

DOING THE DOUBLE

“ ‘You want me to do the double,’ I said at last.

‘Just for a couple of hours,’ Dale said. ‘You might even enjoy it.’

I doubted that very much. But, as usual, he’d won. When it came down to it, I couldn’t say no. ”



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PROLOGUE

Dale and I used to play this game. We called it Doing the Double. If a team wins the league and cup, then they do the double. When we did the double, we pretended to be each

other. Twins do it to trick people.
For a joke.

We hadn't done it for years. But
this time it was serious. Really
serious.

I was in the changing room before
the semi-final. Strangers kept
clapping me on the back.

'Hey, Dale! What's up?' said my
team's goalie. No. Not my team.
Dale's team: Blackstock Youth.

'I'm not Dale, I'm Joe,' I wanted to
say. But I couldn't. I'd promised
Dale. I couldn't back out now.

At that moment I hated football
more than ever.

CHAPTER ONE

I used to love football, like Dale still did. It's not surprising. Our dad was Nicky Green. One of the most talented football players of his generation. That's what everyone

said. They said it with a sigh,
because he hit the booze and flushed
all that talent down the toilet.
When we were kids, we worshipped
our dad. So did every other kid. He
could run with the ball. He could
pass and shoot with either foot. He
had pace and balance and bags of
tricks. He made good defenders look
clumsy. How could you help but love
the guy?

Kids at school would say, 'It must
be great to have Nicky Green as
your dad.' And in a way it was.
When we were small anyway. When
he was at the top of his game and

the booze hadn't taken its toll. But in another way it wasn't that great. We hardly ever saw him. If he wasn't training or playing, he was at some starry event.

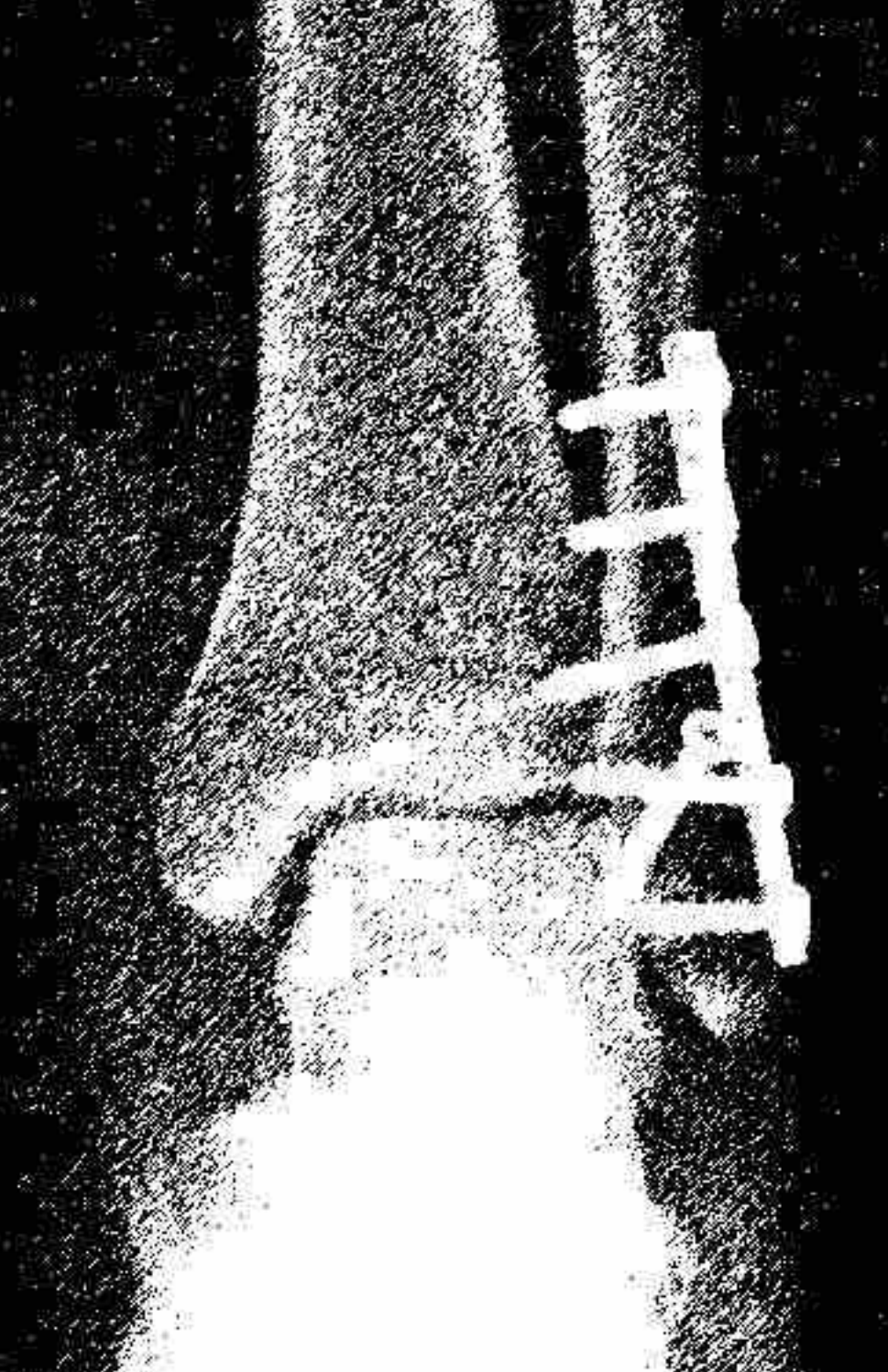
Sometimes I longed for a normal dad. Dad didn't even play football with us. But Dale and I were naturals. We learnt a lot from playing with each other. A lot of the time we shared the same thoughts. Well, we did back then. These days I don't know where Dale's coming from.

It seems weird to say it, but the best times were when Dad was

injured. Then he'd be around the house for a while. He'd do some of the stuff that other dads did. A minor injury was the best news anyone could bring. Anything more major, though, was really bad news.

It was when he got his broken leg that he started drinking. He got so bored and frustrated. He loved playing football more than anything, more than us, more than Mum. Football was his life.

People say, 'It must have been terrible for you when your dad was doing all that drinking.' But Dad wasn't violent. He didn't shout or



swear. We just saw less and less of him. He used to stay out night after night. When he was at home, he'd fall asleep a lot. Sometimes he'd drop off halfway through saying a sentence. Then the drinking started to affect his playing. It got in the papers. Kids at school said nasty things about him. Dale and I got into fights about it. I knew when to stop, when the odds were against us. Dale never did. And he's the same now. Trouble follows him around. Trouble like going out on the town two days before the most important match of his life. Trouble like

having too many drinks and trying
to jump a fence for a stupid dare.
Trouble.

