Myckenzie Downs

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Workshop 2

Megan was, is, and forever will be my best friend. She was the first person I met in Laramie when we met at the Tiger Movie. We were three years old and we have been inseparable ever since. Her mother worked with both of my parents and we went to the same elementary school so we saw each other often. We were in all of the same classes and since Megan lived so close to the school we would walk over to her house often times and play with our Polly Pockets and organize and reorganize her pink plastic playhouse that was much cooler than mine because it had a doorbell. We also went to her backyard to play on her playset or trampoline or a combination of both when the Wyoming weather would let us. Lying on our backs with the trampoline still lightly bouncing we would talk about what we would be for Halloween and what we would name the thousands of future animals that we would have. However one day it was different.

We were laying on the trampoline as we normally do, breathing deeply after jumping until we lost our breath. The fall leaves were coating the ground, falling on our legs and gently brushing past our faces. “Kenzie, does your dad love your mom?”

“Um yes.” My puzzled six year old self was confused at this question. Mommies love daddies. That’s just how it works. What a silly question to ask.

“Kenzie my dad doesn’t love my mom.” What was she talking about? “He is leaving forever.” What did she mean leaving? This was a completely foreign concept to me. I had never known divorce or separation. But Megan would soon understand what it meant to be a broken family. Her father left for Lander that week. Megan still got to see him for Thanksgiving, New Year’s, and one weekend every month but it was never enough. Although she loved her mother very much, she didn’t connect with her the same way she connected with her dad.

“Oh my gosh I love this one!” I held up the puffiest most colorful neon dress I could find.

“Eh it’s okay but I like this one more” she showed me a nude dress that went past her feet. We were getting ready for our first formal dance and we were so excited. We tried on every single dress in all of the Cheyenne mall; she picked out hideous ones for me and I did the same for her while her mom (Tina) sat in the back and cringed at the revealing ones and actively persuaded us to wear a turtleneck and jeans.

We checked out with our first more than five dollar purchase, ate at Five Guys and then drove back home. As soon as we arrived we immediately ran downstairs, put on our dresses and sent a picture to Megan’s dad. “Oh you guys look beautiful, have fun at your dance and don’t do anything stupid.” Her dad texted back. Megan’s face lit up and she called him immediately and put him on speaker phone so we both could speak to him. She told him everything.

A couple weeks flew past and suddenly we were on our way to our first dance ever. Our friend Laura and I had a volleyball tournament in the morning so we couldn’t get ready with the other girls at Megan’s house (it always had to be Megan’s house because Tina feared if we did it somewhere else we would get drunk, do drugs and die). When we finally showed up there was someone doing my hair and someone zipping up my dress while the other’s got in a line and I did the 6 girls make up. Once we were all ready we sat in front of the house and took as many pictures as possible. Looking back we looked like the most awkward group of young women that were having the best of time.

We walked into 9th Grade Invite giggling about our inability to walk in heels and hoping a guy would ask us to dance. We dropped our shoes shortly after arriving and spent the majority of the time jumping around and screaming the songs. We even did all of the group dances like the Cha-Cha Slide, the YMCA and the Cupid Shuffle. The dance was coming to a close and I desperately wanted my crush to ask me. He hadn’t left his spot in the corner. What a loser. Who comes to a dance to sit?

“Kenzie just go ask him!” Megan shouted at me after her slow dance.

“No! He has to ask me.” Megan rolled her eyes and just laughed as she grabbed my hands and waved them around. I saw her looking at him and I knew what she was doing but I pretended I didn’t. The song was over and sadly the dance was almost there too. I was beginning to lose faith. He wasn’t going to ask me. I was questioning everything; maybe I look weird, maybe he saw me eat that cookie really fast, maybe he just doesn’t like me. There was a tap on my shoulder.

“Hey Kenzie”

“Oh hey Tyler!” Woah that sounded way too excited. Dial it down. I looked over and Megan smiled and gave me a thumbs up. “Do you wanna dance?” I could tell he was nervous so I grabbed his hands and we danced without making eye contact. And there it was. The end of the dance. My heart was racing. I couldn’t wait to tell Megan all about this, even though she watched the whole thing.

We went back to her house and called her dad. Even at one in the morning he was more than happy to talk to Megan about how this one girl wore the same dress as her and how this one couple got kicked out for making out in the bathrooms.

“I love you Puff”

“Love you too dad” Every time she hangs up her face drops; it hurts her that he is so far away and misses moments like this. But she didn’t stay sad long. We ran to the trampoline and gossiped the rest of the night about the guys we danced with and how Tyler was texting me and how Joe sweated on her. We laughed until we cried and finally fell asleep in her backyard on the trampoline. It was one of my favorite memories with her.

“What do you think of him?” Megan asked me. We had just graduated high school and were only a couple of weeks away from moving Megan into the dorms when she met her first boyfriend Matt. He was a different individual and I never liked him but he wasn’t harmful so I lied.

“He seems great!” No actually he doesn’t. He wears tighter jeans than I do and if he pats my head one more time I will karate chop his stomach. We were sitting on her couch listening to him tell Tina and Wayno (Megan’s stepdad) how they should redecorate their house because he was in fact an expert in just about everything.

“Tomorrow he is meeting my dad.” This was a big deal. Megan’s dad had only come back to Laramie for Megan’s graduation since he left 12 years prior, so the fact that he was coming on random was shocking to everyone. But nonetheless he met Matt and showed Megan around campus. She would later tell me this was the best day of her life.

*Buzzzz*. My phone had already rang 3 times. It was Megan. She knows I work on Thursdays, why is she calling me? It rang 2 more times before I broke down and went to the bathroom to take the call.

“Hello?”

“Kenzie, Kenzie!” She was clearly bawling and could hardly breathe. I could count on my fingers the number of times I’ve seen Megan cry so I knew this was a big deal.

“What’s wrong? Are you okay?”

“He’s dead!” She was shouting

“Who’s dead?”

“My dad! He shot himself in the fucking head!” That was the last thing I expected to hear.

“I’ll be right there” I ran to the office and told them I was leaving. I was shaking and on the verge of tears so no one questioned me. I drove as fast as I could and ran into her house. Tina was screaming at someone on the phone while Wayno pointed downstairs. Megan rushed into my arms and didn’t say anything as her tears filled my dress and her arms gripped onto me as though I was her last hope. Her whole body was shaking rapidly. She was in shock.

We eventually sat down on the trampoline, head to head. She cried a lot. She did that weird thing where people are so angry and so sad that they laugh. She was currently trying to decide if she wanted to read his suicide note that he put on Facebook.

“He will never be able to walk me down the aisle. He will never get to see me graduate. I will never be able to call him again. I’ll never hear his voice again. The last thing that I will ever see from him is on that post but I just can’t read it.” I did a lot of hugging and not a lot of talking. What was I supposed to say to that?

The next couple of days were rough. She had to plan her father’s funeral and call all of her relatives to tell them what was happening. She had to meet with lawyers, florists, and priests that were willing to not have a religious ceremony. All of this seemed to desensitize the situation and caused Megan to appear okay even though I knew she wasn’t.

Eventually the day came. Tyler and I drove at 5 in the morning to Lander Wyoming. The entire drive I wondered what Megan would do without her dad; I couldn’t imagine what she was going through. We got to the most beautiful log funeral home at the top of a hill. We got out of the car and saw hundreds of people gathered outside. I dreaded seeing Megan but desperately wanted to hug her and know she was okay. When I got inside she ran into my arms and absolutely broke down. We cried together with a room full of people watching for a good 10 minutes.

“I’m gonna be okay” she said as if she was trying to convince herself.

“Megan would you like to say a few words?” the funeral was coming to an end. The pastor allowed all of the willing guests to tell how they met her dad and how much they would miss him. No one forgot to say that they love Megan and they were sorry for her loss. She hugged Tina and walked to the front. I squeezed Tyler’s hand as my heart broke.

“I love my dad very much” she managed to get out. She was crying so hard I was shocked she got up there at all. She had debated whether or not she wanted to but eventually decided that she had a responsibility to do this and this was her last goodbye. “One thing we connected on was music. When I went to his house I found his iPod that has 1000 of his favorite songs. But this was by far his favorite. I love you dad.” She sat down and the room was silent as “We’re Not Gonna Take It” by Twisted Sister started playing. It was bitter sweet. Megan and her uncle walked up to the casket as the last line of the song played. They kissed the flowers in their hands, dropped them inside, and hugged each other sobbing in the completely silent room. Eventually Megan worked up the courage. She grabbed her uncle’s hand and together they shut the casket.

“She’s gonna be okay” I told Tyler as though I was convincing myself.