

Off the Pier

Flash Fiction

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## Off the Pier

*1938.*

Kate sat on the old, worn, wooden pier alone, looking out to the endless and quiet Pacific Ocean. The sun, which was just beginning to set, painted a plethora of colors on the evening sky—beautiful, breathtaking actually. It was just her and the sounds of the salty water washing up on the sandy beach, and the wind blew lightly, which forced the smell of salt to Kate’s nose. She watched the seagulls as they swooped toward the water hoping to catch dinner. Kate, just twelve years old, knew how to swim, although the vast depth of the ocean still scared her. It stretched out to what seemed like eternity; there was no limit, and although it was calm at the moment, she knew the ocean was strong and a tide could pull her far, far away from the beach at any moment. Kate wouldn’t dare to jump out into the unknown, so she stayed safely sitting on the edge of the pier, taking in the view.

*2014.*

Kate lay alone in her bed in the dim hospital room. The late afternoon sky provided the only light through the curtained window, and the television was turned off. Kate actually enjoyed the silence because it left all the noisy distractions out, and it was during the quietness and stillness that she spoke to God the most. The only thing Kate heard now was the faint beep of her heart monitor.

“Knock, knock! It’s me, Grandma!” Kate’s youngest grandson, Tyler, walked in.

“Oh, Tyler! It’s so good to see you. Where is your mother?” Kate smiled at the sight of him.

“Mom is working late tonight—you know, the usual. I drove myself.”

“Oh! I keep forgetting you know how to drive. You’ve grown so much, sweetheart,” Kate said between deep, heavy coughs.

Tyler had grown so much. He was just a few months shy of graduating high school and already planning to go far away from home, for college. Tyler reached into his backpack and pulled out a brown paper bag. Immediately, with the sight of the bag, Kate’s mouth became moist.

“Brought you your favorite,” Tyler said as he pulled out the golden, chocolate-glazed, cream-filled doughnut. The cold, sanitized-smelling hospital room filled with the scent of a warm bakery for a second as he placed the flaky doughnut on a plate and handed it to her as she struggled to sit up.

*She looks worse than last week,* Tyler said to himself, his heart heavy.

“What’s wrong, Tyler?” Kate asked, although she already knew the answer. Ever since she found out two months ago that her cancer was terminal, Tyler wasn’t his normal, perky self.

“Oh, nothing,” he mumbled as he looked down to the floor, giving away the fact he was lying. His grandma was dying; he knew it, she knew it—*everybody* knew it.

“You know that’s a lie. Tyler, please talk to me,” Kate pleaded as she put the barely nibbled doughnut down on the food tray. Tyler was still looking at the floor, and when he looked up his eyes were glossy with tears.

“I just don’t want you to ... to go, Grandma.” Tyler croaked as he forced himself to choke down his tears. He had to stay strong. He couldn’t break down in front of her like this.

Kate, unable to hold herself up any longer, lay back down in her bed. Her breath was shallow; she could feel her weakened heart throb against her chest just from the labor of sitting up.

“Tyler you do trust God, right?”

“Well, of course. After all, you’re the one who always made sure I went to church.” Tyler pulled a chair next to her bed and sat down, clasping her hand gently.

“But, Tyler, do you trust what He is doing now?” Kate asked, using some of her precious strength to squeeze his hand. Tyler fell silent and looked at the floor again. He couldn’t say anything. He didn’t trust God with the situation at hand. How could God take his grandmother? She had served Him throughout her entire life and led hundreds to Christ, including him. It just didn’t make any sense. Kate was the wisest woman in Tyler’s life, and he couldn’t imagine his college years without her being just a phone call away.

“You need to jump off the pier, Tyler,” Kate whispered, knowing he wasn’t trusting God with her situation. Tyler didn’t need to say anything; his puzzled look gave it away. He didn’t understand what his grandmother was talking about.

“Many times, things in my life didn’t go as I planned, Tyler, but I knew I had to trust God. I had to jump off the pier.” The room grew darker as the sun set, casting shadows throughout the room. “Why is it that people are afraid of the ocean, even though they know how to swim?” Kate asked as her breath started to falter.

“Because it’s big and deep?”

“And?”

“It’s kind of scary?” Tyler guessed, not understanding where this was going.

“Exactly. People are scared of the unknown. Trusting God is the same way, Tyler. It will be scary, and at times you will want to question Him, but God knows what He’s doing,” Kate said as her breath ran out, forcing her to breathe deeply.

“We are not called to sit on piers, Tyler.” Kate took in another deep breath so she could finish speaking. “Jesus said in John chapter fourteen, verse one, ‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.’ God knows what He is doing,” Kate said, reassuring herself and Tyler.

Tyler looked into her eyes, and for once in these past two months she looked happy. Tears now freely flowed down his cheeks as he rested his hand on her cold, bony hand.

“God is like an ocean—mighty, never-ending, and sometimes scary. His plan, His power, are limitless, Tyler, so let go. Jump and trust Him, you are going to do great things, I already know,” Kate said with her last bit of strength. Tyler couldn’t speak; the room was filled with the sound of his weeping. Kate began to pray silently and closed her eyes for the last time.

Tyler didn’t notice the loud beeping noise until the nurses ran into the room and flipped on the bright fluorescent lights.

“What’s going on?” Tyler demanded, tears still flowing down his eyes. He already knew what was going on; his grandma had passed. Tyler said goodbye for a final time and knew he wasn’t leaving the hospital the same person as when he had come in.

He had jumped off a pier, and although it hurt, he knew God was in control, and that’s all that mattered. He then pulled out his phone to make the hardest phone call he would ever have to make.

Kate had also jumped off a pier, the greatest of them all. She opened her eyes and then looked up to The Father and smiled.