

A Hope Of Healing

PERSONAL ESSAY & MEMOIR

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I'll never be able to forget that day that I can never quite remember.

It was everything that was to be expected, just like the funerals from the back of my childish, clouded head. Black clothes, forlorn faces, rivers of tears. Even the surroundings were familiar; the same desolate graveyard that sat next to the same old, smalltown church I'd been to my entire life. Yet, it was nothing I ever could have predicted. How different a funeral is when it is your own mother.

There are things I do not remember that everyone else seems to. Others tell me names of those that were there, what she was wearing in her casket, and what was said at her graveside. They tell me how long the service lasted, what I was doing, where everyone was sitting, who was speaking above her body at the altar. All of these things are lost to me.

The things I do remember are the feelings. The feeling of dread and overwhelming loss upon entering the church, stark contrast to the usual jovial atmosphere that surrounded the place I once enjoyed going. I remember the aroma of grief that saturated the air, swirling around us, thick and tear inducing, like it was choking you to produce the saltwater drops it desired.. I remember the feeling of something similar to but so much stronger than annoyance when people would ask me if I was okay, posing such an outrageous, unanswerable question. I remember the numbness that prevented realization from sinking in, the cloud of nothing that kept me from accepting the knowledge that I would never see her smile again. All these things battered me, like furious waves beating an exhausted shore, all day. That day churned me like an angry ocean of grief, smoothing me out and tumbling me around.

But then, there was something else, something I never would have anticipated, especially that day of all days. I remember another feeling. It was fleeting, maybe even frail, but oh so vivid while it lasted. I remember the numbness parting like morphine clouds around my mind and the light of a different epiphany breaking through. There was a feeling of family. We were all here. Those of us who were fighting the day before the news broke now sat shoulder to shoulder, crying together. Those of us who had been so immersed in private battles that we couldn't spare a second for our own families now raced around comforting them. Those of us who were so closed off were open, even honest.

Broken, hurting, and damaged though we may be, as we carried her to that hole, we were whole. In a sick but beautiful way, being torn apart brought us together in a way I have seen nothing else ever do. Loss is an awful, fickle, and funny thing, in that regard.

It may have torn my world apart, leaving it beyond repair. But, in place of it, loss left me with a new world that had a hope. A hope of healing. ■