

## Unforgettable

These past few years have been so messed up for me and my mother. They have been filled with tears, blood, bruises, and smiles. Although we went through all these troubles and tragedies, I know it has definitely made me and my mother stronger.

Well, it all started on a hot, summer day in the middle of July. I had just recently graduated 8<sup>th</sup> grade and was out of school for the summer. Mom and I were waiting for Dad to get home from work, so we could go to California for our summer vacation. We lived in a pretty small town and we were a close family, so we were ready to get out of this town and spend some time together.

It seemed as if me and Mom had been waiting forever for Dad to come home, and it felt as if something had gone wrong.

“Jamie, why don’t you go check the bags to see if we have everything,” Mom said to me.

I heard the phone ring and Mom go answer it. “Hello?” I heard Mom say in her smooth, sweet voice.

Then there were a few seconds of silence. “What? No!” I heard Mom with a mix of shock and sadness in her voice.

I went to the living room to see who had called. As soon as I walked into the room, I saw Mom sitting in the chair with tears streaming down her face. I was not really sure why she was crying, so I asked. The things that she told me seemed to punch me in the stomach and leave me gasping for air. It just happened so quickly.

The police officer who had called said that my dad had been in a car accident. The car hood was crushed completely. When the people pulled him out of the car, it was too

late. Dad had passed on. It's amazing how you can lose something so important, in an instant.

Going back to school was hard. It seemed like people treated me differently ever since my dad passed away. It was like everyone always felt sorry for me. When I walked into my classes, I felt like people had been talking about me. It was just not the same.

One day after last period I was walking down the hall. "Hey Jamie," I heard a kind, manly voice say.

I turned around only to see Coach Bennett. He was the head coach of the girls' basketball team. Since I wasn't really the athletic type, we didn't talk too much but he and my father had been good friends in high school.

"I'm really sorry about your dad...he was a good man," Coach Bennett said in a quiet voice.

"It's okay," I said and started to walk down the hall slowly.

When I was not even halfway down the hall I heard the same voice holler, "Basketball signups are tomorrow, I hope to see you there."

Even though I didn't turn back around to say anything to Coach, that thought stuck in my head all day.

Since Mom had been dating, I had seen a lot of her boyfriends. Most of them didn't give Mom the same joy Dad had given her, but soon Mom met this guy. His name was Jon Maxton. He was a pretty likeable guy and seemed to make Mom happy. Seeing Mom *actually* happy for the first time made me smile.

The next day, I decided to sign up for basketball. It was really weird that I had decided this because I hadn't played basketball in years. I just figured that it would give me something to do and help me think less of Dad.

When I showed up at the gym, Coach Bennett was the first to greet me with a big smile on his face.

"Hey, girl," he said while playfully punching me on the arm.

"Hey, Coach," I said with a smile on my face, too.

"I'm really glad that you decided to sign up, we are going to have a lot of fun this year."

"Well...I sure hope so," I replied and went to go sign up.

Right when I was about to leave, Coach said, "Hey, I just want you to know that I'm always here if you need to talk. Bye, kid."

I didn't have any friends, so it felt good to know there was someone who would be there for me.

It seemed as if Mom and Jon were spending more and more time together and getting closer. Time had passed and they had been dating for about a year and a half now. When we were sitting at the dinner table that night, Mom told me some news that would surprise me. Mom and Jon were getting married. Although Jon was a nice guy, it just didn't feel right for Mom to get married to him. I didn't want to make mom sad, so I wore a smile for her.

I had my first varsity game of the season on Friday and the wedding was on Saturday, so a lot of things were running through my head. Coach and I had become closer and were pretty good friends by now.

Before the game, Coach took me into the locker room to give me a pep talk.

“Here, I want you to have this,” he said as he pulled out a small, velvet bag from his pocket.

I opened the bag and pulled out a gold class ring.

“My dad gave it to me before my first game. He told me to always do my best and to not be afraid.”

I smiled and said, “Thank you so much. You have been so good to me even when others weren’t and I really appreciate that.”

I was ready for the game. When I walked out of the locker room, I looked up in the stands and was disappointed. Mom wasn’t there. It was sort of understandable because the wedding was tomorrow and all, but it still made me sad.

Coach patted me on the back and said, “Hey, keep your head up. I’m behind you 100%.”

It was almost as if he had read my mind. We won the game that night.

Saturday had come. As I sat in the church pews alone, I thought of Dad and thought of Jon. I couldn’t believe that today was the day that Mom was going to get married to another man. The thought of having a new dad scared me. I felt a light tap on my shoulder and turned around. Mom came and sat right beside me.

“Are you ready for the wedding?” she asked in a cheerful voice.

“Uh...yeah,” I said hesitantly.

“I know that you’re scared...so am I, but everything will be okay. Understand?” Mom said reassuringly.

“Yes, Mom.”

The wedding was on.

The games had been going well and we were about to play the finals that would determine if we were going to play the championship game. The night of the finals game, I looked up in the crowd, and unsurprisingly, Mom wasn't there again. In fact, Mom had not been to one of my games, but I just squeezed the class ring Coach had given me, remembered what he told me, and ran to join the huddle.

With five seconds left on the clock, we were tied. We called a timeout and Coach thought of a plan. Samantha, the point guard, was going to fake it to the left, where Jane, the post player, would catch the ball and shoot it. Jane missed the ball, so I had to take it back up. I ended up making the winning shot! Coach Bennett was the first one out on the court giving me a high five. The team was so excited that we had won. My school had never gotten this far. The championship game was in two days.

A month of being married seemed to really change Jon's attitude toward Mom. He argued with her 24/7 and came close to hitting her one night. The night after I had come home from the finals game, I was getting fed up with the arguing, so I decided to stand up and give Jon a piece of my mind.

"Stop treating my mom like this! You were supposed to make her happy but all you do is make her cry. She doesn't deserve this and you definitely don't deserve her," I yelled with all I had in me.

Jon pushed me to the floor. This really made my mom angry.

"Don't you dare lay a hand on her," she shouted.

He slapped her, made her fall to the floor, and just left. Mom and I ran to the bathroom to lock ourselves in, just in case Jon came back. We stayed in the bathroom all night and cried ourselves to sleep.

The next day at school, I had to tell someone. I went to the coaches' office, found Coach Bennett, and told him everything that had happened the night before. He gave me a long talk and helped me build up the courage to tell my mom that we needed to get away as soon as possible. He even offered to let us stay at his house for a while. I was so lucky to have a male figure that I could look up to. Coach Bennett was more of a father than Jon would ever be.

Mom and I stayed at Coach's house that night. The next day, I woke up refreshed and ready to play the championship game. It was hard to believe that we even made it this far, and that the day was finally here. Mom and Jon were done for good, so this raised my spirits even more. This was the time and place to shine and play with all that I had. When I looked up in the stands, it felt good to see Mom's smiling face looking back at me.

By halftime we were losing by four points. This really brought the team down, but when we went back out to play the second half we had to put all the bad thoughts behind us. During the fourth quarter, we finally caught up by making two lay-ups.

With two seconds remaining, one of the girls from the other team fouled me. I had two shots and another chance to bring my team to victory. The first shot bounced off the backboard and hit rim, but didn't go in. I got a little discouraged. When I heard Mom in the stands yelling for me and saw Coach give me the thumbs up sign and form the words, "Make this unforgettable," with his mouth, I gathered the confidence for my next shot. As soon as the ball left my fingertips, it seemed as if everything was moving in slow

motion. Swish! The ball went in! After two seconds, the buzzer rang and the fans jumped up. We had actually won! That was truly an unforgettable night.

Through all these years, I know Dad was with me every step of the way. It feels like he was the voice in my head telling me to try basketball and get closer to Coach Bennett.

Mom and Coach Bennett have been dating for about two and a half years now. Next week they are getting married, and this time, everything feels right.

Word Count: 1905