



Me and my mom at a birthday party when I was 13

“I promised you wouldn't feel anymore pain. Did you?”

“This is the way the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper”- T.S. Elliot; “The Hollow Men”

May 31, 2012, 3:00 in the afternoon, Food Lion parking lot, Church Hill, TN.

I frantically shuffle through my purse screaming, “somebody call 911!” People gather around, but no one calls. They all just stare at us. I finally yank up my phone from the scattered receipts, candy wrappers and hair bows in my bag. I dial 911 and when the operator answers I am at a loss for words.

All I can manage to say is, “ My mom is on the ground, she's not responding to me, but she is alive.”

2:30 pm

Just like every summer before, I had slept all day. I went downstairs to talk to my parents and in the garage I found my mom removing rainbow nail polish from her fingers. She looked up from her remover when she heard me open the door

“It's about time sleepy head.”

I just rolled my eyes and said,

“Yeah, yeah.”

She told me she was going to go to the grocery store and asked me if I would want to go. Before she could even get the whole question out, I was already running back upstairs to get ready.

2:35 pm

Being 19 years old, and still a young heart, I had a very unique style in clothing. I stood in the bedroom choosing my outfit. I chose knee high bright green socks, a pair of black shorts with green trim and Kermit the frog on them, and a shirt with three aliens from Toy Story on it (it glowed in the dark too). After I got dressed I went to the bathroom to brush my pink and purple hair. I brushed my teeth, washed my face and decided that I wanted to wear my hair extensions, which I had not yet worn. After I got all my extensions clipped in, I grabbed my purse and by the time I shut off the bathroom light my mom was yelling, “Come on youngin!”

3:05 pm. Food Lion parking lot

I stay on the phone with the operator for what feels like hours, looking down at my mom, who now would not look at me. Her eyes are in a fixed stare at the sky, as if she were searching the clouds for the answers to all of the questions she ever had in her whole life. I grab her hand. Knowing she is

unable to talk to me, I talk to her. My words come out shaky, and in a broken squeak, but she still hears me, “Mom, it's Coby. I'm here, and I'm not going anywhere.” She grabs my hand back with hers and I see two tears make their way down her face from each eye. At that same time, I hear the ambulance sirens and tell the operator they have come and we hang up. I turn around to see them pull up behind me, I turn back around to look at my mom and at the same time, I realize her hand is no longer holding mine, just mine holding hers... she stopped breathing and was beginning to turn blue. I scream at the EMT's, “Help her she just stopped breathing!”

2:45 pm

I made my way out to the Jeep (it was a Jeep Cherokee without 4 wheel drive, so mom called it a half breed), where mom was blasting this song by Cher that I hate called, “Half Breed”. She kept a cd with this song on it, and played it every time we took the Jeep anywhere. She said it was like her theme song. I whined about the song and she just turned it up louder, and gave me the “deal with it” look. I buckled up and shut the door, and mom backed out. We only lived five minutes from Food Lion, so the car ride was pretty short. When we got to the store, I asked mom if I could go next door to Dollar General after we got food and she said yes. We walked through the sliding doors to Food Lion, and grabbed a buggy, and as soon as we got past the first register, mom grabbed her head with one hand and she stopped walking like something was wrong. I asked her, “You okay?” She said, “Yeah, I just got really light headed.” I offered her a drink of my diet mountain dew, but she declined. I jokingly called her an old lady and she giggled, but she said, “No, for real.” She started to worry me, but then she started to walk again, so I thought she'd gotten over it, since it was scalding hot outside. 92 degrees Fahrenheit and temperature was still rising made me assume that it was the heat making her dizzy.

3:15 pm Food Lion parking lot

I step back to let the EMT's do their job, while random strangers stand nearby gawking at us. One lady even reaches out to pat me on the back, as if it would make me feel better. I turn from her touch as if her hand was a flame. I do not want anyone to touch me, look at me, speak to me, much less try to comfort me at this moment. All I want is to rewind time and figure out a way for the events of today to be altered. I grab my cell phone again and I dial the number to my house. My uncle answers, and the only words I can utter are,

“Mom... I don't know what happened!”

“Calm down and talk to me.”

“We're in Food Lion parking lot you need to get everyone here.”

I stand watching the EMT's defibrillate my mom and give her CPR. Inside my head is raging a war of thoughts. I am driving myself insane and I have no idea what to do, except stand there. I feel so helpless.

2:50 pm

Mom and I made it almost completely through our shopping trip and we were walking to get the last thing on the shopping list, bread. I walked to the bread and got the kind we always bought. When I was coming back to the buggy, mom was sitting with her head in her hands on the side of the cooler. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that she'd heard someone say that when you're dizzy if you put your head in your hands, it helps. I asked her if she wanted me to call my dad, but she just said no. After a few minutes she stood up and we went to the checkout. We made it through the transaction and I told her I was going to run next door to see if they had the makeup I needed.

She said, “Why don't you just do it another time?”

I said, “Well, I know what I'm after, so I won't be long. You can stay in the car if you want to.”

She made a joke and said,

“Well, if I'm laying in the parking lot when you get back, call 911”, and she laughed.

I took that serious and said,

“No, for real, do you need me to go with you?”

She said, “No, I'm alright. I might meet you in there.”

I said, “Okay”

and I watched her leave through the opposite double doors from me. I walked to the Dollar General and was in there for about five minutes and I peeked out the window and saw my mom standing with something white held up to her face. I walked to the door way and held up my hands in a “what happened” signal. She waved me to come out. I was walking halfway through the parking lot and she said,

“Hurry up babe.”

I asked her what happened, and she said,

“I went down.” “You have to drive.”

I said, “How?”

She started to tell me, then she cut herself off and said,

“Oh god!”

She grabbed my arm, and I turned around in enough time to catch her falling. I kept her from slamming into the ground, and laid her down on her back. She laid there for a second, and I said,

“Mom?”

and then I noticed she was not responding to me, and I started freaking out.

3:20 pm Food Lion parking lot

My mamaw is the first one to show up. I see her through the crowd. She makes her way to me, and says,

“What happened Coby?”

I say, “She just went down, I don't know.”

I am choking back tears and I say,

“I kept talking to her, but she didn't hear me.”

After I get out that sentence I completely lose control and start crying into my mamaw's shirt. My dad and little brother show up next. Dad is fighting through the crowd, and yelling at my mom trying to get her to respond to him. He keeps screaming,

“Heather! It's Dave, talk to me baby. Angel face.”

Police push him back meanwhile he is yelling at them asking them what happened to her. My 13 year old little brother's face breaks my heart even worse. He just stands there emotionless, and I squeak at him,

“Jonathan, don't look. Get back.”

but he says, “No, Coby.”

My papaw and my uncle show up last. They stand in with the crowd watching, until the EMT's load mom up in the ambulance, then my papaw asks a police officer what happened, and they tell him what I told them. I ask one of the EMT's if I can ride in the ambulance. The driver to the second ambulance tells me I can ride with him, because they are going to be working on mom in the other, so I agree. I then tell the rest of my family I am leaving with the ambulance, and they say they will follow.

The whole thirty minutes that my mom was laying on the ground of the Food Lion parking lot, only one man stepped out of the crowd to offer his help. He offered to do CPR on her if she'd stopped breathing. He sat with me on the other side of her and held her arm off of the scalding hot pavement to keep her from burning her arm on it. I got burns on my knees from kneeling next to her on that pavement, but at the time I did not feel the burn from it on my knees. I only felt the sting of pain in my heart, because I knew there was nothing I could do to help her.

My mom was in the hospital for a week, and was on life support and was unresponsive to their tests. We disconnected her from life support on June 8, 2012 and she passed away the night of June 9, 2012, due to cardiac arrest.

Many questions ran through my head and still run through my head to this day about why she had to die so young. She was only 35 years old. I was 19. I had a 16 year old sister, a 14 year old sister, and a 13 year old brother. We were motherless in our teens. I did not understand and do not understand why this happened to us. I used to read about things like this happening to other people in the newspapers, but I never thought I would become one of those people. I constantly think of questions that I would love to ask my mom, and stories I wish I could have shared with her. I constantly have to remind myself that everything happens for a reason, but to this day I do not understand the reason for this happening to us. While it may have been her time to go, she left us all behind.

It was a long hard battle coming to terms with my mother's death, and sometimes it is still a struggle, because a pain like that does not ever go away, it simply subsides for a while, but it always comes back. Being 19 at the time of her death meant that I was an adult. I was the rock for most of my family. I cried at my mom's funeral and after that I did not dare shed one tear in the sight of my family. My family needed to be reminded that strength was within, and if there was ever a strength that was necessary, this was one. I had to be strong to remind them that life does go on and that it was okay to mourn, but then we would all have to continue on the paths in which we were heading before mom died.

My mom died in one of the world's trashiest parking lots, with a crowd gawking at her last breaths. One girl I was friends with on Facebook had the audacity to post a status that read, "Just watched a woman die at work today. FML." My mom did not have any last words or any last requests, because there was no time. My mother's world did not go out with a bang. Her world ended with a whimper. To this day, there is a faint whimper in my heart for my mother, and it will remain until I am

in the same place.