

It felt so good to go back home. Home to the field lined dirt road leading out of town. To the old, rundown high school with its brown, faded football field. To the bar, Joey's, that me and my friends got caught trying to sneak into so many times when we were little kids. The sign which welcomed newcomers and tourists: "Welcome to Bayville, Oregon." The only things that made me hesitant to go back were the not-so-pleasant memories. Chiefly, the memory of the night which was the reason I skipped town at sixteen: October twenty-third, 1962, the night my stepfather murdered my momma, my little sister Peggy, and my unborn baby brother. . Even now, fourteen years later, I remember that night in all it's gruesome reality. I flashed back through my whole childhood at that point.

My papa was killed in an auto accident. I was four or five, I think. Momma brought home my stepdad a month later. Boy, would she regret that. She loved my dad, but she needed someone to provide for us, and she was lonely. My stepdad was decent for the first few months or so, then one night, he decided to show his true colors as an abusive alcoholic.

They were both World War II vets, but that's where the similarities ended. My papa worked his ass off at four jobs to earn the money for our food and rent. Didn't spend a penny on himself. My stepdad blew most of his on whiskey and poker games. Didn't leave hardly anything for us. That's why my momma had to get an extra job. My old man was warm and caring. My stepdad was cold and hard. My dad wouldn't even think about layin' a hand on any of his family. My stepdad once belted me so hard that it knocked a tooth out. I was five and a half. After that, I started hanging out with my friends more and more, and my family saw me less and less. My stepfather, as you may have guessed, didn't really give a rip whether I came home or stayed out. My mom was just too busy. Me and my friends are all what most people would call greasers. There isn't even one of us that came from rich or even middle class families. There was Henry Johnson, Richie Harding, Ray Jacobson, Hal Dietrich, and Steve Townshend.

Henry was small for his age, but stocky, with dark blonde hair he kept in an elephant's trunk. That's a hairstyle, by the way. He was somewhat reserved around strangers, but with us, he was like a puppy all full of energy.

Richie was the oldest by two years, kind of everyone's big brother, with black hair that he slicked straight back. He could sneak anything out of anywhere if he put his mind to it. I remember one of the times we tried to sneak into Joey's and got caught, but Richie had snuck in through the back and came out with three 40's of malt liquor. We were twelve then, Richie was fourteen.

Ray Jacobson was the toughest out of all of us, the only African-American kid we knew and the only one who didn't wear grease in his hair. It was too curly for that. He probably acted so tough so he could defend himself from all the racial slurs that got slung at him, and all the threats of violence. I remember one night when we were 14, three college Klansmen wannabes cornered him in an alley and beat him half to death. Guess they didn't have the guts to finish the deed, though. He told us the general story after we found him and took him to the hospital. He had blood streaming from both nostrils, his eyes swollen shut, with four or five missing teeth, 6 broken ribs, and KKK carved into his forehead. He still has that scar to this day.

Hal Dietrich was Mr. High-On-Life, boisterous and loud. Tall and skinny, with dark red hair that he wore in an Elvis-like pompadour, he was always smarting off to everybody. He couldn't shut the hell up to save his life.

Steve's my best friend in the world, and Hal's adopted brother. Me and him really understood each other. He was shorter than Hal even though he's the same age, taller than Henry but skinnier, with dark brown hair he combed to the side on top and kept short on the sides. Usually, he was more reserved than his brother, but when the mood hit him, he was even louder and crazier. They volunteered to skip town with me, but I told them I had to deal with this on my own. Still, we kept in contact to the best of our ability.

So here's what happened: My mom was pregnant right about then, but it wasn't my stepdad's kid. One night he came home drunker than we had ever seen him. Him and my mom got in an argument about me. My dad wanted to kick me out of the house, my mom wanted me to stay so I could help care for the baby, which was due in 3 months. My stepdad's argument when he saw me standing in the doorway of my room, silently watching, was "What the fuck we keep him around for? Why the 'ell don't he jus' go live with his friends, cuz he almost does already, we hardly see him no more." My momma shot back with "The hell do you care? You're hardly here either! We got a baby comin' and I'm workin' two jobs to get by, cause we wouldn't be able to with the shitty little scraps of yer pay that you leave us, and we certainly won't be able to with me off of work takin' care of another kid!! You ain't gonna be around to take care of the baby while I'm workin, so who the hell else is left but him!?"

"Wha' abou' Peggy?" My stepdad slurred. "What about Peggy?!!" Momma mimicked. "She's SIX goddammit, what the hell makes you think she can care for a baby?!!" She was pissed now. "I'm gonna tell you something. This baby ain't even yours!!" She must've been a bit soused too now that I think about it, 'cause she wouldn't have said that if she wasn't. Big mistake.

My stepdad's face went from red to purple with rage. Without a word, he stomped out the back door, cursing and raving the whole way. A few moments later, he returned with his pump-action and a box of shells. As he rounded the corner into the living room, he shot my mom in the stomach, and then chunks of her head flew around as he shot again. My sister, spattered with momma's blood, ran to the phone to dial the cops. Before she finished dialing 911, BOOM! BOOM!, her back was peppered with holes. Then he pointed it at me, cocked, and fired. I ducked behind the wall, but not before a couple of pellets grazed my cheek and one almost took out my eye. He came in the room, but I knocked him out with the baseball bat, autographed by Joe DiMaggio, that my dad got me for my fourth birthday.