

The Pain Dies With You

Quinn

Prologue

“Quinn, please listen to me.”

“Well, *I wish you were dead!*” I screamed and ran to my room and locked myself in it. I was mad at my dad. Really mad. I can’t wait until summer camp comes. I’ll be free of my parents and all these high expectations.

I

I looked out the window as we drove by beautiful dark evergreens, full of green needles, and around green mountains that were covered in a clean crisp layer of white during Christmastime. Mom turned around and looked at me, and I remembered that soon enough, I would once again, be in a camp full of kids my age. Home. And best of all, my best friend, Hannah, was going to be there, too. We reached the town the camp was in after around two-and-a-half hours (with Mom driving slightly fast, as usual). As we entered the town limits, we were greeted by a sign that said, “Willkommen in Leavenworth,” and I thought to myself, *I’m home*. The small town was my favorite place in the world; it was a place to get away from the busy streets and high academic and social expectations of Seattle. I only got to visit for three weeks in the summer, and two weeks in the winter. But now, as we approached the campground that usually hosted around one hundred kids in twelve cabins (all named after the Olympian gods and goddesses), I made sure I had everything I needed with me: clothes, my phone, and an extra pair of shoes (as one of my pairs usually end up being lost or at the bottom of the lake).

“Bye, Quinn. Call me if you need anything and remember to write to me and your dad,” reminded Mom as she looked at me with her soft green eyes. I winced, remembering the massive argument I had with my dad only three days ago. It was the only reason why he did not come with Mom to take me to camp.

“Yeah, I will. I’ll call you if anything urgent happens. I love you, Mom. Tell Dad that I love him, too. Bye, Mom.” I opened the car door and stepped out and breathed in the cool fresh air, a bit warmer than the air-conditioned car. Mom drove away, and I went to go find Hannah.

We reunited and walked to our cabin, which we stay in every year. Counselors choose their campers on the first day of camp every year. Hannah and I were chosen for the Artemis cabin by our counselor, Savannah, three years ago. When we were 11. Once I found her, Hannah and I ran to our cabin, and we rushed to hug Savannah. I got the top bunk, and Hannah chose the bottom bunk, like every year.

“It’s good to be back,” I said as I wrote my name on the chalkboard sign at the foot of the bed.

II

Camp went along smoothly for a week. I had called home a couple times. I talked to Mom, but Dad never spoke to me on the phone. All Mom ever said was, “He’s busy,” and to call back the next day. I wanted to say sorry to him, but I never got the chance to. A couple days later, I tried calling Mom, but she didn’t pick up. The day after I decided to just stop calling home altogether, Mom left me a message. I wasn’t expecting anything big. I wasn’t expecting what my mom was about to tell me. “Your dad. He hung himself, and he’s gone now. When we were in the hospital, his last words were ‘Tell Quinn that I want her to be happy. If me being dead meant her being happy, then what else could a dad want more?’ Be happy Quinn, my daughter.” I went to my bed that night and cried until I fell asleep.

III

I didn’t tell anyone, but I knew everyone could tell with my huge eye bags and red eyes. After a few days, Hannah managed to make me tell her. “The guilt is eating me alive, Hannah. I need to go home. I’ll be better at home.” Hannah only replied, “Call your mom. Talk to her. I don’t want to be here without you, but I understand.” With assurance from my best friend, I called my mom and asked her if she could pick me up as soon as she could. She texted, “I’ll be there tonight.” *I wish that I could be back at home, and that things were normal again.*

I went to bed waiting for her, and in the morning I woke up and forgot all about my mom coming to pick me up until Savannah said, “Quinn, I am so so sorry, but your mom got into a really bad accident last night. You know how the mountains are at night. It’s always dark. So

when she was driving, she crashed into the side of the mountain. She's in the hospital right now. I wouldn't mind taking you to go see her." Tears filled my eyes, and I only managed to croak out a "yes." At the hospital, the doctors wanted to talk to me. I only got the gist of what they said. My mom had suffered a heart attack, most likely putting her in a spell of dizziness, making her lose control and end up crashing. The hospital didn't guarantee a recovery, and I stayed with her that night, just to be close. In the early morning at around 4, my mom gently shook me awake.

"My life is nearing its end. All I can say to you is, 'I love you. Be happy, Quinn.'" And with that, my mind shut down. I screamed and the nurses came, but they couldn't do anything to save her.

IV

Lucky me, guilt came to tear at me everyday like mosquitoes out in Grand Teton. No matter how hard I tried, new thoughts and old ones as well came back to eat me alive. I isolated myself from others, including Hannah and Savannah. They tried talking to me, but I just walked away. They told me I was getting depressed, but I just shrugged it off. It didn't matter what they thought. But deep down, I knew they cared about me and that they were right. I needed help. I was just too afraid to say it out loud. I tried to keep all the pain to myself.

Every morning, I took a visit to the camp lake, where we canoed and swam on the hottest days of the summer. The atmosphere of the lake provided a tranquility that I longed to have ever since the deaths of my parents.

"Life moves on, with or without you," Savannah once said. One day I couldn't take it anymore. It hurt too much to be alive. Why live a life that I didn't want to live? I left a note on my bed saying, "The pain will die with me. I hope everyone else is happy." I slowly walked to and into the lake, and that's where I stayed. Submerged. *I wish I was happy*. The last thing Quinn heard in her head was, "You'll only be happy if you're with your parents. Go with them. You won't be happy if you lived in misery." The last thing she saw was her last pocket of air, released to the surface and the world above. The last thing she felt was the burning sensation in her lungs as her body willed her to break to the surface, but her mind thinking otherwise. Her last and final wish of all had been granted. She was gone...

Hannah

Epilogue

No, no, no, no. Quinn couldn't have just drowned herself like that. I walked into the cabin and placed my shoes under my bed, like we both have since we were eleven. Luckily, Savannah asked that everyone else in our cabin stayed in a different one for the time being. Tears began to well up in my eyes, and I felt myself drop onto the bed before I could even register what was happening. *But she was gone. She really was.* I sobbed and sobbed until the sun set, which was when Savannah came back from helping out with the camp activities. I pretended to be asleep until I heard her crying as well. I started to cry again, and we both talked about Quinn and how much we missed her.

"I wonder why she left that note on her bed," I said. I got out of my bed and sat on the dark red-brown, wooden floor. About to slouch in weariness and sorrow, I rested my head and back on the bed frame, and stayed there.

"I mean, she must've wanted us to know why she did it. In the end, I think that she really did care about us, too. With the death of her parents so sudden, I think she was really overwhelmed," replied Savannah. "Well, we should get some rest. We have to wake up early tomorrow. Everyone wants to do a small remembrance ceremony at the campfire, and we should probably get ready a little early."

I only nodded, but we both knew that neither of us would be getting much sleep tonight. But as a nightly ritual, we took out our ponytails and brushed out each other's hair. On normal nights, I would brush out Quinn's medium brown hair, while she brushed out Savannah's dirty blonde hair. Because my hair was almost impossible to brush, with it being so wavy, Savannah usually just told us old camp stories while we brushed. Today though, we sat wordlessly as I brushed through Savannah's hair.

As I finished, Savannah got up to turn off the light. We were both still shaken with the turn of today's events. From in the morning as campers saw a body floating in the water, until now, when we sat here alone for the first time. Just the two of us.

I pulled up the blanket to my nose, and stared out the window at the moon and the innumerable stars, sprinkled in the open deep blue sky, thinking that Quinn might be staring down from the stars. *Wherever she is, I hope she's happy now.* But I couldn't help thinking one more thing.

The pain didn't die with you, Quinn. It only became a part of everyone you cared for, as well as everyone that cared for you.