

**Morning Son**  
**By Mark Leslie**

A grieving man uncovers deeply buried family secrets on his quest to lay his father's ashes and memory to rest!

**Prologue**

I never spoke so many words to my father as the time I was thirty-two and traveled with him from Ottawa to the sprawling network of fishing holes off Highway 144 in Northern Ontario. The only thing that took any real pleasure out of the experience was the fact that my father was nothing more than about three pounds of ashes in a silver-plated urn that I had strapped into the passenger seat in my car.

A man of few words his entire life, my father's Will reflected the same, stating that everything was to go to his only son, and that upon cremation of his body, I scatter his ashes at his favorite fishing spot. The only problem was that my father's favorite fishing spot was a more closely guarded secret than the US president's nuclear launch code. That and I hadn't fished with my father since I was eleven; I was about as

likely to remember where he'd taken me fishing all those years ago as I was to guessing the winning Lotto 649 numbers. And I would be just as at home reading a topographical map as I would reading the French language my surname suggested I was endowed with.

Nonetheless, leaving my wife and child behind, I set off to fulfill my father's request, taking myself on a journey of introspection, self discovery and, finally, a clear picture of who my father really was.

Despite some of the shocking secrets I discovered, the realization that my father was as flawed and fallible as myself, and the fact that he had been dead for a couple of weeks, I never felt closer to my father in my entire life.

And I couldn't have loved him more.

## Chapter One

Edward Leroux knew that a ringing phone at 2:00 AM could not bring anything but bad news. For the briefest moment he contemplated picking up the receiver and then just dropping it back in the cradle, stopping the noise that had lifted him from his sleep and ultimately preventing him from having to know the reason behind this early morning phone call. But he also knew, with a conviction almost too clear for his sleep-filled head, that if the call was as important as it seemed, the phone would simply start to ring again.

Beside him, his wife Mandy stirred, the steady call of the phone wrestling its way into her unconsciousness mind. He could usually respond to his own alarm clock before the noise disturbed her from her slumber; but this evil ringing phone had frightened him, intimidated him, and he'd allowed it to ring too many times already.

His hand scrambled across his night table, knocked his

watch to the floor, and then finally located the phone. He picked the receiver up and manoeuvred it into place. "Hello?"

If you later asked Ed what words had been spoken to him through the phone line that night, he wouldn't be able to tell you. All he would be able to say was that it was his Uncle Lester calling him from the Sudbury Memorial Hospital. Then came a blinding flash of white light and white noise, followed quickly by a low rolling rumble in the back of his head. With a rigorous jerking and a familiar tingling aura, Edward felt himself slipping into the Partial Complex Seizures that he'd lived on and off with since he was eleven.

As the seizure took over and he slipped down into it, the way he imagined a dead body would slide into a warm mud pit, images played through his mind in a fanciful dance. Uncle Lester had phoned in the middle of the night once before, about six years earlier. That time, it was to inform Edward that his mother had died, peacefully, in her sleep, after a five year fight with lung and breast cancer. The call had come through at about 3:00 AM on Christmas Day. Edward, the manager of a retail chain bookstore, hadn't been able to make it home that year for Christmas. The store, his very first store, had been his top

priority, and so he'd missed seeing his mother in those final days of her life. For that, Edward's father had never forgiven him. And Edward had been only too thankful that he'd had the store and the seven-hour drive between Ottawa and Levack, a small town about 70 kilometres north-west of Sudbury, as an excuse to stay away. It had been too difficult watching his mother waste away when he'd last been home. He was glad to have an excuse, any excuse not to have to spend Christmas watching his mother lie there in pain, his only thoughts that she'd been too young to have this happen to her, and damn those fucking cigarettes she'd cherished so much and couldn't let go of.

When the flash of white brilliance had subsided, Edward was able to again see. His first sight was the upside down face of his wife as she spoke on the phone, her lips pressed together tightly between words. She clutched the phone receiver in her left hand and held Edward across her chest with her right elbow. Stroking the side of his face, she continued the phone conversation as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

Certainly, Mandy had seen Edward take a seizure before, but he hadn't realized how utterly accepting she had become of the whole thing. To most people observing Edward when he was

overcome with a seizure, he was a rabid beast, an ugly creature, jerking to his left and drooling madly. Often, they would panic and assume he was dying. Reactions from shoving a wallet into his mouth to trying to hold him down to prevent any thrashing movement whatsoever were the usual fare. But Mandy, long experienced with Edward's seizures, knew simply to hold and comfort her husband, allow the seizure to run its course, and to be there for him when it was over.

To be there for him when it was over.

Falling into a seizure was a terrifying experience. But waking from a seizure alone was, perhaps, one of Edward's greater fears. Sometimes he imaged it like an episode of The Twilight Zone. He would slip into a seizure, then wake to a world with nobody but himself.

He looked at Mandy, watching her lips move as she spoke on the phone, thankful for her presence when he woke. His eyes traced the fullness of her lips as they moved, then went on to admire the curve of her cheek, the soft almost invisible down glowing in the light behind her. Her hair spilled down over one eye and cascaded across the other cheek. A few seconds later, his hearing came back to him and he listened to Mandy finishing

up her conversation.

"Thanks for calling, Lester. We'll talk with you soon."

Edward sat up, rubbing his neck and swirling his tongue around the dry musky taste in his mouth.

"Dad's dead, isn't he?"