

You hear the door open and you, your brother, and sister's names called by the trembling voices of your parents. Their eyes are filled with tears and your mind wonders about the death of someone you knew. Although it wasn't the death of someone, it was the death of love. The love they once experienced, the love that raised three beautiful children. The love that kept them in the small home that they made their own. Their voices were stuttering, struggling to tell the truth, afraid to say that things would change. You sat there numb, the questions and fears closing your airways, suffocating you. You go to the room that your parents cradled you in, the room they sat together reciting your nighttime prayer. You shut the door, lay down on the floor, and stare at the uncarbonated Original New York Seltzer can from the night before, the can that still sits on your dresser to this day.

On January 1, 2018, everything changed for your family. Your dad hugged you and said he loved you as he left with a suitcase to stay with your grandparents for a while. The silence that surrounded the once noisy home was intimidating. You sat with your mom and sister in front of the television that nobody was watching. Your grandma came to the house crying and demanding to know what had happened. You sit there uncertain of what had even happened yourself. She then leaves, and back to silence. Your brother that struggles with change since he was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome asks what caused them to do this, and if they love each other still, and if dad would come back home. Your heart is beating, beating, beating, so loud you feel it in your throat as you try to hold back the tears of your burning eyes. After this day, you pretended you were okay, even if you were at different houses, or if your mom slept in your basement.

You now question what love actually is when you once longed for the love your parents had. You wonder what had happened that New Year's Eve that made them decide they couldn't

be together. You make your own relationships suffer because of the cage that has enclosed your heart since that day. You are scared that your parents will start new lives without you in them, with new families and new houses. You are afraid they will get hurt again and believe that these new people will never be enough or not right. They will never be right because your parents aren't together anymore and that was what was right. How could your dad love someone who wasn't the mom that put you to sleep, took care of you when you were sick, and showed you who you wanted to be? How could your mom love someone who wasn't the dad that taught you how to ride a bicycle, carried you when you would fall asleep in the car, and would always play with you? If that was not what love was, what is love?

It has been over three years already, and you feel like it was just yesterday. You now have a new house that you built, a divorced parents' bag, and a schedule engraved in your brain. Every two or three nights, you drag the few items that you absolutely need and shove them in the large duffle bag that allows you to live in two different homes. You lift the 14-year-old dog into the car since he is part of both families; he holds you all together. Many people do not know that you have two houses, have loving parents who are strict about going places, and limited time with each of them. It makes everything a lot more difficult for you. But it's better for them. Your parents are happier; they get to live their own lives without the strain on each other. You are ultimately happier although it was a drastic change. And you learned that relationships were not as perfect as they seem on the outside. Most importantly, you learned that no matter what is thrown at you, love is stronger than anything, and can hold your family together even if it is a part.

From that day forward, you realized that life will continue on and that divorce was what was meant to happen. You sometimes thought it was worse, but now you see it was the right

thing. You now want to find a perfect person for you and never settle for less. You never want your daughter to run to your room in the middle of the night after hearing you arguing. You never want her to notice the ring laying on the bathroom counter that you never wear anymore. You never want her to sit in the car in silence afraid to say the wrong thing after fighting. Although you do want your future family to feel as loved as you are, as happy as you are, and able to adapt to change. You are still trying to love what life has to offer and be open to new possibilities. You once pretended to be okay with the change you had no control over. But now you know that no matter what life throws at you, love will allow you to survive.