

Reading has always been my ‘thing’. Other people might invest their time in sports or academics, but I always feel at home when I’m holding a book in my hands. You see, no matter what hardship or struggle is going around me, as long as I can read, I will be okay. My favorite part of a book is when you think everything is going one way, you feel that they have everything figured out, but in an instant, everything simply changes. Much like my favorite book, life sure can take a turn for the worse.

It all started on a warm, sunny day when my mom was cooking dinner for my father, brother, and I. I had just opened my favorite book to the first chapter, one I could recite without fault from memory:

January 30, 1933

Dear diary,

This morning, my family and I went to the Temple. Mom says I should really start paying attention, but there is just so much to do and so little time to do it. I get the spiel of it, so why do I need to attend every week? Anyway, I saw in the paper that Germany got a new leader, some guy named Hitler. They said that he was power hungry and would do anything to stand by his beliefs, whatever they may be. It’s incredible how oblivious one can be to the harm they are causing, simply by pure stubbornness. All I know is that in this crazy world, I sure hope I get out all right. Forever and Always...

- Sarah

This particular evening, mom was making our absolute favorite, chicken kabobs with her world famous rice. While she preparing this rare delicacy, her legs suddenly seemed to fail her. After a moment of pure shock, we all rushed to her side. She seemed to be feeling healthy; for she lay there laughing, but her eyes began to roll backwards as all life seemed to be washing away from her. We had thought her fall was out of her pure clumsiness, but like most incidents, it proved to be much more than that. When she didn’t wake up, we took action and rushed her to the hospital. After the initial shock was gone, I knew I had to get my mind off of my mother. I couldn’t stop envisioning the whoosh of the hospital bed as my hand was ripped away from the only woman I could never imagine losing.

Chapter two:

February, 1933

Dear Diary:

This Hitler guy sure is making an impact on our lives here in Romania. It has been explained to me that he blames the Jews for everything bad in this world. Can you believe that!? I don't think I have ever wanted to do any harm to really anyone, let alone the world. How could I ever be blamed for our crazy and twisted world, I don't understand.... Forever and always

-Sarah

After the longest 10 hours of my life, the doctors, exhausted from a mad rush of surgeries and diagnostics, finally let me talk to my mother. I walked in and saw my mom, the strongest woman I knew, look as weak and helpless as a motherless baby bird. I ran to her and grabbed her cold hand: "*Skin cancer isn't all that bad, cancer is curable, don't worry.*" She uttered to me as her weak eyes shimmered just the slightest glimpse of hope.

They released her three days later with a diagnosis of leukemia, cancer of the blood. She was then to start chemo at the end of the week. That gave us five days. Five precious days as a normal family again, but we all knew, nothing was going to be normal anymore.

Chapter three:

August, 1941

Dear Diary,

Mom says I have to wear this yellow star on all the clothes I wear. It is to distinguish us from everyone else. I also have to start going to an all-Jewish school. Oh diary, I miss my friends dearly. Mom says that we may have to stop going to temple soon. I'm really starting to get worried now. I feel so ostracized away from everyone else. All of a sudden, people won't look me in the eyes anymore. It is as if they are afraid of me and I don't know why. Forever and always

-Sarah

The last week with mom was a rush of family visits, home cooked meals, and frantic phone calls, but it wasn't until the last day that it hit me: my mom was sick. It had never occurred to me that she might not make it until that last night. She called me over and asked to talk to me. This what she said to me *"I know you're scared, and frankly right now I am too. But you have to remember to always stay strong and be true to yourself. As long as you have even the slightest bit of hope, it will always be enough for me. And no matter what happens, you will always be my kind, sweet, brave, beautiful little girl."*

Chapter four:

June 1941

Dear Diary:

It finally happened. I knew this day would come, deep down I really did know it, but I guess I just had this false hope that I was just being crazy, but even our worst nightmares can become a reality. Right before my very eyes, I saw my family ripped apart. My brother and dad were shoved to the right, my mother and I to the left. We were then packed in this impossibly small train car like sardines in a can. We got the least scraps of food every day and had no windows to see where we were going or just to simply breathe fresh air. Right before we got off the train, my mother looked me in the eyes and said to me: "Sarah, no matter what you do or what they do to you, you have to keep your chin up and be the amazing girl you are. I know you. I know how tough willed you are and how strong you can be. Now listen to me carefully. No matter what trouble comes your way, no matter what they say or do, you must...you must have hope. Hope for a better tomorrow; hope that everything is going to be okay. I love you with all of my heart Sarah, stay strong." We then were immediately shoved out of the trains into something they call a concentration camp, ours, Auschwitz. I tried to cling to my mom's arm as the ruthless Nazi behind us ripped her away from me. Her last words I heard yelled across the restraining arm of a Nazi "Have hope Sarah, I love you!" As of now, I do not know where my mother is or really what is going happen to me. Life right now is full of confusion and I have no idea what to do. I know that I must cling onto even the smallest morsel of hope I have in my heart, for without hope, I could never go on." Forever and always...

-Sarah

I hadn't seen my mother in weeks. They said that her chemo treatment was not working and that they were sending her to a research hospital in Texas. I had never been without my mom for that long. I remember this one time that I went to sleep away camp for three weeks. I got so homesick that I wrote my mom to come get me. She dropped everything to come pick me up. I remember seeing her across the field, I remember her warm embrace as she swept me up in her arms and told me that it was okay, and that she was here now. I no longer have that feeling.

Chapter six

Dear Diary: The date is June, 1941

It has been about a week since I've seen my mother. Life has been so hard here. Because I am one of the younger ones in my bunkhouse, I am forced to sleep on the floor. Lice have become a very big problem here. Already 15 people in my room alone have died from the diseases they carry. I feel so alone without my mom by my side, but I know that everything will be okay in the end. Forever and always...

-Sarah

After about a month and a half, I finally got to see my mom, although I wish it wasn't for the reason that I had previously hoped. Her condition went from stable to unstable after she had contracted a fever. I knew that it might be the last time I ever got to see her. Memories were flooding back like a tidal wave on a quaint beach, seemingly unknowing of the damage that will be done. I started to feel deep regret. It rattled my bones as I felt it creep up my spine and into my head. Simply put, I had taken my life for granted. I never knew how amazing my life truly was until it was all taken away from me.

The last and Final Chapter, Chapter 7:

Dear Diary, The date is August 1941

I got to go outside today. In fact, it was one of the most glorious afternoons of my life. As I was kicked around and shoved by the Nazi soldiers, I saw a most amazing sight: my mother. She ran across the camp, her raw feet seemed to be dragging one step behind her as she shoved the soldier off of me and held me in her arms for as long as she could. In that moment, time stood

still. It was as if everything around us had simply vanished and all that was left was she and I. In an instant, reality struck once again. She was hurled off of me in a whoosh and dragged away, but none of that mattered, for I knew that we would meet again. Forever and always mom...

-Sarah

As I turned the last page of my book, I looked up from the hospital chair where I sat and saw my mother. She was not depicted as the weak and pale woman that lay before me, but as the strong and incredible mother role model I had always seen her as. She opened her eyes and looked at me with tears rolling down her face as she said *“may we meet again my sweet girl. I love you”*

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