

From *The Lost Enemy*, “The Birth of a Scar” (Opening chapter)

Copyright © 2015 by Thorsteinn Gunter. All rights reserved.

Hearts can be so cold. They can taunt and smile in a pitiless bliss. They can ravage and tear upon defenseless souls. So cold, they sometimes leave a hideous scar. Like *they* did, with Eddie.

The day it happened was years ago. The snowflakes in Iceland drifted from a blinding-white sky, like an army of white fairies on parachutes. They landed and melted on the numbness in Eddie’s cheeks, as quiet billows of his breath escaped into the cold, silent air.

And suddenly, like a jagged, slippery boulder hurtling through a placid breeze, a massive chunk of ice slammed onto the back of Eddie’s neck. Volcanoes of laughter exploded, spewing from the children’s mouths, and when the bullies ran they looked like little dwarves as they sprinted across the powdery snow.

Ólafur’s hand then clutched the back of Eddie’s neck. He flung him to the ground, and as Eddie struggled in the maniacal grip he felt the weight of Ólafur’s knee against his back. The tyrant slid his hand to the back of Eddie’s head and plunged his face deep into the mound of snow beneath him. Water trickled into Eddie’s shirt, and in a desperate struggle he finally broke free and ran. The bullies chased him down the snowy road as Eddie raced towards his house. Ólafur stopped and plunged his boot beside a stone that was lodged in the snow, dug it up, and clutched it in his fist.

Eddie sprinted, his house in sight—but of course it was too late. Like a bolt searing through the poor boy’s skull, the stone smacked him on the temple by his eye, and on the glittering snow the crimson blood drops fell.

The snow was stained.

The laughter of the bullies chased him down the street, and Eddie’s temple throbbed, and bled, and festered. When he dashed into his house, the sobs overtook him like a seizure, as the boy sat down to weep.

For years, you see, this Ólafur had thus tormented him. Eddie was but nine years old, yet cruel and childish games his bully had so often played, relentlessly—until Eddie was a dark volcano, ready to erupt.

And after that day, when Ólafur had chased him home, Eddie got up in the morning and gazed in the mirror, where on his face he saw the mark: the streak that ran from the temple by his eye down the side of his cheek. He would carry that mark with him the rest of his life. And every time he saw that mark on his face, he thought of Ólafur.

His scar had been born.

This was a constant reminder for him to seek revenge against this vile enemy. But, owing to life’s changes, Eddie’s loving family brought him far from Iceland, and it was only in the Faroe Islands he lived thereafter. So he waited. He stewed for months and months. And he began to plot.

There was one thing Eddie imagined would be sweeter than the green-glowing ferns of a tropical bliss, or the silky-wet touch of a glimmering kiss, and that was the taste of *revenge*. He knew that, some day, he’d run off and search for his tormentor...