A Deadly Realization Essay, Research Paper

A Deadly Realization

I walked into school around 8:25, rolling out of bed only a half hour before. I wiped the rain from my face, I hate when it rains. As usual, I strolled in with a casual walk, like I was the coolest, because I could come in late every morning since I had no first period class. The first person I saw as I walked through the cafeteria toward the staircase was Louise. Usually an outgoing and crazy person, she strikes many as being on crack. She calmly and quietly said “hey”, with her face to the floor, not even looking at me. On my way up the staircase to my locker, I passed my good friend Mike. He looked me in the face and said, “Did you hear?” I replied with intense wonder of what the latest gossip at Shoreham-Wading River High School could be. “No”, I replied, “what happened?” “You’ll find out at the assembly.” I had a few minutes before second period began, so I walked to the library, and pulled up a seat across from my friend Kevin. “What’s up, I heard we have an assembly this morning.” “Yeah, I think two juniors got in an accident last night, but I heard they’re all ok.” I jokingly responded, “Well, at least periods are shorter.” He gave me a tiny smirk, silently telling me we shouldn’t be laughing over such a horrible thing.

The bell rang, and first period ended. Dr. Hayward the principal came over the loudspeaker, “All students please report to the auditorium.” Kevin and I got up, and joined the crowd slowly squeezing into the auditorium through the two open doors. I looked around and saw a group of my best friends sitting together. Katie had her head on Louise’s shoulder, and Mike and Kyle sat there with a blank stare on their faces. I made my way into a seat, and looked at everyone, “Hey guys.” No one responded, not even a look. By this point, I was scared at what news I might hear. I didn’t know what to be thinking. For everyone to be so upset, it must be really serious. I looked around. Everyone had a look of wonder on their face, or they were crying, or just didn’t know what to think. I didn’t know what to think. I had never seen my friends like this before. Never have I seen Mike so serious, he would laugh if I got run over by a car. But this time was different for sure, and I was more frightened then I had ever been before in my life.

Dr. Hayward slowly made his way to the podium on stage. “I have never had to do this before, and I don’t know what to say, so I am going to just come right out with it Wesley Whitworth took his own life last night ” The room got so quiet, as if no one was there. I have never felt my heart sink as quickly as that second. Everyone in the room seemed to be hurt by the news. I guess Wes had a special place in everyone’s heart. I looked at Katie, and she looked at me. A tear rolled down my face. Dr. Hayward began to cry, and with a weary tone went on to say, “that there is nothing that can be done now we must be strong now we must come together as a school, and focus on getting through this tragedy.”

I got to math class, and sat down. My teacher, Mr. Strotman, who I have known since I was in elementary school, came up behind me, and rubbed my shoulder, “Are you alright?” I picked my head up out of my arms, and just looked at him with tears flowing from my eyes. He understood that words couldn’t explain what I was feeling. Beth Ann came in and sat next to me where she always does. I looked at her and just said “I don’t understand not Wes, anyone but Wes, he had so much going for him anyone but Wes.” We did nothing in class that day, and I finally stopped crying after a few minutes. Beth Ann and I talked about it. I told her how I could remember the last thing Wes said to me, just two nights before.

Throughout the rest of the day, I went to a few more classes before just walking out and going home. I couldn’t stay in school any longer. Biology and Film Criticism were the worst. Wes had been in those classes too, and it was hard to look over at his seat and not see his sarcastic smile that he always had on his face. When I finally arrived home, I ran into the house to find that my Mom was already home from work, and my brother Jerry was sitting next to her. “Mom, what are you doing home from work?” I asked. “Jerry got in a car accident this morning, he was very upset so I came home.” I could feel my emotions going out of control. My eyes quickly swelled, and tears quickly came to my face, “Wes killed himself last night.” My Mom got up and gave me a long hug. “I know” she replied. Jerry embraced us as well, I can’t tell you the last time Jerry hugged me, if ever. This time was different, he understood how upset I was, my confusion. I quickly wiped the tears, and asked Jerry if he was ok. He went on to explain to me that he felt like there was nothing left in the world for him when he got into that accident, but when he heard about Wes, that he realized that a car accident is nothing in the context of life.

The next few days in school were just as horrible. An aura of sadness hung over everything, everyone. I learned more of the night Wes killed himself. And more about Wes then I had ever known. His parents were divorced, and he had 2 younger brothers. He often had to act as the father figure in the household, working to help support his family. He ran track at school, in addition to being in the math club, the big brother/big sister program, and countless others. He was still dedicated enough to his studies to be in the National Honor Society. And Often late at night, he would still make time for himself to play hockey, his one true passion. He was even voted “friendliest kid” in our graduating class.

The wake was one of the most horrible experiences I’ve ever been through in my life. In such a small community like mine, where there’s only 500 kids in the High School, everyone knows everyone. The line to go before the casket stretched outside of the building. Kids waited hours to pay their respects to a person we never really knew, I don’t think we could’ve ever known, but we certainly missed our chance. Parents and teachers also came to pay their respects to a great student, and a community member they had been proud of. Katie cried on my shoulder for the whole time we were there. I never shed one tear. I still can’t understand why, I felt like I should’ve been crying, and yet I wasn’t. I don’t think I was ready to believe it yet. I’m still not ready to believe. I’m not sure I will ever be ready. Events like this don’t come and go. They stay forever. They leave you thinking. Every time I drive down Albert Street, where Wes lived, I get a feeling of emptiness inside of me, a feeling of misunderstanding.

These days, Wes often crosses my mind. I think more than anything he taught me that people are not always what they seem. I always thought Wes would be the last person I knew that would take their own life. He always seemed happy, never missed a good laugh, and always walked around with a smile on his face.

On the last day of school, the senior class planted a tree in his honor. It was strange, only about twenty kids showed up. Those that felt really close to Wes. I think to those few, Wes will never really die, and he’ll always be there. Often times, when I’m upset about something, I remember what happened to Wes, and realize, things can be much, much worse.

That night, I drove down Wes’s street with a bunch of my friends. We each began to talk of our fondest memories of Wes, of all our memories of Wes. His smile was unforgettable, and his personality the kindest. I’ll never forget that last thing Wes told me. “I’ll see you on Monday.” I never saw Wes that Monday, and I’ll never forgive myself for not making more of that night with him. I think one really important thing that I learned from Wes, is to treat everyday of your life as if it may be your last. I’ve heard that line so many times before, I never really thought about it, but now, I hope to never forget it.