the early days of treatment. Today, patients each receive an individual treatment plan.

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