

# **Her Little Soldier**

**Written by Craig Dehut**

Dedicated to my mother, for encouraging me, for believing in me, and for never giving up.

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# Introduction

I had condemned myself, but in a way I was glad.

“Heal them before you heal me,” I would ask God in my prayers.

Whenever I heard of someone that was sick, it became my first instinct to ask God to heal them, without any thought of the sickness that I had.

When it finally dawned on me that God might very well be doing exactly what I had asked him to do, I cried. Mom held me in her arms and just let me cry. There were times that I thought I wasn't being strong enough, but what she told me that day would stay with me forever,

“You're such a little soldier, you know that?”

I didn't. I viewed myself as others typically did: a skinny, short, diabetic kid that hated looking at himself in the mirror because of the pale, sick looking figure that stared back. A soldier? Even with the wonderful imagination and creative mind that I had grown a reputation for, I never envisioned myself as such a hero.

I didn't, but my mother did.

It was that day that I started writing about my disease in my journal. At first they were simply short little blurbs at the beginning of each entry. They soon evolved into my fears, frustrations, and life lessons that came from having my disease.

I know that God is still healing others. I've decided to write this book in the hopes that I can share something with the world and continue to help God heal other people of their hurt.

I pray that my pain, my journey, and my discoveries may bring you some healing and inspire you. My desire is that you will never look at life in the same way again.

# Chapter 1

## My Story

My name is Craig Daniel Dehut. I like my middle name because every time that I hear it, I think of God's prophet in the Old Testament. Daniel was the kind of guy that, no matter what happened to him, never failed to believe in and stand for the one true God. Daniel, along with his friends, defied a king because they believed that no man was so great that he should be worshiped over God. They remained strong in hard times. I've always wished that I could be like Daniel and live up to my name.

I was ten years old when it happened. I was living with my father, Bruce, my mother, Linda, my four older brothers, Jeremy, Jeff, Darren, and Kurt and my younger sister, Lindsey. We were living in Bend, Oregon where my father was a preacher at our local congregation.

Bend is a mountain town in the area of Oregon called the High Desert. I was born in Salem, which is about a three-hour drive from Bend, down the mountain into the Willamette Valley. Because it was the place of my birth, we knew a lot of people around that area, so we traveled back and forth between Bend and the valley all of the time.

My older brothers were playing basketball with our homeschool sports league and we had gone down to the valley to attend one of their games. Before the game, I remember complaining that I didn't feel well. After looking back at photos taken from that day, I am shocked to see just how sickly looking I appeared. I was so pale and tired. We simply thought that I had one of those 24-hour flu bugs or something.

Right before the game, I spilled grape juice all over my shirt. Now, we're not talking about a little spot that I could cover up if I kept my arms crossed. It was *all* over my shirt. I told my mom that there was no way that I was going to the game with my shirt looking like it was, so my dear sweet mother, rushed to the nearest Wal-Mart store and grabbed me a cheap multicolored T-shirt so that I wouldn't have to be embarrassed at my brother's game. I must have been the luckiest kid alive at that point, to have a mom like her – and *it* hadn't even happened yet.

Actually, it had already begun. We just didn't know it. The next morning we all piled into our cars and headed back home. Most of my siblings loaded into our huge, brown, 12-seater van, but my dad, my oldest brother Jeremy and I went in our yellow Chevy Luv pickup truck. When you talk about automobiles having character, this little truck had so much character that sometimes it seemed to talk to you through the gurgling of its engine. It was a great piece of machinery. That Chevy Luv never let us down.

We had only gone a little ways, when it hit me. I had to go to the bathroom and I had to go *bad!* We were fifteen minutes from the nearest town, but I knew beyond a doubt that there was no way that I was going to make it that long. Dad pulled the truck to the side of the road and I dashed out into the woods to relieve

myself. A couple of minutes later, I was back in the truck and we were on our way again.

No more than thirty minutes went by and I was hit by the same undeniable urge. Believe me, I tried thinking about something else, but when you're driving through a mountain pass surrounded by waterfalls and rivers, it's next to impossible. My mind could not ignore what my body was telling it.

"We have *got* to pull over!"

I quickly darted out into the trees again, did my thing, and darted back to the truck. After that, I felt pretty good – for about another half hour.

I probably made three or four stops that trip. As we neared home, we pulled into a gas station and dad bought me a 7-up. My first swig made me realize that I was extremely thirsty. I finished it off within minutes.

When we got home, Mom made an appointment for me at the Immediate Care center for the next morning. She figured that I probably just had an infection or something and that would explain why I had to go to the bathroom all of the time.

Even though that was what she told me, I could tell that she was still unsure about what was really wrong with me. I didn't ask any questions. I figured that I would go to the doctor the next day, he would take my temperature, make me swallow a pill, give me a sucker and send me home healthy and back to normal.

There was little chance that it was going to be that easy, and an even smaller chance that I would be going home with a sucker.

The next day, Mom and I went to the doctor. We sat together in the waiting room without saying a word. Mom just kept looking at me and holding my hand. That one moment is the one that has really stuck with me through these years. I remembering looking into her eyes and seeing how sad her heart was. It was almost as if she knew that it was more than a simple infection.

The doctor called us in and set me up on his examination table - the kind with that white paper on top that crinkles and makes a lot of noise when you move around on it. Mom told him my name and all of the regular information that doctors have to keep records of.

"What are his symptoms?" He asked.

My mother told him about how I had to use the restroom a lot. He wrote that down and kind of nodded his head. She also told him that I was really thirsty all of the time. He nodded his head again. I finally spoke up and asked him,

"Is it normal for me to be this skinny?"

He looked at me. I was ten years old and scarcely over seventy pounds. Something with the doctor clicked - he had heard this all before.

After a couple of quick tests, he took my mom out into the hallway and told her his diagnosis. She really didn't want to tell me there in that unfamiliar doctor's office. She asked if she could go home and get my dad so that they could tell me together. The doctor said that she couldn't and that she wasn't leaving that office until she told me. She came into the room and began to cry as she told me what was going on. I had been diagnosed as a Type 1 Juvenile Diabetic.

I had been cursed.

Okay, I thought, so *what pill do I have to take to make it go away?* My young, often naïve, mind didn't fully grasp the seriousness of the situation. It wasn't going to be that easy. He told us to go back home, pack a few things and get to the hospital as soon as we could.

I had no idea what was going on as Mom drove me home. Apparently, she had heard of this disease before and knew a little bit about it. At that point, I still didn't even know how to say the word, let alone what it meant to have it.

We walked into the house. Everybody else was sitting down watching a movie. It was *Mary Poppins*, I think. I grabbed some clothes while Mom explained to my siblings what was going on. My brother Jeff let me borrow his Gameboy to use while I was in the hospital. I was in and out and on my way to the hospital in less than ten minutes.

My memories about my trip to the hospital are few. I can remember sitting in the hospital while another doctor told us about this mysterious disease called Diabetes. The only things I really remember him saying were things like, "you can't eat sugary cereals like Cap'n Crunch anymore." My mom chuckled and said that I usually didn't eat those kinds of cereals anyway.

The doctors and nurses did their best to explain the disease to me. Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease where the body (for many reasons still unknown) suddenly recognizes its own cells as foreign and destroys them. In the case of Diabetes, it is the cells inside of the pancreas that are attacked. The pancreas is an organ located behind the stomach and is responsible for regulating the sugar in the blood. Whenever something is eaten, the body converts that food into glucose (sugar) and then uses the glucose as energy for the muscles. When too much glucose develops in the body, the pancreas secretes a hormone called insulin that processes the sugar. Too much sugar in the blood can lead to terrible complications including blindness, amputation, even death. But it's a very delicate balance, like trying to ride a unicycle on a tightrope, because not enough sugar in the blood can cause shakiness, blurred vision, and loss of consciousness.

While the two diseases have the same name, type 2 Diabetes is very different. It is usually developed in adults (while type 1 almost always occurs in people under twenty) and is the more common form of the disease. The body continues to produce insulin, but because of various factors (obesity being the foremost), the body fails to use it like it should. Thankfully, type 2 Diabetes can usually be controlled, and often times prevented, with a healthy diet and exercise.

When the doctors explained to me that I had an incurable disease that I would most likely live with for the rest of my life, it took awhile for it to sink in. It took me several days and dozens of questions to finally understand what it was that I had.

Starting that February day, I would have to check my glucose levels and give myself shots of Insulin several times every day for the rest of my life, because my body no longer made enough of its own.

Before I had my first shot, he let me practice on Babie, my beloved teddy bear that I had brought from home. He filled a syringe full of water and let me

inject it into Babie's arm. Piece of cake. Mom gave me my first shot. It hurt a little. Obviously, with three shots a day, 365 days a year, I had plenty of time to get used to it.

At first, it was easy, and understandable, for me to be afraid of the needles. The idea of sticking something through my own skin was frightening to me. But the reality was that if I didn't take the shots I would die. Death has always been a great motivator for people to overcome their fears. I inject the medicine myself everyday without so much as thinking about it; but to this day, unless I am the one in control of the needle, I am still scared and disgusted to see someone else administer a shot.

I was also told that I had to test the amount of sugar in my blood by poking one of my fingers and putting the blood on a little strip. After about a minute, it would give me a number. If the number was too low (below 80) it was bad and if the number was too high (above 160) it was bad. They told me that I would have to do this several times a day, everyday, for the rest of my life.

It hit me that this disease wasn't something that was just going to go away. I wasn't going to be in the hospital for a few days and then get to go home all healthy like before. The doctors didn't know how to cure me. They just knew how to keep me alive.

After the doctor left, I remember sitting on the bed, playing Tetris on the Gameboy, while Mom sat by herself and looked out the window. Sometimes I wonder what was going on inside of her head as she sat there. Every once in awhile, she would look up at the sky and I knew what that meant: She was praying.

A couple of days later, I was allowed to go home. My life as a Diabetic started February 28, 1995. I was ten years old.