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She never looked at him.

God Knows

by Shaun Stevenson

Monty saw his grandma's house just up the driveway. The planks of rough wood had faded in the rain and wind that always threatened to rip them into the ocean only a quick run away.

Mom shut off the car and stared at the garage door. The sun hadn't quite risen yet, and the bluish haze of the early morning still colored everything darker than it really was.

"How long are we going to stay at Grandma's house?" Monty asked.

Mom said nothing.

She pushed open the car door and slipped out, grabbing Monty's red backpack from the passenger seat. Monty's door creaked open, and Mom unbuckled him and took his hand, leading him to the front door.

She still wasn't talking.

"Mom?" Monty asked. "Are you OK?"

Mom reached up and rang the doorbell. She dropped his backpack with a thump, and then she turned and trudged back to the car.

"Mom . . . ?" The wind blew Monty's dark hair back from his face. "Where are you going?"

Mom slammed the car door shut. She never looked at him. She just stared ahead, turned on the ignition, and backed out.

"Mom!" Monty yelled.

But it was too late. That was the last time Monty saw his mom. She disappeared and never came back.

“Jesus went through it all so He could understand.”

All Alone

It was the worst kind of hard thing. The kind you never forgot. The kind that stuck with you, defined you, and never let you feel even remotely close to normal.

Monty lay awake in bed often, watching the glow-in-the-dark stars fade into morning. And that’s when he wondered the most about the God his grandma’s minister always went on about. A God who said He loved everyone. A God who said He protected people.

A God who had let Monty’s mom just drive away when he was 5 years old.

Confused

Every summer Monty went to summer camp up the road where he heard more about Jesus. More about this God who was supposed to love him.

The summer after eighth grade, Monty’s grandma dropped him off at camp again. Every night Monty listened to the speaker share about God’s love, and he squirmed in the padded chair, wondering how anyone could actually believe it.

But as he listened, he also felt every ache and hope—hope for his mom to walk back into the house one day and the ache of knowing she never would.

Why was life so hard?

Why did he suffer so much when

other people had their families and complained about them? All he wanted was a mom—a family—to hug him, to love him, to tell him everything *would* be OK.

But it wasn’t OK. And Monty knew it.

Broken

The speaker picked up a watermelon and heaved it up for everyone to see. “Here’s the thing: we are all a little like this watermelon. It looks nice, things are going well, life is good, but—”

With one quick motion, he smashed the watermelon on the floor. Red and white watermelon guts went flying everywhere, splattering some of the people in the front row, who laughed and peeled the chunks off their clothes.

“We are also all broken.” The speaker reached down and picked up a few of the pieces that were still somewhat intact. “We all have pain. We all have sin in our lives. We all have hurts and fears and secrets we keep. And we want to be made whole again, but we don’t know what to do. So we try to fix ourselves.”

He pulled out a huge roll of silver duct tape and started putting the pieces of watermelon back together. But the watermelon slopped over itself and kept spilling seeds and juice everywhere. After a moment, the speaker held up a mushy mass of duct-taped watermelon.

“This doesn’t work. And we know it. No matter how much we ignore it, no matter how much we try to pretend like everything’s OK—it’s not. And we cannot begin to fix it ourselves.”

Monty clenched the sides of his chair and looked down at the carpet. If people couldn’t just ignore the things that were wrong, then what? Was God actually going to help people? Was God actually going to help *him*?

In that moment, Monty stood up and walked outside. Stars sparkled far above him and he stared up at them, knowing that somewhere out there was supposed to be this God who loved him.

Tears fell from his eyes as he let out a barely whispered prayer: “God, please . . . help me. I don’t know what else to do.”

Help

A footstep crunched the grass behind him, and Monty turned to see his camp counselor standing there. Monty wiped at his face and tried to sniff back his snot. They sat down on the grass outside the main chapel building, and Monty told his story. He told about his pain. About his fear. About the hard things he had faced.

The counselor opened his mouth a couple times, but he couldn’t think of anything to say. But then God reminded him of something he’d almost forgotten—something Monty had never known.

“Honestly, Monty, I don’t completely understand—I don’t think I ever can because I haven’t been through those things. But there is someone who knows.”

“Does God really know?”

The counselor nodded. “He does. Because He lived it. When Jesus came, He was a human being. He was a person. He was betrayed by one of His closest friends. His own family walked away from Him for a while. People hated Him. People thought He was crazy. People made fun of Him. He died.”

Monty twisted his mouth to one side and scrunched his eyes together, trying not to cry again.

“Jesus went through it all so He could understand.”

From then on Monty’s life was different. There always were times he struggled. There were times he cried about his mom, but those were also the times he remembered everything Jesus went through. And sometimes, Monty learned, it’s enough for us to know that God knows. Because He lived it. **E**

Second Corinthians 1:5 tells us, “For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.”