

## Because You Know

There is no single word to describe the pain of abandonment. There is no single word to describe the feelings that accompany such an event. There is only numbness. That is what I experienced on August 31, 2018, when I watched the shimmering, silver Toyota Corolla carry my father away from me. Numbness. There was no shock of pain, no blinding tears; there was numbness. He never looked back, but I could not tear my gaze away from the dust he left behind. I waited to wake from this nightmare, desperate for reality to be only a fantasy. But this, this was real life. When everyone else turned away, there I still stood, hoping for the dust to settle. It never did. He never turned back.

No one blamed me for this turn of events, yet I blamed myself. I genuinely believed that I was the reason my family had to suffer. Family and friends alike desperately attempted to distract me from my grief, but they could never break through the wall of blame I had set for myself. They told me that this was not my fault, that he had made this choice for himself. They took me to movies, invited me to sleepovers and weekend retreats, and begged me to talk about my emotions. I only wanted to grieve in silence. To this day, I distinctly remember the conversations I had with my father. Our viewpoints differed entirely, our beliefs clashed like a wave against the cliffs. He called me naive and stupid for my religious belief, and I strove to show him why it mattered, why it was important to me, why it could matter to him. I wanted him to know that he could change, that God's grace could change him, and he ridiculed me for it. But now, I ponder and contemplate the reason he really left. Is family only temporary, an object to be

tossed once it has been worn out? Is a loving family ever enough? Is love itself enough, or is it that some people are simply looking for something more?

Many people have experienced their parents separating in one way or another. No matter what happens between them, many children still struggle with their feelings of dedication and confusion. For some people, they do not remember when their parents divorced; they were simply too young. For others, one parent cheated on the other parent, which caused a divide between them. In my case, my father decided that he desired a different family, and in my mom's words, "He just walked out on us." People say that time heals pain, but I don't truly believe that. For the past two years, I have spent significant portions of time piecing together my confidence and my faith in humanity, but I never forgot what it felt like to be broken in such a way. No, time does not heal pain; time simply dulls pain until it is more of an ache. Aside from numbing the pain, time does nothing. It does not matter how much time has passed, unless you choose to do something with that time, unless you choose to turn the pain into beauty, unless you choose to move on, time is worthless.

If you have ever had a friend who started an awful rumor about you, you know the feeling of betrayal that accompanies said rumor. Likewise, when someone abandons you, that betrayal is heightened and multiplied until you can no longer remember when you felt connected to them. You desperately want to have the same relationship you did before, yet you know that there will always be a wall between you and them. That wall may shrink, but it will always haunt you, always reminding you that maybe their love is as fragile as the ice which covers the streams in December and just as temporary. It will always remind you that you might just be unlovable. Even as you speak to him from across the world, you are reminded of how he made you feel. Even as you spend a weekend with him, you are reminded of how he did not want you and how

maybe he doesn't still. You know that every time you see him, every time you speak to him, you will feel unloved. You know that this feeling will never fade, no matter how much time passes.

Suddenly, you cannot stand the idea that anyone feels unloved. Suddenly, you become desperate to show the world that they are loved, that they are valued, that you value them even if no one else does. You walk up to them and give them a hug, offer them friendship, and listen to their tears. You remind them that they always have someone to talk to, and they know that someone is there to listen to them. You show them that they are loved because you understand what feeling unloved is like. You offer hope when everything feels hopeless. Above all else, you desire to grow closer to God, because He is who saved you when you felt alone. He sent you friends who showed you what being loved and cared for should feel like, and He sat with you when everything was wrong and pulled you from your grief into a place so much better. This was when you decided that you wanted to be that person for others, the person who cared no matter what someone has done and no matter what they are going through.

You believe in everybody and try to understand them because everyone needs love. Even though you may not believe that you will ever fully forgive your father, you recognize that he too needs to be loved. You recognize that if it were not for the hurt that he caused you, you would not be who you are today. You recognize that his decision is the reason you have the faith, the strength, the compassion, and the desires which you have. You recognize that you desire to be better than him; you never want anybody else to ever feel the way that you felt, and you strive to show them that every day. When everyone around you tells you that you are too kind-hearted, that you are setting yourself up to get hurt, that you have too much faith, you turn around and tell them that Christ did not come for those who were perfect, He came for those who needed Him and gave them love and hope until they killed Him for it. And that, that is the picture of love, and

that is the picture you try to replicate for everyone else because you know what it feels like to be abandoned.