

## Preface

My mind inches up to the surface, waking, but not to everyday consciousness. I take a breath and open my eye.

*Only one eye? What is going on?*

I find myself enclosed by metal bars that form a sort of cage around my bed. I am terrified. *Where am I?* I look around frantically, trying to understand.

Straining to see beyond the bars, my vision slowly clears, and I see a calendar that seems far away, on a wall across the room. The calendar is open to May. *But wait, it's April; I'm supposed to be in Paris. It has to be April.*

Everything still looks hazy. There's a hanging TV near a door. *Is this a dream?* I wonder. So I pinch the skin on my forearm. It hurts, and I realize: *This is not a dream. This is for real.*

*What is this? What the hell?* As I pinch my arm, I see an IV tube. It dawns on me that I must be in a hospital. But, I wonder: *Why is my bed in a zoo cage? What has happened to me? What is going on?*

A nurse walks in. ... Before I can form words to speak, I slide back down into sleep. ...

I have a glimpse of Nicole arriving with a plate of food. I feel so happy to see her. I reach out. ...

I wake up confused. I feel agitated: in tremendous pain all over my body, terrified, angry, upset. I hear jabbering going on around me. Slowly the jabbering begins to take the forms of familiar words, and I hear my name. Then I realize that people are talking about me, about how I'm doing, as if I'm not there. I feel more angry, and I think, *Why don't you ask me?*

The obscuring mental fog continues for days, occasionally broken up by hospital staff or visitors. Mostly, I sleep. I need to sleep. My brain is off line. I desperately need to sleep. And I do sleep, as much as possible, but I am interrupted by the inevitable intrusions of staff and hospital protocol. This agitates me more.

I wake up again, and my friend Margaret is sitting next to me. I feel her hand, hear her voice, and I know she loves me. As I gradually focus on Margaret, I see the broken smile that lines her face. She looks forlorn. Remembering that Margaret is my On Call person during my Paris vacation, I am aware of saying, "What happened to me?"

Margaret bursts into tears, and I try to reassure her: "Don't worry, Sweetheart. I'm going to get well."

In answer, she looks at me with more tears streaming from her eyes and blurts, “I’m afraid you won’t. You’ve asked me what happened many times. I’m afraid you may never get your memory back.”

“Oh.”

Then Margaret tells me the accident story and how I rose like Lazarus from the dead.

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The first inspiration for writing this book came in a moment of pure rage. I was in a rehab hospital unit, not heard or seen for who I really still was by many.... I felt powerless and frightened. ...

But first, I needed to invest my full energy toward healing. My body was exhausted from the trauma.

Then, as I navigated my process of healing beyond trauma, with the help of loving family, friends, and professionals, my focus shifted toward sharing what I learned to help others. ...

Later, the process of writing this book, in itself, became a part of my healing. I hope the perspective that comes from my experience will inspire and empower others.

...

*I was watching the races from about one-third of the way down the racecourse and saw a woman when she caught the edge of her ski and went sliding downhill really fast and hard. She disappeared into the well of a tree, and I thought to myself: ‘This is not good.’ So I raced down there as quickly as I could. There were maybe two or three people there, and I learned that this woman crumpled against the tree was Carole. I could tell it was bad immediately. ... I took my skis off, got down, and looked at her. She was completely still. Lifeless essentially. There was so much blood – from the fractures in her skull and also coming out of her every orifice – mouth, ears, nose, and even her eyes, which were fixed and dilated. “Call a helicopter now!” I shouted, in case no one had. I knew that moving her could risk further damage as we are taught to never shift someone with a neck or back injury unless the situation requires life-saving extrication.*

*She wasn’t breathing, and I shook her briefly. Then I realized I was going to have to go mouth to mouth.... I grabbed her jaw, did the jaw-thrust maneuver and at the same time reached in to pull her tongue down and towards me. As I did this, it must have opened up her throat passage, as suddenly she coughed violently and took a deep breath inwards. There was blood everywhere. This breathing action gave her some energy.*

*As with most major head injuries, there is the natural Flight-or-Fight reaction and adrenaline kicks in. Carole started to violently shake and move, so I got behind her, held her head steady, and said, "Don't move. Don't move!" But she kept thrashing away, so I asked some bystanders who had now gathered to help hold her down. It seemed like a long time until the Ski Patrol arrived....*

*A few minutes later, the sound of the air ambulance helicopter clattered, and I honestly thought it would be too late. Surely such a head injury and that much blood obviously settling into her lungs would have been the end of this woman.*

(Recollection of accident written by volunteer firefighter, rescue responder, Toby Rowland-Jones, the man who saved my life.) Prologue to Chapter 1.