**Giving Life**

It was a blazing hot summer day and I felt like I was going to melt into a puddle. My dad and I were getting ready to go out for a ride on the boat with my friend Katie and our dog Fluffy. That’s when the phone call came, the call that made that bright, beautiful day a cold, dark, gloomy one.

I had just put on my suit, shorts, and tank top, and packed my bag with sunscreen and everything else I would need for the day. I ran into my parents’ room to find Dad. When I saw him on the phone, he was crying. I’d never seen my dad cry before. My heart sank. What possibly could have happened?

“Max, I’m so sorry,” I heard him say. That’s when it hit me. I knew that Suzie had died. My feet felt like they were stuck in cement and couldn’t move. My eyes filled with tears, and my lip started to shake. Memories of Suzie filled my head.

Max has been my dad’s best friend for years. Suzie, his daughter, had a rare disease that mainly affected her body. Her brain was okay. She knew what was going on; she knew that she had problems and was different than other kids. Once she told her dad that she wished she could die and be born in a different body. Although she couldn’t live a normal life, she was still happy. Whenever you saw her, her bright smile would light up the room.

When Suzie and I were little, we spent quite a bit of time together. As we grew up, we grew apart. She lived in New York, and I lived in the Midwest. When Suzie was ten she had to live in a hospital in Virginia. About eight months before she died, Max gave us her number at the hospital and we talked at least twice a week until the end. Suzie was always so excited to talk to us and wanted to know every detail about my life. She wanted to know everything I did and everything I ate. In a way, she lived through me.

The days after that phone call were a blur. We made our plans to go to New York for the funeral. When she was alive, I sent her a Beanie Baby and she sent one back to me. I had bought her another one but never had the chance to send it to her, so I took it to put in her casket.

Her funeral was very different than any funeral I’d ever been to. After they lowered her casket, each one of us put a shovelful of dirt over her. I remember crying so hard, I felt weak. My cheeks burned from the tears. My whole body was shaking as I picked up the shovel, but I’m glad I did it. I wished that my family had never received that phone call and wished Suzie was resting peacefully.

When Suzie and I first started calling one another, I thought it would be more of a burden on me, but I was completely wrong. I learned so much from her. Suzie was as brave as the superheroes on T.V. and stayed positive even when times were hard. She gave me more than I could ever give to her. I will never forget receiving the phone call on that fateful day, but more importantly I will never forget my memories with Suzie. I now know that I must never take anything for granted, especially my health and the gift of life.

What do you notice about the story? Underline or highlight the hook. Which words hook you in? Where is the “so what” of the story? Put a star next to it. Why is the “so what” important?

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