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## **I Never Wanted to be a 'Why God-er'**

HALEY WALLACE

**March 10 and April 11 of 1998** were the days that stole my childhood. I was a happy, carefree six-year old. I knew nothing of heartache, helplessness, or bereavement. My days were filled by making mud pies, having tea parties, and candid, silly conversations with my five-year old little sister, Alana. Our parents were very young when I was born, only nineteen and twenty-one, and learned shortly after Alana's birth that their love had run dry. Despite their separation we were the most loved children I knew. We were blissful and innocent. When that sticky spring bloomed I had no idea that I would soon learn that innocence is not a protection from injury.

We were on a R.V. trip to Florida with my Nana, Pop, and Aunt. I often think about how Alana and I marveled at the waves breaking over the white, sandy shore. I remember little of the trip, as to why I am not sure if it is because of my youthfulness or simply the roadblocks of my guarded memory. Pop was in the front seat and Nana held a map in the passenger seat as she talked to our Aunt. Alana and I sat gazing out window, soaking up the scenery. The ringing phone halted their conversation. White faces and loud heartbeats took hold of them, and Alana and I were immediately herded to the bedroom to watch a movie. I knew something was not right. I felt my world crack but did not know why.

My anxiousness grew as the darkness and silence of night crept in. Finally we stopped. I heard two new, but familiar, voices enter the trailer. We came out to see it was our Mom and her boyfriend. Their faces told of the terrible news that was about to follow. Our Dad was dead. A car wreck, we were told. I was too shocked to cry or ask questions.

**ALANA HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A BEAUTIFUL CHILD, MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN I; SHE WAS ALWAYS HAPPY AND CAREFREE; SHE WAS MY BEST FRIEND.**

## Unity

EVAN HINTON

One  
floating point  
beyond your pupils  
glowing red  
on and off  
flashing memory  
of words  
truncated thoughts  
which cannot be stored  
in available space  
  
The rising edge of sunrise  
gates  
your departure  
The best approximation  
of your contour  
recedes into a series of terminals  
Your smile has taken  
off

I just sat there. Eventually I noticed Alana's tears, and she asked "Does that mean he's in heaven?" Our Mom replied, "Yes honey, he is." Another moment of silence ensued, and then Alana continued,

"Well, when is he coming back?" "He's not," I answered. We rode home with my Mom and her boyfriend in his green pickup truck. Alana, still confused and exhausted, slept beside me in the back seat. The entire drive home I rested my head on the front seat's center console while my mother caressed my hair and I pretended to sleep. I laid there countless hours listening to them whisper.

Less than five weeks later it was Easter. My numbness had carried me through the funeral and I don't remember sleeping, eating, going to kindergarten, or whether or not I ever cried. My Mom and her boyfriend had taken me and Alana out to Sandy Lake for an Easter egg hunt. It was the first beautiful day that I had noticed since I had lost my Dad. We smiled, laughed, and left our worries elsewhere. At the end of the day we reveled in our treasure filled eggs and Easter themed stuffed animals. When the day was over we piled inside my Mom's small car, separately from her boyfriend because we were headed to visit our Granny.

Hot and tired, Alana and I quickly fell asleep. I randomly drifted in and out of slumber during the car ride. In an instance of consciousness I felt the car begin to slow. Then suddenly there was a harsh hit from the rear. Jerk. Drop. Jolt. Roll. Roll. Roll. Roll. Roll. Roll. Over and over our car rolled. I grabbed my stuffed bunny and held it to my face, trying to shield myself from the flying debris of shattered glass. Finally the car halted. I exposed my face to find that I was partially

upside down. I noticed a lot of dust. I noticed eerie silence. Above all I noticed that I was alone. I released myself from the seatbelt and crawled out of the broken, backseat window. I stood in the middle of a bright, white-rock filled lot. The sun seemed blinding and I remember stumbling and covering my eyes. I walked around and began to search for my family.

About sixty-feet away from what was left of our car I found my mother. She was bloodied from head-to-foot, with exposed bone above one of her eyes, elbows, and leg. Although her injuries disabled her from vision, she heard me approach and called out to me. "Haley?" she called. I wonder to this day how she knew it was me. "Yes Mommy," I feebly replied. "Where's Alana?" she asked. Not being sure, I told her that I would find her and come back. I searched around our car until I had left only one side unexplored. I rounded the corner and saw my sister. Alana had always been such a beautiful child, more beautiful than I; she was always happy and carefree; she was my best friend. She now lay crumpled on the ground at my feet, her face and light brown hair clotted with blood. I looked to her head and saw a large area of exposed skull. She breathed no more. She smiled no more. I screamed.

Several witnesses stopped and one in particular scooped me up into her arms and carried me to where her own children were standing. All were in awe at the devastation I had just walked away from. She placed me on the hood of her car and called for an ambulance as I wept. All I could think to ask of her was to please call my Granny to tell her we would be late. Police officers, fire trucks, ambulances, and even a CareFlite helicopter arrived. My memory again

blocks most of the aftermath from attainment, but I do remember being taken for inspection by the paramedics and them having to sedate me because I would not stop screaming. I remember tearfully shrieking as they put in an IV. I awoke briefly during the helicopter ride and saw my mother next to me being attended to by several paramedics, as her injuries were life threateningly severe. At the far end of the cabin, as far away from us as possible, I thought saw a third stretcher covered in a sheet. With grief and disbelief I closed my eyes and fell out of consciousness.

In the hospital I heard many whispers from the doctors about how they could not believe that I had no severe wounds, merely a few minor scratches and bruises, only one of which has even left a scar. My Pop spent many silent hours in my room, watching me sleep. He is the one

**MY NUMBNESS HAD CARRIED ME  
THROUGH THE FUNERAL AND I  
DON'T REMEMBER SLEEPING,  
EATING, GOING TO KINDERGARTEN,  
OR WHETHER OR NOT I EVER CRIED.**

I eventually found the braveness to ask if Alana was really gone. The pain I saw on his face when he answered will always haunt me. He was a broken man, with both son and granddaughter taken. Nana and Pop brought me home and cared for me while my mother spent a few weeks in the hospital. When we got home the first thing that I did was take a bath. I remember how the hot water stung my cuts, and how I cried as Nana washed my hair.

At the funeral I sat in silence. My second funeral in little more than a month. I remember watching my broken mother, while being pushed in her wheelchair, kiss Alana's casket.

I remember sitting through the service and watching everyone weep. I remember how sticky and suffocating the air seemed when we sat for the burial. I remember feeling like my life was over. I remember questioning God, of whom little I knew of, and my entire existence and being. I remember thinking to myself how selfish I was for only trying to protect myself while the car was rolling. I even remember wishing that it was me that they were burying that day. Suddenly I felt as though my short six and a half years in this world were actually millennia.

I am now almost twenty-years old. Last year I found out that my Dad had not been in a car wreck, but instead had stuck a gun in his mouth on the side of an abandoned road. Although I thought once that I would never be happy again, I am. Despite the fact that I was never truly a child again after those cruel days, I do find joy and goodness in life. I never wanted to be a "why God-er," but I do admit that I will never understand why they had to be taken from me. I will never be truly healed but I know now that I can move forward. I write my story not to invoke sorrow or sympathy for myself or my family, but merely out of memory and respect for my guardian angels, whom taught me to cherish life, love, and family above all, and whom I know are smiling down at me now.

### **She is Just Sleeping**

JESSIE MANN

She is just sleeping,  
her arms folded so neatly, as though  
she stood at a wedding. I could almost hear the bells  
ringing.

She is just sleeping.  
Her eyes sealed shut like someone ran a zipper across,  
but they could still flutter open once she returns  
from that blissful place our minds take us in slumber.

She is just sleeping,  
wearing a lovely silk gown with flowers surrounding her,  
covering her inch by inch. She always did adore daisies,  
but I do not see any.

She is just sleeping.  
Her mouth is so still, but her lips look as though  
they just might move  
into a tiny smile.

So goodnight, my friend. Sweet dreams.  
We can talk as soon as you wake up. After all,  
you  
are  
just  
sleeping.