

Chapter 2

Oto was 17-years-old and it was his senior year in high school when his first downswing, from what would later be called Bipolar 1, hit him like a ton of bricks.

Within a couple of months he had lost 40 pounds and could barely walk to the bathroom to take a piss and brush his teeth.

His brain seemed to be fighting itself, and whatever was happening hit his dilapidated body with full force.

Oto instinctually taught himself how to meditate and do deep breathing exercises.

Although the anxiety ripped through every part of his body, he could somehow read Isaac Asimov books — the Foundation series.

He had what was called a bipolar down swing, but he wouldn't know about that for many months to come.

Oto went from a 3.90 GPA and lettering in two sports, to dropping out of high school from a nervous breakdown, which was the last thing that he wanted to do.

At his high school around the corner, believe it or not, all of his teachers worked together, trying to finish what is the equivalent to a senior project at many universities.

Oto could barely make it to the bathroom down the hall to drink well water out of the sink, and crawl onto the toilet to piss.

He was weaker than he had ever been in his life and he had no idea why.

It was like having the flu that would never go away.

Oto just kept doing the breathing exercises, focusing on his toes and all throughout his body, but the anxiety never seemed to let up for very long.

As he lay there looking up at the ceiling he thought of his stepdad who had crashed his plane.

Back then he recalled how it was in May when he was 11, and how it was May again, but 6 years later.

He never focused too much on dates, other than birthday's of course, but he could feel how it was Spring again.

This time of year for some reason made him a little nervous, but never anything like how he was feeling now.

Oto's biological dad had divorced his mom when he was 4-years-old and had abandoned Oto for the most part.

His Dad was an alcoholic and Oto only saw him a few weeks every few years.

But last summer when Oto had visited him for some reason things were different.

His dad purchased a three-wheeler, gas-motored vehicle.

Oto loved racing it out back in the Arizona "wash," which was a large dry desert that would fill up when there were massive rain storms.

Now in Nevada, there was so much sagebrush everywhere he looked, which reminded Oto of Arizona.

In Arizona, however, that is the type of heat that when you spray water on your skin it instantly bubbles up like little blisters all over your arms and legs.

He also thought about how both sides of his family knew how to keep secrets.

Because of this, Oto couldn't know that his uncle on his dad's side of the family had Bipolar 1, which is what would later prevent Oto and his doctor's from knowing how to treat the illness.

Two days had passed since Oto had been thinking about his biological dad.

He had a stabbing pain in his stomach that he had never felt before.

He managed to get out into his 1978 Volkswagen Rabbit to drive himself down to the local doctor's office.

He was still in his down-swing and his brain was crippled, but he managed to get there.

The doctor instructed him to lay flat on the table that was covered with that tissue-like paper.

On the walls of the office that he was ushered into hung paintings of old cowboys sitting around a campfire eating cooked beans.

Just the thought of cooked beans almost made him throw up.

The doctor instructed Oto to lay down on the table and gently pushed in on his appendix.

Oto nearly jumped off the table, howling in pain.

He felt a burning pain in his side where his appendix was located, and tears and snot started running down his face.

Ana had raised her son Oto as best she could. She had two other daughters and another son after all.

She was working down at the county courthouse in a small agricultural community somewhere in Nevada.

The phone rang at her small office inside the courthouse where she worked.

She answered it only to hear the town doctor, a woman's voice, on the other end.

"Ana, get over here right away. Your son Oto needs an emergency appendectomy and I think it may burst so you need to get him to an emergency room as soon as possible."

Ana grabbed her purse and fumbled for the keys, almost sprinting toward the old blue blazer that ran on diesel fuel.

She raced over to the doctor's office, nearly running an old woman hobbling across the intersection down.

The woman screamed at her and just barely made it across the street.

Ana was panicking and she just kept saying to herself, "Dear God, don't let my son die."

Ana made it to the doctor's office and once inside she saw the doctor helping her son get his shirt back on.

He was blowing his nose and wiping his eyes on a few tissues.

She saw his bony torso in the bright lights from the nearby lamps.

She usually didn't have to worry too much about Oto, but now she was panicking.

Oto managed to get into the car. "Hold on, Oto!" Ana said as gently as she could.

She left the doctor in the dust, so to speak, and said to herself, "I gotta get him to the hospital."

She wasn't sure if she was going 85 or 90 mph, but she did know she got him to the far away hospital in the city in one hour rather than the ninety minutes it usually took.

Somehow, to her surprise, she didn't get pulled over by any cops.

The blue Blazer was belching out diesel fumes that Oto could have sworn he could smell as he lay in the back seat.

The pain in his appendix was unbearable, and at every small bump, the seat would shake and he would moan out loud in pain.

They arrived at the hospital and Ana ran in to the emergency room yelling for help from the first nurse that she saw; a man wearing white scrubs.

She didn't know it but the doctor from the town she lived in had called ahead.

A team of doctors grabbed Oto out of the back of the car and put him in a wheel chair, racing to get Oto to be prepped for surgery.

“Hold on, Oto,” she whispered. “God isn’t about to send you to the next life if I can help it.”

Oto was quickly pushed in a wheel chair at great speed through the hallways of the cold white hospital with all of the typical sites and sounds.

The “team” of doctors were prepped and ready to roll.

The only problem was that when the doctor pressed in on Oto’s appendix, he experienced no pain.

The doctor expected Oto to yell out loud, but when he pushed even harder on his stomach there was no reaction from Oto at all.

The doctor was baffled, and so he did a pin prick on Oto’s finger.

After getting the results from the drop of blood yanked from Oto’s finger, he just looked at Ana and said, “Your son’s glucose level is way too high.”

He took Ana aside and whispered to her.

“Your son may have diabetes, but we need to run some tests to make sure. You and your son should go and get some air and come back later.”

Ana thanked God for granting her prayers and was so relieved she stopped at the McDonald’s drive-thru.

She purchased her son a large vanilla shake that he quickly sucked down.

Since they had an hour or so to kill, she drove over to a nearby library.

She asked the librarian where to find an illustrated book about diabetes.

Oto and his mom found a small couch, sitting down together as they looked through the book.

Oto gave his mom a baffled look as he saw the procedure in the book.

You see, he was afraid of needles and almost fainted thinking about pushing one into his own stomach several times a day.

They went back to the hospital, making their way into the doctor’s office.

The specialist looked at his mom and said, “Well, I don’t know how to tell you this. His glucose level is a little high, but nothing too outside the normal levels.”

Ana and Oto were both looking at the doctor in confusion.

Oto was so relieved to hear he didn't have diabetes, but he just wanted something to be wrong with him.

At least then whatever that was killing him could be treated.

The thought of going back to the unknown hit him right in the gut and he began to cry again.

He was relieved of course as they left the cold hospital behind.

Ana parked the car in the real estate parking lot, leaving Oto out in the Blazer in the hot sun.

She walked into her office only to be told that the sale of the house that she had listed had fallen out of escrow due to the seller committing suicide on his front steps.

She was actually in the office for over fifteen minutes and then she remembered that her poor son was out in the hot car.

She walked quickly back to the Blazer, driving Oto back to the small town where they lived.

She helped get him into the house and onto the old couch in the family room.

"Oto, you know where the bathroom is. You must need to use it."

Oto was fumbling around in the bathroom. As he sat on the toilet, he looked in the mirror and saw his sagging body.

He didn't know if he had a tumor or how on earth he could lose 40 pounds in such a short amount of time.

Not long ago Oto was playing on a football team.

He was running several miles back then, but now he barely had enough energy to brush his teeth.

He was pretty sure he was going to die from something, and the doctors had no idea what was wrong with him.

Anna wasn't sure what to do next.

She looked at her son in his bed and tried hard not to break down in tears.

She was a Christian and was praying to God for guidance, but she just did her best to make it through each day, constantly worried about her son.

She decided the best thing to do would be to drive Oto to her pastor. After all, throughout her tough life she had always done that when she had no place else to turn to.

The drive to the church would take an hour or so.

She helped her son back into the car again, and they soon arrived in the church parking lot.

Ana got out of the car, helping her gaunt son out into the bright sunlight.

Oto walked into the dark church, trying to see what was around him.

He had walked in from the bright lights out in the sun.

He was having trouble seeing around the quiet church with nothing but empty pews to greet him.

His mom gently told him to follow her, so they proceeded to a door at the front of the church and she knocked on it.

Her pastor slowly opened the door and asked for them both to enter, but the pastor wanted to talk alone with Oto.

Ana waited out in the empty church, sitting down in an empty pew to give them some privacy.

As Oto took a seat across from him, the pastor that confirmed him a few years before began asking him a bunch of questions.

The anxiety was so acute that later when he made it back to the car, he didn't remember much about the meeting.

He couldn't shake the one memory, though.

"Oto, I have known you for several years. Look me in the eyes, son."

Oto did as he was asked, after all this man sitting across from him was in touch with God.

"Oto, have you ever had sex before? I don't mean just kissing, but actually having sex?"

Oto just looked down at the floor in front of him.

He wished he was back out in the hot car.

Oto couldn't speak, so he just nodded instead.

On the long ride back home, Oto watched the road that was a blur.

He had no idea why he was going to die, but he began to cry.

He now knew he was going straight to hell.

Oto knew for sure that being burned alive is the most painful way to die.

He also knew from confirmation with his pastor that he was going straight to hell for having sex without being married.

And he couldn't imagine being burned alive forever-and-ever.

Oto wasn't sure what time it was, but his mom drove him to his next appointment, which was with a psychiatrist.

Again, his memory was limited, but he did remember all of the books behind the "shrink".

Just like with the pastor a few days before, Oto sat across from the old man with glasses balancing on his nose, with a desk separating them.

The main difference was that in this case there were what looked like hundreds of books on some shelves behind the doctor.

Oto was asked to count backwards by increments of 7 from 100.

That was so easy for Oto that he finished within about 15 seconds.

The doctor also asked Oto a lot of questions to test his memory, and he actually enjoyed the discussion with this doctor.

After probing Oto and hearing his story, the psychiatrist prescribed anti-anxiety pills.

Of course at that time Ana had joined them and she took the prescription on the piece of paper, tucking in neatly inside her purse.

In front of both Ana and Oto the doctor explained that the best diagnosis he could come up with was that Oto had been perfect.

Oto listened to this and tried not to laugh.

"Ana, I don't know exactly what has happened to your son. But clearly he has failed recently at something."

She looked at the doctor and then at her son.

At this point she was willing to believe almost anything.

They left the office and she drove them over to a nearby pharmacy, filling the prescription of what were called anti-anxiety pills.

She didn't read what the brand or dosage was, but trusted the doctor that she had just met for the first time only an hour or two before.

From that day forward, Oto took the shiny pills that Ana would place into his out-stretched hand.

She called the psychiatrist several times a week, and she did see a very small change in Oto, but nothing that would console her for very long.

Oto would spend most of his time in his bed.

He still looked up at the ceiling, but now he was able to focus much better on his deep breathing exercises.

Still, for a lot of the time, he would cry and still had no appetite.

Ana, like her son, was losing track of what day it was and she was having trouble eating.

Unlike him, of course, she had only lost a pound or two.

She was pretty sure only a week or two had passed when she finally got ahold of the psychiatrist on the phone.

“Ana,” he said. “how is your son doing?”

Ana wanted to throw the phone across the room, but she took a deep breathe before saying, “He doesn’t seem to be much better, although yesterday he ate a piece of toast and drank about half a glass of milk.”

There was nothing but silence on the other end of the line, and Ana fought to keep control of herself.

“Ana, I can clear about fifteen minutes in my schedule for you and Oto, but it has to be at 2:45 pm.”

At this point Ana didn’t even hesitate before agreeing to that fifteen minute slot.

Ana arrived with her son and she felt like she had just been there.

She sat down in the chair and waited again as the psychiatrist ushered her son into his office and gently closed the door.

After 13 minutes had passed the psychiatrist came out of the office with Oto next to him. He asked Oto to sit in the chair, and had Ana come into his office.

In the last two minutes before he had to see his next patient he quickly explained to Ana once the door was closed what in his opinion was the best option.

He told her how there was a hospital nearby that could help her son, but she needed to go over there right now without even going home.

He explained to her that a bed had just become available.

It was one of those times that she just reacted.

Ana got back into the car with her son and drove straight over to the hospital after getting the address from the receptionist.