

First Place
Senior High Division
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Life isn't like the soap operas we see on television. Prince Charming doesn't save his princess from the clutches of a dragon and whisk her away on a white horse. It's not that perfect. The foreshadowing of death and evils aren't indicated by music playing in the background.

Life is a precious gift that can be taken away at any minute. And yet, at times, I, like many others, take mine for granted. I think, like most everyone, there will always be a tomorrow. But sometimes there isn't a tomorrow. This past summer I received a second chance with someone I love. Someone who almost didn't get his tomorrow.

I was at my grandparent's house when a purple blazer pulled into the driveway. I was alone with my grandma. My mom and dad were out looking for my grandpa who had left earlier on a bike ride and hadn't returned. As the blazer came to a stop, I noticed that someone was in the passenger's seat. It was my grandpa. The driver helped him out of the truck and I felt paralyzed as I watched. He was covered with blood. He had a black eye, cuts all over his body, and his clothes were stained red.

"Grandma!" I yelled as I ran back into the house. "Grandpa is back," I said, flying out the door again. My grandma came outside with me and began to scream. His eye had been pushed out of the socket and under the skin, forming a purple lump on his cheekbone. Frantically I ran into the house and called my mom. Then the worst sound in the world came through the receiver. Dial tones echoed in my ear as an automated voice droned, "We're sorry: your call can not be connected. Please check the number and dial again, or dial a one before this number." I slammed the phone down and cursed under my breath. I could still hear my grandma screaming outside, claiming my grandpa was going to be blind.

I redialed my mom, and she finally picked up the phone on the third ring. "Grandpa fell off his bike and needs to go to the hospital. You need to get back here now!" I rushed through my words and had to repeat myself two more times. Finally my mom told me to stay calm; she would be there soon.

I grabbed a rag off the kitchen counter, filled it with ice and ran back out to the garage where my grandpa was sitting on a lawn chair. By this point my grandma was crying and the lady who had driven my grandpa home didn't know what to do. She took the ice from me and gently placed it on my grandpa's face as I tried to talk to my grandma. Just then my parents came running across the yard and helped my grandpa into their car. They left telling me to bring Grandma to the hospital. I, being from out of town, had no idea where the hospital was. The lady who had brought my grandpa home said I should follow her there. After calling all my relatives and informing them about what has just happened, I got into my grandma's van and left for the hospital.

I coaxed my grandma the entire way to the hospital and then dropped her off at the front door. I found a parking spot and sprinted into the waiting room. When I came through the sliding doors, I saw all my aunts and uncles sitting in a circle with my grandma. I sat next to my dad and didn't talk. I looked at my softball jersey I was still wearing from earlier that day. I remembered how angry I was after losing my last game that day. I remembered not wanting to see my grandparents because I was so frustrated with how I had played. It all seemed so selfish now. I was ashamed that I had let a game come before my family.

It was one in the morning before I returned home, but that didn't matter because I couldn't sleep. I finally got out of bed and walked into my own kitchen where my brother and parents were standing. They turned to look at me as I entered the room. Then my brother told me the news. "They think someone beat Grandpa with a baseball bat," he said, turning away from me. I was in shock. I couldn't believe that someone would do that to an eighty-year-old man.

No one knew if my grandpa was going to make it for a long while after the accident. The doctors had to reset his eye in the socket, which was broken in three places. His nose was broken, and he had cuts over his hands, arms and legs. These are the minor injuries. He had no recollection of the accident. The hardest part was keeping my grandpa motivated to live. He could hardly see and couldn't walk. He was very weak and mortified. Thankfully he made a complete recovery.

I don't know what I would have done if I would have lost my grandpa that day. I never would have been able to forgive myself for not wanting to visit him that day. I love sports so much, but somewhere along the line I forgot to appreciate my family. You can never replace something like that. Almost losing my grandpa made me think, "Why would I want to replace something like that?" I've been spending so much time trying to define myself that I forgot the best definition of me is what I've been taking for granted, my family.

I've learned a lot in my life. I'm just sad it took me 17 years to learn the greatest lessons of all. Love your family; it's the only one you get. Be thankful for the day you have, you'll never get them back. You will always have your own life, but that doesn't mean you aren't part of someone else's. And finally, when you look death in the face, what kind of miracle will you wish for? Will it be to win a softball game? Or will it be something much more important like spending just one more day with someone you can never replace?