

JANUARY 13TH, 1990

JENNA SANTOS

January 13, 1990. It was an icy Saturday night when my dad was a passenger in his cousin Arthur's car. My dad was spending time in Arthur's new apartment after a long syllabus week. You could say he was enjoying the calm before the storm. His could foresee how his life would be bombarded with the struggles of a wintery commute to Chestnut Hill, the complexities of Father McGowan's business statistics course, and the challenge of making time for his girlfriend, Anna, an education student at Salem State. But what was about to happen could have never crossed his mind, for the storm my dad was about to weather was much greater than he could have ever predicted. January 13th would mark the transition from Mike before the accident to Mike after the accident.



Life has the ability to ebb and flow, and it is a part of the human condition to anticipate the fickle and fragile nature of moments that forge a lifetime. As humans, we have a hardcoded reliance that allows us to endure the difficult and unexpected. Like the homeostatic mechanisms that regulate our bodily functions, mentally we know that even when things get tough, they will eventually get better.

While this is usually true, it is not always the case: accidents, depression, terminal illness, are just a few of the many things that can throw a wrench in the plans. I think my dad understood the anticipation and the uncertainty of life in a very basic sense.

January 13th, 1990. The call to reach my mom at Loon Mountain. "Judy, Mike was in a very bad accident, Mike's mother is calling for Anna. It is very important that you get down there as soon as possible. Don't tell her what happened, it's too devastating to tell her bluntly, he might not make it by the time you get back."

When the body reaches the lower quartile of the homeostatic range, it is common to break into reservoirs of ions and proteins or use the build-up of some gradient that sums the activation energy to move on to the next stage in a biological mechanism. During survival mode, our body does anything and everything to maintain life. As a response to lower quartile conditions, the body produces a stimulus that activates biological processes that aim for a return to the interquartile range; the normal range. My biochemistry professor, Dr. Folker explains biological processes as a glorified game dominated by probability. Our cells do not have a greater likeness or affinity to one process or another, we cannot personify our cells, but rather, given a set of conditions within a microenvironment, it is likely the cells will respond when conditions are more favorable. Even when the conditions are favorable and the probability of a return to normalcy is likely, there is always that minuet chance that things will not return within their normal range. Murphy's law expresses that if something can go wrong, it will go wrong. Sometimes things just happen that way.

February 8, 1990. "Your fever isn't going away. The doctors don't understand why. You also had a seizure one

day during the first week. Your head was badly injured and your body is trying to tell us that. Mom thought it [the seizure] was because of her because she was in to see you when it happened."



When the mind cannot find a logical pathway to make sense of the inexplicable, the mind tends to place blame on itself, or a higher power. Fate is the idea that there is an invisible acting force that has some part in the agency of individual lives. Lia Lee's parents believed that she contracted "the spirit catches you and you fall down" from the slamming of a door. My Vavo thought she induced my dad's seizure because she was in the hospital room. Sometimes when moments in time pile up to the point of incomprehensibility, the mind tends to search for a loophole, an explanation, a meaning behind it all. Sometimes there isn't an explanation. As humans, we have a natural inclination to understand our condition; but sometimes we simply can't.

February 18, 1990. "We are all so happy you are slowly improving. We can't understand why God would let this happen to such a special person. Finally, you are coming back to us, hang in there my darling brother. This is truly a miracle."

In the well-known parable from the Old Testament, the story of Job, Job is a man who loses everything

that is dear to him. The story of Job toils with the idea of retributive justice: the concept that good things happen to good people and vice versa. It is so easy to adopt the concept of retributive justice because it seems logical. Until coming to Boston College, I would have agreed with the connection between suffering and retributive justice. What I have come to realize is that to be human means to be limited, ignorant, and finite; we are standing before the mystery, whatever it may be. The question my family asked was, why is God letting Mike suffer? Why did God let Mike fly out of the passenger door? But instead, the question should have been, what is the true meaning of suffering? Before Boston College, I believed that suffering is a direct result of God's will and that God imparts suffering on the wicked. After reading the Bible for myself, I have come to learn a new face to faith and suffering: suffering is the damming condition all finite creatures must face, but faith is the acceptance that suffering is mysterious and blind. I wish my family could have recognized this during the months following my dad's accident. I wish they could recognize this today.

February 28, 1990. "Uncle JoJo would drive me to Lowell at 5 in the morning so I could be with dad before any of his family got there. They were all so angry all the time, fighting with the nurses and doctors, not pushing dad in the right ways. It was frustrating to watch, and I was a fragile shell of a human. One morning I was so out of it, I forgot to wash the shampoo out of my hair and I walked out to the car and Uncle JoJo told me I had white suds everywhere ...I asked Uncle JoJo to go in and talk sports to dad while he was in a coma because I know dad loved sports. Uncle JoJo would tell him all the stats, then I would go in and play his favorite music. Who knows if he could hear any of it?"

Andrew Solomon said, "To be creatures who love, we must be creatures who can despair at what we lose." I think about my parents when I read this quote. My mom often talks about "growing up quick". One day her youth completely vanished before she had time to tug on the

few remaining strings. My dad's accident, unforeseen and sudden, led my mom to make lots of decisions that were no longer solely about her. When I think of strength and sacrifice, I think of my mom. I could never imagine going through what she endured at 18 years old. I cannot fathom the intensity of my mom's pain when she found out her best friend would never be the same.

My dad is a fully functioning adult with college degrees and unsteady employment. His recovery was truly a miracle. Despite what veneer is exposed to families experiencing the fallout of an accident, or any major life-altering event, there is no sugar coating the before and after version of each person. My mom loved Mike before the accident, and she loves Mike after the accident. They are partly the same Mike, but no one in my family will deny that he's never returned back to who he once was. With the amount of brain damage he sustained, how could he? What they all may fail to notice is their own lack of return to how they once were. Love is powerful; its unconditionality ignites a glimmer of hope that love will always prevail in the darkest of times.

March 25, 1990. "Our long awaited day has finally arrived. You're coming home today. Your memory is improving, so is your speech. The past months have been long and unbearable at times. You are a fighter, Mike. Welcome home!"

March 25, 2017: My 18th birthday. "Jen, do you want a PB&J for lunch?" I respond calmly, "No thanks Dad, I'm allergic to peanuts." I've been allergic to peanuts for 18 years.

So where does this leave me? Looking back on a story that only became mine 9 years after it began is a difficult feat. How can I do justice to a narrative, with so many perspectives, so much pain, but yet so much hope and triumph? How do I live a life of my own, when the one I lead is deeply influenced by the events that came before me?

The dynamic answer that continues to change is complex: this narrative is only partly mine, it leaves me at Boston College, on the precipice of the past and the future. Boston College is a place where I am forging my own path, but also walking the same lanes my dad walked when his life was forever changed. I believe F. Scott Fitzgerald could offer some form of hiatus to a narrative currently in action, one unfinished, "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter...So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

A FEARFUL RESPONSE: HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND EBOLA

MITCHELL LAVOIE

In 2014, the extremely fatal Ebola virus ravaged through the countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, killing over 11,000 people and infecting even more. This outbreak led to a significant response mounted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States. Many healthcare workers from the United States answered the call to serve and were initially applauded for their heroic actions abroad. They even managed to land a spot in Time Magazine's prestigious Person of the Year issue, honoring all of the Ebola fighters as "the ones who answered the call" ("TIME Person of the Year"). However, this warm U.S. response was not consistent for healthcare workers Dr. Craig Spencer and nurse Kaci Hickox, Ebola workers who spent time in Guinea and Sierra Leone respectively. Instead, they were greeted at America's borders with hostility and utter fear. The media narrative only fueled this fear, further vilifying them. Their image was not one that resembled the other healthcare workers in TIME as the U.S. met their return with hasty public health policy and negative public opinion. These two healthcare workers were presented as the "superspreader" as discussed in Priscilla Wald's *Contagious*, representing a major characteristic in the outbreak narrative which helped drive the fear. The fear has even deeper roots, though, resulting from previous outbreak narratives of Ebola and hemorrhagic fever, such as Richard Preston's 1994 novel *The Hot Zone* which, in an effort to find meaning out of an epidemic, only caused mass hysteria and fear (Rosenberg, Quammen). As a result, the initial positive U.S. response towards the Ebola workers in 2014 was replaced by stigma and poor treatment for many of these same individuals.

Healthcare Workers following 2003 SARS outbreak in the U.S. and abroad: Policy and Treatment

To first understand the poor treatment of U.S. healthcare workers after the 2014 Ebola outbreak, specifically that of Dr. Spencer and nurse Kaci Hickox, it is necessary to grasp how the poor treatment they endured, such as the stigma for their work abroad and the stringent policy put in place upon their arrival to the U.S., was not as significant in the SARS outbreak in 2003. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a respiratory illness that is caused by coronavirus and infected people in more than two dozen countries (SARS CDC). In the United States, Canada, and Hong Kong, constant surveillance and quarantine or home isolation for those who contracted SARS was common policy and enacted worldwide (Cetron et al.). Furthermore, in the U.S. the CDC only recommended passive surveillance for those exposed to SARS or whom came from an area of SARS transmission, such as healthcare workers, stating that they should monitor themselves for 10 days and seek out medical care if they become symptomatic (Cetron et al.). This was not the case for other nations such as Canada and China, where even if an individual was exposed to SARS, they needed to be isolated in their home. The U.S. followed the CDC recommendation however, and opted for this passive surveillance, as it would not impede on an individual's "due process" or civil liberties (Cetron et al.). What is more is that in the United States, travel advisories and health alerts were created for flights traveling to and from places where SARS transmission was present, recommending 10-day personal surveillance for healthcare workers and others after they returned. This response from the United States was much more mild compared to what was set in motion in China, Canada, and Singapore. In