

What She Saw

by Jasmine Thomas

I saw it. It was almost like an out-of-body experience. Like I was there but I wasn't really there, you know? I mean, well, I was there but I wasn't supposed to be there. This was definitely not supposed to be an event for multiple people. But there were plenty of people, screaming, chattering, calling for help. But they didn't see it. Only I did. They only got to see the end of it and I saw it all.

I saw it. I saw the body drop.

It didn't seem like a body was falling really. It kind of just looked like a bird that forgot to fly. Wait no, a bird would be too small. More like a skydiver that didn't pull their parachute? Well, I guess that really is a falling body. But to me, it didn't look like that. It wasn't just some heap of blood and bone splattered on the ground, there was a whole journey before it. I saw it. Those crying around me didn't see it, but I did. They didn't see how beautiful it was.

INTRO - Mitch Albom once said "Every ending is a beginning. We just don't know it at the time." But is that really true? In *What She Saw*, we dive deeper through the eyes of the protagonist facing trauma and resilience to her long-awaited peace. The story teaches us to confront our past and uncover hidden truth, allowing us to open ourselves up to a new beginning.

What She Saw by Jasmine Thomas

The police swarmed us. Emergency services were doing what they can but really at that point what could you do? Against my better judgment, I decided to go towards the body. I try to get a glimpse at the face. I thought it may have been one of the kids from my school. And that's when I saw it, my face on that lifeless bloody body. I was dead.

I think I started to have these fantasies at around 12? I'm sure I was depressed before then, but I think 12 was really when I would have these vivid visions of my death. At first, it was just the idea of me getting really sick and eventually dying, you know something I couldn't really do on my own. But then, the visions started to become more violent and somehow more doable. Like, I can't really give myself cancer, but I could throw myself off a high place. I don't know, all I really know is that once Ellie got diagnosed that's when things got violent.

Ellie is my best friend, we've known each other since we were...4. I don't think I can talk about my life (or death) without talking about her. We were both born in Queens, lived in houses right next door to each other and knew everything about each other. I knew when she was happy because she would wear her purple sweater. I knew when she was sad because she would peel the skin off her thumbs and I knew when she was anxious because her right leg would shake violently. I also knew when she coughed blood for the first time something was wrong.

Turns out Ellie had stage 4 lymphoma. At 13. I think that's when I started to doubt God you know, like this girl has not even had her first kiss, and she's already been given a natural death

sentence. How is that fair? Child molesters and racists live up to 100 but she has to die? Bad people are supposed to die not little girls who do soccer and have crushes on the boy next door and have so much left to do in this world.

Ellie didn't see it as a punishment. I think that's what helped her stay so positive through it all. She thought of it as her last great experience. Her final journey. The last level of the really hard game of life. I'd visit her in the hospital and ask her how's she doing, and she would respond with, "Oh just moving along, dying you know?" and I would say, "Oh well so am I, just at a slower pace than you" and we'd both laugh. Yeah, our humour was screwed up but so was the situation. Ellie loved death jokes more than anything so when the girl with cancer wants a death joke, you give her one. I for one hated them. Death was a fantasy, a comfort for me not a joke. But Ellie didn't know that. How do you tell your best friend who's dying against her will that you want to be in her place? That you want to die? That you want to give up the thing she wants to hold on to so badly so much that you dream about it everyday in various ways? The answer is you don't. You support the girl with cancer not nurse your own sick twisted fantasies.

Ellie had this joke she would always say when it was time for her chemo. When the nurse said, "Are you ready sweetie?" she would go, "I'd rather die" dramatically. Again, death jokes. But one day she says "I'd rather die" really quietly. Like she meant it. Like she was at her breaking point and she just really would rather die. Like what was even the point anymore. Like me. She was supposed to be the one clutching grasping for whatever remaining little life she had. If she gives up, then what the hell am I going to do?

This really shakes me up. I'm on the subway platform trying to get home when I have my usual vision of me jumping in front of the train. And almost subconsciously I lean forward as the train comes. It gets closer and faster and I am ready. Ready to stop dreaming and just do. The train passes my nose by a hair because I am yanked back in time by a random person. I'm sitting on the dirty subway platform and everyone around is watching this tiny white lady yell at me for being so irresponsible for standing so close, that I could have been killed and what would my parents do if they found out that their little girl died in an accident. And that's when I start sobbing and saying it wasn't an accident. I didn't want it to be an accident. The lady gets quiet because she knew what I meant and bends down to help me up. She pulls me into a tight hug and tells me, "If you live your life wanting death, you will never live enough to see why life is worth living." Like some cheesy Hallmark card or something. I still somehow cry harder.

A week later, my mom tells me Ellie died. A week before her 16th birthday. How messed up is that? My mom hands me a box of stuff Ellie left for me as per her 'will'. A couple of shirts of hers I loved, some jewelry, books that she has never read that she wanted to. And a note that says, "Dear Nicki, we live in a world ruled by our own destinies. We are predisposed to nothing. Our lives are exactly the right amount of time to complete exactly the right number of things. For me, my great big thing was meeting you. Loving you my best friend has been worth living this short life. I know my sense of humor was strange and I wasn't always in a good mood but I had a great big love for you that I'm sure made you stick around. If my one purpose in this life was to make you appreciate life and want to seize this world by the balls, then I have to say that it is

truly a life well lived. Goodbye, my friend see you in the afterlife but make sure not to come too soon, I still have to get things ready for you. Love Ellie”

I think she’s going to have plenty of time to get ready for me.