

Cracks in the Wall, 6-8

The blank whiteness of the room seemed to consume me; or rather swallow me alive as I stared at the bland hospital walls. They were caressed with cracks, just like my heart, slowly ripping itself into tiny fragments. Hours seemed to pass as I waited endlessly for the results of the biopsy. It had only been days ago that a pain in one of my ligaments became so highly unbearable that my parents asked a physician to do some investigating about what exactly was amiss. I already knew that something was gravely wrong, yet the lengthy wait accentuated my anxiety levels until the long wait felt like the incessant ticking of a time bomb, the fuse waiting for just the right moment to end and causing the bomb to explode into a frenzy of madness.

The silence of the room seemed to expand ever so slightly as I struggled within the pale hospital sheets. The fabric ensnared itself around me, like my apprehension; coiling around me like a carnivorous snake about to asphyxiate its next meal. My conscience battled inside my mind, the little angel murmuring optimism and encouragement, while the little devil whispered lies and pessimism into my ears. As though the evil was supposed to win, I gave into my thoughts of despondency.

The silence was abruptly broken as several doctors rushed into the cramped room. Each one yelled something different. My next memories were only a blur as I was immediately wheeled into another analysis room. Words flashed through my head right before the specialists began conducting more analyses. The next recollections were only of the words: capacious tumor... right thigh...surgery...painful procedure...small chance of walking...swirling around in my head.

A trail of tears made its way down my cheeks. I had never felt so devastated before in my life. Painful reminders that I would never be able to play sports, run, jump, or move without the help of a wheelchair crushed me. There would be no more track, tennis, skiing or even swimming. It felt as though my I were a criminal faced with a death sentence. I wrapped my arms around my lean body, hugging myself tighter. I wept as I prayed that this calamity was all just a dream and I would just wake up to find myself back in a normal life. I was soon carried into the land of fantasies and dreams, clouding and comforting my anguished heart.

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The pounding of footsteps woke me from my comforting dreams. I was once again, being moved, but this time into an operation room. I felt so diminutive and helpless lying in the sheets, being pushed by a nurse. My mind screamed for me to get up and run, but it was far too

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late to flee. I began to feel pale and claustrophobic as nurses closed in to stick an intravenous drip feed in my arm and to check my body conditions. Surgeons walked hurriedly in and out of the operating room as other nurses checked equipment and necessities. I took my last breath right before the anesthetics began to kick in and I floated into unconsciousness.

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I awoke drowsily in the intensive care unit. Several empty hospital beds lay deserted in the corner as my electrocardiogram beeped rudely at my side. I could only feel the pain in my thigh sending waves of pain up through my body. My right leg would now be forever immobile and as the doctors had guessed, it was also now paralyzed. Pain relievers seeped into my bloodstream, giving me a moment of peace as I fell asleep again and again.

I drifted in and out of consciousness for the next several days. However, days began to blend into weeks as I was greeted by friends and family in a hopeful effort to pour some sunshine in my depressing life and piece together the shards of my broken heart by loving me as much as possible. I knew that they had tried so hard, yet my bitter soul took these attempts at loving me as hurting me. The “Get Well Soon!” cards filled the bedside table as bright balloons hovered cheerfully above my head. The painful reminders that I would probably never to walk again were everywhere, and it was all too hurtful for me to endure. I just wanted to end my life; kill myself, and just vanish into thin air. But I knew all too well that such actions would only achieve relief for myself, and create more hurt for the others around me.

That thin thread of hope that I had always clung on to was diminishing day by day as the likelihood of walking again was decreasing. That light at the end of the tunnel was dwindling like the fuse of a light bulb, slowly burning out. Until all that there would be left was darkness, bitterness, and no hope at all.

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I opened my eyes to the warm sunshine streaming through the windows. It felt like one of those days when you know that something extraordinary would occur and change a life forever. It was like that feeling that you know that a miracle would reveal its wonderful deed, but perhaps I was being much too optimistic, since when did something good happen to me in the past couple of months? All that had come out of this good-for-nothing surgery was that my right leg was completely immobile and had no intention of moving for me. Why would something good happen to me for no reason at all?

Sitting up, I realized that there was now another hospital bed parked right next to mine. A tiny boy sat in a sea of sheets, looking at me with the most curious eyes. Although he looked to be about seven or eight, he had those deep soulful eyes that should have belonged to one much older than he. His tousled brown hair stood on end as he looked at me curiously.

“Hey, what’s your name?” He asked as a jack-o'-lantern smile blossomed from his face. “I’m Leah,” I replied as I tried to scrunch up a smile as brilliant as his. “Oh, well I’m Nate,” he said as he directed yet another question upon me, “What’s wrong with you?” he asked innocently. I was at first rather stunned as I tried to understand that he was only a little kid and probably did not quite understand to really think things over before saying them. Even though I reassured myself that he genuinely meant no harm, I still felt hurt. He looked at me with those large, curious eyes, literally demanding an answer. I felt rather obligated to enlighten him with some information as I spent the next twenty minutes trying to explain to him in simple talk that I had a tumor encased within my thigh, that had to be removed, about the whole surgery, and that I was never going to walk again. I felt tears pushing out of the corners of my eyes, but I went on telling him about all the pain and uncertainty. Nate seemed to take a short period to digest this entire block of information before he aimed another one of his questions at me, “Have you even tried to walk yet?”

This question stung as I realized that I had never legitimately tried to walk yet. But I tried to not pay attention to the question as I decided to ask him one myself. “Then what about you? What’s wrong with you then?” I asked teasingly. Nate looked up at me with those green eyes and slowly lifted the sheets off his legs. It was then that I realized that his legs were both amputated below the knee and were red and swollen. He said to me “well, I don’t even have real legs,” as he gave me a sunny grin. I was shocked, and his words brought real tears to my eyes. I couldn’t understand. How could someone who is much worse off than I be so happy and cheerful?

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Guilt rained over me as I finally grasped the idea that I had been so bitter all along that I never realized all the good I had. All the love that was poured out on me and all those people had really cared for me. My heart was just so sour that the extreme pessimism harbored in me never left and oppressed my soul at every chance. My viewpoints were all wrong and that was really what caused my rose-colored glasses to become a dreary grey. I was always looking at the

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downside of things and never persuaded myself to look up on the situation. And now I realize, “where there’s a will, there’s always going to be a way.”

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I opened my eyes lazily as I stretched out my body. The warmth from last night’s sleep was still in the blankets. I wiggled the toes on my left foot, then I impulsively tried to do the same with the right foot’s toes. They actually moved! Although that seems like making a mountain out of a molehill, it was one of the most satisfying things that had happened in the last few months. I was finally able to sense movement through my previously paralyzed foot! Perhaps miracles do happen, I thought, as I began to make my way to the side of the hospital bed.

Soon, I snapped myself out of my ecstasy, and swung my legs over the very edge of the hospital bed. I placed both feet on the cold bare ground and just stood there silently, embracing the moment of truth.

And when I turned around to give the hospital bed one last look, I realized that the cracks in the wall no longer looked like the shards and broken pieces of my heart, but a white dove of hope and peace, flying off into the distant heavens.

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