

# Aftershocks

Beep.

I open my eyes and blink a few times, squinting to see through the blinding fluorescent lights.

Beep.

Once my eyes have adjusted I sit up and look around me. I crinkle my nose at the pungent smell of antiseptic and hand sanitizer that I know belongs to the hospital. I look out the window beside me, see a big H and sigh, *yup I think definitely a hospital.*

Beep.

*What is that annoying beeping?* I think and look to my other side, my eyes go wide when I see my mom lying completely still in a hospital bed. She has a bunch of tubes attached to her and I see that the machine that monitors her heartbeat is the one making the aggravating beep sound.

“What happened?” I whisper to myself, then it all comes back.



We went to an amusement park for my 13th birthday, it was the Sunday before school started and it was packed. We went on every single ride in the park, and Wonderland has a *lot* of rides. We were standing in line for the bumper cars when it happened.

Suddenly the ground was shaking and my dad, who was walking back with our lunch was hit by a falling roller coaster track. Crying, I started to sink down onto the ground but my mom insisted we move, through the panic we ran to the Sunny Snack Shop and took cover under a table. My

mom and I sat there under that small booth for what seemed like forever, crying for my dad and hoping for him to be alive.

I don't know how long it was until the paramedics came. When we finally heard the ambulance sirens we got out from under the table and walked outside. I looked around and saw dozens of people on the ground; smashed under debris that fell. I looked over to where my dad fell and saw firefighters trying to get the roller coaster off of his body.

That was when the aftershock hit. My mom and I immediately ran back inside the diner and got under the table but a window shattered and a piece of glass perforated my mom's back. My eyes went wide and I screamed for help until my voice was hoarse.

A paramedic came running and brought a stretcher for my mom. There was chaos all around us. I was mutely following the paramedic and my mom towards an ambulance when I got hit in the head by something; probably a piece of falling debris. The next thing I knew I was in the hospital.



I heave myself off of the stiff hospital bed and walk over to stand beside my mom. A nurse walks into the room and smiles at me, "we think she's going to be okay" the nurse says and I breathe a deep sigh of relief.

That's when the monitor stops beeping. The nurse drops the clipboard she was holding and pushes a button "patient in room 512 is unresponsive" she says and immediately other doctors and nurses come into the room and flock around my mom, obscuring my view of her.

"What's happening?" I ask and a nurse comes and sits beside me "I'm sorry" she says "what's happening?" I repeat, my voice stronger, she takes a deep breath before speaking to me "Kaitlyn" she begins, her voice soft "Kat" I interject, "Kat" she continues "your dad died here about an hour ago."

I put a hand down to stabilize myself, suddenly glad to be already sitting. *No* I think and I begin to cry again, that's when another nurse comes and shakes his head, "I'm sorry" he says. My mouth forms a little O shape and I shake my head "she isn't dead!" The nurse says he's sorry, that my mom ended losing too much blood from the piece of glass. For the next long while I sit there and let the nurse hug me as I cry, and cry, and cry.

They start to wheel my mom out but then my grandma comes in, "Lynn" she says, staring at my mother's limp body "my poor little girl" she says, turning to me. She crosses the room in two long strides and pulls me into a hug, I feel her tears staining the back of my shirt, "you'll be staying with me for the next while" she said, "how's that sound kitty kat?" she asks, her voice breaking. I give no response but only cry harder.

After going to see my dad's body and crying a lot more we head to my grandma's apartment. She gives me dinner but I can't eat anything so I go to bed early and numbly stare up at the ceiling until I fall into a troubled sleep.

One week passes, then another, school starts but I don't go. I realize there were a lot of things that I took for granted, like being able to play games with my dad whenever I felt lonely or even helping my mom set the table for dinner. The days pass and they all feel hollow and empty, then it's time for the funeral.

Thursday morning I get dressed in a new black dress and pick up a black umbrella because of the torrential rain outside. On the way to the funeral I stare out the car window, watching the raindrops settle on the ground. Throughout the funeral I cry silently, tears streaming down my face like the raindrops outside. Everyone there comes up to me and says their condolences, each "I'm sorry" is like a sharp pain, reminding me that my parents are gone. The funeral is brief and depressing. As my parents are lowered into the ground it hits me that they are truly gone. One by one everyone leaves, my closest family going last after crying for a while. As we drive back to grandma's house she asks me if I want to go back to school next week, and before she can start rattling off reasons about why it would be beneficial for me I say yes.

So that's how on Monday I find myself walking into the eighth grade to the most sympathetic looks I have ever gotten in my entire life. People who I only talk to during group projects come up to me and say their condolences. During class I just keep my head down and do my work silently, the teacher never calls on me anyways. The rest of the week passes like that, with lots of I'm sorrys, sorry for your losses and about a million sympathetic looks when I walk through the hallway. Those make me feel worse though, even though the people mean well. By Friday I am done with all the attention so I sign out for lunch and sit in the school garden for second break. Halfway through break someone comes and sits down next to me. I look over my shoulder to see who it is; it turns out to be Jimmy Osborne from my class.

“I know how you feel” he says

“No” I reply “I really don't think you do.”

“My mom died when I was nine” he says.

My mouth goes into a little O shape, “ I'm sorry” I reply.

“Yeah, my mom was driving back late from her work when she was hit by a drunk driver, they both died.”

“That's terrible” I say.

“Well I think if my mom was alive she'd tell me to stop thinking about the past and get a move on with my future.”

“Yeah” I say, smiling genuinely for the first time in weeks “that's probably what my dad would've said.” I think for a minute then ask “does it get easier to bear?”

He shrugs, “sometimes, other times it's harder but you just have to keep moving, if you stay in the past then you might miss out on what happening in the present. Sometimes I get really mad at the man whose car hit my moms but then I think about what my dad always says.”

“And that is?” I ask.

“Every action has a repercussion and I guess when the man got in his car he wasn't thinking about that plus he was pretty drunk so he might not've been thinking at all, I'm sure he didn't want to hit my mum” Jimmy says.

“Yeah,” I say, nodding slowly, processing his words. “I guess the earthquake just happened.”

Jimmy glances at his watch then stands up, “it's almost time for 5th period so are you coming back inside? Because I don't think you want to miss attendance, do you?”

“Yeah I'm coming, I stand up, brush the dirt off my jeans and look around, seeing; not looking at my surroundings for the first time in weeks.

And with that I walk through the schools front doors,

ready to keep going like my parents would have wanted me to.

**The End**