

Leon's earliest memory...

... was his mother breaking his arm. There was a smell of alcohol, but it wasn't her. She was always sober, which made things that much more frightening. No, the smell of alcohol was from his step-father, who was shouting, "he's only a boy! Stop!" The man wrestled her to the ground as she countered, "He's not a boy! He's his father! Look at him."

He's unsure how old he was. Three? Four? Five? Not five. He knows it was before he was in kindergarten and before his little brother was born. Since he was four years older than his brother, not five. He also remembers he didn't cry out. When that thing bone snapped in her giant hands, he didn't cry. He somewhat suspects that he learned at an even earlier age that if you showed any emotion, his mother would go even harder against you. She fed off it.

They took him to a doctor and got him a Happy Meal on the drive home. His toy was a tiny Big Mac that transformed into a dinosaur. He hid it before his mother could see it. She made it a point to destroy anything that brought him joy. His step-father occasionally bought him toys, but she'd destroy them and tell him "he's not your son. Don't waste money on him."

He often wondered how different his life would be if someone, anyone called child protective services that day.

He played...

... with the Big Mac-dino transformer for years. Always when his mother was not around. He named it Phil but can't remember why. He talked to Phil in the way that other children might maintain a diary. In the tyrannical kingdom that was his mother, Phil was entirely his. When she brought his baby brother home, Phil snuck in to meet him at night. When his mother pulled him out of kindergarten because the