

POST-MORTEM

By Deborah Karczewski

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CAST: one female

(SARAH begins as though SHE is in the middle of an ongoing conversation.)

So, I'm riding my bike, you know, and I'm, like, trying to pump out all of my anger. I purposely picked the most hilly and most windy road I could find. I thought that if I gave myself a workout ... got my heart really beating ... that I could sorta sweat out all of my emotions. I was crying ... sobbing actually. It was OK 'cause nobody could hear me. There were hardly any cars on the road, and it was so cold that if one did pass me, the windows were closed all the way up. So there I was, sobbing and pumping away on my bike. The cold air made my nose and ears throb. My hair and even my skin seemed to be pushed away from my face toward the back of my head – I was going so fast. My tears dried quickly and seemed to stiffen. I felt like I had streaks of dry, cold, hard clay spreading out from my eyes and my nose. You know how a facial mask feels when it's starting to harden? Like your face is being pulled smooth and tight? That's what it felt like.

My eyes were starting to sting. I could hardly focus. The trees and the guard rail were gray and brown horizontal streaks. The sky was gray, too. The clouds began to billow black and blue like a huge, growing bruise. I didn't pay attention to any of the street signs. I didn't care where I was... where I was going ... how far I was traveling.

All I could think about was my grandma. Who would I go to, now, when I needed a good cry? Who would listen to me without telling me I was being too sensitive ... or that I was over-exaggerating... or that I should put myself in the other guy's shoes? Who would *listen* to me? Really *listen* to me without adding any advice...without preaching at me...without making me feel ...inferior? Everyone else has to make a point. My dad always tells me I'm making a big deal out of nothing. My mom always tells me to learn from my mistakes. The guidance counselor at school is so worried about being neutral that she'd rather die than take my side about anything. But not Grandma. She always seemed to be on

my side. She'd really listen ... or hug me ... or just let me hang out. She always made me believe that my feelings mattered. It was OK for me to cry. I could vent my emotions for an hour, and she'd never tell me to stop. And whenever I was finished, when there was nothing more to pour out, when I was exhausted and empty...she'd pop a butterscotch candy in my mouth. It was nice. It sort of ended the sour moment, and filled my mouth and soul with sweetness.

Mom was a wreck when it was time to tell me. She was trying to fight the tears and couldn't find the words that she wanted. She didn't have to. I knew just by looking at her face that Grandma was dead. I didn't wait for her to say the words. I ran out of the living room and straight for the garage. **(pause)** There it was – gleaming – the bike Grandma had given me three years ago for my birthday. It's purple, but Grandma liked to call it "eggplant." I hopped on that bike and rode as fast as I could work my legs.

So there I was, sobbing and pumping away on my bike. I don't even know where it came from – the truck. One second I'm looking at the horizontal streaks of trees, and the next second - the face of the truck. I remember that the windshield looked like eyes set very close together with visors for eyebrows. The grill was a mouth with a horrible grin. The impact sent me flying upward...and then down with a loud smack. Silence. For the longest time all I knew was ... emptiness ... nothingness ...silent darkness. No sound. No sight. No sensation – not even pain. Silence. No emotion – no fear. No confusion. Just silence. Then ... from the deepest recess of my soul ... from somewhere deeper than my heart...came a low rushing sound. I remember a similar sound last summer when we vacationed at the shore. Our cabin wasn't directly on the beach. We had to walk about ten blocks before we reached the ocean. When we walked towards the beach – especially at night – and listened real hard, we could hear a low rumbling which intensified the closer we got. That's what this sound was like – the waves, or drums, or thunder...rumbling progressively louder ... and louder until it reached a deafening crescendo, which cracked through the black nothingness, freeing the light captured behind it!

Then... from the deepest recess of my soul ... from somewhere deeper than my heart... streamed – no, rushed – no, *burst* a cone of bright light. Whoosh! The narrow end was buried deep in my chest, and the rays emanated up and out like a megaphone of light. It flowed out of

my body and illuminated the sky. The light was so magnificent that it even seemed to engulf the stars above me. I felt myself rising. I couldn't feel my arms or my legs, and somehow I knew that I was floating upward. I wasn't frightened. I was calm and maybe a little curious. I soared up and up and up into the light. The higher I ascended, the stronger the illumination.

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