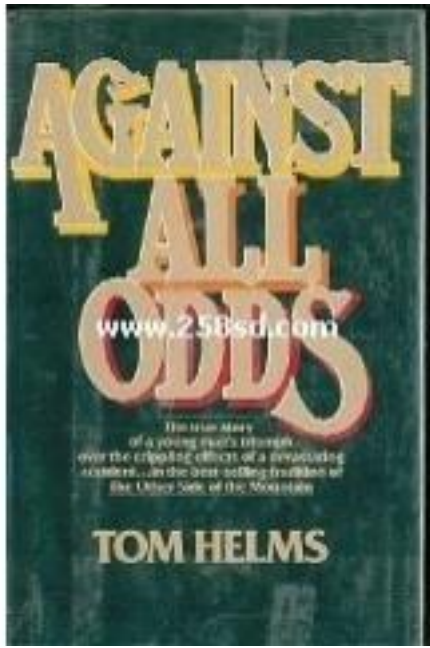


Against all odds



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DREAMS had beckoned before. Gentle dreams that would
teal away my life. It was four years earlier
and by fate or
~ck or those small details of chance that set the course of a
lan s life
I was conscious.
"Hold on. Hold on. Stay awake
" they said.
Someone said it as they pulled me from the car in which I
~d hitched a ride. It was spring and I was on my way home
3m my first year of college. It was raining and the car skidded
:the road and plunged down an embankment. It s funny
lat you think about at a time like that. As the car slid toward
~ embankment
all I could think of was that it was going
be a pain in the ass to lug my suitcase back up that wet
ak. I could see myself slipping and sliding trying to get up
t hill. My footing would fail and I would have to dig a knee
I hand into the mud to keep from sliding all the way back
vn. I even got

angry thinking about having to stand beside
road trying to hitch another ride in
the rain with a muddy
d and two muddy knees.
here was the sound of glass
breaking and metal tearing
then an eerie silence and the smell of fresh-plowed
earth
and gas. It takes a moment for orientation to come.
a moment for pain
to come. I had never lain in the
car with the back of the front seat slowly swaying
a
before
so it took a moment to realize where I was
al
everything was. I
started to reach for the swaying s
something exploded in my back. My vision
faded
az
came back. Pain
unspeakable pain
knifed into my b
shoulders. I tried to pull my shoulders back
to pinch m
der blades together
and squeeze away the pain
but m
ders wouldn't move. I tried to reach for the
seat
ag;
arms wouldn't move. I had broken both shoulders. Jesus
there goes
the summer. Both arms in casts. The pain wa
ing at my back
tearing and
burning. Maybe I was ly
something sharp and it was being pressed deeper
and
into me. I could roll off it if I used my legs. But I had
careful. I had to
be sure I rolled and didn't slide forw
I pushed myself forward it would cut me
open. I had tc
my legs up and push to one side. But my legs wouldn't
They
couldn't be broken. Broken legs hurt. I couldn't fec
thing but the pain in my back. I
couldn't really feel m
I d feel them if they were broken. Maybe they were p
under something. The suitcase? No
not the suitcase.
too strong for that. The
driver? The driver was lying o
legs. What's his name? What the hell's his name? He
tol
when he picked me up but I wasn't listening. I just w:
out of the rain. I
never listen to people's names. I m a
thinking of what to say and I never hear their
names.
Hey you
I said
only no sound came. My mouth movec
no
sound came. I wasn't breathing. Oh
God
I wasn't breathi
I panicked. I
started to scream and run
only I couldn't scl
and I couldn't run. I was so
scared I couldn't think.

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