

I Should Have Been More Careful

I'm falling, out of nowhere I'm falling. I look down and there's the water, clear as crystal, cold as ice, and dangerous as a knife. I plunge into the water, and thrash around, trying to cling to any air in my lungs. My body fills with water, threatening to kill me, to drown me. I start to lose consciousness, my vision going black and my limbs slowing. I close my eyes, ready for the darkness to take me, ready for my heart to drown and stop completely.

"beep, beep, beep..." My alarm screams at me, I slap it off, far too hard, and it falls to the ground, and the screen cracks and brakes. That won't be working anytime soon.

Stupid alarm, I don't need it anyway.

Because ever since that dream last night, I was awake, trying to calm my breaths, trying to slow my racing heart. But it's not the first time that's happened.

As I get ready for school, I pause, stare at the photo of Eli and me, we took last summer. I'm grinning in the picture, squinting at the sun and ice-cream running down my chin. My younger brother is taking up most of the picture, trying to get a bite of my Ice-cream. He to, is smiling, his blonde hair glowing in the summer sun, and deep ocean blue eyes, peering into the camera.

As his eyes meet mine, I slam the photo down, my hands trembling, and cause it to smash. I slam the door close of my bedroom, and storm into the kitchen where dad is waiting with a piece of toast and the newspaper.

I plonk down on a chair, and start shovelling cereal into my mouth. I glance at dad, he appears interested, but I can tell in his eyes, that he is still grieving.

If I can't cope, then I wonder how he is going.

I rush out the door, pecking dad on the cheek, which he responds to by mumbling a vague "love you, honey" his eyes lost, his hair a mess and his heart longing for the lost.

And as I get to school the day flies by, then the next. The nights fly by with a flurry of nightmares and drowning. The days are filled with grief and sorrow.

One day at school, I'm am sitting with Eva, my one and only best friend. She has cropped brown hair, with hot pink highlights flowing through it, three piercings in one ear (which is breaking many rules) and dark olive skin.

She also has a condition called vitiligo, which causes her to have white patches all over her dark skin, which she gets teased for every day. But she still looks amazing. Not just the way she looks, but the way she holds herself so confidently, like she's in charge of the world, and she doesn't care what everybody else thinks.

She sits down with her organic wholemeal sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes, a water (never soft drink) and her (also organic) apple.

Having sudden déjà vu, I remember the first time she sat with me, with an almost identical apple. It was two years ago, and she plunked down and helped me sort out my maths problems. After that we just clicked - we've been friends ever since.

Still lost in thought, I nudged her with my arm. "Hey, why did you sit down with me? All those years ago?"

She thought for a bit, looked to the distance and replied, "When I was 11, and the doc diagnosed me, he said I needed to be more careful with my life, and that other people may hurt me who I am, and the way I look"

She glanced at her hands, streaks of beautiful white and olive skin covering her hands.

She continued, "So, I took it in my stride to be who I am, and to be who I am confidently. When I saw you like that, I decide that yes, I needed to help me, but as well, I could help others..." She paused, and glanced at me, "Help others to be more careful"

The bell rung for next session, and she sprinted off for double art, but not before yelling "beach at four!"

The day flew by, quicker than what I thought was possible, and before knew it, I was on the bus to beach, repeating the mantra in my head, *you can do it, you can do it, you can do it.*

I arrived and the yellow and blue beach, and the memories of That Day, pulled me under, I closed my eyes and saw what had happened that afternoon.

It was a spring afternoon two years ago, definitely not summer, so crisp that I was only dipping my toes in, and dad was up on the grass doing paper work.

Mum and Eli, were in the water, playing in the waves, giddy from the chill.

Then, all of a sudden, mum and Eli were both screaming, they're heads going under. They were screaming, - a scream that still haunts me – as mum tried to hold Eli up.

I yelled for dad and started to run into the water, but I tripped and fell. I held my ankle screaming for anyone to save them. Anyone.

But dad came too late, he was on the other side of the beach, and as he rushed towards the water edge, he was too late. They were dead within seconds.

I should have been more careful. Why did I trip? Why did I fall?

"Charlie!" I looked for my mother, lost in the memories, and then saw Eva running towards me. In shock I waved and hastily wiped a tear from my face. Her shining face fell, as she saw mine, then asked what was wrong.

I looked to the deadly ocean and back to her and whispered with more tears pouring from my face, falling into the sand below.

"I should have been more careful"

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