Soar

CHYANA MARIE SAGE

And even the eagle must flap its wings,
pushing against the grain, until it learns how to soar.

My dad had the most beautiful hair. It was long and cascaded down his back. He always wore it in a braid. My mom said I have his wavy chestnut curls. I also have his eyes, mouth, and woodpecker cheekbones. She also said I have his charisma and power to make anyone believe anything. He could have changed the world, but instead, he changed mine.

He was a warrior to be feared, snaring prey and bringing moose home from the bush. I chased him around the yard, a tiny fragment of his large shadow. He was a Jekyll and Hyde Gemini man and you never knew which side you would get.

He made you think you were the greatest person roaming the land, or he’d shrink you down to the size of a mushroom fairy. He could’ve been a voice in the fight to resilience and strength for our people, but instead, he was a warlock. Maybe that’s the only way it could’ve played out; maybe he wasn’t meant to aid in the road to reclaiming our identity.

Maybe he was meant to be a burial ground.

I ran outside every morning, barefoot in a t-shirt stained with tree sap, long hair breezing behind me in braids. We lived on an acreage that had big tall evergreens surrounding it, forming our own little forest. I ran toward the fire pit in the corner and saw a snared-up rabbit, fresh blood matted to its fur. I yelled back to the trailer, “Dad, you caught a rabbit!” before running past the hanging carcass into the trees.

There was a small clearing in the forest and we built a fort there. I gathered sticks and
formed them into miniature teepees, popped the fuzzies off the pussy willows, and placed them beside me, pretending they were small animals. I laid on the dirt, watching the ants crawl over my skin, wondering how far they had travelled and if they missed their families. Shaking off the ants, I began my hunt for a tree.

I hunted out a tree and began to climb. In my pocket I kept colourful tacks. When I climbed as high as my courage allowed, I stuck one into the bark, knowing the next time I climbed it, I would place the tack higher than before. When the tree began to sway, I knew I had reached the top.

Out the back of our trailer there was a well in the center of the yard, where we'd get our water. I pulled the paper off the birches and practiced my letters. In the farming fields behind the birch trees, crops grew far above my head and I ran through them until I reached the pond. Many rocks surrounded the pond and I sat upon them, watching tadpoles transform under the surface. My sisters dared me to run through it, and I did. The water splashed up high around my aggressive footsteps, the pond floor revealed at lightning speed. I saw a strange creature that didn't look like anything from this world. It was an alien creature living under the surface. My sisters helped me hunt for it the way we hunted frogs, but we never found it. When we saw the combines driving down the fields, we knew it was time to go home. We darted through tall crops as quick as dragonflies, each minute the combines inching closer and threatening our lives, until we reached the fence and climbed over, safe in our yard.

My mother runs through the playground, as if other little girls are chasing her, allowing her to feel free with the wind, but she looks back at empty air.

Dad was the mean one and mom was the nice one, but perception is malleable.

We were lucky, because while most people in the county didn't have neighbours, we had one right next door. There was a little girl who lived there, named Anna. I was in the bedroom with my sisters and we concocted a plan.

“You go.” Orleane motioned to me.

“No, you go!” I retorted.

“I don't wanna ask him.”

“I did it last time.” Chayla chimed.

“He's just gonna say no.” I said.

“Just go and ask mom, you're the better talker.” Orleane told me.

“Fine, I'll go.”

So, I walked down the hallway and up into the living room. Mom was sitting on the arm chair to the right; dad was on the couch to my left. I walked up to my mother.

“Mom, can we see if Anna can come play?”

Dad cocked his head up from whatever his attention was on, “No. You're not allowed.”

I stared at him, black eyes on black eyes. “Was I talking to you?”

His nostrils flared; he clenched his knuckles and dragged me into the kitchen. He opened up the drawer and took out the belt.

After dad was done with the belt we were confined to the bedroom, skin blistering. My sisters and I sat in the room, angry that once again our lives were dictated by his moods. I've always been a stickler for justice. Mom said I've been this way since I was a child.

I stripped down, butt naked. I always hated the
confines of fabric on my skin anyway. It was a beautiful summer day outside. We pushed a chair up to our window and I orchestrated our escape. My sisters looked at me like I was nuts; they said they were staying inside. They encouraged my act of defiance, though. So, I opened the window, and popped out the screen. I looked down and there was a nook coming off the outside of the trailer where the air comes out from the laundry. I hopped down onto that and then felt the grass beneath my feet. I inhaled deep, earth and laundry sheets filled my nostrils. A tingling ran over my body and I began to run. I ran up the yard in front of the big bay window. I ran back down the side of the trailer, past the well, and into the birch trees.

“Catch me, fucker.”

Eventually, my little legs found their way to our swingset and I hopped up, bare-ass to the seat. I pushed forward, backwards, forwards, backwards, all while my sisters watched from the window, waiting for the fist to fall.

Wind is a sweet flavour. It is not bitter, and it is not cold. It flows across the land glimpsing places we dream of, stealing their flavours as it grazes past. If you find a quiet place at the top of a hill and open your mouth as it flows past you, you can feel the way it licks you. I swung and swung and swung, and each time gravity took me through its pendulum, I opened my mouth wide. I let my tongue fall out and welcomed the wind. As the wind tickled me, laughter erupted from my belly in a triumph. Dad could try and steal my light through all of his enveloping darkness, but the wind never allowed me to dull.

I never understood why he didn’t come running out, promising another beating, but after I was done, I hopped off. I walked back to the window, placed my foot upon the nook and hoisted myself up. If Anna was looking out the window, she would have seen my welted ass toppling inside.

My mom was four. Her grandmother took her to a new school for kindergarten and she heard her pull the teacher aside and say that her mother was dead. She longed for arms to hold her and never let go. Eventually, she found them.

Small limbs curled into a small ball on an area carpet in a living room. Arms scooping her up and bringing her downstairs, laying her down on a sheetless mattress. She shivered. It was always cold down there. She preferred the carpet. Bristles against flushed cheeks were better than stained, cold mattresses. She closed her eyes, and willed herself to sleep:

She comes up to me and caresses my head, tucking my long dark hair behind my ear. She wraps her arms around me and kisses the top of my head. She leans in close and whispers something in my ears, but I can’t make it out. Perhaps if I keep sleeping, she will keep coming, allowing me to get closer and closer to hearing what she is trying to say.

She wakes up, cold, again, and listens for footsteps up above.

It’s quiet.

I was seven and we sat in a circle and the flame was the center. I looked down at my small feet that wore black combat boots. Looking up from bare legs swinging back and forth along the chair, I met the eyes of my dad. He looked back at me and the ember glow illuminated his high cheekbones, which cast a shadow under his buffalo eyes. The flame spat and crackled at my feet below. He opened his mouth and his grave
voice told stories of the trickster, Wisahkêcâhk.

I got up to wander into the forest to go to the bathroom.

My dad called after me, “Make sure Wisahkêcâhk doesn’t come get ‘chu.”

No dad, make sure he doesn’t get you.

When I was twelve, I stood at a podium. The judge was before me, a little to the right, and further right still, was my father in handcuffs and an orange jumpsuit. I watched him. He was sobbing. I opened up my letter and began to read.

When I was twelve, I stood at a podium. The judge was before me, a little to the right, and further right still, was my father in handcuffs and an orange jumpsuit. I watched him. He was sobbing. I opened up my letter and began to read.

When my older sister, Orleane, was one, she and my mom lived in a house with her best friend, Charm. My mom was eighteen and had just received her trust fund from the reserve. Charm had this cousin, Frankie, and he called her on the phone all the time from prison. One day Charm wasn’t home, so my mom answered and spoke with him.

My mom fell in love with a broken, incarcerated man.

He had a powerful voice that commanded the softening of ears. He courted her over the phone, talked about dates they would go on, places they would see. He talked about the saltwater shores in Vancouver. He wrote her letters, made her jewelry, and wrote her poems. By the time he got out of prison, they began their lives together. He treated Orleane like his own daughter, and together they built a family. Together, they built me and Chayla.

My mom’s very own family. Her very own cradling love.

When they moved to the coast, my mom saw saltwater for the first time. She let it blow through her hair, the salty air bouncing through her ringlet curls. The three of them sat on the beach and looked for starfish on the rocky shore.

Frankie had one of those personalities that lit up a room, and then took it all away in a matter of breaths. His laughter was loud and charged, but his anger was immobilizing and unbridled. When my mom met his father, she saw where Frankie got his terrifying expressions from.

Frank Senior, a survivor of the residential school system; he told stories of the priests and what it was like to have the Indian beat out of them. When Frankie was a little kid, he watched his dad raise clenched fists to his mother. As children, he and his brother, Jason, were also underneath those unbridled fists.

Dad didn’t show my mom his dark side right away. Maybe it’s a calculated act, but maybe there are parts of bad people that are still good.

Frankie had episodes of anger and threatening his suicide was a recurrent vice. When she was pregnant with me, he held a gun to her and threatened to kill her. She begged for her life. He allowed saltwater to pour from his eyes and turned the gun on himself. Now there she was, begging for his life. He put down the gun and allowed the shores to pour. He apologized and hugged her, “I love you, Les.” She felt relieved and thankful.

She got to keep her family.

I was born to the spirits of the salt.

Once a year his fists poured, and then he would be petals, and they would do it all over again. For thirteen years their friends and family thought my mom was a clumsy woman.

When I was three years old, we lived in Port Coquitlam. I had this stuffed animal I loved too much. It was a
black and white stuffed cat. I needed this cat. I carried it around with me wherever I went.

I climbed up to the top floor of the house, opened the window, popped out the screen, and stared down at the grass. I held my stuffed cat in my hands and dangled it out of the frame. I felt a pain inside my chest but I opened my fingers and watched it fall down down down until it hit the green blades below. Momentarily, I was free. But just as quickly, I felt a sharp pain in my stomach.

I ran downstairs and out the back door, barefoot on the grass, I picked up the cat, hugging it in my arms. Tears dried to my cheek. I apologized and took it with me.

We moved to the city when I was in the third grade. I came home from school and found our home void of furniture and the TV was gone. Dad pawned it all, again.

I’d sit on my bed at night, and cry.

“Mom, why does dad love Orleane more than me?”

“Awe, my girl, he doesn’t. He loves you all equally.” She caressed my head.

She called my dad into the room and told him what I thought. He came up and hugged me. “Wah, I love you so much, Chy-chy. You’re all my favourite.”

After this, my dad started confiding in me about different things. He made me feel special and loved.

One day I was confused because I didn’t know what he did for work. I was in his vehicle with him and I asked,

“Dad, how do you make money? All I see is you driving around all the time.”

“I’m going to tell you something, but you have to keep it to yourself.”

“Okay, I promise.”

“Your dad is gonna be an undercover cop soon.”

I felt so important that he let me in on his secret.

When we lived on the acreage, my mom got into a really bad car accident. She was driving home on the gravel road one day after going into town. The Jimmy rolled three times. It was odd, because normally she brought Chayla with her every time she went into town, but this day, when Chayla begged her to come along, something inside of my mother refused to let my sister hop in with her. My mom told me later how she heard a voice inside her head that just kept saying, No!

When the Jimmy was rolling, my mom felt arms wrap around her, holding her. The vehicle landed on its roof. She broke both of her legs, and blood warmed her face. She crawled out of the vehicle onto her stomach. From there, she hoisted herself with her forearms to the nearest property. It was two kilometers away. The people who lived there saw her coming and called the ambulance.

Nobody understood how she survived, including the doctors. They said it was a miracle she lived.

They didn’t know how much of a miracle it truly was.

In grade six, my dad got caught selling crack outside the front of our apartment. A stroke of luck saved my sisters and I from being sent off to Child Protective Services when the cops booted down our apartment door.

A childhood friend of my mom’s happened to drive by as my dad was being put into cuffs. She called my mom, and within minutes my mom pulled up. She called me,

“Young dad is getting arrested, you have two minutes
to pack as much as you can and get out back, NOW!”

My sisters and I grabbed our duffle bags and started throwing our clothes into bags. As soon as we went out the door, down the back stairs, and into my mom’s car, our apartment was raided by the police.

Dad served six months for drug trafficking.

My mother is not a woman you can ignore. My mother will smile and hearts will be seized. She is the kind of woman that walks through the woods in bare feet and doesn’t wince when the thorns prick blood from her soles. She hunts for western redcedars and when she meets one she stares up at it from a bed of moss. She does not cower in the face of giants. She will walk right up to that redcedar and wrap her arms around it, allowing its energy to flow through her, as she allows her own to pass through it.

My mother is a healer.

In grade four, my parents separated.

Chayla was in kindergarten and she stayed home sick from school. My mom got home from her shift and there was Frankie, sitting on the living room floor, playing Xbox. It was as though thirteen years of pent up rage bubbled over. She walked to the console, ripped it from the wall, and threw it right at his head.

She saw his eyes flicker and his black pupils took over. He leapt. He punched her in the head and she punched him right back. He grabbed her by the collar and wrestled her to the ground. He slammed her on the carpet a few times as she fought back. She felt her consciousness waver with the last blow he gave her, and she gave up. She stopped fighting, because she knew if she didn’t, she might end up dead. They looked at each other, no one was moving. She got up, went to the bathroom, and saw blood on her head. She went into the bedroom and found Chayla hiding. She took her, and they went to the store to get ice cream and then to the park. Chayla looked up at her and said,

“I heard one loud bang and then it was quiet. I thought you died.”

At that moment, my mom knew it was over. She was leaving him.

For months, my dad tormented her. Frankie got deeper into the drug dealing world and his soul ventured further into the land of lost souls. She woke up one morning and her tires were slashed.

One night she and Charm were out at the bar, drinking. Frankie and his friend showed up. She and Charm left with them and they said they were gonna take them to a bush party. Frankie drove deeper and deeper out of the city. Out of the blue, Frankie slammed on the brakes, turned around, and started driving back into the city.

My mom spoke, “Where are we going?”

“I’m taking you girls home.”

Charm dated his friend and later he said Frankie was driving them out there to kill them. He was going to shoot them in the country and leave their corpses.

For some reason, he changed his mind.

The first time I saw crack cocaine it was sitting in mounds on my kitchen table. I was ten years old. My dad showed Orleane and her friend how to weigh and bag it. He left to go sell drugs, and we sat there, weighing and bagging.

I knew how to turn cocaine into crack when I was in grade seven.

Dad was a big and powerful drug dealer, and I inherited that false sense of power. In grade seven, I
ran my mouth, because who was going to fuck with me? No one. One look at my dad was all you needed to step down, and I knew that well.

I admire my mother, for never stepping down from him.

When I was twelve years old, my dad brought me into his bedroom. He said he had something very important to tell me. Before he told me, he grabbed me by the breast and said, “Oh look, you’re developing.”

I brushed him away, “Dad, stop.”

That’s when he told me.

“You’re going to be an aunt. Orleane is pregnant.”

I thought, I’m going to be an aunt and a sister.

Orleane was fifteen years old when she got pregnant. She said it was some boy she went to school with, but a mother just knows. When dad was doing time for drug dealing, he wrote letters to all of us. My mom stole them and opened them. Inside these letters, Frankie was professing his love for Orleane. What the fuck do you do when the man who raised your daughter, the man who changed Orleane’s diapers, the man she loved for thirteen years, has abused his powers and began molesting her? She confronted him.

“You’re fucking sick, Les. What the fuck had to happen to you to think this kind of fucked up shit?”

Was he right? Was she so fucked up from her own childhood that she was imagining this? Is it really innocent? A voice inside her screamed. No. She heard that voice before. When Orleane was a baby, that voice told her, leave Frank, Now! She wouldn’t make the same mistake again.

She took the letters to a couple of psychologists, and one of them confirmed it. These are not the letters of a dad to a daughter. These are the letters of a sick man who is taking advantage of a little girl.

For just under a year she built a case against him. She hired a private investigator. She took the letters to the police, they said there’s nothing they can do.

“What the fuck do you mean you can’t do anything? A full-grown man is raping a child, and there’s nothing you can do?”

They told her there’s no proof. She needed proof.

A week or two before Orleane told her about the pregnancy, my mom got a sick feeling in her stomach. She got to work, and then told her boss she had to go. She had a feeling Orleane was in trouble. She got in her car and started driving to Frankie’s place. While she was driving there, Orleane called my mom.

“Mom, you have to come get us.”

“I’m already on my way.”

My mom knew in her gut that the baby was Frankie’s. So, she got a device to record all the phone conversations.

Orleane was lying in bed. She was always lying in bed.

My mom crawled in and said to her, “You know you can tell me anything.”

She just looked at her, silently.

“If it’s too hard to say it out loud, you can write it down on this piece of paper.”

She took a notebook and placed it inside a basket with a pen. Every day she checked that basket. One time it looked like a couple pages had been ripped out. She’d go home, check the basket, and then lock herself in the bathroom and listen to the conversations she recorded.

She listened to Frankie and me talk about how much we hated her for keeping him away from us. Frankie asked to speak with Orleane, I went and got her.

She heard Orleane through the phone saying, “No,
no, *please.* I’m not home.”

When she talked to him, she made up excuses to not talk to him.

“Mom’s home, I gotta go.” Even though she wasn’t.

One day, my mom heard it. They were talking about the due date of the baby, and she heard it. She got the proof she needed.

Was this rock bottom for her? She breathed silently as she listened to the phone call. She tried to make sense of it, tried to understand. Sometimes no rational, sane reason exists, in its stead is something inconceivable, yet highly possible, because she was listening to it for herself. Some people make up rationalizations, explanations, for the abysmal atrocities that find them. They want to believe that the people they know are not capable of being monsters.

I believe in monsters.

A daughter will tell her mother that her step father is touching her. The mother accuses her of wanting attention, trading in the spirit and hope of that child for her own ignorant bliss.

*These are my ears,* she told herself. *I am listening.*

It was all ringing, ringing, ringing. But she was hearing, make no mistake. She chose to be wide eyed. She did not choose the pitch. She breathed quiet. Undetectable. Each noise a slice to the throat, tears streaming down her pinkened cheeks. Silently. But the voices droned on, horrific, and true. All too true. The tears kept streaming.

She vibrated. She sat on the front step and called her friend. That’s when she saw Frankie parked on the corner of the block. She got up and started chasing his car. He drove by, slowly, and laughed at her.

He laughed, and then sped off.

He and I went to the grocery store together. We parked in the lot of the Safeway. It was a warm day where the sun shone through the thin layer of grey clouds. The sepia-toned sunlight pierced through the window, illuminating the dust particles floating in the car.

“Dad, wait.”

He stopped his hand from reaching for the handle and turned to look at me. “What is it?... Wah, Wisahkècâhk got your tongue?”

“You treat Orleane differently from the way you treat me and Chayla. I see things, sometimes. Something is different.”

He was quiet for a moment, staring at me.

I was a perceptive child, and I can’t explain it, but I can feel what other people feel. It’s both a curse and a gift.

“Well, I have to tell you something, my girl. You can’t tell your mother, because she won’t understand. You’ll understand, my little Chy-chy. You know you have an old soul, right? You never had any interest in other kids, you always sat at the table with the adults. I can trust you to keep my secret, right?”

“Yes, you can. Just don’t hide things from me. I can sense it.”

“Well, you know that Orleane isn’t my biological child, right?”

“Yes, I know.”

“Well, me and her are in love...like the way a mommy and daddy are in love. I’m not her real dad, that’s why it’s okay. When she turns eighteen, we’re gonna get married. I’m going to take you and Chayla and Orleane and we’re all gonna move to Ontario. I’ll change my name. We’re gonna start a new life, away from your mom. You know what a selfish bitch she is. She doesn’t want your dad to be happy, and that’s why you can’t tell her this. I’m telling you because I know how smart you are, and I know you’ll understand. I can trust you. You want your dad to be happy.”

In grade five, my dad told me a secret.
I remember believing every word he told me. I was a daddy’s girl, and he had been treating me as his confidant for years. Children are not born doubting their parents. They learn every truth of this world through them. He used to tell me things like, “Your mom cheated on me with many guys, that’s why we’re not together.”

He fed me lies about her, and I ate them. He bought me lots of meals.

The sun pierced overhead but it wasn’t overpowering. I was sixteen. Standing in one place I turned slowly and slowly, looking out from all sides of me until I spun myself dizzy, nothing but trees and bush and greenery all blurring together in a haze. On the moss-covered earth there were long birch branches laid out in rows. I wandered through the woods, searching for round stones that would break toes if you dropped them. One by one I carried them into the fire, heating them up and respecting their strength and durability. Respecting their defiance of defeat.

Us women wandered into the forest, in hunt of blankets of the earth. We gathered them all and shaped the birch into a dome and placed blankets and hides on top of them, building a womb from the dirt and allowing Mother Earth to cradle us. We carried the scalding rocks into the pit in the center of the dome one by one and once they were all in, us women followed after and the hide blanketed the entry.

Cedar branches dipped in water with berries and sage splash on the faint glow from the rocks, filling the womb with steam and sweet sticky scents. The elder starts the first of four rounds and soon the pitch black space is filled with song and heat and we all begin to pray to the Creator. The first set of songs reverberate through the darkness, cradling the anguished souls who relinquished themselves into the Creator’s healing grace. The salt water droplets that pour from my eyes meet the spirits of the steam and together they meld together in a perfect dance that honors Mother Earth. The second set of songs slashes through my core as we sing for the sisters, the mothers, the women of the earth. I find my weeping mixing together with the power of the voice that bellows out into our cradling cavern as I break down for the healing of my mother and sisters in the physical realm, and then my ancestors. My body shakes as I feel the vibration from Mother Earth creeping up into my bones as she spreads her warmth within me. I radiate that warmth as I spread it outwards further still with all women in my thoughts and heart; all the incarcerated sisters; all the murdered sisters; all the broken and lost sisters. I pray for their healing and grace and for their power to return to them. The power of Indian women can never be taken away, only hidden. I allow the feelings to overpower me as I stare straight ahead in the darkness, a dancing of colours and auras before me. I greet my grandmother for the first time and I know I won’t see her again until my soul leaves this body and enters the spirit world once again. I allow the tears to stop as I see her vibrant white light, knowing she is sending me her guidance and strength, knowing she is telling me that she is here with all of us, protecting us. The third round is the hardest because we pray for the brothers. The third round is the one where I weep the most because I allow myself to pray for my perpetrator and his healing. I weep the most because I am finally able to weep for my uncle Jason, who took his own life, and I pray for his soul and I allow myself to mourn for him for the first time. I feel his soul and he forgives me for not crying when he passed. He forgives me for not going to the funeral. He tells me he knows why. His soul
hugs me as he allows me to release those emotions, and at the end of this round, I am free. The fourth round comes and the songs fill the belly and I am lighter, but then a wall slams into me as I begin to pray for myself, a damaged and broken sister along with them, praying for my healing and my power to come back to me. I open up my wounds and allow the mixture of my salt and the spirits of the steam to fold their way into every crevice of my body that is leaking blood and drugs and alcohol. When I open these wounds it is different from the times I dug a blade into my earth stained skin. When I open these wounds it isn’t to numb myself from the gut clenching pain that seize my insides. When I open these wounds it is to allow the love and light and healing to infiltrate every crevice. It is not a bandaid opening, it is the elixir opening. As this round comes to an end, I feel the mud from Mother Earth covering my wounds, and when I exit her womb, the air assaults my drenched skin, and the mud falls away, leaving my cedar skin fresh with new bark.

My great kokum who sat in the house spoke, “While you sang, four eagles circled above you in a soar.”

At the age of twenty-six, I sat on the bed in my bachelor apartment with my mom. I asked her detailed questions about her life, and even though we’ve had many conversations based around the truth of our lives, this conversation was different. Unpacking your whole life’s trauma in one sitting is a different kind of taxing.

She told me how proud she is of me, her old soul of a daughter. Her spirit of the salt. She told me how amazed she is to see me about to graduate university. She told me how angry she still is, to know how deeply this trauma still affects each one of us.

We talked about the time when I was a kid and I jumped out the window, butt naked.

“I saw you, outside. I saw you running around naked. I distracted Frank, so he wouldn’t see.”

Now I understand why he didn’t come running out.

I was twelve years old when I stood at the podium. The judge was before me, a little to the right, and further right still, was my father in handcuffs and an orange jumpsuit. I watched him, and he looked up at me, black eyes on black eyes. He sobbed. I opened up my victim impact statement and read.

A psychologist explained to me the process of grooming. I had to come to terms with the idea that everything my father ever told me was a lie. Everything he ever did and said to me was building me to be his trusted confidant, his keeper of secrets. I sat with a psychologist and my eyes began to pour.

“Will I ever be able to trust anyone?”

The judge sentenced him to four and a half years at Bowden Institution. Four and a half years, the quantifiable punishment for what he did. Four and a half years, the quantum for stealing my sister’s light. Four and a half years, for abusing my mother for thirteen years.

Four and a half years, for assaulting mine and my sisters’ and my mother’s trust and love and tossing it in the air with a grin on his lips as he pulled the trigger and blew it up into a thousand fragmented pieces.

Four and a half years, as he watched the pieces fall and scatter slowly to the ground.

He only served two and was released on good behaviour.

Justice.

I opened up my fingers and let my dad go. After all, he was meant to be a burial ground.