



Damages

I have an amnesia of sorts. I remember almost nothing of my distant past – a condition which at the brink of my 69th year is neither fatal nor debilitating, but which leaves me anchorless without a direction home. Actually, I do recall some things, but they are hazy almost fairytale fantasies, filled with a lack of detail and usually bereft of emotional connections. I recall nothing specific of what parents, teachers or mentors said; no piece of advice; no life's lessons. I'm sure there must have been some – I just can't remember them. My life, therefore, reads like a storybook filled with innumerable déjà vu chapters, but ones which I can't recall having read.

I had a family reunion of sorts a few weeks ago when my sister and I traveled to Sacramento to visit my failing brother – merely 18 months my senior. After his health issues had been discussed we drifted onto memory lane – talking about old times. Hadn't I known that Dad had never been home, that he had spent months at a time overseas on business in Africa and South America? "Sort of, but not really," I answered – a strange retort for a near adolescent child who should have remembered missing an absent father. Didn't I know that our parents were drinkers; that Mom's "gin-fizzes" usually began in the early afternoon and ended as our high school homework was being put to bed? "I guess not," I replied, "but perhaps after the Depression and WWII, they had a reason to have a highball or two, or three."

My lack of personal memory, I've decided, may reflect minor damage, much like a series of concussions suffered by a football athlete to his brain. Somewhere inside of my still intact protective helmet or skull, a physical or emotional collision may have occurred rendering a scar which prohibited proper healing. Too bad. And yet we all suffer damage in one way or another, do we not? How could it be otherwise in an imperfect world filled with parents, siblings and friends with concerns of their own for a majority of the day's 24 hours? Sometimes the damage manifests itself in memory "loss" or repression, sometimes in self-flagellation or destructive behavior towards