

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 44
Number 2 *Spring 2022*

Article 94

Spring 5-1-2022

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Recommended Citation

Torkmani, Hala Al (2022) "Moving On," *The Prairie Light Review*. Vol. 44: No. 2, Article 94.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol44/iss2/94>

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Moving on

Hala Al Torkmani

I'm the type of person who hides their life stories and feelings away from the world. I keep every traumatic event stored in a box, so when the people around me talk about their problems, I listen, observe, and keep my mouth shut. Making them think that my life is perfect with no flaws, but that isn't always the case. I've overcome unbelievable amounts of trauma at a young age that no one knows about. A few things like my teta Sameera's (grandma Sameera's) death.

As a kid, I grew up being closer to teta than my own mom, to the point that I felt like I loved her more too. On May 1st of 2011, Teta lost her battle to cancer, and I lost the closest person to me. Overcoming the depression and hopelessness that I felt for years after her death, was the hardest yet the most powerful thing I've ever had to do. A person's bravest moment in life is when they realize that they've gotten back up and moved on from the trauma that caused them to break.

I remember getting up in the middle of the night needing to use the bathroom, just like any 10-year-old girl who suffers from insomnia. Walking out of the bathroom, I heard my mother's cries coming from her room. Her big white doors were closed; my mom never closes her door when she sleeps. I knew something was wrong. Reaching for the handle, I opened the door and watched Baba holding Mama while she poured her heart and tears out onto his broad shoulder. As I climbed up on their bed, I pulled Mama close to me and wiped her salty water-drops off of her red cheeks, soft like a baby.

"What happened?" I said softly in a worried tone.

"Sameera just died an hour ago," said Baba so firmly. He didn't shed one tear, which caught me off guard because he was extremely close to teta as well, but I guess that's just how he copes with pain, holds it in.

The next day, Mama booked the first flight to Jordan, our home country. She decided last minute to take me with her, so I could have the chance to wave goodbye to my grandma for the last time. On the plane, I remember having my headphones on for most of the flight, watching movies, listening to music, trying to keep the thought that it hadn't even been 24 hours since the loss of the most important person in my life, in the back of my head. Once we landed, none of my family members were there to pick us up, so we had to take a taxi. We were expecting to get to the family house and leave right away to go bury her, but once we got to the house, the funeral had already started. They had already buried her, without having the patience to wait two extra hours for us to be able to say our goodbyes. It was very rude and disrespectful of my family to do that, knowing my mom hadn't seen her mom in years. We tried our best to get there as soon as possible, but what they did shattered our hearts even more.

A week later, after all the fights, negativity, and toxicity in the air, we finally flew back home. The vibes were still very depressing, but the hardest parts for me were going through the different stages of grief. Over the next month or so, I was in denial. I'd cry myself to sleep almost every night; I wasn't able to process the fact that she was gone, forever. Later on, I got into this level of anger and stress that I had never felt before. I was so upset at the universe that I'd give attitude and yell at my parents, which was never like me. To be going through and feeling all those emotions was very unfortunate, because I was just a kid. I got into a really

bad depression to the point where I couldn't see a purpose in life, and I didn't care if I was dead or alive. I had to start going to therapy. About a year later was when I finally accepted that this is how I had to live life now. After my therapy sessions, I realized that I have to grow up to be successful for Teta: smile for her, cry for her, go through every emotion possible for her, and, most importantly, live my best life for her.

Ten years later, I'm the happiest I've ever been, not because I got "over her," but because I became brave enough to be able to learn how to live without her. I learned how to not base my happiness on anyone but myself. I know saying that might sound selfish considering all the pain I went through as a kid, but as cliché as it sounds, losing my grandma is what made me who I am today. It took me years to get to where I am mentally and emotionally, but I wouldn't be as strong and independent as I am today if I hadn't lost my best friend.



Passing By,
Katie Novotny