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English 11

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The Anger in Forgiveness

It was bitterly cold the day my world changed forever. I was bundled up in a large pea coat and scarf, small cotton gloves barely keeping my icy fingers warm. Only a few more blocks to go, I repeated to myself, gritting my teeth every time a car whipped up cold wind as it sped by. Finally, I rounded the corner to my house and saw my mom’s car parked in the driveway, which was odd because normally at this time she was at work.

Immediately after walking through the door I could tell something was wrong. My mom’s eyes were puffy and red. She had small streaks of black mascara running down her cheeks. At first I didn’t say anything, because I wasn’t sure how to react. My mother was the disciplinarian in the family; she was the strong and sturdy one. I don’t think I had ever seen her cry openly like this before. She tried to put on a fake smile for me and told me we needed to talk. Uh-oh, I thought, the dreaded “let’s talk” conversation. I began to make a mental list of things this could be about: I had gotten almost all A’s in my first semester of 7th grade, I had remembered to do all of my chores that week, I hadn’t gotten in trouble for “talking back” in at least a month.

“Let’s go to Bella Bru,” my mother told me though her contrived grin. I smiled faintly as Bella Bru was my favorite coffee shop. They had amazing mochas and these little ham and cheese croissant sandwiches I loved. We drove to the coffee shop in silence. My mom kept looking at me out of the corner of her eyes, giving me the fake smile again. My stomach started to do flips; something bad was about to happen. I could feel it.

I gripped my warm coffee mug, trying to extract any morsel of heat from it I could. My mom sat across from me trying to make small talk. She asked about school, asked when swim team try-outs were happening, asked about my best friend Kelley. Then, her face went pale as she put down her mug and told me once again that we “needed to talk”.

“Your dad is…is moving out,” she said in a small voice. It sounded as if she was a million miles away, it didn’t sound like her voice at all; it was as if someone else was telling me this. My brain wasn’t quite registering the information. I sat their dumbly concentrating on taking small sips of my mocha.

“Breanne? Did you hear me?”

“Why?” I asked looking down at my hands. I couldn’t look at my mom’s face, it was too painful.

“I don’t want you to hate him,” she said, completely avoiding my question.

“Why?” I asked again.

“He cheated on me, on us I guess. He just decided that maybe this other woman…” I looked up. She was crying softly into her napkin, small tears rolling into her mug of coffee. My stomach did another flip. I pushed my croissant and coffee mug away, it all looked disgusting to me now. I thought I might throw up.

“How?” I asked, “Why?” It was as if I suddenly had a five year olds vocabulary. Words weren’t registering in my head correctly.

“Honey just please remember that he loves you, he really does and nothing about this situation means that we don’t still love you.” She grabbed my hand, trying to squeeze it. I pulled it away; I was angry I realized. I was not sad, but angry. Thoughts rushed through my head quickly, why would he ruin our family? Who was this other woman? Was this why my dad was “working late” so much lately? Where would he live? Would we have to move? Would I get to see him? Tears of anger suddenly sprung to my eyes.

“Are you divorcing him?” I asked as the tears spilled over onto the sticky table.

“No, I mean we are going to try to work it out. We are going to go to therapy. We will see what will happen…really there are no promises right now. I am pretty angry at him and I don’t really know if this is actually going to work out. I don’t know how I can go back to being his wife again. But we want to try for you honey, because we love you so much.”

“Oh.” I squeaked through tears. She grabbed my hand again and tried to smile.

“It will be okay,” she whispered sadly, trying to reassure both of us.

These words echoed through my head as I tried to process the tearing apart of my family for the next few months. “It will be okay.” For weeks I didn’t see my dad and had no clue where he was. I teetered between extreme bouts of anger and extreme depression over those weeks. I yelled loudly at my mom for no reason, refused to do chores, stopped doing my homework, cried in my room, and even got caught stealing from a local grocery store. I had so much anger built up in me towards my dad and what he had done I wasn’t able to deal with life anymore. It was as if someone had torn a huge hole in the fantasy life I was once living.

I rebelled in any way I could and it felt good to not have to be the “perfect” daughter I once was; being rebellious felt wonderful. It made my pain disappear. My mom and dad went to therapy for months and after all of my rebellious acts I also got sent to therapy. After therapy sessions my dad would take me to the park and try to talk to me about school and life, like everything was fine. I barely said two words to him; how could he just expect to have a normal conversation after deserting our family for some floozy? What did he *think* would happen?

Eventually my parents got a divorce and my dad moved into a small apartment a few miles away. By this point I had accepted that my parents would no longer be together, but I hadn’t forgiven my dad. I still don’t think I have forgiven him and it’s been almost twenty years. Sometimes I think about why I am still angry at him, is it because he destroyed our family? Is it because I feel I can’t trust him? Or is it because he shattered the innocence of my childhood? The world became a very different place for me after learning about my dad’s infidelity. I became closed off to others and more cynical, I had problems with trust and often felt jealous of people who could love and trust others so easily. I wanted to have my rose colored glasses back, I wanted the world to go back to my normal world of friends and dances and swimming and school. I wanted to be carefree. Instead, I was forced to look at reality, forced to see the bad in the world, forced to recognize that the people you love can let you down and sometimes those people you love aren’t really the people you thought they were at all.