

# My Father, the Angel of Death



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*Piñata Books are full of surprises!*

Piñata Books

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Summary: Seventh-grader Jesse Baron not only misses his father, a popular professional wrestler who is often on the road, he faces simple family outings that turn into fan-frenzy events, teachers who contrive excuses for parent-teacher conferences, and friendships that are all suspect.

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For Sylvia, Mateo, and Ana  
&  
To the memory of my father, Fermin Villareal,  
who inspired me to write.

The lyrics to *La dueña de mi amor* are from a poem my father wrote for my mother in 1932, while they were dating.

The bright lights dimmed, leaving the coliseum bathed in an eerie, bluish glow. Strained organ chords filled the air with a haunting, discordant tune.

Suddenly, a powerful, deafening explosion rattled the walls. Streams of orange and yellow flames shot upward in tall columns, and a cloud of smoke billowed from the mouth of the arena.

The spectators, frenzied with anticipation, immediately leaped to their feet.

“Death! Death! Death! Death!” they chanted in unison. “Death! Death! Death! Death!”

Then, as in reply to their cries, a gigantic, ominous figure, dressed in black, emerged from the swirling haze. His long, wispy, dark hair hung loosely around his white, skeleton face. A hooded cloak was draped around his massive frame. In his hand, he clutched a wood-handled scythe with a razor-sharp blade.

His presence electrified the crowd.

“Death! Death! Death! Death!”

The man in black paused. He gazed up at the hordes of people that surrounded him. His piercing eyes widened. Raising his scythe in the air, he unleashed a banshee-like scream.

“Aaagghh!”

The crowd was ecstatic. “Death! Death! Death! Death!”

With slow, but deliberate strides, he made his way to the ring.

His opponent, a man named Raven Starr, fearfully waited for him there, like a condemned prisoner facing a firing squad.

The man in black climbed through the ropes. He removed his cloak and handed it and the scythe to a waiting attendant. Then he stepped to the center of the ring, stopping inches away from Raven Starr. He stood rigid, like a statue. His coal-black eyes bore deeply into Starr's. Within moments, Raven Starr's eyes became blank, mesmerized by the man in black's intense, hypnotic stare.

All at once, without warning, the man in black struck! He sprang back with a short step. Then he lunged forward, assaulting Starr with a devastating clothesline that knocked him senselessly down to the mat.

The crowd screamed wildly in approval. "Death! Death! Death! Death!"

The man in black responded by pounding his chest like an enraged gorilla.

"Aaagghh!"

Raven Starr sluggishly rolled over on all fours. He gave his head a quick shake to regain his senses. He staggered to his feet and readied himself for another wave of attack.

The man in black charged forward. This time, Starr fired back with a short series of punches. But they were about as effective as a rabbit fending off a lion.

The man in black, his face a grinning skull, laughed maniacally at Starr's efforts. He forced him into a corner and pummeled Starr relentlessly with jackhammer punches. Raven Starr's body crumpled to the floor.

The man in black lifted him like a rag doll, and with incredible force, power-bombed him onto the mat.

“Aaagghh!” he roared, thrusting his arms victoriously in the air.

“Death! Death! Death! Death!” cried the crowd, now gesturing a “thumbs down.”

Having accepted the people’s verdict, the man in black grabbed his victim, flipped him upside down, and delivered the final blow, the coup de grace, the Death Drop Pile Driver.

“*THE WINNER OF THE MATCH . . . AND STILL . . . THE ACW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION,*” the ring announcer bellowed, “*THE AAANGEL OF DEAAATH!*”

Thunderous applause and cheers echoed throughout the arena. “Death! Death! Death! Death!”

Once again, the blue lights blanketed the room and the unharmonious organ music sounded. The man in black exited the ring and marched triumphantly up the aisle.

Despite the seemingly vicious onslaught I had just witnessed, I smiled. I knew Raven Starr would be all right. He always was.

The man in black disappeared into the enveloping fog, withdrawing to the lower regions of the Netherworld, where he would wait until the Dark Forces summoned him once more.

*There he goes,* I thought, as I watched him leave. *My father . . . the Angel of Death.*