

Nonfiction 2,107 words

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“I love you”

I find that I am controlled by the seasons. I am not physically controlled, I am emotionally controlled by the seasons and it is exhausting. Snow keeps me inside and I begin to feel trapped and with summer comes freedom. I find myself lost.

Every season has me missing something. In the winter I want warmth. In the summer—cold. These feelings drag on and my life becomes a series of wishing I wasn't in my current season. I'm never caught up in the moment; I'm too busy thinking about the past or wishing for the future.

Here are my darkest seasons, laid out for you to learn from. My first advice to you is don't to regret anything. Regret is hard to live with. Let me show you.

Regret #1

My best friend's name is Ally. We talk everyday and she is a ray of sunshine, from the way her blond hair glimmers to her smile; she didn't always glitter though.

When I met her, she punched me in the face. We were six years old and fighting over who's turn it was to use the chalk board. The memory is fuzzy now, but I remember the sting from her fist on my face so vibrantly. A burn like no other, and lots of tears. We didn't get over our rivalry until sixth grade.

When we were re-introduced, we were eleven; Ally was in a dark place in her mind. Somehow we became best friends though. All because we both had a passion for Taylor Swift music and thought her quest for love was somehow relatable, but we both had never come close to having a boyfriend. We bonded over that. We were inseparable. Two peas in a pod. I just wish I had befriend her sooner.

Freshmen year of highschool, we became distant. People always say that your friends change in high school. We never thought we would. I got so wrapped up in my life I hadn't seen Ally in a while. It had been a few months which was unusual, we use to spend every weekend at each other's house. I received a text from her sometime in the middle of January that said she was being driven to a mental hospital and she couldn't talk to me for two weeks, but she'd call me if she ever got the chance.

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To say I was shocked is an understatement. She had been battling depression and anxiety for over a year, but I thought she learned the first time this happened— when she overdosed and I called the ambulance. She was so angry at me for that. Ally's life was worth it though.

Days went by, and I carried my phone around, constantly praying to hear from her. This was the second time she went into a mental hospital. Last year I was more involved. Now, I heard nothing for days and my stomach did flips every time I heard my phone go off, but it was never Ally. My heart would quicken only to be let down. I heard from her mom after days of worrying.

Her mom told me she had overdosed on nyquil and then cut her wrist so deep it wouldn't stop bleeding. Her mom had found her laying on a puddle of blood on her bed just patiently waiting for her mental and physical pain to stop. *It never did.*

Ally finally called me during school one day, and I can remember pacing the hallways almost in tears— thankful to be talking to her. I was still blaming myself for what happened. *What if I had come over that day? What if I called her that day? Could I have stopped this? Did I cause this?* My stomach did flops as I listened to her speak. She didn't seem sad though. Her usual monotone voice was splashed with a little life for once.

We only had two minutes to talk— hospital rules— and Ally told me that she had forgotten her toothbrush, she missed me, and I was the only thing going through her mind as she cut herself; I was the only reason she didn't really want to die. She told me she was sorry for letting me down, but she was trying her hardest to get better— she wanted to get better. I never thought I'd hear her say that. She usually made jokes about how funny she thought suicide was. It was a constant humor to her. Instead she was talking about how the hospital gave her a box of crayons and she enjoyed coloring. She had found a therapy that works.

The weeks without her were hard. Her call time was 12:30 until 12:32. I was excused from my class for those two minutes because I explained my situation to my teacher. Ally would tell me how plain the hospital walls were and how much she couldn't wait to come home. I would pace the bare halls of the school, going back and forth past the classroom doors. I'm sure people thought I was crazy. Ally was all I cared about. I would burst out in laughter, or use hand gestures as I spoke into the phone without realizing it. I didn't care.

She came home from the hospital on January 28th— her birthday. I made her a cookie cake and a handmade card. I waited for her on her front porch. White snow blanketed the ground. The trees were bare. I saw her face through the tinted windows of her red car. The only color in the streets. That car and her smile. She wore her hospital gown. She had got her hair cut too, it was short. Her long curly hair was missing so she wouldn't hang herself with it in the hospital, but it was replaced with a glow in her eyes. For the first time in a long time, I saw the real Ally.

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When she got out of the car, we both ran at each other full speed. We shared the biggest, longest, most loving hug, then took her into her house. The ceiling had pink ribbon draped all around. A big "Welcome Home" sign hung above a "Happy Birthday" sign in the living room. A weight got lifted from my shoulders the second she saw the decorations. Her happiness was contagious. We couldn't stop giggling and hugging. Then we ate her cake and she opened her gifts.

The friend who came home from the hospital was not the same friend that went there. She was a different version of herself that I had never seen before. To this day she is still healing, but it's nice to see her smile. It's not so empty.

Lesson #1

Never forget to say, "I love you."

Let's go back in time now. Let me take you to the scariest moment of my life. I was not in control of my body in this moment. I was outside of my body.

Regret #2

One frosty evening, my dad and I went to the lake at my grandma's house. The lake was covered by a sheet of solid ice. It was sometime in February. My ambitious dad encouraged me to walk on the ice with him. I was reluctant, but my dad talked me into going. He has a way of doing that.

I stepped one foot onto the ice, little crackles echoed to the shore line. I instantly wanted to return to the shore. It was dark and I was cold. I was scared we'd fall through. My dad kept walking.

"Let's go back," I pleaded, refusing to go any farther.

"Ellie, it's fine, watch," and he jumped, but didn't he didn't land. *Crash!* My mind instantly froze like ice, and I mindlessly decided to run back to shore.

I was blinded and in shock, I screamed the whole way. I sat in the snow and began throwing frozen crystals into my face to try and bring myself back to reality— it didn't work— I had to get help.

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My grandma's house was mounted on a steep hill, so I had to climb about 63 steps to get to the house and call for 911. Normally I'd be winded at the top of the steps, but I didn't even remember walking up them. I turned to look at the lake. I couldn't see my dad and I couldn't hear him yelling. My stomach dropped. It felt like a bolder ripped me open and was sitting in the pit of it— there were butterflies too, but not the nice kind. They made me uneasy. I turned to the back door of the house— it was locked. Screaming, I banged myself against the door. Helpless. Scared. Worried.

I turned around one last time in attempt to see my dad; I saw my him being escorted to shore by a man. I could only see a silhouette. He didn't have a coat, and his unmaintained hair and beard led me to believe he was poor, maybe homeless.

My dad began slowly walking up the stairs. He was fine. With frozen tears on my cheeks, and my throat sore from yelling, I managed to squeak, "Thank you!" The man turned to face me, but I still couldn't see his facial features from so far away.

"I'd do it for anyone," he waved, "I just hope someone would do it for me too," he turned around, his back was hunched. The man— my hero— disappeared into the night, and I never saw him again.

When my dad made it to the top of the stairs, I gave him the warmest hug I could.

"I love you," I said into his shoulder.

Lesson #2

Love your neighbor.

So yeah, I've had a few close calls, but by some miracle the people I love most have been saved. I can still hug them, spend time with them, and laugh with them. You could say I'm pretty lucky. I know I'm lucky. That's that arrogant truth, I guess third time's a charm and I had it coming eventually. This is my unlucky story. Spoiler: Someone dies.

Regret #3

April. What a funny month. I always get my hopes up, but April is a jokester. April 1st, 2015 my dad received a call. It's a prank for sure.

Later in the day, my dad picked me up from school. This was unusual because my dad is always working, but he decided to pick me up that day. I knew something was up. We pulled into the Meijer parking lot, about to get some groceries. The sun reflected off the hood on the

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car making the inside very bright. The black seat was hot on my back. I waited rather impatiently to hear what he had to tell me.

My dad turned his face to me, his stubble was growing out on his chin. I wondered why he hadn't shaved today, he then cleared his throat, "So I got a call today," he put the car in park, "It was Kathy, and I have some bad news."

"What is it?" I asked. I had no idea what was coming.

"She told me that uncle Chris died," he struggled to get the words out.

"You're kidding."

"No, Kathy told me he died at the gym. He was fine all day and then he died from a heart attack while running."

Uncle Chris loved to run. He ran marathons. He was healthy. He was forty years old. I still didn't believe the news. I held my head in my hands. Suddenly all the memories I've made with my uncle came flooding back to me. So many stories. Our family vacations, car rides, exploring caves, *his laughter*. I'd never get to hear it again.

My uncle's nasally laugh echoed in my mind. I remembered. I still do, and it's still echoing. I never got to tell him I love him, and I never will. This truth shattered me.

Lesson #3

Don't leave yourself with any regrets.

There's more to life than seasons. There's chapters in life that teach you lessons. Pages with small blessings. I don't miss these dark chapters of my life, but I'm thankful for what I have learned. I guess I'll leave you with this, a quote from someone much wiser than I.

"The ones that love us never really leave us."

– Sirius Black, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*