

Beyond Repair?

Items were scattered all over the floor. Clothes on the ground, desk flipped over, mirror smashed, holes in the wall and wallpaper ripped. The curtains were closed tight enclosing the disaster of the room in the darkness. In the midst of disorder, Katie laid on her bed staring up at the ceiling. In her right hand—the hand without a cast—was a picture frame that she clutched to her chest, but could not stare at any longer. She flinched when she heard a knock on her bedroom door.

“Honey, can I come in?” her mother asked softly. Katie said nothing, but she heard the door open and felt the weight change on the side of her bed. She made no attempt to look at her mother and sat in silence.

“Heather dropped off your homework for the week again and said she would come back later,” her mother said quietly as she glanced at the piles of paper stacked on the ground by the bed. Her mother added it to one of the large piles of paper when she received no response.

“Have you started any of your work yet?”

“No.”

“Katie, have you thought about when you are going back to school?”

Katie finally turned her head towards her mother to look her in the face and replied, “When are you going to make me go back?” Her mother looked away and sighed.

“You should come downstairs and eat dinner with us at the table.”

Katie turned her head back towards the ceiling.

“I’m not hungry,” she said monotonically and her mother expected that. She looked around the destroyed room and shook her head.

“I haven’t mentioned it until now, but you should really clean your room. Heather is coming over later.”

“And?” she questioned while she rolled her eyes.

“You should clean up for your friend,” her mother reasoned. Katie laughed bitterly.

“Is she really my friend? Are any of them my friends?”

“Of course they are and you shouldn’t shut them out, especially now,” her mother said and then added, “You shouldn’t shut any of us out.”

“I want to be alone now, can you leave?” said Katie as she dismissed her mother. Her mom knew she had said too much and left the room without another word. Katie tried to settle back into the quiet, but her mind was yelling loud. Her thoughts were clear yet jumbled. She held the picture up to her face and stared at the large group picture of her friends by the water fountain in the park. Her eyes were only focused on Angel though, her Angel. She laid the picture down next to her carefully. She allowed her mind to be consumed by memories of that beautiful day.

It had been a perfect day for the group of friends to hang outside. They had been spending time in each other’s houses because the month had been nothing but a month full of rainy days. They were ecstatic to see the sun shining and hear the birds tweeting. They left Katie’s house and went straight to the park. The day had been filled with soccer, laughter and food. Towards the end of the day, they found themselves all lounging on the benches around the water fountain. Being the one to always capture perfect moments, Katie told her friends to go sit on the water fountain as she snapped a picture with her camera. As the group gathered around,

they made silly jokes and silly faces. She had laughed along behind the camera and she thought of how she never wanted the group to change.

Two hours later, she heard another knock at her door. Again, she did not answer the knock and simply laid still. She heard her door knob being turned, but she knew it was locked.

“Mom, I’m fine and I’m not hungry,” Katie said tiredly. She recited the same words day after day.

“It’s not your mother. Open the door, Kit Kat,” Heather said in a friendly way. It made Katie’s skin crawl to hear that name.

“Don’t call me that, I can’t stand it. No one can call me that anymore,” she said angrily from her bed.

“Alright then. Are you going to open the door?”

“No Heather. I want to be alone.”

“I can stay out here all night. This is important,” Heather said. Katie could hear her body sliding down the door to sit on the floor. Katie didn’t even understand why she was there. She had no guilty feelings about ignoring her. After all, she didn’t ask her to stay. At one time, she would have welcomed her with open arms, but those days weren’t coming back. The hallway was quiet.

Heather began to talk, “Brian, Nick, Dylan, and Anna didn’t come because we thought it would be a bit overwhelming for you, but they wanted to. We’ve all been worried about our friend.” When Katie heard Heather call her as their “friend”, it set something off inside her. She was ready to address this now. She quickly got up and went to the door.

“Stop leaning on the door and get up,” she said, trying to hold her anger inside. She opened the door and was met with the sight of Heather. She turned away to go sit on her bed and left Heather to follow her inside. Heather stopped at the doorway as she took in the sight of what used to be Katie’s perfect room. She couldn’t keep her gasp inside, but she said nothing. Heather turned and closed the door behind her for some privacy. She stayed standing by the doorway.

“Hey, kiddo. Can I sign your cast?” Heather said in a joking, but nervous voice. Katie didn’t even bother answering her.

“Okay, you aren’t in the mood for jokes.”

“What do you want?” Katie asked firmly.

“I came to see how you were doing. I told you we have been worried sick about you. You haven’t been to school or outside at all since...” Heather’s voice trailed off weakly.

“I don’t have the time to go outside. I’ve been busy here,” she said sarcastically.

“Yeah, I noticed.” Heather looked around again until the picture frame laying next to Katie caught her eyes. She started to walk towards it.

“No, stay over there,” Katie quickly said, stopping Heather in her tracks. Katie put the picture under her pillow, keeping it to herself. Heather looked down at the ground and took a deep breath. She knew that picture well enough without having to look at it.

“You know, she w-wasn’t just your friend. We lost her too,” Heather said in a shaky voice.

“She wasn’t just my friend, she was my best friend.”

“We loved her, too, as much as we love you,” Heather said. She looked over at Katie to see her glaring at her. Heather took a step back as Katie stood up.

“Love me? You say you all love me? You have a funny way of showing it, Heather.”

Katie said her name with venom and continued on, “You know, I remember a different time I needed my friends to come visit me. Angel was gone. I needed my friends to tell me it would be okay and somehow make me laugh like usual.”

Heather stayed quiet and broke eye contact with Katie.

“I wanted to feel that nothing had changed. Only, you never came,” Katie said in defeat. “I thought maybe you didn’t want to come see me in the hospital so I kept my phone charged. I waited for a call or a text from any one of you. Anything would have been nice. After two days of nothing, I stopped charging my phone.” This had been the most she had talked in weeks. It felt good, yet it left her throat burning.

“We were trying to process what had happened too. We were hurting too,” Heather said weakly trying to convince not only Katie, but herself.

“I needed you! I had no one as I sat in that hospital. You forgot about me!”

“Katie, it wasn’t like that,” Heather said, turning around to open the door. “Maybe I should go.”

Katie’s low voice stopped her.

“I was in the car with her. I was with her until we were brought to the hospital. I didn’t even get to say goodbye...” Katie felt as if something was clogging her throat and had to stop to breathe.

“We didn’t say goodbye either so you can’t be angry at us for that,” Heather tried to fight back as she turned back around to face Katie.

“Will you see her broken body or hear her whimpers when you close your eyes to try to remember your last moments with her?” Katie asked in a whisper. Heather had no answer for her.

“Exactly, I can’t ignore the memories in my head. I can never unsee what I saw or unhear what I heard so don’t tell me that you are hurting as badly as I am!”

Heather nodded her head, mumbled a quiet “ok” in surrender and turned away to leave. She was getting nowhere by being here. She opened the door and was met by Katie’s mom. She had tears in her eyes as well and her face was red.

Katie’s mom looked at the two girls. She continued to look at Katie while she said. “Heather, could you please wait downstairs for a moment ”

Heather hesitated, “Miss G, I really need to get home. I should leave”

“No, you’ll stay. I have some things to say to Katie before you two continue to talk,” Katie’s mom said kindly but firm while Katie rolled her eyes.

“Yes, ma’am,” said Heather after a sigh. Heather went downstairs leaving Katie with her mom.

Her mother looked furiously at Katie as she walked in front of her. She said, “How could you say such harsh things to your friend? I did not raise you like that. I thought it would be good for you to unbottle everything, but you took it too far.”

“She is not my friend! She deserved it anyway, they all deserve it.”

“I have held my tongue for too long. I have let you stay home from school and I watched you shut down. It hurt, but I let you do it because I thought it would be better than pushing you to do things. I have had enough! This ends today! There is a difference between grieving and

being vicious, Katie. You have no right to talk to anyone like that, no matter what. You will apologize to her,” her mother scolded as she tried to keep her breathing steady. She was overwhelmed with all her thoughts that she had kept to herself.

“I won’t apologize if I’m not sorry, I hate them. I wish I never met them. They aren’t my friends anymore,” Katie said coldly.

“You don’t mean that. You are going to need them, Katie.”

“NO! I don’t need any of them!” Katie exploded stubbornly.

“Oh honey, yes you will, but it will be too late. They can’t be here for you if you push them away. Stop being cruel. You need to forgive them and give everyone some peace of mind,” her mother said gently as she tried to cool her anger and be comforting. She tried to rub Katie’s shoulder. Katie shifted away quickly and walked away to the other side of the room.

“They didn’t even come to her funeral, Mom. That’s what you call friends?” Katie asked sarcastically, but it held no fire. Her voice was filled with emotion, emotions that were blocking her from truly hearing what her mother was saying. Katie’s mom walked across the room to her, grabbed her shoulder and spun her around. She held Katie’s face to look her in her watery eyes.

“How long do you think you can punish them? What will it solve? They can’t reverse time, Katie.” Her mom said wisely and continued, “They are still young kids. Yes, they didn’t visit you and yes, they didn’t go to the funeral. They made mistakes. We all make mistakes, but how would you feel if you were in their shoes now? Would you like to feel the loss of two friends? One who died physically and one who died emotionally. Don’t make them grieve over two empty holes in the group.”

Katie stood there with her lips parted, but no words came out. Tears slid down her face and she was frozen without an answer. Her mother pulled her into a hug that she leaned her body into without hesitation. Katie's mom stroked her hair as she let her cry into her shirt. After Katie ran out of tears, she stepped back out of her mother's embrace.

"Mommy, I'm so sorry," Katie said softly.

"I know."

Katie walked towards her bed and took the picture frame from under the pillow. She clutched it as she looked back up at her mom.

"I guess I'd better get downstairs then," Katie said softly.

She walked down the stairs with her mother behind her. She saw Heather sitting on the couch, talking to her father. He stood up from the chair when he saw his wife and daughter coming down. Bottom lip trembling, Katie gulped as she stopped at the last step. She didn't know where to begin to apologize. Heather stood up as she looked at Katie. They both began walking until they met in the middle. With a shaky hand, Katie offered the picture frame to Heather. A tear rolled down Heather's face as she took the picture.

"I-I'm so sorry Heather."

"Me too."

The two girls looked at each other's eyes and all was forgiven. They hugged each other tightly. Heather opened her eyes to look at Katie's parents. She mouthed a sincere thank you to Katie's mother. She was given a nod and a bright smile in response. Katie's parents took another quick glance at the girls before they walked away from the intimate moment. They relished the peace.