

## **A Life Taking Sickness**

2<sup>nd</sup> Place

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Grades 9 & 10

I was 12 years old, sitting in my cousins' house playing Play Station. Nothing was bothering me other than the fact my dad was still in ICU and wasn't getting any better. I rarely got to see him; I was lucky enough to stay with him one night, but he was unresponsive, and the only reason we got to stay was because his temperature was really high, and something was wrong.

As I sat thinking about him, how I never got to talk to him since he was on all these machines, I couldn't think of the last time I heard him say, "I love you" to me. He was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Disease when I was about nine or ten years old, and since then it had been like a roller coaster with his health. While he was in the hospital, we sometimes had to wear masks because his immune system was, well, practically gone. About two years later, he had come down with Leukemia which took a lot out of him, the chemotherapy, blood transfusions and just being sick all the time. I always visited him in the hospital. I called it my second home because I was up there almost every day. We actually spent birthdays, Christmases, Thanksgivings and any other holiday you could think of in his room. Even though it wasn't the best place to celebrate these things, I didn't care; I loved being with my dad. I was always the one to cheer him up and make him laugh, and I wouldn't leave until I had given him a hug and a kiss. Just the sound of his voice made me feel so happy, hearing him call me Sissyboogers which was a little nickname he gave me. I was the happiest girl, I was a daddy's girl, and he was my life. I finally came back from my little trance and went to jump into the shower, but before that, my life changed...and I didn't even know it.

After my shower, I got my nightclothes on and walked out into my uncle's living room. I just stopped and stared at everyone's bloodshot eyes and the tissues they were holding; I knew something was wrong. As I sat down beside my mom, I turned and asked her, "What's wrong, Mom?"

She just smiled and choked out the words, “Your dad was a great man...”

I couldn't hear anymore. I ran back to where my cousin Megan was still playing Play Station with her boyfriend, Trevor. I was trying to brush my hair, but I couldn't stop crying. Finally Megan asked me what was wrong. I couldn't get myself to say it, but somehow I managed.

“My dad...he...passed away today,” I said as I started to fall to the floor. Trevor came over and picked me up and just held me there, tight in his arms as we both cried. Trevor was like my brother, and he loved my dad just as much as I did, and I knew he was hurting. All we did that night was stay close to each other and cry or think of memories of my father, but I knew one thing for sure, I didn't think I was going to make it.

I lay there wide-awake as everyone else slept. I could not even force myself to sleep. All I could think of is the one time I walked in and said, “I love you, Dad.” He couldn't respond, of course, but his heart rate jumped up, and a smile appeared on his face. Reality was setting in. I couldn't hug, say I love you, or even hear my father's voice anymore. I was on the verge of just giving up, laying there, hoping I would die so I could be up in heaven with him.

Two days went by, and I still hadn't been able to sleep. I couldn't concentrate, and it was the night before the funeral. I was staying at my aunt's, so I was lying on the floor. Somehow I finally cried myself asleep at six in the morning when I had to wake up at seven. I had the strangest dream, but it would make my grieving so much easier...

I dreamed I was at a skating party, which was the weirdest part, but I was skating to the bathroom. I looked, and there was my dad! I starting freaking out, because I knew he hadn't come back to life, so I followed him.

Finally he stopped and turned around and said to me, “I love you, Sissyboogers; trust me, everything will be fine. I know you will miss me, and I'll miss you, but I have to go. Goodbye now.” Then he hugged me, and I felt someone shaking me to wake up. I wanted to stay in that embrace forever and just leave the world behind me, but I knew it wouldn't happen. That was the last time I ever heard his voice, the last time I felt his hug. I will always remember that dream.

After that one dream, I could easily fall asleep at night. I kept thinking that the dream had brought a type of closure for me. It's amazing how we get to say goodbye to our loved ones, sometimes in person, and in my case, I got to say it through a dream. It was something I never heard of, but I'm glad I had that dream. Of course, I will always miss my father, but I will never forget how I got to say goodbye and the last time I got to hug my father.